

# HUNGARY

## European inventory on NQF 2016

### Introduction and context

Hungary faces several challenges in education and training, such as an increasing percentage of students with low achievement in basic skills, high socioeconomic and regional gaps in relation to student performance, low participation in lifelong learning, and lack of attractiveness and flexibility of the vocational education and training (VET) system. A number of national strategies were adopted in recent years to address these challenges: an early school leaving prevention strategy; a mid-term strategy of public education development; a new concept paper for vocational training; a higher education strategy; and a new lifelong learning strategy (European Commission, 2015).

The comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) for lifelong learning was adopted in July 2012 by government decree and published in the Hungarian official journal <sup>(1)</sup>. It encompasses all State-recognised national qualifications that can be acquired in general education, higher education qualifications (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) <sup>(2)</sup> and those vocational qualifications registered in the national vocational qualifications register (NVQR). Significant progress was made between 2012 and 2014, by further social dialogue and dissemination, developing the methodology for including qualifications in the framework and linking qualifications from all education and training subsystems to the HuQF levels. Inclusion of certain types of non-formal qualifications that are regulated by the Act on Adult Training <sup>(3)</sup> is on the policy agenda.

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<sup>(1)</sup> So far, four government decisions dealt with the establishment of the Hungarian qualifications framework:

- Government Decision No 2069/2008. (VI. 6);
- Government Decision No 1004/2011. (I.14);
- Government Decision No 1229/2012. (VII. 6);
- Government Decision No 1791/2013. (XI. 7).

[http://www.oktatas.hu/LLL/kepesitesi\\_keretrendszer/mkkr/jogszabalyok](http://www.oktatas.hu/LLL/kepesitesi_keretrendszer/mkkr/jogszabalyok)

<sup>(2)</sup> Qualifications acquired in higher education through postgraduate specialisation training are not yet linked to the HuQF.

<sup>(3)</sup> Act LXXVII of 2013 on Adult Training.

[http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV)

The HuQF was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and self-certified to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2015.

## Policy objectives

The main aims for development of the HuQF are to have a comprehensive framework that includes all state-recognised Hungarian qualifications gained at different levels of education and training, and to strengthen the learning-outcomes approach at each level of education. The framework is expected to increase education and training transparency, and compatibility and transferability between national education subsystems and between formal and non-formal pathways.

The HuQF has the following objectives (EQF national coordination point, Hungarian Education Authority (2015):

- (a) to create a coherent national qualification system by bringing together regulative measures of different subsystems of education and training into a unified system, including those acquired outside the formal system;
- (b) to strengthen the outcome-based approach in regulatory documents <sup>(4)</sup>;
- (c) to strengthen quality assurance systems;
- (d) to recognise learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal settings;
- (e) to strengthen coordination of education and training policies and cooperation with stakeholders;
- (f) to orient better the design of new qualifications and education and training programmes, and revision of existing qualifications;
- (g) to provide better support to individual career choices, as well as career guidance and counselling systems;
- (h) to systematise information about qualifications and to make it understandable to employers in a European context;
- (i) to improve the relevance of qualifications in the labour market.

The NQF can also play an important role in supporting lifelong learning in Hungary. Adult participation, at 3.2% in 2014, is below the EU average and one of the lowest in Europe (European Commission, 2015). The need to maintain and

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<sup>(4)</sup> 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.

develop new skills and to adapt to structural challenges is regarded as particularly challenging.

## Levels and use of learning outcomes

The HuQF has an eight-level structure and is viewed as a 'communication framework'. The level descriptors were based on analysis of existing approaches in the relevant subsystems. The hierarchic and cumulative nature of the level descriptions of the EQF has been taken into account and applied in the HuQF as well. Learning outcomes are defined in four categories: knowledge, skills/abilities, attitudes and autonomy/responsibility. The 'knowledge' and 'skills' categories are directly comparable with homologous categories in the EQF, the 'autonomy/responsibility' category shares common features with the 'competence' category from the EQF, while the 'attitude' category (which includes emotional, cognitive and behavioural components in relation to the object of learning) is not present as such in the European framework.

