

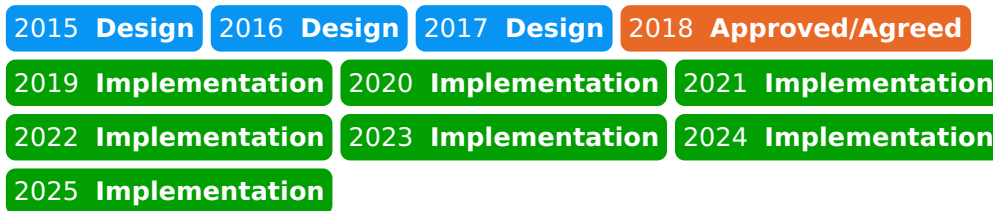
The Italian national qualifications framework (QNF)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 ITALY

Timeline



ID number 28676

Background

A National repertory of education, training and professional qualifications has been in development since 2013.

Objectives

Implementation of National qualifications framework and National strategy for the certification of competences.

Description

A national strategy on lifelong learning has been defined, together with the implementation of legislative norms on the identification and validation of competences acquired in different contexts, through which the National system for the certification of competences has been launched. Since 2012, as a consequence of the Recommendation for validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012), a national legal framework on validation of competences has been progressively developed in Italy.

The establishment of the NQF is part of the implementation process stated by the Legislative Decree 13/2013 on the General norms and standards for the definition and validation of informal and non-formal learning and for the definition of a minimum standard framework of services for the certification of competences. As a first step, an initial EQF referencing process was carried out between 2009 and 2012 linking national formal qualifications, as well as those awarded by regions in the framework of the State-regions agreement, directly to the eight EQF levels. The first Italian referencing report was adopted in December 2012 and presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013 (Italian technical working group, 2012). The qualifications involved in the process were for general education, higher education (academic and non-academic), and VET qualifications in the framework of State-regions agreements. At this point, an important area of Italian qualifications was missing regional qualifications. In 2015, to enable implementation of the

national repository (as foreseen in Decree 13/2013 art.8), stakeholder agreement was reached on an operational common framework for national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills – the National framework of regional qualifications (QNQR) – followed by an inter-ministerial decree.

The rationalisation of the regional qualifications was necessary for entering the national repertory and for making regional qualifications recognisable at the national level. This highly relevant national result represented the precondition to the establishment of the NQF. Qualifications referenced to the NQF and referred to in Article 8 of the legislative decree No 13 of 16 January 2013 are included in the Atlas of work and qualifications in the specific section National repertory of qualifications of education and training and professional qualifications.

According to the technical proposal developed by the EQF national coordination point (NCP), in line with the Recommendation on the European qualification framework (EQF) (2017), the NQF was established by inter-ministerial Decree on 8 January 2018. One of the main challenges in establishing and implementing a comprehensive NQF in Italy has been the high number of stakeholders involved in the process, related to the complexity of the national education and training system, with diverse qualification repositories at national and regional level managed autonomously by the awarding bodies. The education ministry is responsible for qualifications awarded in general and higher education, while the regions and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano are responsible for VET qualifications. The education and labour ministries have been leading developments in EQF-related processes, in agreement with the regions, autonomous provinces and social partners, as laid down in several agreements. All these institutions worked together for the implementation of the NQF in a committee established by the labour ministry. This technical committee includes all national and regional awarding bodies.

At this stage, the NQF is in implementation phase: all the qualifications issued in Italy will have to be included in the framework.

The implementation of the Italian NQF, allowing the referencing of all qualifications to the EQF, is a wide-ranging public tool, referred potentially to all types of stakeholders as its implementation might be seen as an advantage to those who would like to see skills and qualifications transparent for mobility purposes (geographic or sectoral), but also to those who would like to take part to upskilling and reskilling activities. In addition to that, the implementation of NQF serves as a framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, representing a chance for disadvantaged target groups, for ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training and the labour market.

2015 Design

Decree of 30 June 2015 on the implementation of the National framework of regional qualifications (QNQR) was adopted.

2016 Design

2017 Design

2018 Approved/Agreed

On 8 January 2018, with a Decree of the labour and education ministries, the establishment of National qualifications framework (QNQ) was formally adopted.

