# CEDEFOP

# NQF state of play

**Luxembourg** 2024

# Table of contents

# Overview

**Stage of development:** [Activation stage]

**NQF linked to EQF:** ✓

**Scope of the framework:**
The NQF includes all levels and types of qualifications from formal education (VET, general education, higher education). Qualifications awarded through adult education and training and validation of non-formal and informal learning are the same as those obtained in initial education and training.

**Number of levels:**

Eight

**Legal basis/stage of development:**

Law on the recognition of professional qualifications (2016)
(in French)

Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications (2017)
(in French)

**NQF/EQF website:**
⌕ Website

**Qualifications register/database:**
⌕ Information on secondary education programmes
⌕ Register of higher education diplomas

# Introduction and context

## 1.1. Policy context

In 2022, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was at the EU average (4.7%). The rate of participation in early childhood education and care (children aged 3 and above) is 90.5%. In 2023, the percentage of learners leaving early education and training was well below EU average (6.8% compared to the EU average of 9.5%). Tertiary education attainment (for those aged 25-34) is among the highest in the EU (60.2% in 2023 compared to the EU average of 43.1%). In 2022, participation in adult learning within the last 12 months was significantly higher than the EU average (45.2% and 39.5% respectively) (European Commission, DG Education Youth Sport & Culture, 2024).

## 1.2. NQF legal basis

As a response to the EQF recommendation, the work on NQF started in 2009. It was based on an initial government go-ahead and continued in the following years. The CLQ is embedded in the Law of 28 October 2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications (article 69) ([1]).

# Policy objectives

The development and implementation of the CLQ is seen as an opportunity to make the existing education and training levels as well as the links between them explicit and transparent. The initial scope of the framework, acting as a non-binding and guiding framework for stakeholders, individuals, education and training providers and the labour market, has not changed (INFPC, 2019).

The learning-outcomes-based CLQ level descriptors intend to improve overall consistency of education and training provision. An important element is the geographic location of the country, which hosts many workers mainly from Belgium, Germany and France. The development of the CLQ is seen as a way to assist comparison and recognition. The high immigration rate and the large number of foreign workers make it necessary to pay attention to the coherence between the country's framework and those of the neighbouring countries (Cedefop, 2020a; 2020b).

# Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

### 3.1. NQF structure and level descriptors

CLQ has an eight-level reference structure. While the number of levels corresponds to the EQF, the descriptors reflect the national tradition and context. At each level, descriptors are differentiated according to knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes (*connaissances, aptitudes, attitudes*). While the level of detail is higher, the relationship to the EQF can be clearly identified. This is, for example, the case for the third column (attitude) which is based on the principles of responsibility, autonomy and context ([2]) as per EQF ([3]).

### 3.2. NQF scope and coverage

The CLQ includes all levels and types of qualifications from formal education (VET, general education, higher education). Qualifications awarded through adult education and training and validation of non-formal and informal learning are the same as those obtained in initial education and training (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014). Some qualifications in Luxembourg posed challenges in terms of levelling. The vocational aptitude diploma (*Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle*, DAP) that can be acquired through apprenticeships has been assigned to the CLQ/EQF level 3, and the master craftsperson qualification ([4]) to CLQ/EQF level 5 (European Commission & Cedefop, 2018). This is different in the frameworks of the German-speaking countries where these types of qualification were referenced to EQF levels 4 and 6 respectively (European Commission & Cedefop, 2018).

### 3.3. Use of learning outcomes

The use of learning outcomes (compétences) in education and training varies between sub-systems; it is most advanced in compulsory and vocational training. Competences for primary education are formulated in the *socle de compétences* (skills base) ([5]); whereas for secondary and VET education competences are elaborated in a skills standard (*référentiels de compétences*) ([6]).

A gradual development of a learning-outcomes or competence-based approach in VET has taken place, as the competence-based approach had

a prominent position in the Law on VET reform, 2008 ([7]) and the amended Law on VET reform, 2019 (Reform Law on Vocational Education and Training). In IVET, all qualifications and programmes have been described using learning outcomes and can be accessed via the register of the education ministry.

IVET curricula are developed by the education ministry in cooperation with professional chambers, based on an occupational ([8]) and a training profile ([9]). They are regularly updated to address labour market needs and enable learners to use the latest technologies. The training profile (INFPC, 2019):

a. defines the learning outcomes for each competence and regroups them by learning domain;
b. organises the learning domains and outcomes in modules;
c. determines the content of the different modules of the curriculum.

