

## **NQF state of play**



**Albania 2024**

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# Overview

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**Stage of development:** Activation stage

**NQF linked to EQF:** ✓

**Scope of the framework:**

Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and lifelong learning qualifications for adults and people undertaking specialised courses for professional development.

**Number of levels:**

Eight Correct.

**Legal basis/stage of development:**

NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018)  
(in Albanian)

**NQF/EQF website:**

[Website](#)

**Qualifications register/database:**

[The National Catalogue of VET qualifications](#)

# Introduction and context

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## 1.1. Policy context

Albania has been a candidate country for EU entry since 2014 and seeks integration and compatibility with EU policies, tools and systems in education and training. It is committed to achieving the objectives outlined in the EU Council Recommendation on VET from November 2020 and the Osnabruck Declaration.

Albania's economy, primarily composed of micro-enterprises with fewer than ten employees, has remained resilient despite several challenges over the past four years, including the 2020 earthquake, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine. After a 3.3 % decline in GDP in 2020, the economy rebounded with 8.9 % growth in 2021, followed by slower growth of 4.9 % in 2022 and 3.9 % in 2023. The services sector, particularly tourism and construction, and increased private consumption due to rising employment and wages, have driven this growth (OECD 2024) ([1]).

In the academic year 2023-2024, 533,711 pupils and students were enrolled in formal education, with a decrease of 3.7 % compared to the academic year 2022-2023. This trend has lasted for many years and represents a 10 % decrease since 2019. This decline across all education levels has far-reaching implications for educational institutions and workforce planning within the education sector (INSTAT, 2024 ([2])).

The vocational education system in Albania, though relatively modest in size, has seen some growth in recent years.

## Education and Training reform

Education and training reform has been driven by three successive National Employment and Skills Strategies (NESS), the first of which was implemented from 2014. The current NESS runs 2023 to 2030. It spans mainly VET in the perspective of lifelong learning. It sets three main policy objectives:

- a. increasing access to pre-school provision and ensuring compulsory education.
- b. improving quality assurance throughout educational levels.
- c. achieving excellence in tertiary education.

The new strategy on Employment and Skills 2030 was adopted in 2023 via a Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM). Its vision is 'Quality employment and lifelong learning for all'. It includes the goal of developing better matching skills to labour market demand, for greater employability. Specific objectives include:

- a. reducing the skills mismatch for all occupations.
- b. increasing the skill levels of people of working age.
- c. better functioning of the labour market for the benefit of all.

Principal measures that will contribute to the achievement of the objectives are:

- a. Development of a more relevant, flexible, evidence-based, better governed VET offer that guarantees continuity and inclusiveness.
- b. Strengthening the quality assurance and development mechanisms in the VET system.
- c. Systematic and systemic involvement of the private sector in the governance, design and provision of VET.
- d. Fostering inclusive opportunities for lifelong learning.
- e. Recognition of prior learning, non-formal and informal.
- f. Digital transformation of employment services and the VET system.
- g. Creation of a skills intelligence system that provides regular signals on labour market and VET developments.

The Strategy further underscores Albania's commitment to addressing infrastructure needs, digitalisation, environmental sustainability, and enhancing the quality of vocational education and training (VET). The strategy emphasises lifelong learning, work-based learning, and civic engagement.

Albania's NQF has been central to each of the three Strategies. NESS 2023 to 2030 highlights the critical role of the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) in promoting lifelong learning across all levels of education and training.

## **1.2. NQF legal basis**

[Law No. 10/247](#) on the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was adopted by parliament on 4 March 2010. A revision of this Law ([23/2018](#)) was adopted on 18 May 2018. It describes the main characteristics of the AQF such as its structure, scope, objectives, and functions, as well as arrangements for its governance, institutional management,

implementation, quality assurance and financing.

[Law No.15/2017](#) 'On Vocational Education and Training', defines the AQF as a national classification system of qualifications.

