

NQF state of play

 **Belgium-FL 2020**

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Overview

Stage of development: [Operational stage](#)

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:

Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and from the professional qualifications system.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch)

NQF/EQF website:

[Website](#)

Qualifications register/database:

[Qualifications database](#)

Introduction and context

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 ([1]). It is a learning outcomes-based framework with eight levels, using two main categories of level descriptors: knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility.

The FQF is operational and well-integrated with education and training legislation. The Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants (AHOVOKS) coordinates FQF implementation actions and also oversees the quality assurance of professional qualifications, being part of the FQF. 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 with many professional qualifications included in the framework. 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. It forms an integrated part of the FQF.

Policy objectives

The 2009 Act on the qualifications structure defines the Flemish qualification system as '... a systematic classification of recognised qualifications based on a generally adopted qualifications framework (FQF)' (Flemish Parliament, 2009, Chapter I, Article 3). The qualifications system and framework aim to make qualifications transparent, so that stakeholders in education, training and the labour market can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and associated competences and enable comparison of qualifications nationally and at European level. It acts as a reference for quality assurance, developing and renewing courses, and developing and aligning procedures for recognising acquired competences. It plays an important role in strengthening the learning outcomes-based approach and aims to strengthen policies and practices on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2020).

With the reform of secondary education, starting in 2019 ([2]), as well as the qualification reform at level 5, the FQF is seen as an instrument reshaping the structure and content of secondary and higher VET at level 5. Two important decrees supporting further implementation of the FQF were adopted in 2019: the decree on communal quality assurance framework for professional qualifications at all levels ([3]) and the decree on recognition of acquired competences ([4]). With the approval of these regulations, the Flemish qualification structure has acquired a broader scope; they provide the quality framework, allowing for quality assurance of courses or recognition of competences (EVC), resulting in a professional qualification at any level of the FQF ([5]). This ensures that all people following such courses or procedures for recognition of prior learning, leading to the same professional qualifications and titles, have obtained the same set of skills after completion of the course or procedure.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

The FQF is a comprehensive framework with all types of qualifications from all parts of education (from primary to doctoral degrees), including professional qualifications. It provides a clear commitment to focus on the learning outcomes approach at policy level and programme and qualifications design. The FQF is based on an eight-level structure described by the categories of knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. Compared to the EQF, FQF descriptors are more detailed, particularly for lower levels. A main feature of the Flemish framework is the use of 'context' as an explicit element of the descriptors. The context in which an individual is able to function is seen as an important part of any qualification. The term 'competence' also plays a significant role in Flemish education, training and employment policies and is used as an overarching concept. Competence and learning outcomes are used as interchangeable terms in education and training with the exception of higher education.

An explicit distinction is made between educational and professional qualifications; all eight levels are open to both ([6]). 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 ([7]). An educational qualification is based on a set of competences an individual needs to participate in society, to continue education and/or to exercise professional activities. An educational qualification can only be acquired through education programmes and in education institutions recognised by the Flemish authorities. Depending on the educational level and the form of education, such qualifications may consist of one or more professional qualifications, final objectives and/or specific final objectives ([8]).

Practical implementation of the principles of learning outcomes/competences has progressed in recent years. The VET sector is probably the most experienced in this field. The implementation has been accelerated by the new secondary education reform, starting in 2019. Special attention is given to the interplay between professional qualifications and final attainment levels so that learners from upper secondary vocational education (BSO), and upper secondary technical education (TSO) are well prepared for the labour market, with a good balance between basic skills and general knowledge and professional

competences.

Learning outcomes are also present in general education, for example by the setting of learning objectives/the attainment targets in national core curricula. Following the adoption on 2 February 2018 of a decree ([9]) on altering the secondary education structure and the renewal of learning outcomes for compulsory education ([10]), new attainment targets began to be developed in stages ([11]). The content and profile of all educational qualifications at levels 1-4 were approved at the end of August 2020 and will be gradually implemented in the context of modernisation of secondary education. In dual learning, most of the existing courses in the second and third grade have already been modernised.

At post-secondary level, one-year specialisation programmes are offered as follow-up technical programmes. Developments also occurred at EQF level 5 and, in particular, in graduate courses leading to short cycle graduate degrees, which have been updated so as to be based on at least one professional qualification. The professional qualification (s) are translated into domain-specific learning outcomes per educational qualification ([12]). By 2024, all graduate degree programmes should be based on a professional qualification (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). In this way, labour market needs are taken up in VET programmes, including higher VET at EQF level 5 ([13]).

