



EUROPEAN  
INVENTORY  
OF NQFs 2020

**KOSOVO**

Please cite as:

Cedefop and ETF (2021). *European inventory of NQFs 2020 – Kosovo*.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/kosovo-european-inventory-of-nqfs-2020>

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# KOSOVO (1)

## European inventory of NQFs 2020

### Introduction and context

#### **NQF snapshot**

Kosovo's parliament adopted the country's national qualifications framework (NQF) in 2008, making it one of the early NQFs in the region. Since the 2008 law, Ministers have approved a series of regulations to operationalise the NQF, spanning approval of standards, accreditation of providers, implementation of recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures and other functions.

The Kosovo NQF is a comprehensive lifelong learning framework, encompassing qualifications from all sectors of education, plus non-formal qualifications. It consists of eight levels, defined by three sets of descriptors, and has been developed in close cooperation with stakeholders. It is managed by a dedicated and autonomous agency, the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), and supported by other public institutions with responsibility for the different education sub-sectors: general education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education.

Kosovo's framework closely adheres to the European qualifications framework's (EQF) principles, and the country referenced its NQF to the EQF in 2016.

Kosovo has adopted an extensive legal framework; it has established a dedicated lead agency, qualifications are placed in the NQF and certificates bear level indications. However, the NQF does not yet consistently provide a platform for stakeholders, and it cannot yet be said that it fully supports or influences related reforms in areas such as curricula. The NQF, therefore, is at the activation stage.

#### **Policy context <sup>(2)</sup>**

Kosovo is a relatively new State, gaining independence in 2008. A Stabilisation and association agreement (SAA) between the European Union (EU) and Kosovo came into force on 1 April 2016. The SAA will support the implementation of reforms and move Kosovo closer to the EU.

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(1) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

(2) This section is based on European Training Foundation (2019). *Policies for human capital development in Kosovo. An ETF Torino process assessment*. Torino: ETF.

Kosovo's NQF and VET system must be placed within the context of its recent history, the ongoing political uncertainty, and the resulting economic, social and educational challenges. Unemployment levels remain high, growth is slow, the private sector is small and foreign investment limited. The country largely depends on remittances from the many Kosovars abroad and on donor support.

Before the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, labour market indicators had improved, although Kosovo still lags behind other Western Balkan countries on most indicators. High numbers of new labour market entrants every year and the lack of jobs translate into high inactivity and unemployment rates. In the Western Balkan region, Kosovo records the lowest female activity rate (18.2% in 2019) and the highest youth unemployment rate (49.4% in 2019, though improved from 55.4% in 2018)

ETF estimated in 2019 that 52.4% of the upper secondary cohort, ISCED 3, are in VET schools. On leaving school, most young people, including those obtaining the VET *matura* leaving certificate, aspire to enter higher education institutions, given that university graduates usually fare better in the job market. Even so, employment opportunities are still limited, so that many young people access higher education to defer entry into an unpromising labour market.

A national programme for the period 2017 to 2021 (Kosovo Government, 2017) <sup>(3)</sup> was adopted, consisting of four main elements:

- (a) rule of law: combatting corruption and organised crime by introducing changes in legislation and conducting a full review of the rule of law sector;
- (b) economic development and employment: aiming to bring sustainable economic development to an average annual growth rate of 5-7%;
- (c) Euro-Atlantic integration: strengthening Kosovo's position in the international community by increasing recognition of the State by other countries and ensuring its membership in relevant international organisations;
- (d) sectoral development: with a focus on education, health, social welfare, environment and spatial planning, as well as culture, youth and sport.