The following by-laws, adopted by the Council of Ministers, implement specific features of the AQF:

- a. Decision of the Council of Ministries No. 173, adopted on 24 March 2023, approved the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2023-2030, along with a comprehensive [Action Plan](#) to guide its implementation.
- b. Orders of the Minister responsible for VET and Education on establishing 2nd Sectorial Committees (Hospitality and Tourism; Technik), [No. 163, 6 June 2022](#), and [No. 159, 10 July 2023](#).
- c. Order of the Minister responsible for VET and Education on establishing 3rd Sectorial Committees (Energy). No. 248, 24 February 2025.
- d. Guideline of the Minister of VET, No. 1109, 16 December 2024, [On the procedures for assessment and certification for the implementation of the system for validation of previous non-formal and informal learning](#)'.
- e. the yearly orders of the Minister responsible for VET for the adoption of Revisions and additions in the National Catalogue for VET qualifications. [No. 241, 23 October 2023](#).
- f. the instruction of the Minister responsible for VET, No. 9, 29 March 2023, on additions and changes in instruction No. 16, 26 April 2019, 'On the types, procedures and methods of issuing certificates, as well as the formats that will be used in the vocational education and training system' by introducing the EQF level in the template of all VET certificates, at AQF Levels 2 to 5.
- g. Instruction of the Minister No. 26, 30 July 2018, 'On the national catalogue of professional qualifications'.
- h. Decision of Council of Ministers (DCM) no. 426, June 2019, 'On organization and functioning of the Sector Committees and the criteria for their selection'.
- i. DCM No. 427, June 2019, 'On approval of criteria and procedures for including the qualifications received through lifelong learning into the AQF levels for VET'.
- j. DCM No. 428, June 2019, 'On Detailed level descriptors of the AQF level'.
- k. DCM No 756, 13 December 2021, 'On the system of recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning'.

- l. Joint Order No. 64, 30 March 2020, 'On the establishment and composition of the sectoral committee of information and communication technology'.
- m. Order of the Minister No 99, 25 May 2021, 'On approval of the National Catalogue for Vocational Qualifications'.
- n. Order of the Minister No 645, 28 August 2024, '[On approval of the National Catalogue for Vocational Qualifications](#)'.

## Policy objectives

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The aims of the AQF are to classify and link qualifications, ensure that they are relevant to learners and employers, and to raise their quality, including via strengthened cooperation with the private sector, and to contribute to lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities and provision.

Additionally, the AQF, as for most international equivalents, acts as an identifiable entry point for comparison of the country's qualifications with those from other countries.

Like their counterparts in the region, Albania's education and employment actors and stakeholders view the AQF as one of a set of tools to reform and govern the labour market and qualifications system. The AQF contributes to achieving NESS' Strategic Objectives B, on VET provision, and D, which concerns governing the labour market and the qualifications system.

Strategic Objective B, 'On the Quality Offer of VET for Youth and Adults' includes actions to:

- a. diversify VET provision.
- b. develop post-secondary VET qualifications and assess provision of post-secondary VET.
- c. in recognition of prior learning (RPL), complete the legal framework to move it towards implementation; and pilot RPL in two occupations.
- d. in quality assurance, implement accreditation of public and private VET providers.
- e. develop a first model of a teacher training qualification.

Objective D includes measures to:

- a. implement the AQF, including via updating and maintaining the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications.
- b. complete the AQF's legal framework.
- c. introduce mechanisms to include non-formal qualifications in the AQF.
- d. revise professional qualifications based on labour market needs.
- e. introduce a VET credit system aligned with ECVET.
- f. complete regulations for sectoral committees; and pilot such a committee in a chosen sector.

- g. strengthen the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) via e.g., staff training and formalisation in law of its functions.

# Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

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## 3.1. NQF structure and level descriptors

Inspired by the EQF, the AQF consists of eight levels, whose descriptors are written in learning outcomes organised in the three domains of knowledge, skills, and competence. A single set of descriptors is used in the AQF, applied for all types of qualification, whether they are from general education, VET or HE.

## 3.2. NQF scope and coverage

The AQF is open to all types of qualifications.

There are three main categories of qualifications identified in the AQF handbook and the 2018 Law:

- a. general and higher education qualifications.
- b. professional or VET qualifications.
- c. lifelong learning qualifications which cater to adults and people undertaking specialised courses for professional development.

The term 'qualifications for LLL' in the AQF Laws is used to distinguish them from the formal qualifications that are automatically included in the AQF, based on existing legislation e.g., the VET Law, HE Law etc. and all other qualifications.