Methodologies were developed within three different projects (one for general education, one for VET, and one for higher education), for linking qualifications to the HuQF. There was regular consultation between those responsible for each subsystem and agreement on common principles.

The focus on learning outcomes has received support mostly from qualification developers and in research studies in different education and training subsystems. It has been mostly driven by EU policy and the need to link the HuQF to the EQF. However, stakeholders' views differ based on their previous knowledge, information and involvement. According to a recent Cedefop study, 'a shift to learning outcomes has not been a clearly articulated policy objective in recent years' (Cedefop, 2016). In practice, the education subsystems differ significantly in the extent to which they are outcome-oriented, and they apply different terminology and varying notions of competence in defining outcome requirements/standards.

In general education, the newest core curriculum, issued in 2012, redefines key competences and broad standards in 10 subject areas as learning outcomes, or outcome requirements; these are described in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, general education in Hungary has placed the main emphasis on process and content regulation since 2010 <sup>(5)</sup>, with the only outcome

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<sup>(5)</sup> The national curriculum (2012) reintroduced the definition of 'mandatory minimum content' (with extensive amounts), which together with the new mandatory, centrally

requirements present as standards in the upper secondary school leaving examination. Since 2005, the final secondary school examination (*maturita* examination) has been reformed, enabling more accurate assessment of competences acquired by students. Secondary education finishes with a school leaving certificate issued after completing the 12th grade and holders can take a secondary school leaving examination in specific subjects chosen at medium or advanced level. Exams measure both declarative knowledge and skill, the ability to apply knowledge. The certificate obtained following the examination is an entry condition to higher education and most higher education courses require the secondary school leaving examination at advanced level.

There have been two VET reforms in the past 12 years: in 2004-06 and in 2011-12. The NVQR was reformed and a modular system and competence-based training was introduced in 2006 (the renewed NVQR was generally introduced in all VET schools from 2008). The 2012 revision of the NVQR kept the competence-based approach and the modular principle. Vocational and examination requirements (VERs) were developed for each qualification, consisting of a 'task competence profile' and an 'attribute competence profile' that lists the vocational knowledge and skills, as well as social (communication, cooperation and conflict-resolution), methodological (logical thinking, problem-solving) and personal (flexibility, creativity, independence) competences required to perform the tasks. Vocational school programmes, which prepare students for State-recognised vocational qualifications, run for three years, simultaneously providing general education and VET. The proportion of practical training in the new three-year programme is significantly higher, while that of vocational theoretical education, particularly general education, is lower. Advanced VET has been reorganised: it is now solely provided by higher education institutions. Learning outcomes descriptions were prepared in cooperation with providers in 2012 and higher education quality assurance measures apply.

Learning outcomes have partly appeared in higher education qualifications requirements through regulatory measures and acts. All first and second cycle higher education qualifications in Hungary, including advanced VET qualifications, are increasingly described in terms of both input and outcome criteria. However, student-centred learning, outcomes-based orientation and use of learning outcomes in designing programmes and learning modules are still key challenges in higher education. In 2016, the new educational and outcome requirements of higher education study programmes have been rewritten in

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published framework curricula and the central selection of textbooks, leave little professional autonomy for schools.

terms of HuQF level descriptors <sup>(6)</sup>. The higher education accreditation committee has to assess new programme proposals in accordance with HuQF-compatible outcome requirements defined in the educational and outcome requirements.

## Stakeholder involvement and institutional arrangements

Overall responsibility for developing and implementing the HuQF, and for initiating related legislation, is shared between the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of National Economy.