Developments in higher education have been influenced by the Bologna process but are mainly dependent on initiatives taken by single institutions or associations of higher education institutes. While reflecting a diverse situation, a clear strengthening of the learning outcomes principle has taken place in Flanders. Learning outcomes that have been acquired previously can (after successful assessment or validation) lead to acquisition of the corresponding credits in higher education ([14]). At levels 6-8, the Parliament Act of 2009 ([15]) states that higher education institutions jointly describe the subject-specific learning outcomes for higher education courses. The validated descriptions of the subject-specific learning outcomes are automatically recognised as educational qualifications by the Flemish Government and published in the Flemish qualifications database (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

There are various providers of further education for adults. The adult education centres are modularising their training offer and bringing it in line with the content of professional qualifications. Due to the decree on the communal quality framework, it is also possible, for example for VDAB (public employment services) but also for other public/private

partners, to have training programmes recognised that lead to recognised partial or full professional qualifications. These organisations, when they meet the quality standards laid out in the communal quality framework, can also provide RPL – assessment trajectories that also lead to full or partial professional qualifications.

These regulations came into force in 2020 and only a limited number of courses and RPL trajectories have been accredited. There is also dialogue between the public employment service (PES) and adult education institutions. The PES aims to lead jobseekers to the labour market as quickly as possible (through short training courses, which are not necessarily based on a full professional qualification).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The Flemish national qualifications framework is firmly legally embedded ([16]). The day-to-day running of the FQF has been delegated to the Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances (*AHOVOKS, Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen*) ([17]). The agency was appointed as EQF NCP and is responsible for coordinating the process of implementation, involving all stakeholders through expert committees. It also oversees the quality assurance of professional qualifications ([18]). Professional qualifications are based on occupational standards. The development of professional qualifications is guided and supervised by AHOVOKS, involving sectoral representatives of employers and employees, VDAB and independent experts.

The process of FQF implementation has involved a broad range of stakeholders at all stages ([19]), coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Training. Other ministries – Ministry of Labour and Social Economy and Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media – have also been involved. From the education and training side, participation of relevant sectors (general education, initial, continuing and higher vocational education and training and higher education) has been important. Both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Work and Social Economy wanted a closer alignment between education and training and the labour market. To formalise this collaboration, an overarching management committee of education, training and work has been created to prepare and monitor policy decisions.

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) ensures the quality of [higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders](#) by [assessing](#) and [accrediting programmes](#), as well as contributing to improving [quality](#) ([20]). The Education Inspectorate inspects adult education and dual and non-dual training programmes in secondary education and adjusts their quality framework accordingly. For the training of private partners recognised by the Department of Work, a quality body (Team Supervisors Entities Work) was set up to check the quality requirements of the courses leading to professional qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Flemish professional qualifications are developed within a tripartite

system, giving the social partners, in the context of the Social and Economic Committee (SERV), a decisive role. Social partners have been involved at all levels with a high degree of commitment, although clarification of their role required substantial effort.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

[21]

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has been well established on the public policy agenda in Belgium. In Flanders, the term EVC (*erkennen van verworven competenties*: recognition of acquired competences) is used to refer to the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([22]). Validation is used to obtain a certificate of professional qualification and to gain admission to an education and training programme and to request exemptions from (parts of) the study programme.

The main changes have been the increased congruence between different validation providers (inside as well as outside education), new developments in quality assurance and the adoption of a single integrated quality assurance framework linking validation processes to the FQF. Two decrees, one on a communal quality assurance framework for professional qualifications at all levels ([23]) and another on recognition of acquired competences ([24]), approved by the Flemish Government, have strengthened the coherence of quality assurance systems. They serve as the legal basis for a system of external quality assurance for all courses and/or validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning resulting in a professional qualification at all levels ([25]). This ensures that all people following professional courses or procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL) resulting in the same professional qualifications titles, also obtain the same set of competences after completion of the course or procedure. EVC standards have already been developed for 10 professional qualifications.

