

European Inventory on NQF 2012

GREECE

Introduction

Greece is currently developing an NQF for lifelong learning (Hellenic qualifications framework, HQF), which aims to include all parts and levels of education, training and qualification and will accommodate non-formal learning.

The new Act on Lifelong Learning (Act 3879/10) was put in force in September 2010, introducing the development of the HQF and the concept of learning outcomes as essential elements of awards.

Preparatory actions have started. A new institution – National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eoppep) – was set up in December 2011 to develop and put the HQF into practice. Mapping of existing and older qualifications has started to prepare foundations for the NQF. This is supported by methodological instruments (e.g. methodological guides for referencing learning outcomes to HQF levels) available since February 2011. It contains information on the basic principles and methodology on how to express qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and referencing them to the HQF levels.

Main policy objectives

Apart from responding to the EQF initiative, the work on the NQF is directly linked to the country's efforts to develop a framework for further improving lifelong learning policies and practices, which will allow for recognition and certification of all kinds of education and training, including non-formal learning. Compared to other EU countries, the participation of adults in lifelong learning in Greece is among the lowest ⁽¹⁾ and systematic and coherent policies have largely been lacking. Strengthening the learning outcomes dimension in all parts of education and training is considered a precondition for moving towards lifelong learning. This will not only provide the basis for a more transparent and open qualification system, it will also allow individuals to have their learning validated and recognised throughout their lives. The new Law on Lifelong Learning (Law 3879/10), adopted in September 2010 is an important milestone in these developments. There is also broad agreement among different stakeholders on the need to put a validation system in place but practical arrangements have not yet been made. Recognition of learning outcomes was

⁽¹⁾ In 2010 only 3% of adults (25-64) participated in lifelong learning compared to European average of 9.1%. The national target is to reach 6% of adult participation in lifelong learning by 2013. European Commission (2011). *Analysis of the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), country analysis for Greece*, p. 59. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/joint11/wp2_en.pdf [accessed 10.5.2012].

largely dependent on attainment in formal education and training (European Commission et al., 2010, Greece, p. 5) ⁽²⁾ and the system was largely input based.

It is agreed that the NQF could help to address the following challenges and needs:

- to increase coherence and consistency of the national qualification system and reduce fragmentation of current subsystems;
- to improve access and progression possibilities, eliminate dead ends and foster lifelong learning opportunities;
- to develop coherent approaches and procedures to certification and quality assurance;
- to have a solid basis for developing recognition for non-formal and informal learning.

The short-term objective is to develop coherent national certification procedures covering both IVET (there is an existing system) and CVET to support the consistency and portability of qualifications.

In the medium term the following objectives will be pursued:

- to improve the transparency and currency of qualifications through clear learning outcomes description;
- to develop procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning;
- to improve access, progression and recognition possibilities;
- to improve quality and portability of qualifications in general.

Long-term objectives will be developing coherent lifelong learning strategies and practices, improving the coherence of national reform policies, and using the NQF as a development instrument for change.

Stakeholder involvement and framework implementation

The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports is the main national body in charge of developing and implementing the HQF. Stakeholders from public institutions, social partners, representatives of universities and external experts are included. The Ministry of Labour has not been involved so far.

Eoppep was set up to put the HQF and procedures for validation of learning outcomes into practice and assure quality in lifelong learning.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

According to the Law on Lifelong Learning, the HQF will be a comprehensive framework covering all parts and levels of education and training. An eight-level structure has been proposed reflecting existing formal education and training systems in Greece. EQF level descriptors were taken as a starting point and further developed according to national needs. Levels are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Work on level descriptors for HQF and on a qualifications framework for higher education has been taking place

⁽²⁾ *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Greece.* <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77459.pdf> [accessed 26.11.2012].

separately, but the final objective is to have a comprehensive framework, covering all levels and types of qualifications.

Strengthening the learning outcomes approach is seen as an important dimension of current reforms in primary, secondary and tertiary education. A system for occupational standards is currently being developed, seen as a precondition for setting up a system for validating non-formal learning. Additionally, these profiles will be used to review curricula in both initial and continuous VET and for accreditation of training programmes. The new curricula currently being developed are based on the learning outcomes approach.

These developments are supported by the methodological guide for referencing the learning outcomes to the HQF levels and promoting common understanding of the basic terms. They will also render the procedures transparent and promote quality assurance, while assigning qualifications to the HQF levels. A common template for description of qualifications has been prepared.

Working groups have been formed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports to draft the outcomes of qualifications provided in subsystems of formal education and to suggest their allocation to the eight levels of the HQF. This work continues on a technical level.

In general education, a framework for developing a 'new school' has been launched politically and renewal of curricula is planned.

Development works on the QF for higher education have started but level descriptors have not yet been prepared. It is expected that this work will reinforce the learning outcome approach in reorganisation of learning procedures and curricula to promote interdisciplinary and mobility in HE.

Links to other tools and policies

The HQF aims to include non-formal qualifications, mainly awarded in adult and continuing vocational training, and to support the validation and recognition of individual learning outcomes. The new Lifelong Learning Act provides the basis for a more coherent and integrated approach as the coordination of all issues to lifelong learning (including adult learning and initial and continuing VET) is now under the Ministry of Education; previously this was under the remit of the Ministry of Employment (European Commission et al., 2010, Greece, p. 6) ⁽³⁾. Further work needs to be done to put the new legal framework into practice: a system for accrediting the bodies which will be responsible for certifying the qualifications awarded outside formal education is planned.

⁽³⁾ *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Greece.* <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77459.pdf> [accessed 26.11.2012].

Referencing to the EQF

The referencing of the national qualifications system levels to the EQF is scheduled to take place in 2013.

Important lessons and future plans

The involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in HQF development and implementation is seen as crucial, but also a challenge. All subsystems of formal education and training are included via the Ministry of Education, but there is a challenge to link two current development processes, one on NQF for lifelong learning and QF developments in HE. Also, the Ministry of Labour has not yet been involved.

Other challenges ahead include the referencing of the HQF of international sectoral qualifications, as well as of those qualifications acquired through programmes run by foreign universities, which cooperate with private institutions in Greece. There is a clear division between non-university, mostly private, institutions and the university sector, which is public and charges no fees in accordance with the Greek Constitution. Universities have the exclusive right to award traditional higher education qualifications (MA, BA and Doctorate). Referencing higher education qualifications awarded outside traditional universities, using learning outcomes-based level descriptors, is seen as a challenge.

Compared to many other EU countries, Greece has a weak tradition of using learning outcomes for defining and describing qualifications. The main challenges are seen in putting into effect the shift to learning outcomes and developing all necessary methodologies, procedures and standards. It is expected that the HQF will provoke reform of education and training and improve links to the labour market. It will bring to the attention of the general public issues of lifelong learning, validation, informal learning, and quality assurance.

Main sources of information

The National Organisation for Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eoppep) is designated as the NCP.

<http://www.nqf.gov.gr/ΑρχικήΣελίδα/tabid/36/Default.aspx> [accessed 7.12.2012].