Higher education is organised in courses lasting one semester; each course is composed by assessable modules with allocated credit points (European credit transfer and accumulation system - ECTS). These courses are increasingly defined and described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are included in the new Law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg, which lays down that each programme requires specific objectives, based on the acquisition of certain knowledge, competences and transversal skills. Further, the obligation to define learning outcomes is also included in the 2010 Grand-Ducal decree of 23 February 2010 on the organisation of courses and the evaluation of students of the Advanced Technician Diploma (modified in 2018).

### 3.4. Quality assurance arrangements

Two governmental administrations are responsible for the internal quality assurance of the school system. The SCRIPT (*Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologiques*) is in charge of conducting large-scale studies on the school system and oversees data collection and analysis. IFEN (*Institut de Formation de l'Éducation Nationale*) supports schools with their quality development initiatives and the advancement of digital competences ([10]). External evaluation of the education system is outsourced to the University of Luxembourg. A National observatory of school quality was also created in January 2018 at the education ministry to report on the school system; it produces findings based on research and recommendations (Cedefop, 2020a).

The VET Law of 2008 that was amended in June 2019, also covers the main aspects of quality assurance. The amended law incorporates into the Labour code provisions relating to apprenticeship contracts and the internship agreements that are provided for in the 2008 law.

Quality assurance in higher education uses external evaluation, as there is no national quality assurance agency. Instead, the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth has outsourced the process to foreign agencies and experts. The University of Luxembourg ([11]) ([12]), and private higher education institutions and their programmes ([13]) ([14]) are evaluated by a foreign agency, registered with EQAR (European quality assurance register for higher education) every four and five years respectively. To be accredited by the ministry, programmes leading to the Advanced technician diploma (BTS) are evaluated by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation NVAO, which is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and is an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) ([15]). For both foreign private higher education institutions and their programmes, and for BTS programmes in secondary schools, only accredited programmes and institutions are officially recognised by the State ([16]).

# Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The development and implementation of the CLQ is being coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, which also acts as the EQF national contact point (NCP), in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The ministries, in conjunction with the relevant bodies are responsible for the quality assurance of formal qualifications. Links with the social partners and their active involvement are ensured by this centralised situation (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014).

Although the overall framework responsibilities have not been laid down, there are clear responsibilities for qualifications at different CLQ levels. The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth is responsible for qualifications at levels 1 to 4, while the Ministry of Higher Education and Research is responsible for those at levels 6 to 8. At level 5, responsibilities are split between the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth and the Chamber of Trades for the master craftsperson's diploma and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research for the Advanced technician diploma (BTS) (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014). Social partner involvement is a core principle in VET policy; with the reform of 2008, the role of professional chambers was formalised (Cedefop, 2020a). Chambers act as partners for official consultation and are directly associated with the legislative and executive procedure.

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

## 5.1. Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

Validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning is known as 'validation of prior experiential learning' (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*, VAE) and has been operational since 2010. VAE arrangements are in place for formal qualifications awarded through technical and vocational education, post-secondary non-tertiary education qualifications, such as master craftsperson certificates, and higher education qualifications (both short-cycle degrees and qualifications awarded by the University of Luxembourg). 'Classical secondary education' is not covered by VAE. Candidates should be able to evidence that the total length of their prior experiential learning amounts to at least 5 000 hours over a minimum of three years and is effectively related to the targeted qualification (Hampe-Nathaniel, 2024). Validation arrangements can lead to a partial or full award of a formal qualification in technical, vocational and post-secondary non-tertiary education (CLQ levels 2 to 5) (Hampe-Nathaniel, 2024).

In higher education (CLQ levels 6 to 8), validation can give access to programmes or exemptions from parts of qualifications or modules. Any type of prior experiential learning relevant to the targeted qualification, whether it is the result of formal, non-formal or informal learning activities in the education and training sector, the labour market or the third sector, can be used to apply for validation. Nevertheless, only previous relevant academic experience is considered for granting credit points as an exemption from parts of the programme. Regarding advanced technician diplomas, validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning enables to get exemptions from courses, but they have to attend parts of the programme of at least 30 ECTS credits (Cedefop, forthcoming).

The value of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal contexts is largely accepted in Luxembourg. This is due to the high value attributed to lifelong learning and to the consensual political culture, with social partners and stakeholders involved in the validation process.