In its Economic reform programme (ERP) 2019-21, the government (Kosovo government, 2019) addresses education and training and labour market issues by committing itself to:

- (a) improving the quality of, and increasing the inclusion of children in, pre-university education;

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<sup>(3)</sup> Programi i Qeverisë së Republikës së Kosovës, shtator, 2017. [https://www.min-rks.net/repository/docs/programi\\_i\\_qeverise\\_se\\_republikes\\_se\\_kosoves\\_2017\\_2021.pdf](https://www.min-rks.net/repository/docs/programi_i_qeverise_se_republikes_se_kosoves_2017_2021.pdf)

- (b) increasing the quality of VET-based on labour market requirements by reviewing existing or drafting new standards, curricula and teaching materials; supplying workshop facilities, cooperating with employers and enabling professional practice in schools and companies;
- (c) reforming higher education through completing and implementing the legal framework; developing quality assurance mechanisms; and increasing participation in international higher education and research programmes;
- (d) increasing the access of young people and women to the labour market through quality employment services and active employment and entrepreneurship measures.

National strategies supporting these efforts, which address education and training and other sectors, are the following:

- (a) the National development strategy (NDS) 2016-21 (Prime Minister's Office, 2016) <sup>(4)</sup>;
- (b) the National programme for the implementation of the stabilisation and association agreement;
- (c) the Strategy on education and career orientation 2015-19;
- (d) the Quality assurance strategy for Kosovo pre-university education 2016-20;
- (e) Kosovo's Education strategic plan (KESP) 2017-21 (MES, 2016) <sup>(5)</sup>;
- (f) the sector strategy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare 2018-22 (MLSW, 2017a) <sup>(6)</sup>;
- (g) the action plan: Increasing youth employment 2018-20 (MLSW, 2017b) <sup>(7)</sup>.

### **NQF legal basis**

Law No 03/L-060 on national qualifications, adopted on 7 November 2008, established the Kosovo NQF.

Related legal and regulatory measures are the Law on pre-university education (Law No 04/L -032, dated of 2011), the Law on higher education (Law No 04/L-037, dated of 2011), the Law on adult education and training (Law No 04-

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<sup>(4)</sup> National development strategy 2016-2021, January 2016. [http://www.kryeministriks.net/repository/docs/National\\_Development\\_Strategy\\_2016-2021\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.kryeministriks.net/repository/docs/National_Development_Strategy_2016-2021_ENG.pdf)

<sup>(5)</sup> Kosovo Education strategic plan 2017-2021, December 2016. <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/02/20161006-kesp2017-2021.pdf>

<sup>(6)</sup> Strategjia sektoriale e MPMS 2018-2022, December 2017. <https://mpms.rks-gov.net/en/wpdm-package/strategjia-sektoriale2018-2022/#>

<sup>(7)</sup> Action plan, increasing youth employment: [https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Plani-i-Vepimit\\_Punesimi-i-te-Rinjeve\\_ENG-1.pdf](https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Plani-i-Vepimit_Punesimi-i-te-Rinjeve_ENG-1.pdf)

L-143, dated of 2013) and the Law on vocational education and training (Law No 04/L-138, dated of 2013).

Under the provisions of the law on national qualifications, cited above, the National Qualifications Authority regulates the awarding of qualifications in the framework; exceptions are qualifications regulated under the provisions of the law on higher education and those explicitly regulated by other legislation.

Relevant secondary legislation includes:

- (a) Administrative instruction No 28/2014 on criteria and procedures for the verification of the occupational standards;
- (b) Administrative instruction No 31/2014 for prior learning recognition;
- (c) Administrative instruction No 32/2014 on criteria and procedures for quality assurance in VET institutions' internal processes;
- (d) Administrative instruction No 35/2014 on criteria and procedures for the validation and approval of national qualifications and accreditation of institutions providing qualifications in Kosovo;
- (e) Administrative instruction No 09/2019 on criteria and procedures for the accreditation of institutions that implement recognition of prior learning in Kosovo.

NQF-related legislation includes:

- (a) the Law on vocational education and training (No 02/L-42, 23 February 2006); this defines occupational standards, whereas the Law on national qualifications (No 03/L-060, 7 November 2008) provides a more general definition of standards;
- (b) Law No 04/L-032 on pre-university education in the republic of Kosovo (20 August 2011) addresses levels of qualifications;
- (c) Law No 04/L-037 on higher education in the Republic of Kosovo (20 August 2011), dealing with the levels and the accreditation of higher education programmes and institutions; this is carried out by the KAA, while the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad is carried out by MES;
- (d) Law No 02/L-42 on vocational education and training (23 February 2006) defines qualifications standards, relating to the level of entry and several other definitions (student, diploma, etc.);
- (e) Law No 02/L-24, on adult education and training (22 July 2005) defines certification as well as informal and non-formal learning.