2019 Implementation

In 2019, for the application of the Decree of 8 January 2018 and the implementation of the national NQF, a technical process to update the first referencing report, began. In 2019, the EQF National Coordination Point (NCP), the National Agency for Active Employment Policies (ANPAL) presented a draft summary of the updated report to the technical committee of the labour ministry. This report was planned to contain the classifying criteria for all qualifications not yet referenced to EQF. At the same time, another labour ministry committee approved the guidelines for the interoperability of

awarding bodies of the National system of the certification of competences (general norms and standards for the definition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and for the definition of a minimum standard framework of services for the certification of competences) which allowed the full operability of the national system for the certification of competences, in alignment with the provisions and requirements set by the Legislative Decree 13/2013. This approval- although necessary for the system to operate- wasn't formal (in terms of legislative intervention). These guidelines which function as a technical instrument, aim to support the efficient implementation of validation services for the portability of qualifications and skills. The validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning supports individuals to return to formal education and training and to acquire a qualification or part of it for reintegration in the labour market. As per the European Recommendation, the connection to the NQF is a fundamental element for the further implementation of validation processes.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, based on the workplan of the European grant, the EQF NCP worked on the technical proposal on the update of the referencing report, which was then presented by the labour ministry at the National Technical Committee. The presentation had as a goal to share the updated contents of the report with the public competent authorities responsible for learning actions at national level, in accordance with the legislative context of the National system for the certification of competences and with the establishment of the NQF. The presentation of the technical proposal started a complex and long-lasting debate with all the subjects directly involved in the referencing procedure. From November to December 2020, four meetings were held with labour and education ministries and regional authorities involved in the process, discussing the proposal for finding a common vision.

The EQF NCP tried to 'link' the Italian qualifications and learning opportunities to the European Qualifications dataset register in the Europass website. Special emphasis was given to the analysis of the technical requirements. A pilot project was carried out for referencing learning opportunities.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, the update of the referencing report continued.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the second Italian referencing report was presented to the Advisory Group and the social partners.

On 3 August 2022 the State-Regions Conference- established in 1997 is part of the Italian multi-governance system- agreed on a draft Decree on the updated referencing report to EQF. Following the agreement, the labour and education ministries started drafting an Interministerial Decree to finalise the formal procedure for the adoption of this second, updated referencing report.

2023 Implementation

On 15 June 2023 the joint decree of the labour and education ministries, adopted the Referencing Report of the Italian qualifications to the EQF, implementing the EQF Recommendation of 2017, aimed at improving the transparency, the comparability and the portability of qualifications of EU citizens. The updating procedure of the national report, updated in 2022 and adopted in 2023, was an essential step in the wider context of the EU cooperation in the education and training system policies within the strategic framework of EU Education and Training 2020-26 and of the future EU strategic frameworks, which is focused particularly at achieving the following objectives:

a. contribute to the modernisation of the education and training systems;

- b. increase the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners;
- c. ensure a better link between formal learning and non-formal and informal learning, with the aim of supporting the validation of the skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning (especially in the workplace).

On 11 October 2023 the Italian Referencing Report was presented to a wide public of stakeholder during a national seminar devoted to illustrating the innovations of the system within the European Year of Skills. The event was the occasion for presenting the essential steps of the updated Report, but it also gave the opportunity of contextualising the innovations introduced within the Italian NQF adopted in 2018 and through the national guidelines for the interoperability of National Competent Authorities of 2021, implementing the National Certification system, as stated in the legislative decree nr. 13/2013.

2024 Implementation

Until 2024 the EQF NCP was located at the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL). In 2024 ANPAL ceased operations and the EQF NCP was transferred at the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP). Currently, according to the updated Italian Referencing Report and consequent to new context of key policy actors, the NCP is redesigning the governance for the implementation of the 'Italian Referencing procedure of all qualifications to NQF/EQF issued at national and regional level'. The development of a NQF platform prototype, initially funded under the Grant agreement 2021-2023 (project JiTT), is ongoing under a new project (ToNQFit) funded by the Erasmus policy network grant agreement 2024-26. This platform is currently in the implementation phase, providing technical support for the referencing procedure and setting up the NQF Register of referenced qualifications. Once the redesign phase of the procedure is completed, testing pilots will be launched in cooperation with national competent authorities issuing qualifications at both national and regional levels. These aim to facilitate the creation of the register, enabling the interoperability of the Italian NQF with the Europass portal.