## 5.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications

The Law of 28 October 2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications, introduced the CLQ as the formal reference point for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside Luxembourg. Following the adoption of the law, the ENIC-NARIC has been using the framework for this task. The procedure for obtaining formal recognition of a higher education diploma acquired in another country, leads to the registration of the qualification in the register of formal higher education qualifications. This registration provides information on the corresponding CLQ level of the qualification ([17]).

# NQF implementation and impact

## 6.1. Stage of implementation

The CLQ is in activation stage. A crucial milestone in CLQ implementation was the adoption of the modified Law of 28 October 2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

## 6.2. Procedures for including qualifications in the NQF

The procedure of including formal qualifications in the CLQ was implemented in parallel with developing the framework; it included three steps.

At the initial phase, a committee composed of representatives of the education ministry and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research reviewed the intended learning outcomes of all formal qualifications and classified them in the eight CLQ levels. The committee evaluated if the qualifications could be levelled in the CLQ following the best fit ([18]) principle and recommended that the referencing procedure should adopt this principle. In the second step a broad consultation took place, which involved social partners, sector representatives, academic and training circles, and the University of Luxembourg. In the third stage, three national experts carried out a second check, on the basis of the best-fit principle. For all qualification types in levels 1 to 8, the experts checked the alignment of selected representative individual qualifications with the CLQ level descriptors. This random sampling was dimmed sufficient, as the framework offers a generic rather than a discipline-based description of qualifications and does not set up any differentiation within a type of qualification. When needed, the experts consulted relevant stakeholders (e.g. the relevant professional chamber).

In higher education, new qualifications can be included provided they meet the requirements of the procedure for accrediting new training courses (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014). The Law of 21 July 2023 on the organisation of higher education set the accreditation procedure and an external quality assurance framework for higher education programmes, including BTS programmes. According to this law, each programme should be based on a structured curriculum, which clearly reflects the intended learning outcomes. The Law details the accreditation criteria, which are related to the relevance, impact, feasibility and sustainability of

the programmes as well as the aims and objectives, admission criteria, assessment and certification of learning outcomes, applied quality assurance measures and the implementation of the study programme (see annexes A & B of the law).

## 6.3. Indicating EQF/NQF levels

CLQ and EQF levels are not yet included on certificates and diplomas. However, CLQ and EQF levels are included on diploma supplements in VET (*supplement au diplôme*), and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research requests the inclusion of levels on diploma supplements in higher education; they are already included in some higher education diploma supplements. Qualifications awarded through validation arrangements and formally recognised foreign qualifications include the same information as regular diplomas ([19]). CLQ and EQF levels are also indicated on digital credentials uploaded to learners' wallets on Europass ([20]) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2024).

## 6.4. NQF dissemination

The CLQ is known to a certain number of actors in education and the labour market but disseminating the framework on a wider level and to larger target groups is the key challenge for the coming years. The CLQ webpage offers information on the framework.

## 6.5. Qualifications databases and registers

A comprehensive national database or register of qualifications has not yet been set up and there are no relevant developments in this regard. Currently there are two registers in place: register with information on secondary education programmes, including VET and the register of national higher education diplomas.

## 6.6. Awareness and use of the NQF

The framework has an important role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications and is established as the formal reference point for recognition of foreign professional qualifications. The learning-outcomes-based CLQ level descriptors function as a reference point for the development and renewal of qualifications and programmes.

## 6.7. Impact of the NQF

By placing vocational qualifications on a par with general qualifications, the CLQ has helped to promote VET in Luxembourg. More specifically, the

Advanced technician's diploma is placed on the same level as the upper secondary general education school leaving certificate. Similarly, the master craftsman diploma is classified not only as higher than upper secondary general education school leaving certificate but also at the same level with the advanced technician's diploma. These examples show that the CLQ has contributed to promoting parity of esteem between education and training sub-systems (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014).

# Referencing to the EQF

Luxembourg referenced its qualifications levels to the EQF and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2012; a referencing report was published in 2014.

# Important lessons and future plans

While a solid basis for the CLQ has been established, implementation slowed following the referencing to the EQF in 2012. This was caused by the lack of a clear legal basis and some uncertainty among stakeholders over the role to be played by the CLQ at national level. Integrating the CLQ into the legislative structure as the formal reference point for recognition of foreign professional qualifications, signals official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full implementation. Raising CLQ awareness among end users is a major challenge for the upcoming period.

# Main sources of information

[URLs accessed 8.7.2025]

Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.

CLQ - The Luxembourg qualifications framework.