Conceptualisation of an NQF started in early 2006; establishment of the framework and its referencing to the EQF was legislated through two government decisions, in 2008 and 2011, respectively <sup>(7)</sup>. During 2008-10, stakeholder involvement in the development of the NQF was ensured through the Social renewal operational programme (SROP) of the new Hungary development plan (2007-13). Between 2011 and 2014, framework development was carried out as part of three different projects of the SROP: one for general education, one for higher education, and one for vocational and adult education. Each of the three projects was responsible for involving their own sector-specific stakeholders through conferences and workshops. To ensure coordination, information sharing, and harmonised working methods, an operational interministerial task force <sup>(8)</sup> was set up and met regularly. A national consultation on the development of the HuQF grid also took place.

The latest government decree <sup>(9)</sup> regulated the governance for the development phase of the HuQF. However, the legal basis for the institutional setting and the operational aspects for the implementation phase are still under discussion. A proposal has been drawn up to adjust the governance structure for the specific purpose of NQF implementation, which has its own challenges, but

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<sup>(6)</sup> Decree No 18/2016 (VIII. 5) of the Ministry of Human Resources on the educational and outcome requirements of higher vocational programmes, bachelor and master programmes and on the modification of Decree No 8/2013 of the Ministry of the Human Resources on the common requirements for teacher training and educational and outcome requirements for teacher training programmes.

<sup>(7)</sup> Government Decision No. 2069/2008 and No 1004/2011.

<sup>(8)</sup> The operational task force consisted of the projects' key experts, the Hungarian national coordination point (NCP) and the Hungarian representative in the EQF advisory group.

<sup>(9)</sup> Government Decree No 1229/2012.

this is yet to be approved <sup>(10)</sup>. Currently, there is a discussion about the future management and sustainability of the HuQF, but no decision has yet been made.

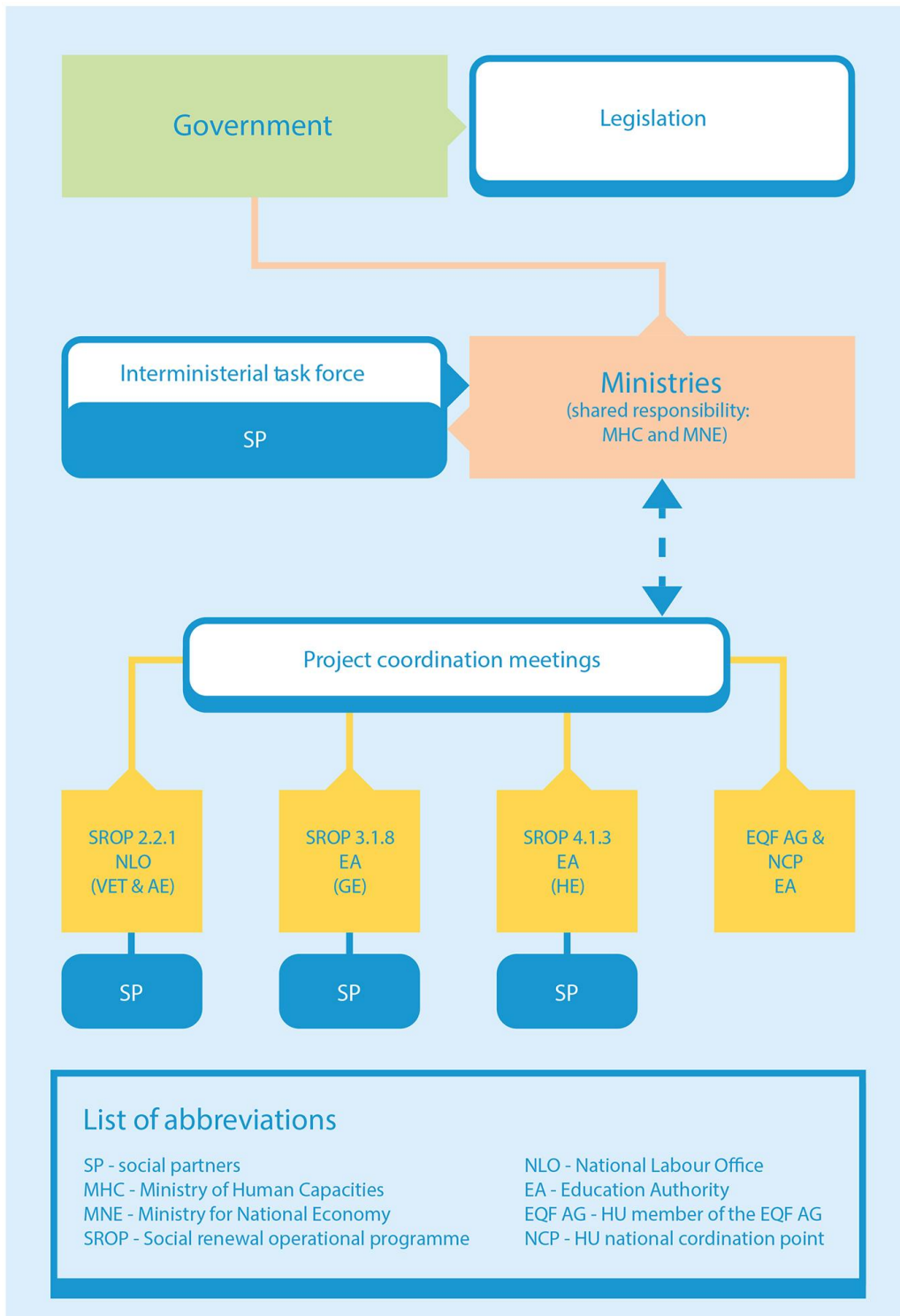
Professional support to the interministerial task force has been provided by the education authority since September 2012. In spring 2012, the national coordination point (NCP) <sup>(11)</sup> was placed within the education authority as a project unit, mainly to coordinate stakeholders and prepare the referencing process. The NCP and the Tempus Public Foundation organised subsector-specific and horizontal consultations and events. Of the three educational subsystems, involving stakeholders from general education remains a challenge to be addressed.

