OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2019
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Scope of the framework</th>
<th>Number of levels</th>
<th>Level descriptors</th>
<th>Legal basis/stage of development</th>
<th>NOF linked to EQF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • wider competences</td>
<td>NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018) (in Albanian)</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.arsimi.gov.al/">https://www.arsimi.gov.al/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive NQF; currently, includes qualifications awarded in higher education and VET qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6 from formal education and training; it includes two qualifications from the health sector at level 8.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competence</td>
<td>Federal Law 14/2016 on the NQF (in German)</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td><a href="https://oead.at/en/expertise/qualifications-and-comparability/nqf/">https://oead.at/en/expertise/qualifications-and-comparability/nqf/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-FL</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and from the professional qualifications system. Development/inclusion of educational qualifications at levels 1-4 is in progress.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge/skills • context/autonomy/responsibility</td>
<td>Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch)</td>
<td>2011, 2014 update</td>
<td><a href="http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/">http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-FR</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive framework, including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system. It currently includes vocational and secondary general education qualifications and qualifications awarded through validation at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5, as well as HE qualifications at levels 6 and 7.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge/skills • context/autonomy/responsibility</td>
<td>Decree on cooperation agreement between the three francophone governments on the creation and management of CFC (2015) (in French) (Early) operational</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ctc.cfwb.be/">http://www.ctc.cfwb.be/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-DE</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• occupational competence (knowledge and skills) • personal competence (social competence and autonomy)</td>
<td>Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German) (Early) operational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competence</td>
<td>Decision of the CoM on the adoption of the baseline qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) (in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian)</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.eqf.ba">http://www.eqf.ba</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight plus a preparatory level</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competences (personal and professional)</td>
<td>Decision No 96 of the CoM on the NQF (2012) (Early) operational</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. It is a qualifications and credit framework.</td>
<td>Eight, with sublevels at levels 4, 7 and 8</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • autonomy and responsibility</td>
<td>CROQF Act (2013, amendments in 2016 and 2018) (in Croatian) (Early) operational</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en">http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en</a></td>
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| Cyprus  | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of vocational qualifications. | Eight, with sublevels at levels 5 and 7 | • knowledge  
• skills  
| Czechia | National framework for vocational qualifications in VNFIL (the national register of qualifications – NSK) and the higher education qualifications framework. | Eight in NSK | National framework for vocational qualifications in VNFIL:  
• competences (including knowledge and skills) | Act on the verification and recognition of further education results (179/2006) (in Czech) (in English)  
The national register of vocational qualifications (NSK) is operational | 2011 | http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/ |
| Denmark | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to those awarded outside formal education and training. No qualification linked to EQF level 1. | Eight | • knowledge  
• skills  
| Estonia | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of occupational qualifications. | Eight | • knowledge  
• skills  
• scope of responsibility and autonomy | Professions Act (2008)  
| Finland | Comprehensive framework including all State-recognised qualifications. No qualification linked to EQF level 1. | Eight | • integrated level descriptors include knowledge, skills and key competences | Act on the national framework for qualifications and other competence modules (93/2017)  
(in Finnish) (in English)  
Government Decree on the NQF (123/2017)  
(in Finnish) (in English) | Operational | 2017 | https://www.oph.fi/qualificationsframework |
| France | NQF covers all levels and types of vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications and the national baccalaureate (general, technological and vocational). Open to qualifications awarded outside the formal education system. | Eight | • complexity of knowledge  
• level of skills and know-how  
• degree of responsibility and autonomy | Law No 2002-73 on social modernisation (2002)  
Law No 2018-771 for the freedom to choose one’s professional future (2018)  
<table>
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| Germany | Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; includes qualifications from general education, VET (initial VET and regulated further training), and from higher education. | Eight | - professional competence (knowledge and skills)  
- personal competence (social competence and autonomy) | Joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Economic Affairs and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Technology (2013)  
(in German)  
Operational | 2012 | http://www.dqr.de/ |
| Greece | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. | Eight | - knowledge  
- skills  
- competence | Law on development of lifelong learning and other provisions (3879/2010)  
(in Greek)  
(Early) operational | 2015 | http://nqf.gov.gr/ |
| Hungary | Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning encompassing all State-recognised national qualifications acquired in general education, HE, and the vocational qualifications in the national vocational qualifications register. | Eight | - knowledge  
- skills  
- attitudes  
- autonomy and responsibility | Government Decision 1229/2012 on the Hungarian qualifications framework  
(in Hungarian)  
(Early) operational | 2015 | https://www.magyarkepesites.hu/ |