Register of secondary education programmes.

Register of higher education diplomas.

Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research. (2014). *Report on referencing the Luxembourg qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area*.

# National qualification framework (NQF)

| NQF LEVEL | QUALIFICATION TYPES | EQF LEVEL |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | Doctoral diploma (Phd) (Doctorat) | 8 |
| | Certificate following specific training course in medicine (Diplôme de formation spécifique en médecine générale) | |
| 7 | Master diploma (Master) | 7 |
| 6 | Bachelor diploma (Bachelor) | 6 |
| 5 | Master craftsman diploma (Brevet de maîtrise) | 5 |
| | Advanced technician diploma (Brevet de technicien supérieur) | |
| | Specialised advanced technician diploma (Brevet de technicien supérieur spécialisé) | |
| 4 | Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires) | 4 |
| | General secondary school leaving certificate (Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires générales) | |
| | Technician diploma (Diplôme de technicien) | |
| 3 | Vocational aptitude diploma (Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle - DAP) | 3 |
| | Certificate attesting completion of middle-cycle general secondary education (Certificat de réussite du cycle moyen de l'enseignement secondaire général) | |
| | Certificate attesting completion of five years secondary education (Certificat de réussite de 5 années d'enseignement secondaire) | |
| 2 | Vocational capability certificate (Certificat de capacité professionnelle - CCP) | 2 |

| 1 | **Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle, technical secondary education (Certificat de réussite du cycle inférieur de l'enseignement secondaire technique)** | 1 |

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CLQ | Cadre Luxembourgeois des qualifications, CLQ (Luxembourg qualifications framework) |
| DAP | *Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle* [Vocational aptitude diploma] |
| ENQA | European Association for Quality Assurance for Higher Education |
| EQAR | European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education |
| EQF | European qualifications framework |
| NQF | national qualifications framework |
| QF-EHEA | qualifications framework for the European higher education area |
| VAE | *validation des acquis de l'expérience* [validation of non-formal and informal learning] |
| VET | vocational education and training |

# References

[URLs accessed 8.7.2025]

Cedefop. (2020a). *Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015-19:* Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies.

Cedefop. (2020b). *National qualifications frameworks developments in Europe 2019: qualifications frameworks: transparency and added value for end users.* Publications Office of the European Union.

Cedefop & ReferNet. (2024). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe*. [online tool]

European Commission & Cedefop. (2018). *Survey on implementation, communication and use of NQF/EQF* [unpublished].

European Commission & Cedefop. (2020). *Survey on implementation, communication and use of NQF/EQF* [unpublished].

European Commission. DG Education Youth Sport & Culture. (2024). *Education and training monitor 2024: Luxembourg.* Publications Office of the European Union.

Hampe-Nathaniel, A. (2024). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update: Luxembourg*. European Commission & Cedefop.

INFPC (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Luxembourg*. Cedefop. ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018.

KeyCoNet (2013). *KeyCoNet 2013 literature review: key competence development in school education in Europe*.

Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research. (2014). *Report on referencing the Luxembourg qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area*.

# Notes

[1]Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.

[2]Attitudes refer to 'personal and social dispositions in work or study situations and for professional or personal development. Personal abilities are characterised by an autonomous, responsible disposition that allows critical consideration of one's own actions and the actions of other people; they also define the scope of a person's own development through either study or practice.' (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth & Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014).

[3]EQF level descriptors.

[4]The master craftsperson qualification (brevet de maîtrise; ISCED 453, EQF 5) entitles holders to establish themselves in the craft industry as self-employed and to train apprentices. The qualification confers the title of master craftsperson in the particular trade. The master craftsperson qualification does not give any access right for higher education; progression opportunities depend on the certificate gained at secondary level (INFPC, 2019).

[5]The socle de compétences defines a set of key competences referring to subject-independent competences and should be seen as the 'core set' of competences (KeyCoNet, 2013).

[6]Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.

[7]The law aimed to modernise initial and continuing VET. The main point was to reorientate IVET towards a modular and competence-oriented structure. It defines competences as the totality of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary in order to practise an occupation.

[8]An occupational profile lists the areas of activity as well as the activities and tasks of future occupations after two to three years of workplace experience (INFPC, 2019).

[9]A training profile is based on the occupational profile by areas of competence: occupational and general competences (INFPC, 2019).

[10]Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.

[11]Law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg.

[12]The bachelor, master and PhD programmes offered by the University of Luxembourg, are by law automatically recognised.