Readily accessible information and guidance is provided in Belgium Flanders, but awareness-raising efforts will be increased with the new, integrated approach. All information on validation in Flanders is available to the public via a dedicated website ([26]). The first professional qualifying training and trajectories for validation of non-formal and informal learning that follow the communal quality framework are being further implemented. In this way, the employed and job seekers can make use of the range of professional qualifying programmes (for training or recognition of acquired competences) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

NQF implementation and impact

The FQF is operational and well integrated with education and training legislation. The road from adoption to implementation and operational status has proved complex for the Flemish NQF but a series of implementation decrees have been adopted over the past decade, covering both professional and educational qualifications, which have led to detailed procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the framework. In the context of current reform, the FQF is seen as an instrument for reshaping the structure and content of secondary education and higher VET. The most important achievements are related to the links between educational and professional qualifications and the quality assurance of professional qualifications, which is getting stronger, as well as the broadening of the scope of the framework (as other accredited providers can train for professional qualifications).

The FQF covers educational qualifications and professional qualifications with links between them (see the section on levels, learning outcomes and qualifications). By November 2020 a total of 520 professional qualifications (*Beroepskwalificatie*), at levels 2-7, and 500 educational qualifications (*Onderwijskwalificatie*), at levels 5-8, had been included in the FQF and published in the Flemish qualifications database. An important change has happened at levels 1-4 of educational qualifications, which until now had not been included in the framework: the content and profile of educational qualifications at these levels were approved at the end of August 2020 and will be gradually implemented in the context of the modernisation of secondary education in the coming years ([27]).

A national database of qualifications ([28]) has been set up to support the FQF. All recognised qualifications are included in the database. Since 2017, NQF/EQF levels have been mentioned on diplomas awarded in the new apprenticeship pathway (*dual learning*) in initial VET, initially in the pilot phase and fully implemented since 2019, and in adult education and higher education qualifications, as well as qualifications awarded outside formal (regulated) education and training (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). The FQF/EQF levels are included on Europass supplements for the VET certificate supplement and the HE diploma supplement.

So far, the FQF's communication efforts have been primarily oriented towards partners at macro and meso level (representatives of other

policy domains, social partners, sectoral organisations and education institutions). Dissemination of information about the NQF is carried out via the NQF website ([29]), brochures with technical information ([30]), seminars and meetings with sectoral organisations. However, the website for citizens needs to be revised, for user friendliness, flexibility and interconnectedness.

The guidance and counselling practitioners of the Flemish public employment service (VDAB) and the stakeholders that develop professional qualifications use the same reference framework (the *Competent* database) ([31]). The Flemish public employment service is also involved in meetings about policy decisions on qualifications.

An evaluation of the framework has not yet been made.

Referencing to the EQF

The FQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2011 and an updated report was submitted in March 2014. The referencing report is planned to be updated in 2021-22. 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.

Important lessons and future plans

The FQF is considered operational and well integrated with education and training legislation. A qualifications database has been established and a large number of qualifications has already been included (mostly professional qualifications at levels 2-7 and educational qualifications from higher education (bachelor and master degrees). Educational qualifications at levels 1-4 were approved at the end of August 2020 and will be gradually implemented in the context of the modernisation of secondary education. Developments also occurred at EQF/FQF level 5. The framework plays a role in the continuous review and renewal of qualifications. Stakeholders consider implementation of the FQF for professional qualifications to be successful (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). The same qualification can be obtained through different types of providers (e.g. in adult education, secondary education, through dual learning, in special education and in RPL procedures) so transparency between educational and professional qualifications and progression (horizontal and vertical) in education and training have been enhanced. In this way, the framework acts with increased transparency supporting lifelong learning. FQF contributes to better coordination between education, training and the labour market.

With the approval of the regulations on the communal quality framework and on the recognition of acquired competences, the FQF has found a broader scope, building trust in professional qualifications and acquired competences, independent of the way they were obtained. In addition, the use of a professional qualification in a training programme has brought stakeholders from education and sectors together in committees; these discussions led to commitments from both parties (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). The FQF also constitutes a building block for lifelong learning, delivering benefits for citizens, enabling them to obtain a professional qualification in different ways. Professional qualifications often build on each other in terms of content. For example, one can progress from assistant baker training to baker training, possibly with another provider (and thus obtain exemptions for the common competences). One may also have obtained a partial qualification and, after additional training or recognition of experience, obtain the full professional qualification.