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<sup>(10)</sup> Cedefop (2015). *Survey on the sustainability and visibility of NQFs*.

<sup>(11)</sup> The EQF NCP existed before 2012 within the Ministry of Human Resources.

**Responsibilities related to development and implementation of the Hungarian qualifications framework (\*)**



(\*) VET and adult education are managed by the Ministry of National Economy, while general education and higher education by the Ministry of Human Resources. The National Labour Office falls under the Ministry of National Economy. The Education Authority falls under the Ministry of Human Resources.

Source: EQF NCP, Education Authority, 2015.

## Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways <sup>(12)</sup>

The legal framework governing VET, higher education and adult education allows for validation and recognition of prior learning, but there is no explicit policy on validation of non-formal and informal learning in the country. Practice is still limited. The *Strategic framework for policy of lifelong learning for 2014-20* adopted at the end of 2014, establishes the ground in measure 3.7: ‘development of human resources with the tools of lifelong learning (LLL)’ of the Human resources development operative programme in the new national development plan. The text establishes that the Hungarian Government – following the 2012 Council recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2012) – will engage in establishing a national validation system by 2018. At the moment, there are discussions within the different sectors on how this can be achieved.

According to the amended Higher Education Act (2011) <sup>(13)</sup>, at least one third of the credits in a qualification should be earned in the institution issuing the diploma. Two thirds can be acquired in another way, including through validation of non-formal and informal learning. The development of validation in higher education <sup>(14)</sup> was concluded in 2015 and integrated into the NQF development. In the first phase of the project (2009-11) a model for the validation procedure for higher education was elaborated and disseminated. The second phase of this same project was launched in the middle of 2012: it developed recommendations for higher education institutions taking into account the specificities of different branches and study fields. The text provides ideas on how to organise the validation process at an institutional level <sup>(15)</sup>. A 2015 government decree <sup>(16)</sup> stipulates that validation of formerly acquired non-formal competences (acquired outside the school system, but in training conducted in an organised form),

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<sup>(12)</sup> This section draws mainly on input from the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission et al., forthcoming).