| Iceland | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, including certified adult learning. No descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1. | Seven, with sublevels at NQF levels 5 and 6 | - integrated level descriptors include knowledge, skills and competence | No overarching legal basis for the ISQF (its role and mandate are stated in a series of acts and decrees).  
Operational | 2013 | www.haefnirammi.is |
| Ireland | Comprehensive NQF including all types and levels of qualification from formal education and training. | 10 with five classes of award type: major, minor, special-purpose, professional and supplemental | - knowledge  
- skills  
- competence | Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999)  
(in English)  
Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012  
(in English)  
| Italy | Designed as a comprehensive framework; it will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and regional qualifications. | Eight | - knowledge  
- skills  
(in Italian)  
| Kosovo | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and non-formal and informal learning. | Eight | - knowledge  
- skills  
- wider competences | Republic of Kosovo (2008), Law 03/L-060 on national qualifications  
(in English)  
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<th>NQF/EQF website</th>
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</table>
| Latvia   | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. | Eight            | • knowledge  
• skills  
• competence                                                                    | Regulations No 990 of the CoM on the education classification of Latvia (2010)  
(in Latvian)  
(in English)  
Replaced by the Regulations No 322 of the CoM on the education classification of Latvia (2017)  
(in Latvian)  
| Liechtenstein | NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPO) and NQF for higher education.          | Eight            | Level descriptors of the NQF-VPO:  
• knowledge  
• skills  
• competences (professional and personal)                                     | Ordinance on the national qualifications framework of the Principality of Liechtenstein for VET qualifications (2017)  
(in German)  
Qualifications framework for higher education (2013) and included in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance (in German)  
(Early) operational stage | 2016             | http://www.nqfl.li/                                                            |
| Lithuania | Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; currently includes qualifications from VET and higher education; revision and inclusion of general education qualifications at levels 1-4 is in progress. | Eight            | • characteristics of activities (complexity, autonomy, variability)  
• types of competences (functional, cognitive and general)                       | Government resolution on approving the description of the Lithuanian qualifications framework (2010)  
(in English)  
| Luxembourg | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. | Eight            | • knowledge  
• aptitudes  
• attitudes                                                                     | Law on the recognition of professional qualifications (2016)  
(in French)  
Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications (2017)  
(in French)  
| Malta    | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. | Eight            | • knowledge  
• skills  
• competences                                                                    | Legal notice 294 on MQF for lifelong learning regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 327 A31) (2012)  
(in English)  
(in Maltese)  
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| Montenegro     | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education | Eight, with      | • knowledge  
• skills  
• competence                                                       | Law on the MQF (2010)  
(in English)  
(Early) operational | 2014               | http://www.cko.edu.me/default.aspx                               |
|                | and training and from the system of national vocational qualifications (NVQs).         | sublevels at levels 1, 4 and 7 |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
| Netherlands    | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education | Eight, including a | • context,  
• knowledge  
• skills  
• responsibility and independence                                      | Approval of the NLQF by the Dutch Government and the Dutch Parliament (2011)  
|                | and training (except primary education). Open to qualifications offered outside the    | sublevel at level 4 (4+), and an entry level |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
|                | formal education system. Qualifications below EQF level 1 included at entry level.    |                  |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
| North          | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education | Eight, with      | • knowledge  
• skills  
• competence                                                       | Law on the MQF for lifelong learning (2013)  
(in English)  
(Early) operational | 2016               | http://mrk.mk/?lang=en                                          |
| Macedonia      | and training, and from vocational qualifications.                                      | sublevels at levels 5, 6, 7 |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
| Norway         | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education | Seven, with       | • knowledge  
• skills  
• general competence                                                 | Ministerial Decision on the NQF (2011)  
(in English) | 2014               | https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/ |
|                | and training. No descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1.                    | sublevels at levels 5 and 6 |                                                                    | Regulation on the NQF for lifelong learning and on the referencing to the EQF for LLL (2017) (in Norwegian) |                   | https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/ |
| Poland         | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education | Eight             | • knowledge  
• skills  
• social competence                                                  | Law on the integrated qualifications system (2015)  
|                | and training. Open to regulated and non-statutory qualifications awarded outside formal |                  |                                                                    | Operational                                                                                     |                   |                                        |
|                | education and training.                                                                 |                  |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
| Portugal       | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education | Eight             | • knowledge  
• skills  
• attitudes                                                          | Ministerial order on the NQF (2009)  