No LLL qualifications are included yet in the framework. However, NAVETQ has conducted a study on the requisite inclusion process, while a Handbook for integrating LLL qualifications as AQF-levelled partial certifications in the Albanian Qualifications Framework at Levels 2 to 5 is in the development process.

The AQF is open to, and includes, partial qualifications. Similarly, the AQF is open to qualifications that can be considered as micro-credentials, though none are levelled in the AQF at the time of writing.

The Following Table presents qualifications that are included in the AQF.

## 3.3. Use and renewal of learning outcomes and standards

All new VET qualifications developed since 2009 are defined in learning outcomes and have a clear division between knowledge, skills, and

broader competences. Outcomes for individual qualifications are developed to match the AQF level descriptors. Learning outcomes for individual qualifications are of course more detailed in terms of knowledge, skills, and broader competences, compared to the more generic AQF level descriptors.

VET qualifications derive from occupational descriptions contained in the [National List of Occupations](#). NAVETQ draws on the National List of Occupations and then uses the AQF descriptors as occupational standards to develop VET qualifications. Currently, the template for occupational standards is being improved and will include performance criteria, tools, and equipment etc. All future standards are developed against this new template. Qualification standards are composed of learning units described in learning outcomes terms, under the domains of knowledge, skills and broader competences. This model supports a flexible delivery of qualifications to accommodate lifelong learning qualifications in the AQF, as well as facilitating the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Vocational curricula are modularised. Vocational theory modules/subjects are organized in outcomes and themes with respective teaching hours. The modularized curricula are crucial in supporting a flexible delivery of qualifications and in offering several different pathways between different qualifications and between different learning contexts.

NAVETQ issues guidelines for writing outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and broader competences. Additionally, to support the sustainable implementation of outcomes approaches, 95 % of all VET teachers and instructors are trained in the 'Basics of Didactics in VET', which helps equip them to write outcomes and enables them to acquire the skills to apply outcomes in teaching and learning, and in assessing students.

Higher education qualifications are not yet based on learning outcomes. Instead, Albania refers to students' workload for allocation of credits. A working group is working on new legislation, which will introduce outcomes in the higher education system.

### **3.4. Quality assurance arrangements**

The AQF Law stipulates that all qualifications in the AQF shall be quality-assured. In VET, QA is both internal and external.

All public VET schools in the country have completed a self-assessment exercise as part of accreditation requirements. NAVETQ is now implementing the adopted accreditation model for all VET schools. This measure addresses both providers and the qualifications themselves.

VET providers are responsible for internal assessment and certification of vocational qualifications at AQF levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. NAVETQ provides guidelines on both formative assessment and for summative assessment to achieve the certification. The framework curricula include recommendations on verifying if learners have achieved the intended learning outcomes in the qualification. NAVETQ also produces guidelines for VET teachers and providers, containing assessment methods and assessment tools e.g., tests, projects, checklist, etc.

The Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQAHE) manages quality assurance for this sector. It requires higher education institutions and their programmes to be accredited before they can issue degrees or other qualifications.

# Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

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## 4.1. Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

Ministries, rather than a dedicated NQF authority, are responsible for the AQF. Broadly, the concerned ministries manage qualifications in the AQF, which correspond to the educational subsystem the respective ministry coordinates. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Sport covers qualifications in elementary, lower, and upper secondary general education, higher education and lifelong learning, while the Ministry of Finance and Economy leads on VET qualifications.

The AQF laws define three implementing institutions:

- a. the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ).
- b. higher education institutions, in cooperation with institutions, which carry out periodic labour market assessments and employment surveys of graduates.
- c. the ministries responsible for education and their associated agencies in accordance with the relevant provisions of the applicable legal framework (ETF, 2018b).

Implementation is coordinated by a dedicated AQF taskforce co-chaired by the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, which covers VET. Its tasks include development of an AQF handbook for users, revision of the AQF law, and managing the relationship between the AQF and the EQF. Its current mandate ended in 2022, and a process is now ongoing to renew the mandate.