Other relevant laws are:

- (a) Law No 04/L-143, on adult education and training (2012);
- (b) Law No 03/L-068, on education in the municipalities of Kosovo (2008);
- (c) Law No 03/L-018, on final examination and the State *matura* examination (2008);

- (d) Law No 02/L-52, on pre-school education (2006);
- (e) Law No 06/L-046, on the education inspectorate in the Republic of Kosovo (2019).

## Policy objectives

### **Education and training reforms**

The Kosovo qualifications framework is central to the government's aim to improve the quality of the education and training system and to drive it towards EU standards.

The Kosovo NQF is explicitly intended as a reform instrument and is perceived as a key tool in building and structuring the national education system. It should, therefore, not only relate or link the different sub-sectors of the national system but initiate and stimulate curricular and qualifications redesign and promote institutional change.

Kosovo's vision for VET system development is for an inclusive education system, based on lifelong learning principles, and offering quality education to all. The Government is continuing education reform towards increasing quality in pre-university education, improving the teaching career system, better reflection of economic demand in VET programmes and expansion of practical components.

The country's guiding document in education and training is the Kosovo Education strategic plan (KESP) 2017-21. It is the second KESP, following the first, which ran from 2011 to 2016. KESP 2017-21 was drafted by drawing on the evaluation of KESP 2011-16, and the National development strategy, which recognised the need for investment and improvements in education, including VET, in order to turn Kosovo's labour force into an engine for development. KESP 2017-21 intends to link education policy to the National development plan, emphasising the need for a more labour market-responsive education and training system. KESP 2017-21 specifies measures to improve governance and to increase the quality of education in general.

The strategy in VET focuses on improving the relevance of school programmes in the light of labour market needs, the development of a VET-specific core curriculum in alignment with the Kosovo curriculum framework, offering systematic provision of high-quality work experience and professional practice. Specific to Kosovo it also covers the further development and sustainability of the six centres of competence.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST, now the Ministry of Education and Science, MES) established the Agency for VET and Adult

Education (AVETAE) and the Council for VET and Adult Education (CVETAE) in 2014. The full functioning of these two institutions is a challenge and a prerequisite for creating a more coherent approach in VET and adult education. In essence, their function is bringing together the full range of VET stakeholders for better cooperation between the public and private sectors.

### **Aims of NQF**

The objectives of the national qualification system, based around the NQF, are to:

- (a) improve the recognition of qualifications at all levels of formal and non-formal education and training;
- (b) ensure that qualifications meet the needs of the labour market, economy and society;
- (c) regulate qualifications, assessment and certification, based on quality and standards;
- (d) improve access to assessment, including recognition of prior learning;
- (e) make the qualifications system flexible and transparent.

## **Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications**

### **NQF scope and structure**

The qualifications law (2008) <sup>(8)</sup> defines the NQF as the national mechanism for classifying qualifications awarded within the national qualification system according to a set of criteria.

The Kosovo NQF consists of eight qualifications levels, covering general education, higher education, and vocational education and training sectors. It is a lifelong learning framework, so that its qualifications cater to all types of learning contexts, such as formal, non-formal and informal learning. The qualifications levels are learning-outcomes-based, as per the existing levels descriptors, distinguishing knowledge, skills and wider competences.

The descriptors, as well as the framework overall, are strongly influenced by the EQF and draw on elements of other existing NQFs, such as the Scottish qualifications framework. They have been designed and developed, though, for Kosovo's conditions.

### **Types of qualifications**

There are six specified types of qualification recognised in the NQF:

- (a) higher education qualifications;

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<sup>(8)</sup> Law No 03/L-060, law on national qualifications.

