NQF state of play

Belgium-DE 2020

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Overview

NQF linked to EQF: ✕

Scope of the framework:

Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German)

Introduction and context

The German-speaking Community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (*Qualifikationsrahmen der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*, QDG) on 18 November 2013 ([2]). 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). The 2013 decision envisages that a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning will be linked to the QDG. The QDG has not yet been referenced to the EQF.

Policy objectives

A main objective for the framework is to strengthen national and international understanding and comparability of qualifications. While subject to federal laws on education applying in Belgium, 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 the neighbouring countries. The framework also promotes equivalence between general and vocational education and training ([3]), and the strengthening of the learning outcomes principle is an important step in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

The QDG is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework that includes qualifications from primary and secondary general education, VET and higher education. The framework builds on the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* (action competence) with qualifications 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.

Level descriptors of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, main categories

HANDLUNGSKOMPETENZ (ACTION COMPETENCE)

Subject/occupation-oriented competence (*Fachliche Kompetenz*)		Personal competence (*Personale Komptenz*)	
Knowledge	Skills	Social competence	Autonomy

Source: Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (2013).

In addition to the legally stipulated descriptors, the so-called Dublin descriptors also apply to qualifications in the higher education sector in the German-speaking Community.

The framework is seen as an instrument for promoting a learning-outcomes- or competence-based approach across the different parts of education and training in the region. It distinguishes between general and vocational qualifications. General upper secondary education (*Abitur*) is placed at level 4, with the three cycles of bachelor, master and doctor placed at levels 6 to 8. In vocational education and training, completed apprenticeship (dual system) is at level 4. A master craftsman with two years of training is placed at level 5, one with three years of training at level 6.

Quality assurance arrangements in the German-speaking Community are organised as follows: the higher education institution Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien coordinates the internal and external evaluation of schools ([4]); the School Inspectorate (*Schulinspektion*) is in charge of

the quality assurance and development of the teaching system of primary, secondary as well as school-based continuing education ([5]); and an external evaluation agency for VET schools and VET competence centres is in place (Cedefop and Bruxelles Formation, 2019).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The QDG is legally embedded, following a 2013 decree ([6]). The Department of VET and Organisation of Education in the Ministry of the Community was appointed as the EQF NCP and a leading institution; it has the task of referencing QDG to the EQF, using transparent methodologies and providing all stakeholders, institutions and companies with relevant information ([7]). The framework has been developed over a relatively short time, involving all main education and training stakeholders in the German-speaking Community. This includes the social partners who normally play a key role in an education and training system inspired by that of Germany, such as Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand und in kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen (IAWM) (Institute for Education and Training in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) ([8]). Scientific cooperation has been established with the Flemish Community and the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB).

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

[9]

Current efforts are aimed at developing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning linked to the QDG. Once this happens, a central validation body will be set up (Cedefop and Bruxelles Formation, 2019).

The strategy for introducing a validation system was outlined in 2015 and referred to European developments in this area, as validation was considered an integrated part of an overall, lifelong learning strategy for the region. Individuals with no (or low) qualifications were seen as a key target group. A steering group involving stakeholders from formal and non-formal education, as well as employment and the social partners, was set up following a 2016 public launch event on the recognition of competences 2016. During 2017, the steering group developed a validation concept with the aim of putting concrete arrangements in place by 2018. On that basis, application arrangements were jointly financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) (Cedefop, 2020b). In July 2018, the pilot project *Creating future directions* was initiated to support validation of non-formal and informal learning; it was aimed primarily at low-skilled jobseekers and workers, as well as migrants whose foreign diplomas could not be recognised. Access to education and employment was very difficult for these target groups. The project was divided into three parts: guidance and counselling to find an appropriate continuous training offer (support level); the ProfilPASS workshops focusing on the elaboration of personal competence profiles (level of formative validation); and the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired professional competences with reference to training occupations and programmes offered by the training providers in the German-speaking Community (level of summative validation).

A new ESF application was submitted and approved for 2021. In 2021, the focus lies on standardising the validation process and developing a corresponding circular letter. A concept of competence balancing for companies in the non-commercial sector will be worked on and the extent to which a competence balancing federation (*Kompetenzbilanzierungsbund*) can be created in the German-speaking Community will also be explored.

