

LIECHTENSTEIN

European inventory on NQF 2016

Introduction and context

In 2011, the government decided to develop an integrated national qualifications framework for lifelong learning for Liechtenstein (NQFL). From the beginning, the development of NQFL was closely coordinated with Switzerland with whom Liechtenstein has established a common VET system. Switzerland adopted and put in place a national qualifications framework (NQF) for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF VPET) ⁽¹⁾ in October 2014 ⁽²⁾ and referenced it to the EQF in spring 2015 (Swiss Confederation State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, 2015). Liechtenstein has adopted, within its own qualifications framework, the vocational and professional education and training (VPET) framework employed in Switzerland. VPET qualifications are classified by Switzerland and finally approved by the Liechtenstein Government (Ministry of Education, 2016).

In 2013, a qualifications framework for higher education, defined in terms of learning outcomes in line with the qualifications framework in the European higher education area, was adopted and included in higher education law ⁽³⁾; it was self-certified against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA). It constitutes an integral part of the NQFL for lifelong learning. As in Austria and Germany, general education is currently not included in the framework.

The NQFL was referenced to the EQF in October 2016 and has reached operational stage.

⁽¹⁾ The German abbreviation used to refer to the Swiss national qualifications framework for vocational and professional education and training is NQR-CH-BB.

⁽²⁾ Information regarding the adoption of the framework is published on:
<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/de/home/themen/berufsbildung/nqr/europaeischer-qualifikationsrahmen.html>

⁽³⁾ Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein (2013). Qualifikationsrahmen für den Hochschulbereich im Fürstentum Liechtenstein (NQFL-HS) [Qualifications framework for higher education in the Principality of Liechtenstein].
http://www.llv.li/files/sa/pdf-llv-sa-qualifikationsrahmen_fuer_den_hochschulbereich_im_fl_nqfl_hs_2013.pdf

Policy objectives

The NQFL, and certificate and qualification supplements aim at improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications from Liechtenstein and referencing them to the EQF.

More specifically, the NQFL aims to:

- (a) describe adequately the education system, improving the transparency, the clarity and the comparability of qualifications in VET, higher VET and higher education;
- (b) support, in terms of labour market needs, an employer's assessment of the skills of vocational graduates from Liechtenstein and enable similar process for graduates with qualifications from abroad;
- (c) improve the employability of Liechtenstein-educated specialists and managers in the country and abroad. (Ministry of Education, 2016: 25)

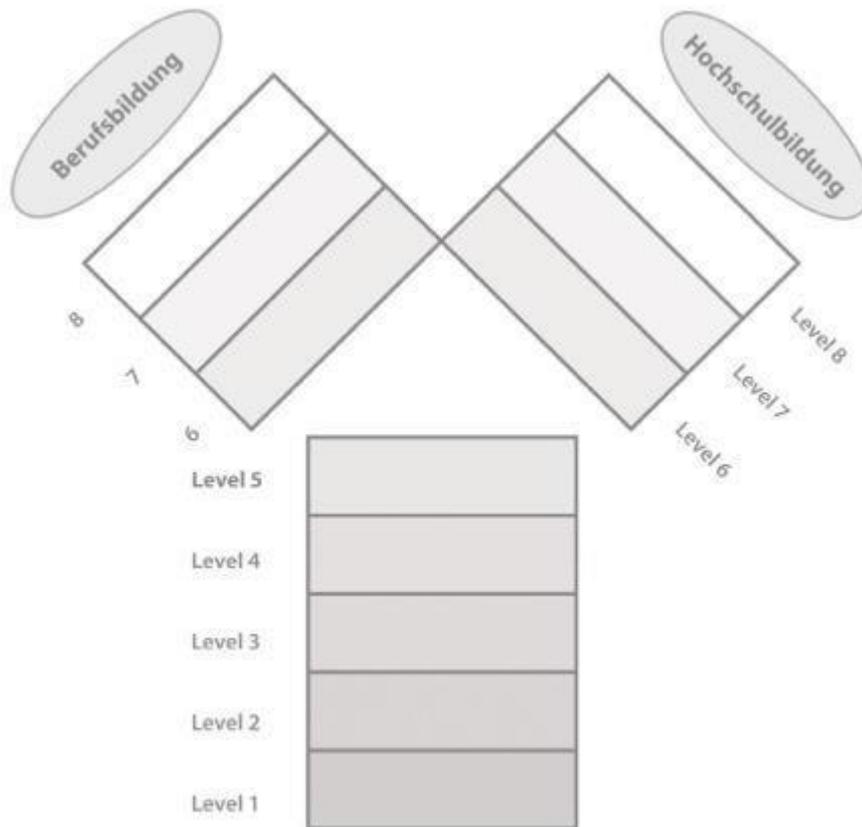
In the longer term, NQF is seen as a tool to support lifelong learning through better understanding of qualifications and learning opportunities, improved access to and participation in education and training, and valuing all learning outcomes, in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Levels and use of learning outcomes