[13]Law of 19 June 2009 on the organisation of higher education.

[14]Based on the evaluation, the Minister decides if they will be

accredited.

[15]Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.
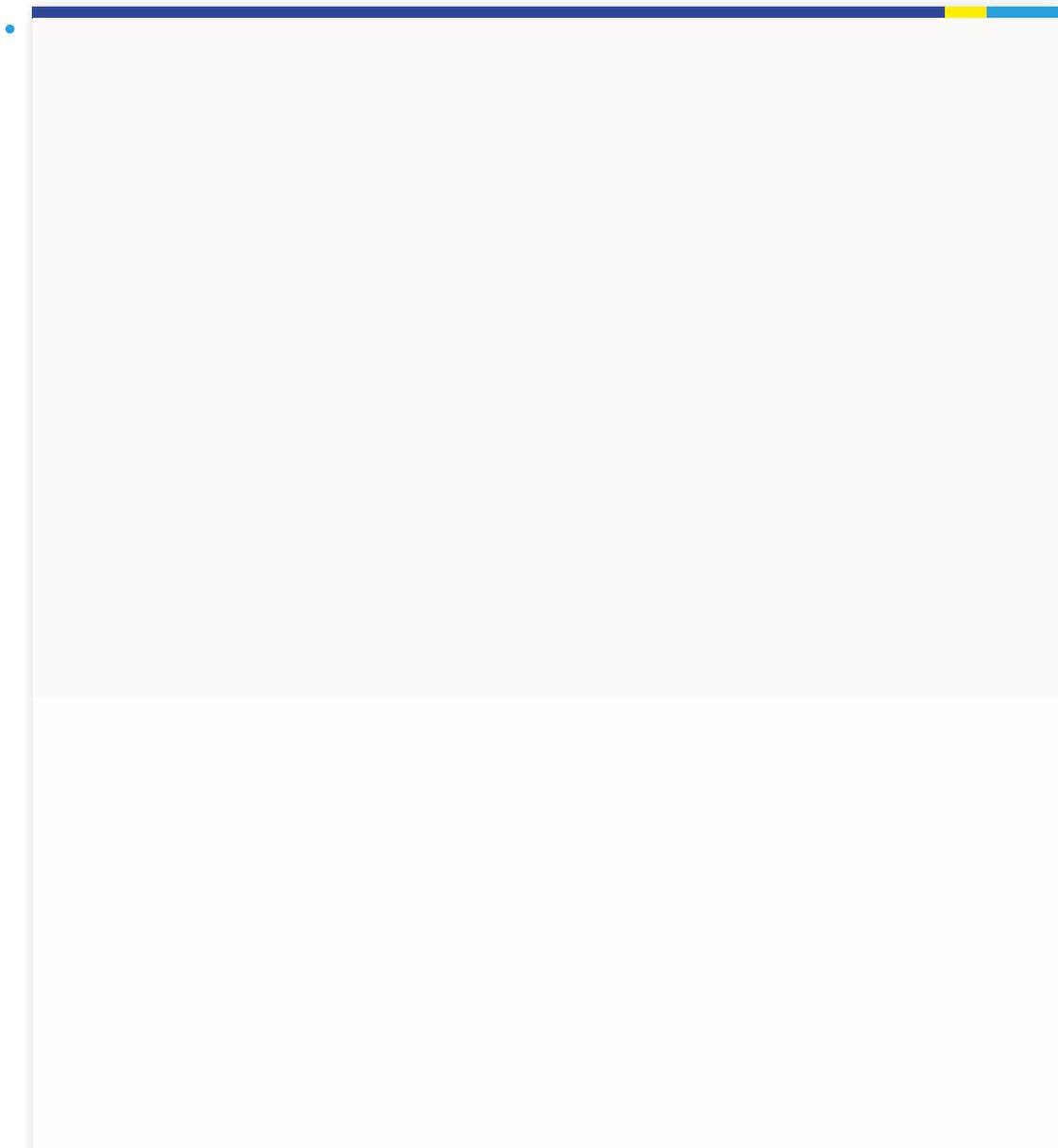
[16]More information here.

[17]More information are available on the web-site guichet.lu (accessed on 09.06.2025).

[18]The learning outcomes of a qualification should completely correspond to the level descriptors of a given CLQ level.

[19]Source: Înternal communication with the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.

[20]More information here.

# Related content

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# Luxembourg – European inventory of NQFs 2024

**European inventory of NQF**

Luxembourg