- (b) general education qualifications;
- (c) combined national qualifications;
- (d) national professional qualifications;
- (e) qualifications based on international standards;
- (f) customised qualifications.

Qualifications are developed on unit or modular structures, in both VET and higher education.

### **Quality assurance of qualifications**

The legal basis for quality assurance is provided by: Law No 03/L-060 on qualifications: Article 5 (NQF), Article 15 (Regulation of the award of qualifications).

NQA is responsible for standard-setting for the validation (approval) of qualifications and the accreditation of providers (authorisation to develop, offer and assess qualifications). Qualifications/modules are developed by MES, AVETAE, relevant ministries and other providers, public, private and third-sector. The NQA itself does not develop qualifications

VET qualifications must be based on occupational standards if they are to be placed in the NQF; they are the starting point for outcomes-based curricula and outcomes-based qualifications. Occupational standards are developed in cooperation with MES, MLS and other relevant ministries and social partners. They are verified by the NQA and, in theory, should be approved by the CVETAE but, as CVETAE is still not fully functioning, it is NQA which still approves the standards.

Occupational standards should be used to provide a reference point for identifying the learning outcomes that should be covered in different modules of the qualifications. The main tasks generally identified in the standards will lead to the definition of modules for learning and assessment.

The validation process of qualifications, specified in law, is transparent and consists of four stages. In stage one the institution seeking validation of a qualification/module makes an application to the NQA, clearly stating the rationale for the qualification/module. In stage two, a panel of experts appointed and supported by NQA evaluates the application. In the third stage, the experts' report and recommendations are presented to the Governing Board of NQA for the final decision and, in stage four, the approved qualifications/modules are included in the NQF and made public.

Qualifications or modules that are proposed for validation must state the following <sup>(9)</sup>:

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<sup>(9)</sup> National Qualification Authority (2020). *National qualification framework*. [https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/national\\_qualification\\_framework\\_handbook\\_2020.pdf](https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/national_qualification_framework_handbook_2020.pdf).

- (a) title of qualification/module;
- (b) rationale/justification;
- (c) purpose of the qualification/module, target group;
- (d) NQF qualification/module, level and credit value;
- (e) entry requirements and access;
- (f) opportunity to progress after completion of the qualification/module;
- (g) qualification structure;
- (h) evaluation forms for the qualification/module (assessment);
- (i) quality assurance arrangements;
- (j) other detailed specifications.

Decisions on the level at which each qualification is placed in the NQF are based on their match against level descriptors. Once qualifications are validated and placed in the NQF, the NQA publishes its decisions on the NQA website.

Criteria for the validation of a qualification by the NQA for inclusion in the NQF include ensuring:

- (a) delivery, assessment and certification of the qualifications are supported by an effective quality assurance system including institutional self-assessment and monitoring;
- (b) candidate records are sufficient to meet the requirements for internal and external quality assurance of the assessment and certification processes and to provide verifiable evidence of candidates' achievements.

Kosovo has adopted a national quality assurance framework (NQAF) in VET in line with the European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (EQAVET). The aim is to build a functional system of quality assurance for VET qualifications and to meet the needs of Kosovo society and European standards.

NQAF has six quality principles, each of which is defined by the following quality indicators:

- (a) management responsibilities (15 criteria);
- (b) resource management (nine criteria);
- (c) design and development (12 criteria);
- (d) learning, assessment and certification (28 criteria);
- (e) self-evaluation (13 criteria);
- (f) continuous improvement (10 criteria).

The NQA administrative instruction defines the process of accreditation <sup>(10)</sup>. So far, the NQA has accredited 60 providers/institutions (45 private vocational training centres (VTCs), 11 public VTCs (which provide training for adults, including jobseekers) and other VET providers, two public VET schools, two private VET schools). NQA has admitted 88 VET qualifications to the NQF. These come from:

- (a) public VET schools/CoCs, accredited to provide eight qualifications;
- (b) private VET schools, accredited to provide six qualifications;
- (c) public VTCs and other VET public providers, accredited to provide 16 qualifications;
- (d) private VTC, accredited to provide 57 qualifications.