Despite the improvements brought about by the development and introduction of the FQF, there are still issues to be addressed. One of the

implementation challenges in the coming period is related to the link between educational qualifications and training programmes on the one hand and professional qualifications on the other. The new secondary reform and review of higher VET qualifications at EQF level 5 are strengthening this link. Adjusting IT systems in a way that transparency is also visible to the user is an important challenge for the future (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). The development of professional qualifications has currently stagnated due to the Covid-19 crisis as sectors have different priorities and different qualification providers have switched to online learning. Future FQF plans include updating and reviewing more qualifications and including them in the database and framework, indicating FQF levels on all certificates and diplomas and/or supplements, and supporting teachers, trainers and guidance/counselling staff in the use of the framework; the trajectory database (under construction) ([32]) will be able to link learning opportunities and qualifications to make learning pathways transparent for citizens, assisting guidance and career development.

Main sources of information

●The Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants (*Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen* - AHOVOKS) acts as EQF NCP:

www.ahovoks.be

●Flemish qualifications framework website:

<http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/>

●Flemish qualifications database: [https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?](https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK)

[p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK](https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK)

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

<https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac->

[eqf/files/referencing_report_belgium_flanders_update_2014.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/referencing_report_belgium_flanders_update_2014.pdf)

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	<p>Doctoral degree (Universiteit - Doctor) Category Educational qualifications</p>	8
7	<p>Academic master degree (Universiteit - Master) Category Educational qualifications</p> <p>Advanced master programmes (master na master - manama) Category Educational qualifications</p> <p>Professional qualifications Examples: Librarian/information manager (Bibliothecaris/Informatiemanager)</p> <p>Physiotherapist (Kinesitherapeut)</p> <p>Archivist/information manager (Archivaris/informatiebeheerder)</p>	7

6

Academic bachelor degree (Universiteit - Bachelor)

6

Category

Educational qualifications

Professional bachelor degree (Hogeschool - Bachelor)

Category

Educational qualifications

Advanced bachelor programme (bachelor na bachelor - banaba)

Category

Educational qualifications

Professional qualifications

Examples: Dietitian (Diëtist)

Dental technologist (Dentaaltechnoloog)

Textile designer (Textielontwerper)

5

Graduate degree (short cycle) (Graduaat)

5

Category

Educational qualifications

Professional qualifications

Examples: Archive expert (Archiefdeskundige)

Coordinator-advisor of decorative painting (Coördinator - adviseur decoratieve schilderwerken)

Police inspector (Inspecteur Politie)

**Upper secondary general education school
leaving certificate (Algemeen Secundair
Onderwijs - ASO)**

Category

Educational qualifications

**Upper secondary technical education school
leaving certificate (Technisch Secundair
Onderwijs - TSO)**

Category

Educational qualifications

**Upper secondary artistic education leaving
certificate (Kunstsecundair Onderwijs - KSO)**

Category

Educational qualifications

**Certificate of a specialisation year a preparation
for higher education**

Category

Educational qualifications

Professional qualifications

Examples: Bartender (Barman)

Electromechanic (Elektromecanicien)

Commercial assistant (Commercieel assistant)

Pastry chef (Banketbakker)

3	<p>Upper secondary vocational education school leaving certificate (Beroepssecundair Onderwijs - BSO)</p> <p>Category</p> <p>Educational qualifications</p> <p>Professional qualifications</p> <p>Examples: Construction welder (Constructielasser)</p> <p>Florist assistant (Assistent florist)</p> <p>Driver in the fuel service (Chauffeur in de brandstoffenhandel)</p>	3
2	<p>Adult basic education</p> <p>Category</p> <p>Educational qualifications</p> <p>Lower secondary education - first stage of secondary education</p> <p>Category</p> <p>Educational qualifications</p> <p>Pre-vocational education</p> <p>Category</p> <p>Educational qualifications</p> <p>Professional qualifications</p> <p>Examples: Animal production assistant (Assistent dierlijke productie)</p> <p>Room service employee (Medewerker kamerdienst)</p> <p>Bakery and pastry shop employee (Medewerker bakkerijbrood- en banketbakkerij)</p>	2
1	<p>Certificate of elementary education (6 years)</p> <p>Category</p> <p>Educational qualifications</p>	1

Acronyms

AHOVOKS	<i>Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen</i> [Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants]
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
EQF	European qualifications framework
FQF	<i>Vlaamse kwalificatiestructuur</i> Flemish qualifications framework
HBO5	<i>hoger beroepsonderwijs</i> [Higher vocational education 5]
NQF	national qualifications framework
NVAO	<i>De Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie</i> <i>[Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders]</i>
RAC	recognition of acquired competences
SCHE	short-cycle higher education
SERV	Social and Economic Committee
VDAB	Flemish public employment and vocational training service
VET	vocational education and training

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[URLs accessed 7.9.2020].

