

# Implementation of the national qualifications framework

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT****REGULATION/LEGISLATION** AUSTRIA

## Timeline

2016 <b>Approved/Agreed</b>	2017 <b>Implementation</b>	2018 <b>Implementation</b>
2019 <b>Implementation</b>	2020 <b>Implementation</b>	2021 <b>Implementation</b>
2022 <b>Implementation</b>	2023 <b>Implementation</b>	2024 <b>Implementation</b>

**ID number 27987**

## Background

In April 2008, the European Parliament and the Council issued a recommendation on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This was intended to create a Europe-wide reference framework to improve the transparency of qualifications. The recommendation called on Member States to establish national qualifications frameworks (NQF) and reference them to the EQF. Based on learning outcomes and applying the EU principles of quality assurance, qualifications should be mapped to the national qualifications framework. Subsequently, all qualifications should include a reference to the NQF/EQF level. The recommendation also urged Member States to establish national coordination bodies for the NQF, which was done in 2009.

In Austria, the Council of Ministers gave the green light for the establishment of an eight-level comprehensive NQF in December 2009.

## Objectives

The following objectives have been pursued with the development and implementation of an NQF:

- (a) implementing the recommendation of the EU Parliament and Council;
- (b) improving the transparency and understanding of qualifications acquired in Austria;
- (c) facilitating transnational mobility;
- (d) promoting more permeability between educational programmes/contexts/levels at national level;
- (e) increasing the visibility and appreciation of non-formal qualifications;
- (f) strengthening the parity of esteem between qualifications from different contexts.

## Description

The NQF development and implementation process is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF). It is supported by the NQF Steering Group,

which includes representatives from all ministries, the higher education area, the social partners, continuing education and training as well as the provinces. Quality assurance steps to improve procedures and processes have been taken continuously. These are coordinated by the National Coordination Point (NCP), and all results and conclusions have been coordinated with the NQF steering group. The main quality assurance measures include the improvement of the assignment request and the assignment criteria, the streamlining of the assignment process and the optimisation of communications.

#### Adoption of the NQF Act

In March 2016, the NQF was formally introduced in Austria with the entry into force of the NQF Act. In line with the Act, the NQF Advisory Board was established, which is based at the NCP and is responsible for the technical assessment of submitted assignment requests. The NQF handbook was also published, including the form for the assignment of qualifications and templates for the assignment requests were created.

#### Assignment of formal and non-formal qualifications

In 2017, the implementation of the NQF started with the assignment of formal, i.e. legally regulated, qualifications. In this phase, central qualifications from the school sector were assigned: this included upper-secondary VET qualifications; the dual VET programme qualifications and three- to four-year school-based VET programme qualifications were mapped to level 4, while five-year school-based VET-programme qualifications were mapped to level 5.

In between 2017-19, the prerequisites for the assignment of non-formal qualifications were set up. This included the establishment of NQF service points which, as intermediaries between the qualification providers and the NQF bodies, were to take over the quality assurance of assignment requests. In 2019, six NQF service units were appointed to be responsible for the quality assurance of the assignment of non-formal (i.e. non-governmentally regulated) qualifications.

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

#### **2017 Implementation**

#### **2018 Implementation**

#### **2019 Implementation**

In January 2019, the first assignment requests for non-formal qualifications were submitted. Lessons learned were used to improve the processes and procedures.

In June 2019 the appointment of the NQF service units took place. After a period of preparation, in which each of the six institutions had to set up a website, the units started their operative work in mid-November 2019.

#### **2020 Implementation**

The first submissions of non-formal qualifications to the six service units were made in January 2020 and, in June 2020, the first allocations became effective. No further formal qualifications were assigned to the NQF register in 2020. By the end of 2020 eight non-formal qualifications were mapped to the NQF.

#### **2021 Implementation**

Assignments of qualifications - formal and non-formal - continued in 2021.

18 non-formal qualifications from different sectors and contexts (including tourism, youth work, adult education, basic vocational qualification) were classified to the NQF during 2021.

Among the formal qualifications assigned in 2021 are those in healthcare: nursing assistance (level 1) was assigned to NQF 4, and nursing assistance (level 2) to NQF 5.

The general nurse programme (bachelor degree) was assigned to NQF 6.

## 2022 Implementation

In 2022, the work of the NQF service units was monitored. There were several feedback meetings between the service points, the NCP and the education ministry. The service units were also able to provide written feedback. The NCP drew conclusions from the results, which are to be discussed with the service points and the NQF steering group in the first half of 2023.

## 2023 Implementation

In 2023, efforts have been made to further improve the efficiency of the assignment process. To this end, the process has been evaluated and possible courses of action have been discussed with the steering group. Another objective was to increase public awareness of the NQF. For that purpose, workshops and presentations were organised. In order to lower the threshold and reach a broad audience, these are open to all, free of charge and last about one hour.

At the end of 2023, a new strategy paper for the Austrian NQF was concluded. The objective is to develop a comprehensive and coherent strategy for the future development and utilisation of the NQF. The strategy paper identifies six thematic areas that are to be addressed over the subsequent two-to-three-year period.

87 formal and non-formal qualifications were assigned to the NQF, including qualifications from the field of continuing education and training. Austria is one of a small number of countries in Europe to have done so.

## 2024 Implementation

Efforts to improve process efficiency and public awareness continued in 2024.

In February, the new strategy paper was presented to the NQF service units. An action plan, which will include responsibilities, milestones and timetables, is to be developed under the lead of the Ministry of Education.

Also, more formal and non-formal qualifications were assigned, for example the Qualified Shiatsu Practitioner to NQF level 6 and the Master Builder to NQF level 7.

# Bodies responsible

- NQF steering group
- National coordination point (NKS)
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)

# Target group

## Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

# Thematic categories

## Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

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

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

# Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[The Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework, published in the Federal Law Gazette 14 of 2016, Part I and issued on 21.3.2016](#)

[NQF qualification register](#)

[National news on VET: NQF allocation of non-formal qualifications - allocation process](#)

[NQF manual \(edition April 2019\) \(in German only\)](#)

[NQF service unit at ibw \(in German only\)](#)

[NQR service unit at öibf \(in German only\)](#)

## Related policy developments

**2024 Approved/Agreed**

### Establishing a higher VET field

To realise parity of esteem and increase the visibility and public perception of higher VET qualifications, a discussion on the establishment of a defined educational field for higher VET qualifications was started in 2019 within educational policy.



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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action plan

#### Subsystem

CVET

**2024 Implementation**

### Apprenticeships for adults leading to NQF level 5

Under the title Apprenticeship NEW for adults, the Federal Economic Chamber has taken the initiative within its education campaign (*Bildungsoffensive*) to develop a programme for people with a higher education entrance qualification that leads to a dual VET qualification at NQF/EQF level



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#### Type of development

Practical measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

## 2024 Implementation

### Engineering Act (IngG 2017)

A new Engineering Act (IngG 2017) came into force on 1 May 2017.



#### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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## 2024 Implementation

### National strategy on validation of non-formal and informal learning

Following a national consultation process, the national strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning was finalised and adopted in November 2017.



#### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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## 2024 Implementation

### Transparency of master craftsperson qualifications

The policy development refers to a comprehensive process for aligning master craftsperson qualifications to the requirements of the NQF.



#### Type of development

Practical measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

CVET

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