<sup>(13)</sup> Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education.  
[http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV) (in Hungarian only).

<sup>(14)</sup> In the framework of SROP 4.1.3: Social renewal operational programme in the frame of the new Hungary national development plan.

<sup>(15)</sup> Éva Tót (2015) Intézményi validációs rendszer – ajánlások a hazai felsőoktatási intézmények számára/Institutional level validation scheme – recommendations for higher education institutions; p. 62. The text has been distributed in electronic file format (publication on the internet is planned).

<sup>(16)</sup> Government Decree No 87/2015. (IV.9) on the execution of certain provisions of Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education.



informal competences (acquired outside the school system, through experience), competences acquired by learning, and experience acquired through working, may be implemented by validating competence (knowledge, achievement, result, skill, other competences) in a course by means of credits or exemption from the performance of a requirement. The specific procedure is determined at institutional level.

A prior learning assessment scheme in the adult training system has existed since 2001 and aims to customise training provision. The Adult Training Act (2013) <sup>(17)</sup> retained the previous scheme and made assessment of prior learning an obligation in vocational training and language training. These validation procedures, however, do not seem to be much used due to the link between adult education provision and subsidies (European Commission et al., forthcoming).

VET provision is modularised and the qualifications and requirements are described in terms of competences, so VET is closer to the learning outcomes-based approach. Regulation of the VET examination system has been 'open' to validation since 1993 (Law on VET) <sup>(18)</sup>, making it possible for applicants to take an examination without entering a formal VET programme, though this option is not much used.

Without an overall policy and procedure on validation, education institutions tend to operate validation autonomously in the framework of their given legal environment. Adapting to a learning-outcomes approach remains the major difficulty in implementing validation in Hungary. Validation reference standards are those of the formal education system; having input-oriented standards makes it difficult to relate to validation. Further NQF development is expected to assist validation through implementation of the learning outcomes approach and because the framework is open to including qualifications obtained through validation of prior learning achieved in non-formal and informal settings.

## NQF implementation

The HuQF was formally adopted by Government Decision No 1229/2012 and is partly operational. Since the adoption of the framework, its development has been carried out in the three projects of the Social renewal operational

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<sup>(17)</sup> Act LXXVII of 2013 on Adult Training.  
[http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV)

<sup>(18)</sup> Act CLXXXVII of 2011 on VET.  
<http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/getdoc2.cgi?dbnum=1&docid=A1100187.TV>

programme (SROP): VET and adult learning, higher education and general education, following the logic of three education and training subsystems. Over recent years, NQF developments were closely linked to new legal provisions in all subsystems of education and training: new VET law (2011) <sup>(19)</sup>, new law on general education (2011) <sup>(20)</sup>, new act on adult learning (2013) <sup>(21)</sup> and amended law on higher education (2011) <sup>(22)</sup>.

Assigning qualifications to NQF levels has started. First, reference qualifications from higher education and higher vocational qualifications were assigned to NQF levels. A recent government regulation <sup>(23)</sup> made it compulsory for higher education institutions to revisit and adjust the educational and outcome requirements for higher education study programmes in line with NQF descriptors. New higher education programmes will be evaluated and accredited based on the new educational and outcome requirements.

General education qualifications have also been linked to HuQF levels: the leaving certificate awarded after six grades of primary school (to those who move to general secondary schools covering grades 7 to 12), the primary educational qualification certifying the completion of the first eight grades, the secondary educational qualification certifying the completion of secondary education after the 12th grade, the certificate for the secondary school leaving examination, as well as the two bridge programmes <sup>(24)</sup>.

In VET, assignment of VET qualifications to NQF levels started with the qualifications included in the national vocational qualifications register, using technical comparisons between qualifications and NQF descriptors and – if needed – social judgement and examination of legal backgrounds.