NQF implementation and impact

The QDG was adopted by decree on 18 November 2013 (Ministry of the German-speaking Community, 2013), paving the way for implementation. The 2013 decree outlines criteria ([10]) and procedures for the inclusion of qualifications into the framework; a technical commission in charge of levelling and inclusion has been put in place. Only qualifications with clear description of learning outcomes and those obtained in institutions accredited by government are included. Among important criteria for inclusion is the relevance of a qualification on the labour market and for further learning. A total of 21 qualification types have been assigned to QDG levels so far according to the decree ([11]). The framework is at activation stage.

Although the QDG is not referred to in the 2025 education and training vision for the region ([12]), the emphasis given to validation and competences over recent years indicates that the learning outcomes orientation underpinning the framework is being taken forward in a systematic manner. This is also apparent in relation to other projects outlined in the 2025 strategy, such as strengthening support to individual pupils and application of competence-oriented diagnostics. Alignment of a qualification within the framework levels does not replace the existing system of access and does not provide automatic entitlement to access the next level ([13]). No register of qualifications has been set up yet, and QDG levels are not yet indicated on certificates and diplomas ([14]). The templates for all certificates and qualifications that can be obtained in general education, higher education, and VET are part of the Government decree of 28 May 2009 ([15]).

Given the small size of the German-speaking Community, actors in the education sector and the labour market are aware of the different diplomas and certificates that are awarded within the Community. However, including levels on certificates and diplomas would facilitate transparency and comparability of qualifications in the broader Belgian landscape and international context.

Referencing to the EQF

The QDG has not been referenced to the EQF.

Important lessons and future plans

The German-speaking Community of Belgium has adopted its qualifications framework; it is being implemented but has not yet been referenced to the EQF.

The key task that remains is the full implementation of the framework; referencing it to the EQF and setting up arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning (the preparation of which was initiated in 2014). The Ministry still needs to ensure the transparency of the methodology used to link the QDG with the EQF and ensure access to information and guidelines for the different institutions, educational actors, enterprises and citizens.

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
- Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (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

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	**Doctoral or postdoctoral degree/habilitation (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer Promotion oder Habilitation auf Doktoren- bzw. Professorebene) Category** General education qualifications	No EQF level
7	**Master degree (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines Hochschulstudiums langer Dauer auf Masterebene) Category** General education qualifications **Master degree on successful completion of dual track higher education (long duration) (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines dualen Hochschulstudiums langer Dauer auf Masterebene) Category** VET Qualifications	No EQF level

6	**Bachelor degree (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines Hochschulstudiums kurzer Dauer auf Bachelorebene)** **Category** General education qualifications	No EQF level
	Master craftsperson certificate on successful completion of a three-year master craftsperson programme (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer dreijährigen Meisterausbildung mit dem Meisterbrief) **Category** VET Qualifications	
	Professional bachelor degree on successful completion of dual track higher education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines dualen Hochschulstudiums kurzer Dauer auf Bachelorebene) **Category** VET Qualifications	
5	**Master craftsperson certificate on successful completion of a two-year master craftsperson programme (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer zweijährigen Meisterausbildung mit dem Meisterbrief)** **Category** VET Qualifications	No EQF level
	Successful completion of supplementary secondary vocational education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer Ausbildung im ergänzenden beruflichen Sekundarunterricht) **Category** VET Qualifications	

4	**Successful completion of upper secondary general education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Oberstufe des allgemeinbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)** **Category** General education qualifications	No EQF level
	Successful completion of upper secondary technical and arts programmes (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Oberstufe des technischen oder künstlerischen Sekundarunterrichts) **Category** VET Qualifications	
	Attestation of competence upon successful completion of year 6 in vocational education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des sechsten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts mit Befähigungsnachweis) **Category** VET Qualifications	
	Successful completion of year 7 (complementary year) in vocational education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des siebten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts) **Category** VET Qualifications	
	Journeyman certificate on successful completion of an apprenticeship (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer mittelständischen Lehre mit dem Gesellenzeugnis) **Category** VET Qualifications	

