

# European Inventory on NQF 2012

## SLOVAKIA

### Introduction

In March 2011, set of level descriptors for a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning was approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports. It will include qualifications from all subsystems of formal education and training (VET, general education and higher education). However, the government plans to review the NQF. The process will start in December 2012.

The work is based on the government decision on EQF implementation in Slovakia, adopted in February 2009 <sup>(1)</sup>. This was confirmed by the Act on Lifelong Learning, stipulating the legal background for development of a national qualification system and framework.

A national register of qualifications – the backbone of the national qualification system and the NQF – is being established with the aim of including all national full and partial qualifications with qualifications and assessment standards.

The development is complemented by adoption of the following acts: the Vocational Education and Training Act No 184/2009 <sup>(2)</sup>, the School Act No 245/2008 <sup>(3)</sup>, and the Lifelong Learning Act No 568/2009, adopted in December 2009 <sup>(4)</sup>. To apply the NQF as an integrated tool, changes in this legislation are planned. In November 2012, the amended Lifelong Learning Act introduced NQF into the education sector (Act No 315/2012). The review process for including formal qualifications from primary, secondary and tertiary education into the NQF will start in December 2012 closely linked to development of qualifications and assessment standards. There is a special challenge in including qualifications acquired outside formal education and training in a way that allows for recognition. This will follow in the second phase of the NQF implementation. Describing qualifications in learning outcomes and agreeing on standards for quality assurance are seen as preconditions for including qualifications acquired through non-formal education and training into the NQF.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The decision is only available in Slovak:  
[http://www.rokovanie.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Uznesenie-5819?prefixFile=u\\_](http://www.rokovanie.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Uznesenie-5819?prefixFile=u_) [accessed 5.12.2012].

<sup>(2)</sup> *184/2009 Z.z. Zakon z 23 apríla 2009 o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov.*  
[http://www.tnuni.sk/fileadmin/dokumenty/univerzita/dolezite\\_dokumenty/Zakon\\_184\\_2009\\_o\\_odb\\_ornom\\_vzdelavani.pdf](http://www.tnuni.sk/fileadmin/dokumenty/univerzita/dolezite_dokumenty/Zakon_184_2009_o_odb_ornom_vzdelavani.pdf) [accessed 14.12.2012].

<sup>(3)</sup> *245/2008 Z. z. ZÁKON z 22.mája 2008 o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov* [Education Act No 245/2008 Coll.].  
[http://www.uips.sk/sub/uips.sk/images/PKvs/z245\\_2008.pdf](http://www.uips.sk/sub/uips.sk/images/PKvs/z245_2008.pdf) [accessed 5.12.2012].

<sup>(4)</sup> *568/2009 Z. z. ZÁKON z 1. decembra 2009 o celoživotnom vzdelávaní a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov [Lifelong Learning Act]*  
[http://www.istp.sk/downloads/Pravne\\_predpisy\\_2012/Zakon\\_568\\_2009.pdf](http://www.istp.sk/downloads/Pravne_predpisy_2012/Zakon_568_2009.pdf) [accessed 26.11.2012].

## Main policy objectives

Apart from its transparency function and ease of referencing to the EQF, a comprehensive NQF has the following specific objectives:

- link education and labour market needs better;
- improve the transparency and consistency of qualifications;
- support validation of non-formal and informal learning and enhance lifelong learning.

Adult participation in lifelong learning is below the EU average, at 2.8% in 2010 compared to the EU average of 9.1%. There are plans to review adult learning and continuing VET. Measures are planned to improve the match between labour market needs and skills supply (European Commission, 2011, pp. 128-131) <sup>(5)</sup>. The NQF, with its clear learning outcomes orientation, aims to support these actions.

The main pillars of the NQF are the national register of qualifications and national register of occupations. The aim of the NQF is to create a system environment that will support comparability of learning outcomes achieved by various forms of learning and to enable recognition of real knowledge and competences independently of the way they were acquired. Unified methodology for defining learning outcomes will be prepared and used for developing and renewing state educational programmes and study programmes for continuous training.

## Stakeholder involvement and framework implementation

Work on the NQF was initiated, and is coordinated, by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports. A steering group was established, chaired by the Director General for Adult Education and Youth Division. The members come from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Culture. Administrative and research support is provided by the Ministry of Education. State institutes (State Vocational Education Institute and the National Institute of Pedagogy) are responsible for formal education (including vocational education) and will be involved developing the NQF.

A ministerial working group was created to analyse existing qualifications and to do preparatory work with employers and employees.

Coordination between NQF and Bologna implementation had already been established through cooperation with the national team of Bologna experts and the higher education department at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

A NQF review process is planned to start in December 2012 to link it closely to development of the national system of qualifications.

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<sup>(5)</sup> *Analysis of the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), country analysis.* [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/joint11/wp2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/joint11/wp2_en.pdf) [accessed 5.12.2012].

## Level descriptors and learning outcomes

An eight-level structure was approved to cover the main characteristics of the national qualification system and also be compatible with the EQF in terms of principles, categories and level descriptors. Level descriptors are defined as knowledge, skills and competence. However, they will be subject to further revisions with more focus on skills descriptor to be in line with other national documents and to allow for inclusion of non-formal qualifications.

The learning outcomes approach has been recognised as a part of the reform agenda and is being integrated in all new developments. The modernisation programme Slovakia 21 and the National Reform Programme 2008-10 (Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, 2008) <sup>(6)</sup> were adopted by the government of Slovakia to achieve better visibility of learning outcomes in the education system. The learning outcomes approach is described in action plans, e.g. related to:

- change in accreditation processes at higher education institutions, with the shift of emphasis to the output indicators instead of criteria focused on input;
- improved employability through increased interconnection between the content of education and the demands of the labour market.

In general education (primary/secondary) learning outcomes are being implemented in line with the School Act No 245/2008. At the moment there is a review of state education programmes for general and VET oriented secondary schools.

In VET, the learning outcomes approach is being reinforced through the new Vocational Education and Training Act No 184/2009 and curriculum reform. Renewed examination of educational programmes helps respond better to labour market needs as well as occupations.

It is expected that work on the NQF will have an impact on the use of learning outcomes in higher education.

The Act on Lifelong Learning aims to contribute to unified accreditation and certification practices by recognising full and partial qualifications based on competence acquired regardless of the learning setting. Development of qualifications and assessment standards included in the national register of qualifications is a precondition for recognition of non-formal and informal learning; developments are at an early stage (European Commission et al., 2010, Slovakia, p.4) <sup>(7)</sup>.

## Referencing to the EQF

The referencing report is expected to be presented by second half of 2013.

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<sup>(6)</sup> *National reform programme of the Slovak Republic for 2008–10.* <http://www.finance.gov.sk/en/Default.aspx?CatID=450> [accessed 10.5.2012].

<sup>(7)</sup> *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Slovakia.* <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77480.pdf> [accessed 5.12.2012].

## Important lessons and future plans

To establish a good partnership platform between all stakeholders, involving social partners, is one of the preconditions for developing an NQF.

As there are still discussions on purpose, role and added value of the national qualifications framework, more at political than technical level, progress so far has been slow. Initial expectations that NQF development will be classified as the highest priority have fallen, so it is difficult to operate within the planned deadlines.

The NQF review process is planned for late 2012 to link it to development of the national system of qualifications.

### **Main sources of information**

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports – Adult Education and Youth Division.  
<http://www.minedu.sk> [accessed 17.12.2012].

[www.nkr.sk](http://www.nkr.sk) [accessed 14.12.2012].