

European Inventory on NQF 2012

HUNGARY

Introduction

A comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning was adopted in July 2012 by government decree and published in the Hungarian Official Journal. It will embrace all national qualifications that can be acquired in general and higher education and those vocational qualifications registered in the national qualifications register. All subsystems are included in accordance with the broad (general) national level descriptors which will allow subsystems to adopt more specific descriptors. These developments are designed to support validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The national register of VET qualifications and the current revision of professional and examination requirements in VET, as well as continuing fine-tuning in the cycle system and the focus of regulation towards outcomes in higher education in the Bologna process, contribute to the establishment of a single comprehensive NQF.

Main policy objectives

The development of an NQF will address the following issues:

- promote harmonisation of the different subsystems, helping the national qualification system to become more coherent, and supporting national policy coordination (¹);
- improve transparency, transferability and comparability of national qualifications by showing the relationship between qualifications (there are many qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6);
- support lifelong learning and enable stronger links between adult learning and formal education, awareness-raising related to different learning paths, in the long term: recognition of a broader range of learning forms (including non-formal and informal learning);
- reinforce the use of learning outcomes in standard-setting, curricula and assessment (²) and contribute to the establishment of a common approach for describing learning outcomes in different subsystems;
- through referencing the NQF to the EQF, make Hungarian qualifications easier to understand abroad and make them more comparable, and more transparent, enhancing mutual trust;

(¹) The connections between the management of public education, higher education, vocational education and training and adult training have been weak to date and developments are separated from each other.

(²) The Hungarian education system has traditionally been characterised by a content-based approach to education and assessment with substantial differences between study fields and programmes.

- improve the relevance of qualifications in the labour market;
- support the career orientation and counselling system.

The NQF could play an important role in supporting lifelong learning in Hungary. Adult participation, at 2.8% in 2010, is below the EU average (European Commission, 2011) ⁽³⁾.

Stakeholder involvement and framework implementation

Overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the NQF is shared between the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of National Economy.

The conceptualisation of an NQF started in early 2006 under the Ministry of Education and Culture (now part of the Ministry of Human Resources) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (whose responsibilities are now transferred to the Ministry of National Economy). In June 2008 the government adopted a decision (No 2069/2008) on the development of an NQF for lifelong learning and on joining the EQF by 2013 ⁽⁴⁾. During 2008-10 the NQF developments were taken forward as part of the social renewal operational programme of the new Hungary development plan (2007-13), mostly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) ⁽⁵⁾. A new government decision (No 1004/2011) was adopted in January 2011, which further supports the establishment of a Hungarian qualifications framework to be referenced to the EQF. Based on this decision, the relevant ministries worked together to create – in their respective fields of competence – the necessary legal, financial and institutional conditions for implementing the NQF.

An intergovernment task force was set up in February 2011 to programme, harmonise and monitor all phases of NQF development and implementation. It is chaired by the Deputy State Secretary for Higher Education and Science. It comprises representatives from all the ministries, the National Council for Public Education, the National Labour Office, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, the Higher Education Planning Council, representatives of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. As the technical work is carried out in three separate projects according to the subsystems of education (VET, HE, public education), cross-subsystem cooperation seems to be a challenge.

Administrative support to the task force is provided by the Educational Authority. The national coordination point has been established as a project unit within this institution with the main task of coordinating the stakeholders and preparing the referencing process.

⁽³⁾ *Analysis of the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), country analysis*, pp. 64-70. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/joint11/wp2_en.pdf [accessed 5.12.2012]

⁽⁴⁾ 2069/2008 (VI. 6) *Korm határozata az Európai Képesítési Keretrendszerhez való csatlakozásról és az Országos Képesítési Keretrendszer létrehozásáról [government decision (No 2069/2008) on the development of an NQF for lifelong learning]*. <http://www.okm.gov.hu/kozoktatasi/2069-2008-kormhat> [accessed 5.12.2012].

⁽⁵⁾ *Social renewal operational programme 2007-13*. <http://www.nfu.hu/?lang=en> [accessed 5.12.2012].

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

An eight-level structure has been adopted. Learning outcomes levels are defined in four categories: knowledge, skills/abilities, attitudes and autonomy/ responsibility. The descriptors were based on analysis of existing approaches in the relevant subsystems. Further, subsector-specific developments are planned.

The focus on learning outcomes has strong support among different stakeholders and is the subject of research studies in different education and training subsystems. In recent years, a number of steps have been taken towards a learning outcomes and competence-based approach. As of 2007, a national core curriculum based on key competences has been put in place in school-based education and the national competence assessment has been introduced in public education. Since 2006 the final secondary school examination (maturity examination) has been reformed, enabling more accurate assessment of competences acquired by students. The new core curriculum and curriculum framework of 2012 reregulated the content requirements of public education to achieve unified learning outcomes and results. The new regulation enforced the knowledge elements so they are in balance with the competences.

In VET, the national qualifications register (NQR) was reformed and competence-based vocational qualifications referenced into a five-level structure were developed.

The shift to learning outcomes in post-secondary VET involved the introduction of competence profiles, which are used as the basis for qualifications and curricula design and are at the core of the competence-based examination system. Qualifications consist of core and optional modules. Advanced VET has been reorganised: it now belongs within the scope of HE. Learning outcomes descriptions were prepared in cooperation with providers in 2012 and higher education quality assurance measures apply.

In higher education learning outcomes have appeared in qualifications requirements through regulatory measures and acts. All first and second cycle higher education qualifications in Hungary are described in terms of both inputs and outcomes criteria. However, student-centred learning, outcomes-based orientation and use of learning outcomes in designing programmes and learning units are still key challenges in HE.

Referencing to the EQF

The draft referencing report is expected to be prepared and presented to the EQF AG by 2013.

Important lessons and future plans

One of the main roles of the NQF is to function as an interface between education and the labour market; therefore, it is crucial to get stakeholders on board. As NQF development is running within three separate projects, following three subsystems (VET, HE, public

education), cross-subsystem cooperation is a challenge. There is some kind of coordination mechanism established through representation in the intergovernment task force ⁽⁶⁾.

Main sources of information

The Educational Authority delegates the member of the EQF advisory group, and the role of EQF national coordination point is also carried out by this background institution.

⁽⁶⁾ NCP survey, September 2012.