DCM No. 673, of 16 October 2019, designates NAVETQ as the implementing institution for the AQF in VET. Within NAVETQ, a dedicated department composed of two units is responsible for development of occupational descriptions and standards, and vocational qualifications. This department has expanded from three employees in 2019 to its current complement of eight. Budgets have been doubled during the past five years to enable NAVETQ to further implement the AQF and develop the country's quality assurance system.

## 4.2. Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

Sector Committees revise existing, and develop new, professional

qualifications based on labour market needs. The Committees' functions include identifying qualifications needed based on studies; proposing new qualifications to NAVETQ; working with NAVETQ to draft the occupational standards and vocational qualifications standards to be included in the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications; and broader support to the AQF's implementation.

The Committees are organized by technical groups for each sector, up to a maximum of 10 national committees, each of fewer than 10 persons to facilitate decision-making. Members are drawn from the different ministries responsible for the AQF; ministries responsible for the respective Committee's economic sector; employers' associations; trades unions; VET institutions; an HR specialist from the sector; and an independent expert with experience of developing and implementing the AQF.

To date, two committees, covering the ICT, and Hospitality and Tourism, sectors are operational. A third, covering the energy sector, is expected to be operational during 2025 or 2026.

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

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

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is one of the priority measures in NESS and provided for in both the VET and AQF laws. The Decision of the Council of Ministers on the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning was adopted in December 2021, see Section 2.2 above.

Implementation so far has been confined to pilots and has not yet been applied countrywide. NESS outlines a national system for validation. Actions to be taken include:

- a. appointment of dedicated bodies, and the establishment of procedures for the validation of qualifications; assessment of knowledge, skills, and competences; certification; and validation of prior learning.
- b. establishment of a national system to recognise qualifications, work experience, and skills acquired abroad.
- c. consolidating the legal framework for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- d. defining roles of implementing institutions in managing RPL.
- e. development of a database on RPL.
- f. training for teachers, assessors and other professionals.
- g. the engagement of stakeholders, especially employer bodies and trade unions, in the design and implementation process.
- h. identifying priority sectors for RPL and pilot in two occupations.

Following the DCM on establishing the RPL system in Albania, and after a thorough consultation process with national stakeholders and with experts from countries in the region, RPL guidelines have been produced. Adopted via the Guidelines of the Minister of VET, No. 1109, on 16 December 2024, these are titled, 'On the procedures for assessment and certification for the implementation of the system for validation of previous non-formal and informal learning.' Currently, the roadmap to support the implementation is being drafted.

## 5.2. Credit systems

The AQF Law stipulates that the AQF should facilitate accumulation and transfer of credits. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit system in Higher Education is operational.

There is not yet an operational credit system in VET, and qualifications for lifelong learning are generally not expressed in credits. However, following a concept paper on the viability and operation of such a system, national authorities and ETF are co-developing a feasibility study. A VET credit system would be intended to improve quality assurance and support learner progression.

### **5.3. Promoting lifelong learning**

The AQF is lifelong learning in its scope.

NESS provides for certification of partial qualifications or units of qualifications.

Modularized curricula are crucial in supporting a flexible delivery of qualifications and in offering several different pathways between different qualifications and between different learning contexts.

To support the integration of Lifelong Learning qualifications into the AQF a mapping of best practices from EU member states was conducted. Based on this, a national model was developed and supported by a completed legal framework. LLL programs of at least 125 hours are now able to be recognized as AQF-levelled partial certifications. Building on the criteria set by DCM No. 427 and the mapping results, a process was defined for levelling short-term training courses over 125 hours in AQF. This initiative facilitated broader stakeholder engagement, particularly by private training providers, and enabled the first round of applications for recognition. The official adoption of 'Learning Units' within Vocational Qualification Standards further strengthens the framework for lifelong learning.

# NQF implementation and impact

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## 6.1. Stage of implementation

Albania has reached the activation stage.

Over 140 qualifications appear in the national VET catalogue. Accreditation of VET providers has started, progressing towards the set milestones. Revision of study programmes in HE for full implementation of learning outcomes approaches is underway.

Establishment of sector councils comprising social partners and other stakeholders supports development of more relevant qualifications. However, there are just two operational for now, and a third expected to start functioning shortly.

The VNFIL system is not yet operational.

## 6.2. Indicating RQF/NQF levels

AQF levels are included on new certificates and diplomas, Europass supplement documents and diploma supplements, and indicated in the national catalogue for VET qualifications.