3	**Successful completion of lower secondary general education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Unterstufe des allgemeinbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)** **Category** General education qualifications	No EQF level
	Successful completion of lower secondary technical, vocational or arts programmes (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Unterstufe des technischen, künstlerischen oder berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts) **Category** VET Qualifications	
	Certified partial qualification acquired in year 2 of an apprenticeship (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer zertifizierten Teilqualifikation im zweiten Jahr der mittelständischen Lehre) **Category** VET Qualifications	
2	**Successful completion of 'common' year 2 in secondary education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des zweiten gemeinsamen Jahres des Sekundarunterrichts)** **Category** General education qualifications	No EQF level
	Successful completion of year 3 in vocationally oriented education (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des dritten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterricht) **Category** VET Qualifications	
	Attestation of competence certifying lower secondary special needs education (Befähigungsnachweis der Unterstufe des Fördersekundarunterrichts) **Category** VET Qualifications	

| 1 | **Successful completion of primary education, four years (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Grundschule)**
Category
General education qualifications | No EQF level |
| | **Certificate upon successful completion of year 2 in vocationally oriented education (Das Studienzeugnis des zweiten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)**
Category
VET Qualifications | |

Acronyms

EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
IAWM	Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand und in kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen [The Institute for Education and Training in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises]
NQF	national qualifications framework
QDG	*Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft* [qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community of Belgium]
VET	vocational education and training

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[URLs accessed 16.2.2021]

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Cedefop(2020a). *National qualifications framework developments in Europe 2019*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4190

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http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/addons/SharepointDokumentsuche/desktop/SharepointDokDetails.aspx?Extern=1&DokID=61fa6a12-5036-4800-a2de-10eba96ea49b

Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (2015).

Ostbelgien Leben 2025. Regionales Entwicklungskonzept der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Regional Development Concept for the German-speaking Community].
https://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/REK4-72dpi-KORR_23sept.pdf

The summary in English can be found here.

Notes

[2] Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2013). Dekret zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Decree of 18 November 2013 establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community]. Belgisch Staatsblad, p. 12532, 13.2.2014. http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/pdf/Mbbs/2014/02/13/126688.pdf

[3] For example, the completion of the general upper secondary level and upper secondary technical and arts education are both level 4.

[4] The main objectives of the evaluation are related to personal responsibility, participation, cooperation within and outside the school as well as sustainable school and teaching development. See chapter VII of the Decree of 31 August 1998. http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/addons/SharepointDokumentsuche/desktop/SharepointDokDetails.aspx?Extern=1&DokID=7528bdbc-2bd1-4ad9-aa52-478a0cdd712f

[5] See Decree of 25 June 2012. http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/addons/SharepointDokumentsuche/desktop/SharepointDokDetails.aspx?Extern=1&DokID=cb133b9c-6a53-4aeb-9cd3-8163383ef3f6

[6] Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2013). Dekret zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Decree of 18 November 2013 establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community]. Belgisch Staatsblad, p. 12532, 13.2.2014. http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/pdf/Mbbs/2014/02/13/126688.pdf

[7] See Eurydice description of the German-speaking Community's qualifications framework: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/belgien-deutschsprachige-gemeinschaft/national-qualifications-framework_en

[8] http://www.iawm.be/de/ueberuns/aufgaben.html

[9] This section builds on the information provided in the government strategy document: Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (2015). Ostbelgien Leben 2025 Regionales Entwicklungskonzept der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft. [Future strategies for the German-speaking Community of Eastern Belgium â 2025]. The information provided here builds on the section covering the Bildungsregion DG (the German-speaking education and training region). https://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/REK4-72dpi-KORR_23sept.pdf

[10] These criteria are mentioned in Article 6 of the decree of 18 November 2013.
[11] See Articles 9 and 10 of the decree of 18 November 2013.
[12] See Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (2015).
[13] See Eurydice's description of the German-speaking Community's qualifications framework.
[14] Further legal provisions would be needed to indicate QDG levels on certificates and diplomas (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).
[15] Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (2009). Erlass der Regierung vom 28. Mai 2009 Ã¼ber die Bescheinigungen, Nachweise, Brevets, Zeugnisse, Diplome und Zusatzdiplome zur BestÃ¤tigung der in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft organisierten Studien [Government Decree of 28 May 2009 on certificates, diplomas and additional diplomas certifying studies organised in the German-speaking Community]. Belgisch Staatsblad, p. 62798, 17.9.2009. http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/pdf/Mbbs/2009/09/17/114314.pdf

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