2025 Implementation

During the period 2024-2025, the EQF NCP worked on the technical and methodological side outlining the main features of the NQF referencing procedure, in compliance with the criteria stated by the Italian Referencing Report. The implementation of the referencing guide is a core activity of the NQF implementation, as defined by the updated Referencing Report adopted by decree on 15 June 2023. In 2025, the EQF NCP, in cooperation with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, developed the first draft of the referencing guide for the referencing of regional VET qualifications, with the aim of ensuring a user-friendly procedure for referencing all qualifications to the NQF/EQF and for storing the referenced qualifications in the Italian NQF register. During this period, the EQF NCP also worked on optimising the referencing procedure for all qualifications following the termination of the ANPAL governance.

In May-June 2025, following the redefinition of governance arrangements, the EQF NCP launched a pilot test of the NQF referencing procedure involving the Regions, with an initial focus on the tourism sector. The Certification of Competences Group, coordinated by the EQF NCP, prepared a technical and methodological document to support the description of qualifications and their allocation to NQF/EQF levels. This activity marked a key step in the development of the NQF Register and was supported by targeted workshops for pilot implementation. In parallel, the EQF NCP disseminated information on European transparency developments, including the presentation of the new CEDEFOP guidelines for the publication of qualifications in databases and registers.

During the same period, additional workshops were organised to present materials and tools illustrating innovations related to the implementation of the EU Qualifications

Data Register (QDR) and to address key issues related to its rollout. Three sessions were held in Rome on 18 March 2025, 14 April 2025, and 6 May 2025.

In June 2025, a first version of the Italian One-off Report on VNFIL, compliant with the updated Referencing Report, was produced as part of the monitoring of VNFIL procedures following the Decree of 5 January 2021. The empirical section of the report will be completed once the first monitoring cycle of IVC practices (identification, validation and certification of competences) carried out by INAPP is concluded

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policies
- Regions and autonomous provinces
- Ministry of Education and Merit
- Ministry of Education (until 2022)
- Ministry of Universities and Research
- Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (until 2019)
- National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners
Unemployed and jobseekers

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Using EU transparency tools (EQF, Europass, ESCO, ECTS, ECVET principles)

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Cedefop publication - ReferNet news - Italy: National qualifications framework finalised](#)

[Cedefop publication ReferNet news Italy: The national qualification repertory](#)

[Legislative Decree No 13/2013 on the Definition of general rules and basic level of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and minimum service standards of the national system of competences certification](#)

[Decree of 8 January 2018 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and of the Ministry of Education, University and Research on the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework, Official Gazette No 20 of 25 January 2018](#)

[Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 5 January 2021 - Provisions for the adoption of the Guidelines for the interoperability of entitling bodies of the National system of certification of competences](#)

[State-Regions Conference agreement on the draft Decree on the adoption of the updated Italian Qualifications Framework referencing report](#)

[Decreto del Ministro del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, di concerto con il Ministro dell'Istruzione e del Merito e con il Ministro dell'Universita e della ricerca del 15 giugno 2023.](#)

Related policy developments

2021 Discontinued

ECVET-related developments

The Italian context has been characterised in recent years by reform processes aimed at building an Italian lifelong learning system and a national system of skills certification.

 ITALY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Validation arrangements

The Law 92/2012 on the reform of the labour market defines for the first time in Italy the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as one of the key elements to ensure and implement lifelong learning in a comprehensive and systematic manner, establishing rules and regulatory requirements

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

National framework of regional qualifications (QNQR)

In June 2015, an inter-ministerial Decree (signed by the education and labour ministries) introduced an operational framework for the recognition of regional qualifications and related skills competences at a national level (National framework of regional qualifications, QNQR).

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

The Atlas of work and qualifications

In 2013, the Legislative Decree No 13 article 8 sets up the National repertory of education and training and professional qualifications.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). The Italian national qualifications framework (QNQ): Italy. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

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