EQF levels are included in new certificate and respective supplements in line with the instruction of the Minister responsible for VET, No. 9, from 29 March 2023.

## 6.3. NQF dissemination

While no national communication strategy is in place, several initiatives have been undertaken to raise awareness and promote the use of the AQF among key stakeholders, including employers, learners, VET providers, and others. These efforts have focused on increasing understanding of the AQF's functions, benefits, and impact on the national qualifications system.

A prominent tool in this outreach has been the release of an informational video about the AQF, which provides an overview of its role, structure, and the benefits it offers to learners and employers. The video emphasizes the AQF's support for lifelong learning and its adaptability to the evolving needs of the labour market. Additionally, an instructional video was developed to explain the role of sectoral committees within the AQF. These committees are responsible for ensuring that qualifications

remain relevant and aligned with industry standards, and the video serves to illustrate their importance in shaping a workforce-ready qualifications system. Also, some instructional videos promote the process of inclusion of lifelong learning qualifications in the AQF levels.

Furthermore, multiple workshops have been organized with training providers to deepen their understanding of the AQF's structure and benefits. These workshops have covered essential aspects of the AQF, such as its role in promoting quality assurance, enhancing the transparency of qualifications, and facilitating pathways for upskilling and reskilling. They have also provided practical guidance on how to align curricula with AQF level descriptors, making qualifications more recognizable and valuable to both learners and employers.

In addition to these events and resources, a range of informational materials - including a handbook - has been widely distributed. Social media campaigns have also been launched to broaden the reach of AQF awareness efforts. These materials and platforms collectively aim to build understanding among stakeholders of the AQF's potential to support individual career progression and contribute to a dynamic, skills-based economy.

There are documents presented as weblinks by using the Facebook social media channel.

#### **6.4. Qualifications databases and registers**

The [National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications \(NCVQ\)](#), developed by NAVETQ is the de facto national vocational qualifications register and is approved by the Minister in charge of VET. Currently, the number of qualifications in the NCVQ is 141.

The NCVQ is linked to the National List of Occupations, which is based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations, or ISCO.

Within the Catalogue, the National List of Vocational Qualifications (NLVQ) lists the vocational qualifications, all based on learning outcomes. These qualifications span AQF levels 2 to 5. At levels 2, 3 and 4, they are available through the 2+1+1, 2+2 and 4-years formal educational structure. Level 5 qualifications are also recorded in the register.

The List is now available online in the NCVQ in the form of a public, interactive, searchable web portal/database on qualifications, curricula, and training offers by VET providers.

The Catalogue includes learning outcomes descriptions. The outcomes statements are developed by dedicated working groups following the specified methodological guidance. These outcomes statements are also used in the Vocational Certificate supplement.

There is not yet a digital tool to support the search, presentation, analysis, and comparison of qualifications available or planned.

National authorities plan to connect the national register to the Europass platform via the [Qualifications Dataset Register](#). The data model used for publishing information in the national register is not yet interoperable with the European Learning Model ([3]).

The Catalogue is currently available only in Albanian.

NLVQ is linked to the National Classification of Occupations, which is also developed by NAVETQ, and to the careers portal run by the careers guidance centre of the Tirana city authority.

The Ministry of Education and Sport is meanwhile creating a national register of higher education programmes. Each programme will be coded according to the field of study. The required legal framework is under development.

The National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications demonstrates close adherence to Annex VI of the EQF Recommendation, which proposes data fields for the electronic publication of information on qualifications with an EQF level. The database includes the following information on individual qualifications:

- a. title of the qualification.
- b. NQF level.
- c. description of the qualifications, in units of learning describes in terms of LO in knowledge skills and broader competences.
- d. awarding body/competent authority.
- e. workload/credit points allocated.
- f. internal quality assurance procedures.
- g. external quality assurance/regulatory body.
- h. entry requirements.
- i. relationship to occupations.

## **6.5. Use of NQF in recognition of foreign qualifications**

The national information centre (NARIC) is the Technical Secretariat for the Recognition of Foreign Diplomas under the Ministry of Education and

Sport.