As most public VET providers have difficulties in meeting the challenging criteria for accreditation, their qualifications largely remain outside the NQF. Public VET schools basically offer learners what they have available: the prevailing conditions in the schools and the availability of subject teachers determine the programme, rather than what may be identified as labour market need. VET schools and their governing boards, as a rule, cannot freely decide about the courses they provide.

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is the institution responsible for quality assurance in the higher education system. The criteria for the evaluation and procedures for accreditation of higher education institutions include internal policies and procedures for quality assurance of their study programmes and awards. In higher education 22 institutes are accredited and 293 qualifications are levelled in the NQF. KAA is also responsible for accrediting post-secondary VET colleges.

### **Use of learning outcomes and standards**

The NQF is built on the principles of learning outcomes. The qualifications are defined through the learning outcomes which state what the learner is expected to know and to be able to do on the successful completion of the module or of the full programme. For professional qualifications, the learning outcomes derive directly from the competences identified in the occupational standards.

Law No 03/L-060 (Article 2) defines standards as measurable indicators of achievement, defined either in terms of qualitative or quantitative criteria that are required to be achieved by candidates for the award of qualifications.

There are two main applications of the term 'standards' in the context of the development of a system of professional qualifications for Kosovo. Occupational

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<sup>(10)</sup> Administrative Instruction No 35/2014 on criteria and procedures for the validation and approval of national qualifications and accreditation of institutions providing qualifications in Kosovo.

standards are descriptions of expected work tasks and responsibilities in a given occupation. Learning outcomes within the adopted qualification standards are measures of assessed learning achievements.

Defining occupational standards should be the starting point for development of curricula and assessment for outcomes-based VET qualifications and competence-based VET programmes. This is not yet the case for the combined national qualifications, not even with the latest VET curriculum reform implemented by teachers under the guidance of MES.

The specifications for a vocational education and training qualification also include a description of how the qualification links to employment structures, and evidence of consultation with labour market stakeholders.

### **Credit systems**

One of the objectives of the NQF is to facilitate the accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes between different learning contexts or systems; this includes outcomes acquired via formal and non-formal learning. Such transfer should support learners' geographic and occupational mobility by enabling them to accumulate and combine learning outcomes from different settings and use them in different education pathways.

The NQA has developed a VET credit system based on ECVET recommendations. One credit is awarded for 20 notional learning hours.

The NQA's credit system uses learning outcomes, categorises qualifications by measuring the volume of learning, and identifies providers that have a role and responsibility in allocating credit. The NQA regulates the credit system by accrediting providers and setting criteria to determine which providers can submit qualifications for inclusion in the NQF. These criteria include strict procedures for allocating credits, which ensures that providers have the necessary capacity and expertise <sup>(1)</sup>.

A credit system has been established for the higher education sector and is aligned to the European credit transfer system (ECTS).

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<sup>(1)</sup> National Qualification Authority (2020). *National qualification framework*. [https://akkks.rks.gov.net/uploads/national\\_qualification\\_framework\\_handbook\\_2020.pdf](https://akkks.rks.gov.net/uploads/national_qualification_framework_handbook_2020.pdf)

## Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

### **Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF**

The NQA, established in 2008, has overall responsibility for implementing the NQF. It has nine staff members and a governing board of 13 members who represent VET, general education, higher education, trades unions, employers and employers' organisations, chambers of commerce and voluntary bodies. It is also the designated agency in international cooperation.

### **Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders**

While the NQA leads and coordinates the NQF, it shares responsibility for developing and implementing the framework with MES and the agencies, KAA for higher education, and CVETAE and AVETAE in VET. However, for capacity reasons, these last two agencies are not yet able to fulfil all their functions in line with the NQF provisions. Government and donors are working with the Council to remedy this situation.

