


# National qualifications framework

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 BELGIUM-FL

## Timeline



ID number 28009

## Background

With the Act on the qualification structure, the Flemish parliament and government adopted in 2009 a comprehensive qualifications framework based on learning outcomes and covering all types and levels of qualifications from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system. In 2011, the Flemish qualifications framework (FQF) was referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and has been populated with qualifications since then and was implemented in 2012. The referencing report was updated in 2014. Amongst other things, information was added on the first recognised professional qualifications.

## Objectives

The National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) facilitate the understanding and comparison of qualifications. The NQF classifies qualifications by level, based on learning outcomes, which the holder of a specific diploma or certificate is expected to know, to understand and to be able to do. This approach facilitates the moving between education and training institutions and sectors.

The FQF includes the:

- (a) professional qualifications (*beroepskwalificaties*), which are the basis for formal vocational education, professional training and validation processes and thus ensure a validated and unambiguous framework for competences needed for exercising a certain profession;
- (b) educational qualifications (*onderwijskwalificaties*), which can only be acquired through formal education, by institutions recognised by the Flemish Government. In IVET and CVET educational qualifications of levels 1-5, the competences of one or more professional qualifications are embedded.

## Description

In 2016 arrangements were made to facilitate the update of the content of the professional qualifications and to provide partial qualifications. Professional qualifications have been levelled individually (as opposed to being placed as a block) in a process involving the main social partners. Since 2017 it is possible to update the content of the professional qualifications. The procedures take into account the nature of the changes: technical or substantive changes, changes with or without impact on the classification level. In this way, it is possible to respond quickly to changing competence needs on the labour market. It also became possible to cancel a professional qualification that is no longer needed in the labour market. In recent years, 348 professional qualifications have been updated and 10 professional qualifications were cancelled.

The professional and educational field indicated the need to be able to delineate partial qualifications within professional qualifications. This has been possible since 2017. Partial qualifications describe the competences of a (part of a) profession, with which one can work within a narrower segment of the labour market.

Professional qualifications regulation is carried out in partnership between the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and the Flemish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy. Providers from education and the labour market can deliver professional qualifications, if following the right procedures (set out by the common quality framework), which were established in partnership with the Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances (AHOVOKS). All the professional qualifications are found in the Flemish qualification database, which is also managed by AHOVOKS.

In 2018, an additional decision recognised professional qualifications for social roles. These are professional qualifications that lead to roles in leisure or voluntary work. The structure and method of the Flemish classification method were retained, but the composition of the validation and classification/levelling committee was adjusted.

FQF/EQF levels have to be mentioned on certificates and diplomas, for the IVET apprenticeship system, dual learning, in adult education, in higher education and professional qualifications awarded outside formal (regulated) education and training.

#### **2016 Approved/Agreed**

#### **2017 Implementation**

#### **2018 Implementation**

#### **2019 Implementation**

In 2019, the content of the professional qualifications was updated.

#### **2020 Implementation**

By December 2020, the Flemish qualifications database covered a total of 520 professional qualifications and 500 educational qualifications. There are 778 education, training and validation pathways based on a professional qualification. This concerns both regular and special secondary education courses, including dual courses, graduate courses, courses within adult education as well as validation pathways and some training courses outside the regular education system. Up to the end of 2020, 66 partial qualifications have been defined and recognised.

#### **2021 Implementation**

In 2021, a total of 547 professional qualifications and 500 educational qualifications existed in the Flemish qualifications database. There are 826 education, training and validation pathways based on a professional qualification. This concerns both regular and special secondary education courses, including dual courses, graduate courses, courses within adult education as well as validation pathways and some training courses outside the regular education system. In the database, 69 partial qualifications have been defined and recognised.

## 2022 Implementation

In 2022, a total of 561 professional qualifications and 500 educational qualifications existed in the Flemish qualifications database. There are 973 education, training and validation pathways based on a professional qualification. This concerns both regular and special secondary education courses, including dual courses, graduate courses, courses within adult education as well as validation pathways and some training courses outside the regular education system. In the database, 75 partial qualifications have been defined and recognised.

On-site quality assurance, coordinated by the Flemish Social Inspectorate, became fully operational.

## 2023 Completed

In 2023, a total of 563 professional qualifications and 989 educational qualifications existed in the Flemish qualifications database. There are 976 education, training and validation pathways based on a professional qualification. This concerns both regular and special secondary education courses, including dual courses, graduate courses, courses within adult education as well as validation pathways and some training courses outside the regular education system. In the database, 75 partial qualifications have been defined and recognised.

In 2023, the regulations regarding professional qualifications pathways were rewritten so that organisations outside of official education can also offer these pathways. The type of pathways offered by them can be both partial qualifications as well as full professional qualifications.

The NQF is applied on a regular basis, while the number of professional and educational qualifications continues to be regularly updated.

## Bodies responsible

- Flemish Department of Education and Training
- Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy (until 2025)

## Target group

### Education professionals

Guidance practitioners

### Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

### Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Optimising VET funding

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

### **Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications**

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

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

## **Subsystem**

IVET CVET

## **Further reading**

[Parliamentary Act on the qualification structure](#)

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[Decision of the Flemish Government on the implementation of the Act on the qualification structure of 30 April 2009 on the qualification structure for the recognition of professional qualifications](#)

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[Decision of the Flemish Government concerning the implementation of the Act of 30 April 2009 on the qualification structure, with regard to the recognition of professional qualifications for social roles](#)

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[EQF Reference Report](#)

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[National qualifications frameworks \(NQF\): Belgium-FL](#)

## **Related policy developments**

**2025 Implementation**

### **Validation framework**

There is increased cooperation between different validation providers (inside as well as outside education) and the willingness to create a single framework linking validation processes to the Flemish qualifications framework (FQF).

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#### **Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

#### **Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Completed**

### **Quality assurance for non-formal VET**

On the 26 April 2019, the Flemish Government approved a new Decree on common principles about the quality assurance of training (and validation) pathways outside the formal education system, leading to professional qualification, formally linked to the

## Flemish qualifications framework (*Vlaams*)

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### **Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

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IVET CVET

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#### **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). National qualifications framework: Belgium-FL. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28009>