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<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/009>

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http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/kwalificatiestructuur/european-qualifications-framework/koppelingsrapport-vks-eqf/files/Koppelingsrapport_EN_2014-FINAAL.pdf

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Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma/VHP (2018). *Programme national de réforme 2018 [National reform programme 2018].*

http://www.be2020.eu/uploaded/files/201805041043430.NRP_2018_Belgium.pdf

Notes

- [1] Flemish Parliament (2009) Decreet betreffende de kwalificatiestructuur [Act on the qualification structure]. Belgisch Staatsblad, 16.7.2009, p. 49597. <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14111> .
- [2] The reform of secondary education started on 1 September 2019 and will be finalised in 2026 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).
- [3] The decree and decision on quality assurance for professional qualifications based on a common quality framework can be accessed at: <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1031716¶m=informatie&ref=search&AVIDS=> and at: <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1032138¶m=informatie>
- [4] Decree and decision on an integrated policy for the recognition of acquired competences: <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1031737¶m=informatie&ref=search&AVIDS=> and <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1032137¶m=inhoud>
- [5] The scope of the decree on the communal quality assurance framework covers all the vocational training programmes offered outside formal education, relying on the professional qualifications standard (Cedefop and Bruxelles Formation, 2019). In addition to education providers, private or public organisations can now also offer training or recognition of competences (EVC programmes) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).
- [6] Professional qualifications are placed at levels 2 to 7; there are currently no professional qualifications at levels 1 and 8.
- [7] Professional qualifications are approved by the social partners: a professional qualification has to reflect the competences of the profile and no single professional qualification description can be approved without social partner input and approval. While time-consuming and challenging, the inclusion of professional qualifications into the FQF can be deemed a success as it demonstrates that stakeholders are fully involved and responsible for implementing the framework.
- [8] [https://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/wat-is-vks/meer-info-en-downloads/files/Brochure-Developed_Aproved_Implemented-\(En\)-12-2012.pdf](https://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/wat-is-vks/meer-info-en-downloads/files/Brochure-Developed_Aproved_Implemented-(En)-12-2012.pdf)
- [9] More information can be found at: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national->

reforms-school-education-

3_en#2017_Modernisation_of_secondary_education_legislative_process

[10] Compulsory education lasts for a maximum of twelve school years, up to the age of 18 or as soon as a pupil obtains the diploma of secondary education.

[11] Implementation of new attainment targets for the first grade started in 2019, the second stage will start in 2021, the third in 2023 and the fourth in 2025 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

[12] There are 29 level 5 educational qualifications based on 60 level 5 professional qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

[13] For further information, please see the Policy note 2019-24 Work and social economy â Beleidsnota 2019-2024, Werk en sociale economie â at: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/beleidsnota-2019-2024-werk-en-sociale-economie>

[14] Credits are referred to in Flanders as 'study points', while students who successfully complete a course or modules are awarded a credit certificate (De Rick, K., 2019).

[15] Flemish Parliament (2009) Decreet betreffende de kwalificatiestructuur [Act on the qualification structure]. Belgisch Staatsblad, 16.7.2009, p. 49597. <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14111>

[16] The Flemish Community of Belgium introduced the FQF in 2009, with the adoption of the Act on the Qualification Structure: <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14111> Flemish Parliament (2009). Decreet betreffende de kwalificatiestructuur [Act on the qualification structure]. Belgisch Staatsblad, 16.7.2009, p. 49597. <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14111> .

[17] AHOVOKS took over this role from the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV, Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming), which has been discontinued due to reorganisation of the Flemish administration.

[18] AHOVOKS has made available a self-assessment instrument to help organisations assess the quality of their validation procedures. More information can be found at: <http://erkennenvancompetenties.be/evc-professionals/evc-toolbox/>.

[19] In the Flemish Community, the Department for Education and Training coordinates policy and three executive autonomous agencies are responsible for implementation, as well as the autonomous Education Inspectorate. The three agencies are AgODI, (Agency for Educational Services for elementary, secondary, part-time artistic education and student guidance centres), AHOVOKS (Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances) and AGIO, (Agency for

Educational Infrastructure), which is responsible for designing, planning, building and renovating school buildings for grant-aided public and private schools. See OECD (2017):

<http://www.oecd.org/education/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Belgium.pdf>

[20] NVAO is listed on the [European Quality Assurance Register \(EQAR\)](#). More information on NVAO can be found at:

http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/NVAO_-_Accreditation_Organisation_of_the_Netherlands_and_Flanders

[21] This section draws mainly on input from the 2018 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Belgium â Flanders (De Rick, K., 2019).