For future stages of development, the framework is open to linking qualifications acquired in non-formal settings. Besides linking new and existing

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<sup>(19)</sup> Act CLXXXVII of 2011 on VET.

<http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/getdoc2.cgi?dbnum=1&docid=A1100187.TV>.

<sup>(20)</sup> Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education.

<sup>(21)</sup> Act LXXVII of 2013 on Adult Training.

[http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV).

<sup>(22)</sup> Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education.

[http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV)

<sup>(23)</sup> Government Regulation No 139/2015 (VI. 9) on the qualifications obtainable in the higher education and recording new qualifications in the higher education catalogue.

<sup>(24)</sup> Bridge programmes are one-year programmes that prepare students who have not completed lower secondary studies or who performed so poorly that they were not admitted to upper secondary education to continue their studies in vocational schools.

qualifications to the HuQF, a regular revision of the qualifications framework was proposed on a five-year basis; however no specific policy provision has yet been made on this issue.

The HuQF currently serves as an instrument for transparency and communication of qualifications for experts and stakeholders, and plays a role in the lifelong learning narrative, but concrete implementation actions are still limited. Within its limited budgetary and human resources capacity, the NCP has carried out information and dissemination activities, and staged workshops aimed at raising awareness about learning outcomes approaches among target groups from the different education subsystems.

## Referencing to the EQF

Hungary submitted the referencing and self-certification report of the Hungarian qualifications framework to the EQF and to the QF-EHEA in January 2015 (EQF national coordination point, Hungarian Education Authority, 2015) <sup>(25)</sup>, and the report was approved in the EQF advisory group.

The legal basis for the three education subsystems (the Act on national higher education, the Act on national general education and the Act on vocational education and training) foresees the inclusion of NQF and EQF levels on certificates and diplomas and on the Europass supplements for qualifications linked to the HuQF. In higher education, a regulation <sup>(26)</sup> has been adopted making it compulsory to indicate HuQF and EQF levels in diplomas. In public education <sup>(27)</sup> the modification of the ministerial decree <sup>(28)</sup> on the operation of public education institutions is under way; this will regulate the inclusion of HuQF and EQF levels in official qualifications. Similarly, a 2016 government decree <sup>(29)</sup> on the national vocational qualifications register regulates the possibility for NQF and EQF levels to be added to vocational education certificates.

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<sup>(25)</sup> The report can be found at: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/documentation>

<sup>(26)</sup> Government Decree No 87/2015. (IV.9) on the execution of certain provisions of Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education.

<sup>(27)</sup> Public education includes general education and initial VET (12 years).

<sup>(28)</sup> Ministerial Decree 20/2012 (VIII. 13) on the operation of the public education institutions.

<sup>(29)</sup> Government Decree 25/2016 (II. 25).  
[http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1600025.KOR&timeshift=ffffff4&txtr eferer=00000001.TXT](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1600025.KOR&timeshift=ffffff4&txtr eferer=00000001.TXT)

## Important lessons and future plans

One main role of the NQF is to function as an interface between education and the labour market; it is crucial to get all stakeholders on board. As NQF development has been running within three separate projects, following the three education subsystems (VET, higher education, general education), cross-subsystem cooperation has been a challenge. Particular aspects that could be addressed in the future include the involvement of stakeholders from general education, as well as wider dissemination of the benefits of the framework among end users (students, parents, employers and employees). Awareness among guidance practitioners and employment services could be raised through conferences and seminars <sup>(30)</sup>.

Following the work on NQF development and on the referencing process, implementation of learning outcomes has been identified as a key area for further work. NQF development work and related work on validation has generated common understanding of the learning outcomes approach and initiated revision of regulatory documents. Three supporting projects in school education, VET and higher education have disseminated the learning outcomes approach to a wider circle of stakeholders. However, the education subsystems are at different stages of development in this regard and strengthening the learning outcomes approach would be an essential step before moving on. In line with the lessons of the referencing report on the HuQF, revision of the contents of training programmes leading to qualifications at levels 5, 6 and 7 (higher vocational education and training, bachelor courses, master courses) has been completed in 2016.