The NQA is responsible for registering VET and adult education qualifications developed by providers such as VET schools or special professional schools or academies, such as the police college, within the framework. It is responsible for the accreditation of VET providers and conducts quality assurance processes relevant to the validation, assessment and certification of these qualifications to ensure they are of sufficient quality to be included in the NQF.

MES oversees general education qualifications and develops secondary school-level general qualifications, such as the lower secondary leaving diploma and the upper secondary *matura*.

In higher education, the KAA oversees higher education provision and accredits higher education institutions as providers. Universities generally develop their own qualifications, quality assured by the KAA. The KAA is overseen by its governing board, the National Quality Council.

CVETAE is the advisory body for VET and adult education policies to the Minister of Education and Science in Kosovo. It is a tripartite body, engaging government, employers and trade unions in VET. CVETAE consists of 15 members, who represent the education and labour ministries, other relevant ministries, NQA, AVETAE, the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce and the social partners.

CVETAE has statutory responsibility for approving occupational standards for the VET system. It is the responsibility of CVETAE to ensure that the standards proposed meet the needs of Kosovo's labour market as well as ensuring support

from all interested parties. It forwards approved occupational standards to the NQA for the verification process.

AVETAE has extensive responsibilities in VET, including the coordination of study programmes concerning VET and adult education, engagement of social partners and supervision and coordination of the development of occupational standards. Although AVETAE is supposed to fulfil this function for all VET schools, it currently does so only for the six so-called centres of competence, which are donor-funded VET schools that specialise in one sector, e.g. business/commerce. Its relationship with the NQA and other actors and their respective remits needs to be clarified as the agency develops.

Stakeholder involvement outside the key institutions is developing but is still quite limited. However, this situation is not unique to the NQF or wider education and training; it reflects the position in society generally, where civic institutions are still developing.

## Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

### VNFIL arrangements <sup>(12)</sup>

Design of a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Kosovo commenced in 2011, with the endorsement of the national qualifications framework (NQF) and the development of the first guidelines on the benefits and uses of recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Since then, national policies, secondary legislation and training modules for the implementation of RPL have been developed. Two bylaws have been developed and endorsed by the Minister of the MES:

- (a) Administrative instruction No 31/2014 for recognition of prior learning, endorsed in 2014. This outlines the scope, general provisions, principles, responsibilities and procedures for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, within all the levels of the NQF.
- (b) Administrative instruction No 09/2019 on criteria and procedures for the accreditation of institutions that implement recognition of prior learning in Kosovo, endorsed in 2019. This outlines principles, responsibilities and procedures for accreditation of VET providers to implement RPL. However, it

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<sup>(12)</sup> This section is based on Danuza, T. (2019). *Implementation of the 2012 Council recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning. One-off report: Kosovo.*

includes only the accreditation of CVET qualifications and does not cover IVET qualifications.

Both administrative instructions are in alignment with the Council recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Kosovo is currently at the beginning of the implementation of validation in VET: RPL is only possible for national vocational qualifications that are quality-assured by validation and approved on the NQF. There are 62 validated and approved national professional qualifications in the NQF but, at this first stage of implementation, RPL is limited to the pilot qualifications: welding, electro-installation and hairdressing. The idea of the IPA/LuxDev 2018 ESVET-PRO project is to offer RPL as an active labour market measure; project leaders launched a call for applications from people who would like to have their skills assessed and recognised for these three pilot qualifications.

Implementation of RPL was supposed to start in 2020 but was delayed due to the Covid-19 situation. So far, seven providers have applied for accreditation to conduct RPL; five for qualifications for hairdressing and two for welding. One provider (hairdressing) has been accredited and one accreditation is still in process. The other five submissions will be reviewed in 2021. The NQA, with support of DVV International, delivered training sessions for RPL practitioners and NQA's external assessors in October 2020.

Kosovo presented the one-off report on VNFIL to the EQF advisory group in February 2020, describing the legislation developed and the next steps to be taken in implementing RPL.