|                | and training and from the national system for the recognition, validation and          |                  |                                                                    | Operational                                                                                     |                   |                                        |
|                | certification of competences.                                                          |                  |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
| Romania        | Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal          | Eight             | • knowledge  
• skills  
• responsibility and autonomy                                       | Government decision on the approval of the NOF (2013)  
(in Romanian) | 2018               | http://www.anc.edu.ro/                                        |
|                | education and training. Open to qualifications obtained through validation of          |                  |                                                                    | Government decision amending and supplementing GD No 916/2013 on the approval of the NQF (2018) and harmonised with the 2017 EQF recommendation  
(in Romanian) |                   |                                        |
|                | non-formal and informal learning.                                                      |                  |                                                                    | (in Romanian)                                                                                   |                   |                                        |
| Serbia         | Designed as a comprehensive and integrated NQF, and will include all levels and types  | Eight, with       | • knowledge  
• skills  
• abilities and attitudes                                              | Law on the NOF for Serbia (2018)  
(in Serbian) | http://roks.mpn.gov.rs/en/                                    |                                      |
<p>|                | of qualification from formal education and training, and non-formal and informal        | sublevels at levels 6 and 7 |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |
|                | learning.                                                                             |                  |                                                                    |                                                                                                  |                   |                                        |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Includes a sub-framework of occupational qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competences</td>
<td>Act on Lifelong Learning (2009) and amendments to certain acts (2012) (in Slovak) (Early) operational</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/">http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, from the system of national vocational qualifications and non-regulated supplementary qualifications.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competences</td>
<td>Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (2015) (in Slovenian) Operational</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td><a href="https://www.nok.si/en">https://www.nok.si/en</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight proposed</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills and abilities • competence</td>
<td>Royal Decree 1027 (2011) establishing the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES): levels 5-8 (in Spanish) Advanced development stage of NQF for LLL (MECU)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mecd.gob.es/mecu">http://www.mecd.gob.es/mecu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competence</td>
<td>Ordinance (2015:545) on qualifications framework for lifelong learning, including the general framework (in force since October 2015) and the application procedure (in force since January 2016. (in Swedish) (Early) operational</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td><a href="https://www.seqf.se/">https://www.seqf.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive NQF; it will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the national vocational qualification system.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>• knowledge • skills • competence</td>
<td>Regulation on the procedures and principles of its implementation (TQF Regulation) (2015, updated in 2019) (in Turkish) (in English) Regulation on the quality assurance of qualifications to be included in the Turkish qualifications framework (2016) (in Turkish) (in English) (Early) operational</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tyc.gov.tr/">http://www.tyc.gov.tr/</a></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>UK – England and Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Regulated qualifications framework (RQF) covering all regulated general学术 and vocational qualifications and a framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ).</td>
<td>Eight, including entry levels. Entry levels 1 and 2 are below EQF level 1</td>
<td>Level descriptors of the RQF: • knowledge and understanding • skills</td>
<td>General conditions of recognition (2018)</td>
<td>2010 joint UK referencing report; UK (England and Northern Ireland) 2019 update, including referencing of the FHEQ to the EQF</td>
<td><a href="https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/">https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK – Scotland</td>
<td>Comprehensive credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) including all levels and types of qualification.</td>
<td>12, of which, levels 1 and 2 are below EQF level 1</td>
<td>• knowledge and understanding • practice: applied knowledge, skills and understanding • generic cognitive skills • communication numeracy and ICT skills • autonomy, accountability and working with others</td>
<td>Government green paper ‘Opportunity Scotland: a paper on lifelong learning’ (1998)</td>
<td>2010 joint UK referencing report; UK (Scotland) 2018 update</td>
<td><a href="http://www.scqf.org.uk/">http://www.scqf.org.uk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK – Wales</td>
<td>Credit and qualifications framework of Wales (COFW) including all level and types of qualification. It consists of three pillars: regulated qualifications, HE qualifications and lifelong learning.</td>
<td>COFW: eight, including entry levels. Entry levels 1 and 2 are below EQF level 1</td>
<td>Level descriptors of regulated qualifications: • knowledge and understanding • skills Level descriptors of lifelong learning pillar: • knowledge and understanding • application and action • autonomy and accountability</td>
<td>The COFW Common Accord (CCA), 2002</td>
<td>2010 joint UK referencing report; UK (Wales) 2019 update</td>
<td><a href="https://beta.gov.wales/qualifications">https://beta.gov.wales/qualifications</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cedefop.
Stages of NQF development and implementation