Currently, Albania has procedures in place for the recognition of foreign certificates and diplomas at levels 5 to 8 of the AQF, issued by foreign higher education institutions. Recognition of foreign vocational qualifications is under development.

An instruction of the Minister of Finance and Economy on the procedures for recognition of qualifications at levels 2 to 5 was adopted in 2018.

### **6.6. Career guidance and counselling**

Careers advisers are generally aware of the AQF and use it in counselling clients. Qualifications placed in the AQF feature in career portals.

### **6.7. Awareness and use of the NQF**

Bodies exercising functions relevant to NQF implementation such as quality assurance bodies and those regulating occupations or making recognition decisions are generally well-informed about the AQF. Likewise, education and training providers, who are institutional stakeholders.

NAVETQ is fundamentally involved in implementing the procedure for the inclusion of lifelong learning qualifications in the AQF, and the accreditation of VET institutions for delivering AQF qualifications at levels 2 to 5. Therefore, its staff have a strong understanding of the AQF and EQF, recognizing their significance in standards behind the qualifications and ensuring quality in education and training processes. The level of the awareness of the quality assurance bodies is very high.

Recognition authorities evaluate and confirm qualifications from other countries' educational systems. This role necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the AQF and EQF, as these frameworks provide the necessary context for assessing and recognizing foreign qualifications. Therefore, their awareness of the AQF is very high.

Employers in specific sectors, particularly those involved in sectoral committees and designing qualifications in VET, are generally aware of the AQF's role in aligning qualifications with job requirements. However, apart from these directly engaged sectors, broader employer awareness remains limited, especially among small to medium-sized enterprises that may not have the same level of engagement with the AQF.

Trade unions have increasingly been involved in discussions around

labour market policies and skills development, and in participating in sectoral committees, which has led to a better understanding of the AQF and EQF. Their overall awareness is moderate.

Employment services typically prioritize immediate job placements over broader qualifications frameworks. As a result, there may be insufficient emphasis on how understanding the AQF/EQF can enhance jobseekers' long-term career development and skill recognition. Here, awareness is low.

Students are increasingly interested in international opportunities, such as studying abroad or seeking employment in other countries. Awareness of the EQF's role in facilitating the recognition of qualifications across borders has grown. However, while some students are utilizing the frameworks to understand how their qualifications will be recognized internationally, many still lack comprehensive knowledge about the processes involved in qualification recognition. The use of the AQF/EQF by this group is moderate.

Learners who hold qualifications on which the AQF levels are indicated clearly have some exposure to the framework. But overall, awareness levels of among learners and students is moderate.

Those already established in the labour market, or those possessing older qualifications, usually have low awareness of the AQF.

## **6.8. Monitoring and evaluating the NQF**

No comprehensive evaluation has been conducted yet.

## **6.9. Impact**

Legislation on the AQF requires that new VET qualifications be written in learning outcomes. Likewise, the AQF has influenced VET curricula, so that it is increasingly modularized. New qualifications can be designed in units.

The influence of the AQF is visible in making qualifications transparent and comparable. By defining levels of qualifications and the skills required at each level, the AQF enhances the transparency of qualifications at the national level, allowing learners, employers, and education providers to clearly see what each qualification entails.

VET qualifications are more accessible through use and promotion of [the National Catalogue for Vocational qualification](#), which is accessible on the

NAVETQ Website.

Further, the AQF has raised the quality of qualifications by setting criteria for inclusion of qualifications in the framework's levels.

The AQF has contributed to enhancing progression in education and training by linking vocational education and training with general and higher education. The process to increase the permeability in the system is ongoing.

The AQF plays a vital role in promoting parity of esteem between different types of education and training and qualifications. By recognizing diverse learning pathways, establishing standardized learning outcomes, facilitating progression, and engaging with employers, the AQF fosters an inclusive educational environment. While challenges remain, continued efforts to advocate for the value of all educational pathways will be essential for achieving full parity of esteem, ultimately benefiting learners.

The AQF has influenced the dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders. The sectoral committees are mechanisms where different stakeholders in the economic sectors cooperate to identify skills needs and validate the standards behind the qualifications.

The AQF is used as a mechanism to identify gaps in VET provision.