An important aspect still to be tackled is laying down regulations for the operational phase of the HuQF. The legislation concerning the overall institutional setting, as well as sectoral regulations for implementation of the framework, are yet to be discussed. An explicit strategic vision to integrate the HuQF in the different education subsystems is still to be defined.

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<sup>(30)</sup> Cedefop (2015). *Survey on the sustainability and visibility of NQFs*.

#### Further source of information

More information is provided on the homepage of the Education Authority, available soon in English as well: <http://www.oktatas.hu/>

## Hungarian national qualifications framework (HuQF)

NQF levels	Types of qualification	EQF levels
8	PhD/DLA (doctor of liberal arts) ( <i>Doktori fokozat</i> )	8
7	Master degree (MA/MSc) ( <i>Mesterfokozat</i> )	7
6	Bachelor degree (BA/BSc) ( <i>Alapfokozat</i> )	6
6	Advanced VET qualifications (entry requirement is BSc degree) ( <i>Felsőfokú szakképzettség</i> )	6
5	Advanced VET qualifications (higher VET programmes – short cycle) ( <i>Felsőfokú OKJ szakképesítés</i> )	5
5	Postsecondary full and add-on* VET qualifications (based on upper secondary school leaving examination) ( <i>Érettségire épülő szakirányú OKJ szakképesítés</i> )	5
4	Certificate for upper secondary school leaving examination ( <i>érettségi bizonyítvány</i> )	4
4	General upper secondary school leaving certificate ( <i>gimnáziumi záróbizonyítvány</i> )	
4	Vocational grammar school leaving certificate ( <i>szakgimnáziumi záróbizonyítvány</i> )	
4	Vocational secondary school leaving certificate ( <i>szakközépiskolai záróbizonyítvány</i> )	
4	Full/add-on* VET qualification of vocational secondary schools ( <i>szakiskolában megszerzhető teljes vagy ráépüléssel OKJ szakképesítés</i> )	4
4	Partial**/full VET qualification of vocational grammar schools ( <i>szakgimnáziumban megszerzhető rész- vagy teljes OKJ szakképesítés</i> )	
3	Leaving certificate and VET qualification (vocational schools for SEN students) ( <i>Speciális szakiskolai záróbizonyítvány és OKJ szakképesítés</i> )	3
3	Lower secondary and secondary*** level partial**, full and add-on* VET qualifications ( <i>Alapfokú és középfokú teljes, rész- és ráépüléssel OKJ szakképesítés</i> )	

NQF levels	Types of qualification	EQF levels
2	Primary (general) school leaving qualification (primary level educational attainment) (eight years) ( <i>általános iskolai záróbizonyítvány</i> ) Leaving certificate of skills development (vocational schools for SEN students) eight years) ( <i>Speciális készségfejlesztő szakiskolai bizonyítvány</i> ) Partial** VET qualification after Vocational Bridge Programme ( <i>Híd program</i> )	2
1	Leaving certificate after six grades of primary school (for those who move to general secondary schools covering grades 7 to 12) ( <i>6. osztályos általános iskolai bizonyítvány</i> )	1

(\*) Add-on qualifications build on one or more full qualifications. These consist of additional modules that extend the scope of activities for which the holder is qualified.

(\*\*) Partial qualifications cover a subset of the modules included in a full qualification. They prepare the holder for simpler occupations or for a narrower scope of tasks.

(\*\*\*) Lower secondary and secondary qualifications have different access requirements.

Source: Hungarian Education Authority, 2016.

## List of abbreviations

CVET	continuing vocational education and training
NQF	national qualifications framework
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
HuQF	Hungarian qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training
NQF	national qualifications framework
NVQR	national vocational qualifications register
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework of the European higher education area
VERs	vocational and examination requirements
SROP	social renewal operational programme

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