[22] Validation is a matter of policy in different education sectors and the arrangements in these sectors differ as each Ministry department regulates validation within its own sector.

[23] The decree and decision on quality assurance for professional qualifications based on a common quality framework can be accessed at:

<https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?>

[DID=1031716¶m=informatie&ref=search&AVIDS=](https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?) and at: 

<https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?>

[DID=1032138¶m=informatie](https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?)

[24] Decree and decision on an integrated policy for the recognition of acquired competences:

<https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?>

[DID=1031737¶m=informatie&ref=search&AVIDS=](https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?) and 

<https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?>

[DID=1032137¶m=inhoud](https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?)

[25] This decree covers professional qualifications at levels 1-4 as well as professional qualifications at levels 5-8 obtained outside HE.

[26] EVC â erkennen van verworven competenties:

<http://www.erkennenvanverworvencompetenties.be/> [accessed September 2020].

[27] This process will be rolled out gradually, so that by 2025 all secondary education will have been adapted to the qualification structure.

[28] Flemish qualifications database:

www.vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be

[29] Flemish qualifications framework website:

<http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/>

[30] <http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/wat-is-vks/meer-info-en-downloads/>

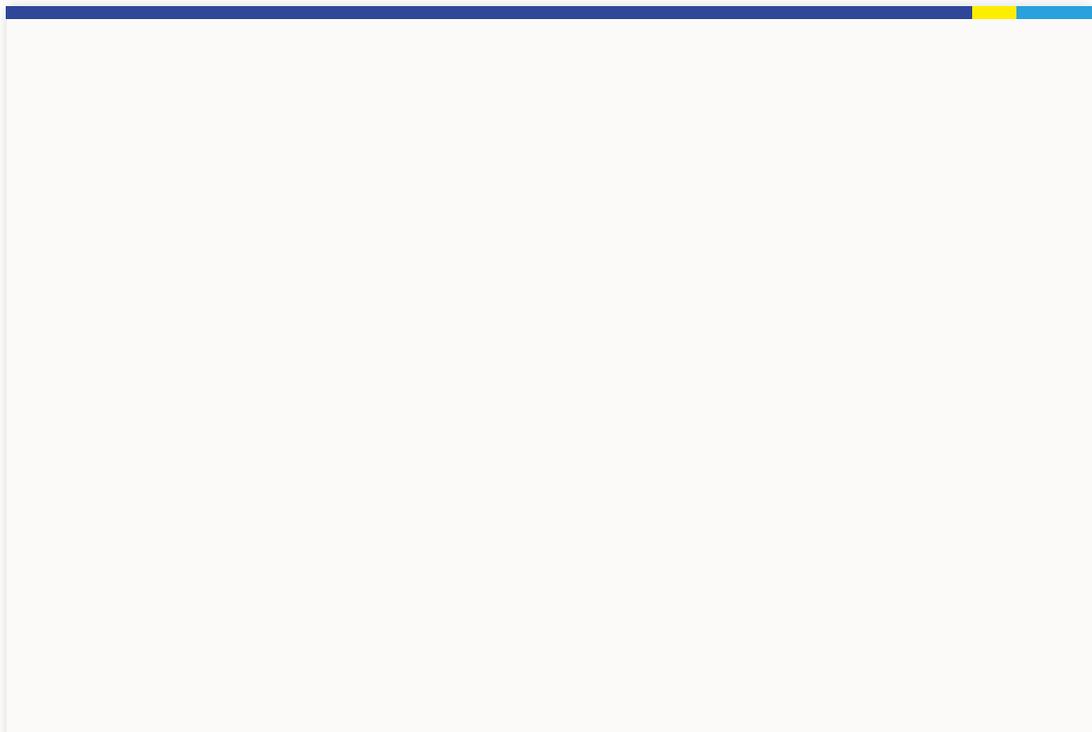
[31] The Competent database/Professions and competences can be

accessed at: <http://production.competent.be/competent-nl/main.html>

[32] In the trajectory database, it will be clear for the end user how different pathways to a certain qualification are the same or differ and how their learning can be planned through different providers. For example, a person can qualify as an assistant baker in secondary school and after some years of work in a bakery, and by successfully doing a RPL, the person can qualify as a baker. Information on further study for a pâtissier in adult education and how many modules still need to be completed is available.

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