# Referencing to the EQF

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## 7.1. Referencing to the EQF

Albania participates as a full member in both the EU's EQF process inside the EQF Advisory Group, and the Council of Europe-chaired Bologna process in higher education. Albania referenced, or linked, its AQF to the EQF, and self-certified against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) in one report, submitted to the EQF Advisory Group, in October 2021.

Referencing an NQF to the EQF raises the profile or visibility of a country's education and qualification systems among the other countries in the EQF process and is intended to increase their trust in that country's qualifications. A 2023 legal act allows for indication of EQF levels on certificates and diplomas etc., a measure which should support their recognition abroad and so facilitate learner and worker mobility.

The table below illustrates the relationship, level to level, between the EQF and the AQF, as determined by the AQF Task Force which prepared the country's referencing report, and which was agreed with the EQF Advisory Group.

From AQF Level 3 to AQF Level 8, there is a straight level to level correspondence to the EQF, so that AQF Level 3 maps to EQF Level 3, AQF Level 4 maps to EQF Level 4, and so on up to both frameworks' respective Level 8.

However, the Task Force, with the agreement of the international experts who advised it, found no equivalent level in the AQF of EQF Level 1, as no qualifications exist at that level in Albania. Instead, the Task Force found that there are qualifications available in Albania at both Levels 1 and 2 of the AQF that correspond to EQF Level 2.

<b>AQF Levels</b>	<b>EQF Levels</b>
Level 8	Level 8
Level 7	Level 7
Level 6	Level 6
Level 5	Level 5

Level 4	Level 4
Level 3	Level 3
Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 2
No equivalent in AQF	Level 1

Albania will update its referencing report once significant further progress in the framework's implementation has been made.

## 7.2. International cooperation

As an EU candidate country, Albania receives financial assistance from the EU via the Instrument for pre-Accession (IPA). The government has prioritized actions to address skills mismatch as the country prepares for the next round of EU support through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance 2021-2027.

Albania participates in peer exchanges, conferences, and dialogue with other countries. It participates in the [Berlin Process](#), a platform to intensify cooperation among the Western Balkan Six and between these countries, the EU and other European states. It is also a member of the [Regional Cooperation Council](#) in Southeastern Europe, which promotes the region's European and Euro-Atlantic integration in a range of policy areas, including human capital

## Important lessons and future plans

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Key factors facilitating development to date of the AQF include close coordination by the Task Force, an enabling legal framework, mobilisation of relevant stakeholders, development of standards, setting up a qualifications register and referencing the AQF to the EQF and its self-certification to the QF-EHEA.

Challenges are boosting beneficiary awareness of the value of the NQF, and indeed of the gains to be had by taking further qualifications. Jobseekers remain hard to reach. Linking the qualifications register to Europass and ensuring its interoperability with the European Learning Model would support comparison and recognition of national qualifications with those of other European countries.

Priorities include:

- a. inclusion of new qualifications in the framework.
- b. including LLL qualifications in the AQF.
- c. extension of outcomes approaches to HE programmes and qualifications.
- d. implementing VNFIL.
- e. involving the private sector systematically in skills anticipation and development, including via operationalising sector committees.
- f. developing a national communication strategy

## **Main sources of information**

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Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport

National catalogue of vocational qualifications (NCVQ)

# National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	<p><b>Doctorate</b>  <b>Category</b>                      General/traditional qualifications                      Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Graduate school study in advanced studies</b>  <b>Category</b>                      General/traditional qualifications                      Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Executive master/second level master/postmaster</b>  <b>Category</b>                      Vocational/professional qualifications                      Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Long term specialisation</b>  <b>Category</b>                      Vocational/professional qualifications                      Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Study programmes for continuous education</b>  <b>Category</b>                      Lifelong learning qualifications</p>	8

7

**Master of science**

7

**Category**

General/traditional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Master of arts/ Master of Fine Arts/programme level II study**

**Category**

General/traditional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Integrated study programme of the second cycle**

**Category**

General/traditional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**4-year study programme (pre-Bologna programmes)**

**Category**

General/traditional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Professional master/first level master**

**Category**

Vocational/professional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Study programmes for continuous education**

**Category**

Lifelong learning qualifications

6

**Bachelor**

6

**Category**

General/traditional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Study programme first level**

