

European Inventory on NQF 2012

BELGIUM

Belgium is in the same situation as the UK in terms of developing and implementing more than one NQF. This reflects the federal structure of Belgium, giving the three communities a wide ranging autonomy in how to organise their education, training and qualifications systems. While the Flemish- and the French-speaking communities have been working on national frameworks since 2005-06, the German-speaking community has only recently decided to start work in this area. The Flemish and the French-speaking communities have been following different pathways, reflecting the substantial institutional and political differences in education and training between the two. The 2011 version of this report questioned whether some form of link between the two frameworks could be envisaged, potentially providing added value to Belgian citizens for mobility within in the country. This challenge has now, July 2012 ⁽¹⁾, been addressed by the adoption of an amendment to the Belgian Federal Law on the general structure of the education system. This amendment states that the EQF levels will be used as a common reference for the three communities in Belgium. The linkages will be further enhanced by the adoption of broadly similar basic principles for the frameworks of Flanders and the French-speaking community. Differently from the UK, however, the three Belgian regions will reference separately to the EQF.

(¹) 3 augustus 2012 – Wet tot wijziging van de gecoördineerde wetten van 31 december 1949 op het toekennen van de academische graden en het programma van de universitaire examens en van de wet van 7 juli 1970 betreffende de algemene structuur van het <hoger> <onderwijs>

Belgium (German-speaking community)

The German-speaking community of Belgium is currently developing its own qualifications framework. Being the smallest part of Belgium (geographically and in terms of population) the framework reflects the work done in the Flemish- and French-speaking parts of Belgium and is also inspired the DQR. The NQF for the German-speaking community will be adopted – through a parliamentary decree – in early 2013. It is foreseen that reference to NQF levels will be introduced into qualifications and certificates in 2013 and that a system for validating non-formal and informal learning will be introduced by 2014.

Main policy objectives

A main objective for the framework is to strengthen international comparability. While subject to Federal laws on education applying in Belgium, the geographic location of the region means that citizens are likely to cross the border for living and working. This makes it a priority to clarify the relationship between own qualifications and those awarded in the neighbouring countries. The framework will also promote equivalence between general and vocational education and training and the shift to learning outcomes is an important step in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability.

Stakeholder involvement and implementation

The framework has been developed over a relatively short period of time, involving all main education and training stakeholders in the region. This includes the social partners who normally play a key role in an education and training system inspired by the German system, both for general and vocational education and training. The framework will be implemented from 2013 onwards, starting with reference to NQF levels in certificates this year. It is envisaged that further development of procedures will take place during 2014.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

An eight-level, learning outcomes based framework will be introduced. The framework builds on the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* (action competence) and distinguishes between subject/occupational specific and personal competences. Level descriptors will be based on the following categories:

Table **Level descriptors of the German-speaking community of Belgium, main categories**

<i>Handlungskompetenz (action competence)</i>			
Subject/occupational oriented competence (<i>Fachliche Kompetenz</i>)		Personal competence (<i>Personale Kompetenz</i>)	
Knowledge	Skills	Social competence	Autonomy

The framework is seen as an instrument for promoting a learning outcomes or competence based approach across the different parts of education and training in the region. The framework distinguishes between general and vocational qualifications (reflecting the parallel distinction made in Flanders and the French-speaking part of Belgium). For general education it is worth noting that general upper secondary education (*Abitur*) is placed at level 4 while the three cycles of bachelor, master and doctor are placed at levels 6-8. In vocational education and training completed apprenticeship (dual system) is at level 4. A master craftsman with two years of training is placed at level 5 or level 6 for three years of training.

Links to other policies and tools

A system for validating non-formal and informal learning is expected to be put in place by 2014. There are no existing plans for using ECVET or ECTS.

Referencing to the EQF

It is not clear when a referencing to the EQF could take place.