The NQFL comprises eight levels. Competence-oriented descriptors describe requirements for each level; these are closely aligned with the EQF descriptors, but also adjusted to suit specific national features. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Knowledge refers to declarative knowledge and is further subdivided into knowledge and understanding. Skills refer to the capacity to apply knowledge and solve problems: distinction is made between procedural and sensorimotor skills. Competences express application of knowledge and skills in the work context and are subdivided into professional and social competences.

An important characteristic of the NQFL is that levels 5-8 are also open to higher vocational qualifications awarded outside higher education.

Figure 1. Y-Model of NQFL



Source: Ministry of Education (2016).

All subsystems have taken important steps in implementing a learning outcomes approach, but to varying degrees. Learning outcomes already play an important accreditation role in higher education; a qualifications framework for higher education was implemented in 2013. In general education, standards were introduced in 2010 and subsequently tested for grades 3, 4, and 8. A competence-based approach is being strengthened in teaching and evaluation of general education. In line with the amended VET law in 2008 ⁽⁴⁾ qualifications

⁽⁴⁾ Article 6 of the Vocational Training Act: Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein (2008). Berufsbildungsgesetz [Vocational Training Act]. Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt [Liechtenstein law gazette], 412.0, No 103. <http://www.nqfl.li/Portals/0/BBG.pdf>

and curricula have been revised with stronger focus on competences and equipping students with the competence to act (*Handlungskompetenz*) (Cedefop, 2016).

Stakeholder involvement and institutional arrangements

The NQFL is supervised by the Ministry of Education. The National Agency for International Educational Affairs (AIBA) ⁽⁵⁾ has been appointed the EQF national coordination point (NCP). AIBA is an independent institution, supervised by the Ministry of Education.

For public involvement and information, the NQFL website (*Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein*) was established in spring 2013, providing information and updates ⁽⁶⁾.

Liechtenstein started the Bologna process several years ago and this is now an integral part of the University of Liechtenstein. The NQFL builds on experience in developing the qualifications framework for higher education.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways ⁽⁷⁾

The 2016 inventory on non-formal and informal learning describes validation of non-formal and informal learning in Liechtenstein as quite pragmatic due to the country's size; it follows a similar approach to that developed in Switzerland but there is no holistic approach. However, validation approaches have been developed in the initial VET and higher education, taking into account different target groups, responsibilities and methods. The Vocational Training Act determines that admission to any examination or qualification does not depend on undertaking specified educational programmes; it is also granted if applicants have at least five years' work experience.

⁽⁵⁾ AIBA website: <https://www.eeagrants-li.com/>

⁽⁶⁾ NQFL website: *Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein*:
<http://www.nqfl.li/>

⁽⁷⁾ 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., 2016).

Most development in higher education has occurred in the past five years. The Education Authority (*Schulamt*) regards development of the national qualifications framework for higher education (*Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein für den Hochschulbereich*) (NQFL-HS) as an opportunity for anchoring lifelong learning more within higher education, and for improving validation and recognition of prior learning achieved outside the higher education system. The legal bases for admission to higher education have been formalised. The Law on higher education regulates conditions and process of admission without a *matura* certificate ⁽⁸⁾ and limitation of crediting learning acquired outside the higher education system. It is possible to recognise non-formal and informal learning as contribution to achieving a qualification, up to a maximum of one sixth of the necessary workload (European credit transfer and accumulation system credit points) for the whole qualification. Standards used in VET and higher education for validation, are those of existing programmes. The validation process in VET is based on a similar process to that developed by Switzerland, following a similar series of steps. The NQFL offers opportunities to integrate further non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