**Category**

General/traditional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

5	<p><b>Post-secondary study programme of professional type</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Vocational/professional qualifications Qualifications from initial education</p>	5
	<p><b>Professional non-university study programme after secondary education</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Vocational/professional qualifications Qualifications from initial education</p>	
	<p><b>Vocational certificate (postsecondary VET)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Vocational/professional qualifications Qualifications from initial education</p>	
	<p><b>Bridging courses (certificate)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Lifelong learning qualifications</p>	
	<p><b>Specialisation courses based on professional requirements</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Lifelong learning qualifications</p>	

4	<p><b>State matura diploma (Upper secondary general education)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>General/traditional qualifications Qualifications from initial education</p>	4
	<p><b>Vocational/State vocational matura</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Vocational/professional qualifications Qualifications from initial education</p>	
	<p><b>Diploma issued upon completion of the vocational high school programme</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Vocational/professional qualifications Qualifications from initial education</p>	

**Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of the four-year study programme for middle technicians/middle managers**

**Category**

Vocational/professional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of the two-year programme for technicians/ middle managers**

**Category**

Vocational/professional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of the one-year programme for technicians/ middle managers**

**Category**

Vocational/professional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of an apprenticeship programme**

**Category**

Vocational/professional qualifications

Qualifications from initial education

**Bridging courses**

**Category**

Lifelong learning qualifications

**Vocational training courses**

**Category**

Lifelong learning qualifications

**Specialisation courses based on professional requirements**

**Category**

Lifelong learning qualifications

3	<p><b>Vocational certificate issued at the end of a three-year programme for skilled workers</b>  <b>Category</b>  Vocational/professional qualifications  Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Vocational certificate issued at the end of a one-year programme for skilled workers</b>  <b>Category</b>  Vocational/professional qualifications  Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Vocational Certificate issued at the end of an apprenticeship programme</b>  <b>Category</b>  Vocational/professional qualifications  Qualifications from initial education</p>	3
2	<p><b>Vocational certificate issued at the completion of the two-year programme for semi-skilled workers</b>  <b>Category</b>  Vocational/professional qualifications  Qualifications from initial education</p>	2
1	<p><b>Final school report after completion of the compulsory nine-year education</b>  <b>Category</b>  General/traditional qualifications  Qualifications from initial education</p> <p><b>Minimum entry requirements to work or social life</b>  <b>Category</b>  Lifelong learning qualifications</p>	1

# Acronyms

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<b>AQAHE</b>	Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
<b>AQF</b>	Albanian Qualifications Framework
<b>DCM</b>	Decision of Council of Ministers
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>ECVET</b>	European Credit System for VET
<b>ENIC- NARIC</b>	European Network of Information Centres / National Academic Recognition Information Centre
<b>EQF</b>	European qualifications framework
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>INQAAHE</b>	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
<b>ISCED</b>	International Standard Classification of Education
<b>ISCO</b>	International standard classification of occupations
<b>LLL</b>	Lifelong learning
<b>LM</b>	Labour market
<b>NAVETQ</b>	National Agency of Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications
<b>NESS</b>	National Employment and Skills Strategy
<b>NLO</b>	National List of Occupations
<b>NLVQ</b>	National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications

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<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NCVQ</b>	National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications
<b>NLVQ</b>	National List of Vocational Qualifications
<b>NLO</b>	National List of Occupations
<b>QF-EHEA</b>	Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area
<b>RPL</b>	Recognition of prior learning
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>VNFIL</b>	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
<b>VTC</b>	Vocational Training Centres

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## References

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[URLs accessed 8/4/2025]

European Training Foundation (ETF) & Gedeshi, I. (2021). *How migration, human capital and the labour market interact in Albania*.

European Training Foundation (ETF). (2024). *Validation of non-formal and informal learning - Albania*.

European Training Foundation (ETF). (2025). *Key policy developments in education, training and employment - Albania 2024*.

## Notes

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[1]Cited in European Training Foundation (ETF), Key policy developments in education, training and employment - Albania 2024, Turin 2025.

[2]Cited in European Training Foundation (ETF), Key policy developments in education, training and employment - Albania 2024, Turin 2025.

[3]The European Learning Model, or ELM, provides a single vocabulary for learning and employment data in Europe and is used for the Europass platform.