## NQF implementation and impact

### **Key achievements and main findings**

Since the 2018 inventory, progress has been most conspicuous in preparing the conditions for the implementation of RPL. Secondary legislation has been adopted and the accreditation of providers to conduct RPL has started. Piloting is under way. Kosovo also presented its one-off report on VNFIL to the EQF advisory group in February 2020.

The number of VET qualifications in Kosovo's NQF has increased significantly since 2018, rising from 27 that year to the current 88. The number of occupational standards adopted has increased from the 2018 figure of 88 to 116 now. A further 20 standards are currently undergoing verification.

The NQA also published a new handbook on the NQF in Kosovo: [Korniza kombetare e kualifikimeve – brendia anglisht.cdr \(rks-gov.net\)](#). The handbook covers the most recent revisions to the NQF.

### **Qualifications registers and databases**

Validated qualifications are included in the register. To date, 88 VET qualifications have been validated and registered in the NQF, at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. Currently, there are students enrolled to pursue about 90% of these qualifications. Universities develop their own qualifications, quality-assured by the KAA; 293 higher education qualifications have been included in the NQF.

Qualifications in general education are awarded at the end of a learning programme by MES. These qualifications are developed, and quality assured by the pre-university education department of MES, based on national standards for the qualifications and their curriculum areas. They are automatically part of the NQF. The standard general school-leaving qualifications is the *matura*, at Level 4.

### **Qualification documents**

NQF and EQF levels appear on qualification documents issued by providers in continuing VET and higher education and, in some cases, initial VET. Europass supplements are used for both higher education and VET.

### **Career information and guidance <sup>(13)</sup>**

The MES, with support from LuxDev, has created a platform for professional orientation, career education and guidance: Busulla.com. The platform supports both pupils and students, as well as institutes in career education and guidance.

The platform offers several tools and information concerning the following steps in career orientation:

- (a) self-recognition through career tests;
- (b) validation of career-related skills: basic check potential assessment test
- (c) exploring the labour market;
- (d) exploring education institutions in Kosovo;
- (e) identifying job and/or internship opportunities;
- (f) online advisor.

The platform offers institutes, policy-makers and business four modules to aid interaction between education and the labour market:

- (a) industrial liaison;
- (b) training needs assessment;

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<sup>(13)</sup> Based on Zelloth, H. (2018). Busulla.COM The online platform for professional orientation, career education and guidance. *Live&Learn, 2018*.

- (c) skills and knowledge needs assessment;
- (d) monitoring and evaluation.

### **Recognition of foreign qualifications**

Kosovo's NQF provides a basis for cooperation and mutual recognition of higher qualifications with other countries. A first step is ensuring compatibility with the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area* developed by ENQA.

## **Referencing to regional framework/ other frameworks**

### **Referencing to regional frameworks**

Kosovo has been a member of the EQF advisory group since 2015 and referenced its NQF to the EQF in 2016.

### **International cooperation**

A key objective of the NQF, specified in the NQF law, is to provide a basis for cooperation and mutual recognition between the NQF and the EQF. NQA is the designated national coordination point for participation in the EQF process.

ENQA has changed the status of the KAA to 'under review', a downgrade from its previous assessment. The KAA is a full member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). For external political reasons, Kosovo does not take part in the Bologna process.

### **International donor support**

EU assistance to Kosovo under the priority sector Education, employment and social policies (financial assistance under IPA II) has several goals: improving the functioning of the labour market; raising education standards; promoting skills development; and restructuring the social welfare system.

Both IPA 2017 and IPA 2018 support the further development of the NQF in Kosovo, and specifically the further implementation of RPL.

A large international donor community is active in the country. NQA receives donor support from DVV International in development of vocational qualifications. Other donor support to Kosovo's VET system comes from international organisations including the UN and bilateral donors such as Luxembourg and Germany.

## Important lessons and future plans

One of the most important developments since the previous inventory in 2018 is the adoption of the administrative instruction to accredit providers for RPL, which provides for further implementation of RPL.

While the NQA is a critical actor in VET reform in Kosovo, the overall education governance structure is complex. This hinders optimal use of the NQF and its further developments. ETF's latest Torino process assessment<sup>(14)</sup>, written in 2019, recommended that the authorities revisit the current governance arrangements in VET to achieve a more coherent structure.