Cedefop uses five stages \(^1\) to monitor NQF development and implementation. These are:

(a) conceptualisation and design;
(b) official establishment/formal adoption;
(c) (early) operational stage;
(d) operational stage;
(e) evaluation, impact and (re)design.

Figure 1. Circular and iterative character of NQF developments

The stages are presented in the form of a circle signalling the continuous, circular and iterative nature of NQF developments; their relevance and impact depend on continuous feedback from stakeholders and users.

1. Conceptualisation and design

During this stage countries analyse and define objectives, rationale and architecture for an NQF; the resulting outline forms the basis for dissemination, discussion and technical testing. This is also the stage when relevant stakeholders buy into the process.

Progress indicators:
- (a) rationale and objectives have been agreed;
- (b) the architecture, and the conceptual and technical bases have been created;
- (c) awareness raising, consultation and buy-in of key relevant stakeholders;
- (d) technical testing through projects in selected economic areas.

2. Official establishment/formal adoption

At this stage countries officially establish or formally adopt an NQF. Formal adoption means different things in different countries, reflecting the respective national, political and legislative context and culture. It can range from the introduction of specific NQF acts or government decisions to amendments of existing laws and regulations or stakeholder agreements. While formats vary across European countries, formal adoption is generally a prerequisite for implementation.

In many European countries formal adoption of frameworks has taken longer than initially expected, causing delays in implementation.

Progress indicators:
- (a) NQF policy has been officially established/formally adopted (by NQF act, government decision, stakeholder agreement, etc.).

3. (Early) operational stage

The early (preparatory) operational stage is characterised by concrete implementation actions taken by a country, fully engaging all relevant stakeholders. The recognition of this separate stage reflects the fact that NQF developments require sufficient time, as the move from formal adoption to full operation is demanding and critical for the success of the framework.

Progress indicators:
- (a) implementation structures in place (e.g. fine-tuning governance structures, deciding on leading NQF organisation or partnership);
- (b) introduction and implementation of tools and measures (e.g. by-laws, databases, communication strategies, quality assurance arrangements);
- (c) capacity building of institutions;
- (d) continuing and finalising the allocation of qualifications to levels;
- (e) updating and/or redesigning qualifications based on learning outcomes.

4. Operational stage

The operational stage is the stage of full implementation. The NQF adds value and contributes to meeting the objectives set at the operational stage.

Progress indicators:
- (a) the NQF is a permanent and visible feature of the national education, training and qualifications system, improving transparency by:
  - i. providing a map of, and reference to, all nationally recognised qualifications; this is the case for comprehensive frameworks (implemented in most European countries);
  - ii. indicating NQF levels on certificates and diplomas;
  - iii. providing a reference point for development and review of standards and curricula;
  - iv. providing a reference point for assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
  - v. supporting teachers, trainers and guidance/counselling staff;
  - vi. providing a platform for cooperation of stakeholders across education, training and employment;
  - vii. directly supporting end-users (learners, parents, citizens) to progress in learning and work, notably through qualifications registers and databases;
- (b) the NQF is a permanent feature of the national education, training and qualifications systems, supporting reform and renewal by:
  - i. helping implement learning outcomes across sectors and institutions;
  - ii. opening up to, and including, non-formal qualifications and other types of qualifications;
  - iii. providing information to both education and training, and labour market stakeholders; helping to structure information on skills supply and demand; assisting guidance and career development; helping to identify learning pathways; facilitating certification of experiences gained at work, etc.

5. Closing the circle: NQF evaluation/review and impact

NQFs need to evolve constantly to be relevant and of value. An NQF policy needs to be regularly reviewed and evaluated with respect to its implementation processes, contribution, impact, and to make sure it fulfils its purpose and brings added value to learners and other stakeholders.

Figure 1 above illustrates the circular (and iterative) character of NQF developments, pointing to a need for continuous evaluation and review of the conceptual basis, technical design and stakeholder involvement and buy-in. Another important element at this stage is agreeing on the design and methodology needed to review and evaluate an NQF.

---

1. Informed by the five stages in the change process identified in Cedefop’s 2010 study on changing qualifications; (a) policy discussions; (b) policy; (c) implementation; (d) practice through pilot schemes; and (e) full-scale applied practice. Cedefop (2010). Changing qualifications: a review of qualifications policies and practices. Luxembourg: Publication Office. Cedefop reference series; No 84; p. 17. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3059_en.pdf
OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2019

FURTHER INFORMATION

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