NQF implementation

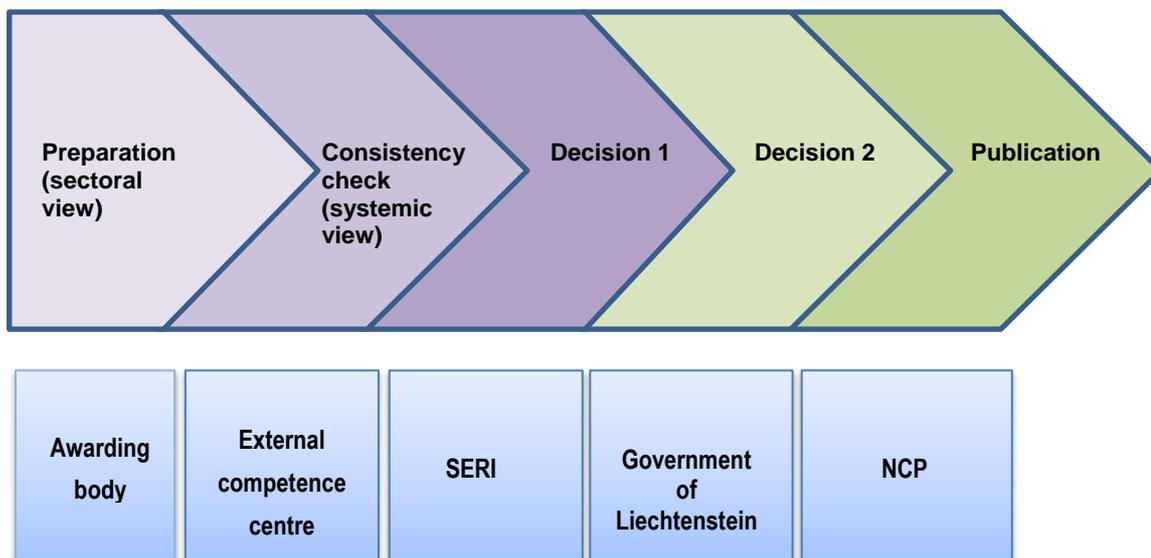
The NQFL for VET is regulated at ordinance level, expected to be adopted by the government in January 2017. The process of assigning each qualification to the NQF level will be carried out by Switzerland. As of July 2016, a total of 82 qualifications ⁽⁹⁾ have been attributed levels in Switzerland. The Liechtenstein Government will approve, in a separate procedure, those qualifications assigned by SERI. The national coordination point – AIBA – will then publish the register and necessary documents on the website. This register will consist of all VPET qualifications in alphabetical order.

⁽⁸⁾ Article 24 of the Higher Education Act: Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein (2005). Gesetz über das Hochschulwesen (Hochschulgesetz; HSG) [Law on higher education (Higher Education Act; HSG)]. *Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt* [Liechtenstein law gazette], 414.0, No 2.
<https://www.gesetze.li/lilexprod/lgsystpage2.jsp?formname=showlaw&lgblid=2005002000&gueltigdate=07032017>

⁽⁹⁾ The list can be found at:
<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/de/home/themen/berufsbildung/nqr/das-verzeichnis-der-eingestuften-abschluesse.html>

Figure 2 outlines the main steps in the levelling process.

Figure 2. **Main steps of the levelling process.**



Source: Ministry of Education, p. 29.

The NQF for higher education (NQFL-HE) is already operational.

Referencing to the EQF

The NQFL was referenced to the EQF in October 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Further sources of information:

Ministry of Education: <http://www.regierung.li/ministry-for-foreign-affairs-education-and-culture/links/>

National Agency of International Education Affairs in Liechtenstein (AIBA): <https://www.eeagrants-li.com/>

Figure 3. Levels assigned to different types of qualifications

NQF VPET level	Qualification type
8	
7	
6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

NB:

- Federal VET certificate, two years vocational education and training at upper-secondary level.
- Federal VET diploma, three to four years vocational education and training at upper-secondary level.
- Federal PET diploma, part-time tertiary level professional education and training.
- PET college degree is a diploma from a college of professional education and training, tertiary level professional education and training (minimum two years academic study or three years part-time study with work placement).
- Advanced federal PET diploma, part-time tertiary level professional education and training.

Source: SERI, 2015.

List of abbreviations

AIBA	National Agency of International Education Affairs
EQF	European qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
NQFL	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein [national qualifications framework Liechtenstein]
NQFL-HS	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein für den Hochschulbereich [national qualifications framework for higher education]
SERI	Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation [State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation]
VET	vocational education and training
VPET	vocational and professional education and training

References

- Cedefop (2016). *Application of learning-outcome approaches across Europe: a comparative study*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3074>
- European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2016). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016: country report Liechtenstein*.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>
- Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein (2011). *Bildungsstrategie Fürstentums Liechtenstein 2020 [Education strategy of the Principality of Liechtenstein for 2020]*. Vaduz: Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein.
http://www.regierung.li/fileadmin/dateien/downloads/AEusseres_Bildung_Kultur/Bildungsstrategie_2020.pdf
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