The Law No 03/L-060 on national qualifications has been supported by different secondary legislation to support the implementation. Different objectives have been stated in the law and secondary legislation, but, so far, no monitoring or evaluation has been conducted to examine to what extent these objectives have been met or how far the procedures work. Evaluations could also help to revise procedures based on actual experience in order to optimise them. Specific attention could be paid to the impact on end-users.

Another key challenge is to ensure the full engagement and active participation of the various stakeholders such as departments, social partners, agencies and institutions necessary to ensure sustained implementation of the NQF in the long term.

Although the number of occupational standards has substantially increased in recent years, the number of approvals could be increased by identifying priority occupations.

The number of accredited qualifications developed by VET providers is still limited. This also relates to another challenge: the actual implementation of the qualifications developed. VET providers need to be prepared and equipped to deliver them. VET curricula currently follow a subject-based approach and the system distinguishes between general subjects, vocational theory and practice teachers. So, qualifications and curricula are not closely linked. Teachers lack insight into the world of work and links to organise work-based learning are missing.

There are plans to develop more level 5 qualifications. This is welcome, but a challenge is to ensure that candidates completing the level 5 qualifications can progress to higher education.

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<sup>(14)</sup> European Training Foundation (2019). *Policies for human capital development: Kosovo. An ETF Torino process assessment*. Torino: ETF

### **Main sources of information**

The National Qualifications Authority of Kosovo (EQF NCP): <https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/>

KQF/EQF website: <https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/national-qualifications-framework>

Qualifications database: <https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/registration-of-qualifications>

National Qualifications Authority (2016). EQF referencing report of Kosovo:

[https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/kosovo\\_eqf\\_referencing\\_report\\_2016.pdf](https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/kosovo_eqf_referencing_report_2016.pdf)

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (responsible for higher education qualifications):

<http://www.akreditimi-ks.org/new/index.php/en/>

The Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology: <http://masht.rks-gov.net/en>

## Kosovo qualifications framework (KQF)

KQF level	Qualifications		EQF level
	Award type	Qualification type	
8	Doctorate – Bologna 3rd cycle	A	8
7	Master – Bologna 2nd cycle	A	7
6	Bachelor – Bologna 1st cycle	A	6
5	Diploma from formal providers Certificate from non-formal providers	A, C, D, E	5
4	<i>Matura</i> certificate (general or vocational education) Vocational education diploma	B, C, D, E, F	4
3	Vocational education certificate (two years) Certificates from non-formal VET providers	B, C, D, E, F	3
2	Certificates from non-formal providers	B, C, D, E, F	2
1	Certificates from non-formal providers	B, C, D, E, F	1

NB Types of NQF qualifications: higher education qualifications (A); general education qualifications (B); combined national qualifications (C); national professional qualifications (D); qualifications based on international standards (E); customised qualifications (F).

Source: National Qualification Authority. *National qualifications framework (NQF)* (not yet published).

## Acronyms

AVETAE	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
CVETAE	Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
CEENQA	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

IPA	Instrument for pre-accession assistance
KAA	Kosovo Accreditation Agency
KESP	Kosovo Education strategic plan
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
NQA	National Qualification Authority
NQAF	national quality assurance framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
RPL	recognition of prior learning
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning
VTC	vocational training centre

## References:

- Cedefop (2020). *National qualifications framework developments in Europe 2019*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.  
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4190>
- Danuza, T. (2019). *Implementation of the 2012 Council recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning. One-off report: Kosovo*.
- European Training Foundation (2019). *Policies for human capital development: Kosovo. An ETF Torino process assessment*. Torino: ETF
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[https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/national\\_qualification\\_framework\\_handbook\\_2020.pdf](https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/national_qualification_framework_handbook_2020.pdf)
- Zelloth, H. (2018). Busulla.COM. The online platform for professional orientation, career education and guidance. *Live&Learn, 2018*.