

LITHUANIA

European inventory on NQF2016

Introduction and context

The Lithuanian qualifications framework (LTQF) was formally adopted through a government resolution on 4 May 2010 ⁽¹⁾. The LTQF is based on eight learning outcomes levels, and covers all officially recognised qualifications in general (primary and secondary) education, vocational education and training and higher education. Two amendments to the Law on education (17 March and 24 August 2011) clarified the role and function of the framework. A joint referencing/self-certification to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) was completed in late 2011. Lithuania was one of the first countries (in 2013) to start indicating NQF and EQF levels in vocational education and training (VET) certificates and diplomas. The LTQF can be considered as operational.

Policy objectives

The development of the LTQF forms part of a (more than) decade-long effort to reform and modernise Lithuanian education and training. The national education strategy for 2003-12 stressed the need for flexible and open education structures, for better coordination between general and vocational education and training, and for stronger links to non-formal and informal learning ⁽²⁾. The LTQF supports this strategy and addresses five main objectives:

- (a) the framework should play a role in better adapting qualifications to the needs of the labour market and society;

⁽¹⁾ Government of Lithuania (2010). Resolution on approving the description of the Lithuanian qualifications. *Official gazette*, No 56-2761, 4 May 2010, pp. 1-8.
http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTQF_official_translation.pdf [accessed November 2016].

⁽²⁾ Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (2003). *Provisions for the national education strategy 2003-12*, No IX-17000, 4 July 2003.
<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2003/lithuania-resolution-provisions-national-education-strategy-2003-2012-no-ix-1700-4-july-2003> [accessed November 2016].

- (b) it should help to improve the clarity of qualifications design to improve assessment and recognition;
- (c) it should increase transparency of qualifications and assist individuals in using them;
- (d) it should support national and international mobility;
- (e) it should encourage lifelong learning and allow individuals to build on outcomes of non-formal and informal learning.

The Lithuanian NQF covers complete or full qualifications. However, some work has been carried out to introduce units of qualifications, defined as the combinations of the competences needed for executing certain tasks. This work has yet to be concluded. The LTQF includes qualifications awarded by formal education and training. There are currently no plans to open the framework up to qualifications offered by the private or non-formal sectors.

Levels and use of learning outcomes

The eight levels of the LTQF combine the existing structure of the Lithuanian qualifications system with the descriptor principles introduced by the EQF. Two existing level arrangements (the five vocational education levels introduced in 1997 and the three levels (cycles) of higher education introduced in 1992) directly influenced the design of the LTQF. The level descriptors are defined according to two parameters: focusing on activity characteristics and on types of competences.

Table 1. **Level descriptors in the Lithuanian NQF**

Parameters	
	Types of competences
Characteristics of activities	Types of competences
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complexity of activities • autonomy of activities • variability of activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functional competences • cognitive competences • general competences

While the distinction between cognitive, functional and general competences broadly reflects the EQF distinction between knowledge, skills and competence, the activity criteria can be seen as a further development and specification of the third EQF pillar, focusing on autonomy and responsibility. The combination of the two parameters allows for detailed description of each level.

The learning outcomes (competence) approach is broadly accepted and implemented in all areas of Lithuanian vocational education and training. VET has used a learning outcomes or competence approach for several decades, partly linked to the introduction of VET standards in the early 1990s. An effort to review and redefine VET standards is currently under way, covering qualifications for all sectors of the economy.

During 2010-15 the Centre for Development of Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training implemented the ESF-funded project *Development of qualifications and creation of the modular VET system* with the goal of developing the national system of qualifications through sector-based occupational standards and corresponding national modular VET curricula. Project follow-up will be launched at the end of 2016, aiming for the development of occupational standards for the remaining economic sectors.

The methodology for designing occupational standards has been based on a combination of competence and work-process analysis approaches. It involved an important shift from functional analysis, which was previously applied in the design of initial VET standards, to work-process analysis. One of the key advantages of this latter approach is potentially identifying and covering all qualifications required for the execution of work processes in the economic sector, as well as mapping the links and interrelationships between the qualifications inside the sector and between the sectors.

Ten sectors have been addressed so far: energy production and distribution, hotels and restaurants, construction, IT and communications, transport and storage services, woodworking and furniture production, textile and leather processing, healthcare and beauty services, agriculture, forestry, fishery and food industry, engineering industry (machinery production)

This revision of standards also covers professional qualifications at levels 6 and 7, signalling that the learning outcomes approach is being implemented in higher education as well as in traditional VET. The level descriptors of the LTQF are used as an explicit reference point for this exercise and help to improve consistency between single qualifications and across the different sectors.

The traditional university sector is also progressing in implementing the learning outcomes approach. LTQF descriptors are taken into account when designing study field descriptors and are used as reference points for the development, review and renewal of university programmes and qualifications.

Implementation of the LTQF is seen as an important part of a strategy to move towards a more consistent and comprehensive use of learning outcomes across education and training levels and types. Initiatives taken to address the use of learning outcomes in general education exemplify this. In 2015 a

description of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary programmes was approved (with changes in April 2016); this defines learning outcomes for each level of general education programme in line with the EQF. It also legitimates that learning outcomes at lower secondary education level are referenced with level 3 of LTQF and learning outcomes at upper secondary education level are referenced with level 4 of LTQF.

Stakeholder involvement and institutional arrangements

Work on the NQF was initiated by the Labour Market Training Authority of Lithuania, which launched an ESF-funded project for NQF design in 2006. Following extensive technical work, a National Authority of Qualifications was established in 2008 to coordinate NQF implementation. This authority was abolished in 2009, following the election of new Parliament late 2008. The Ministry of Education and Science then took over the main responsibility for NQF development in 2009 and has retained this role since. The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC) ⁽³⁾ has been responsible for day-to-day coordination since 2009 and was also appointed as national coordination point for the EQF at this point. In 2013, the Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (SKVC) ⁽⁴⁾ was officially delegated to take part in the coordination and implementation of the LTQF, with a particular focus on universities.

The influence of labour market stakeholders has been strengthened by the involvement of the Central Professional Committee (CPC) in referencing the LTQF to the EQF. The CPC also plays a key role in LTQF implementation, notably in relation to continuing revision of vocational and occupational standards. The CPS is a tripartite committee, established under the Law on VET, signalling the need for active involvement of stakeholders outside education and training. The involvement of the CPC helps to broaden the base and overall credibility of the LTQF to labour market stakeholders. There are also established sectoral professional committees: multilateral bodies at economic sector level, mainly responsible for the assessment and quality assurance of occupational standards and qualifications.

⁽³⁾ Qualification and VET Development Centre (QVETDC):
<http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/en/>

⁽⁴⁾ Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education: <http://www.skvc.lt/en/>

While some progress has been made in coordinating VET and higher education, general education involvement in the LTQF is limited and needs to be strengthened.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways ⁽⁵⁾

Lithuania is building a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Several laws have been amended in the last few years to pave the way for this, both at national and sectoral levels. Building a system for validation is seen as a priority, with related measures included in recent policy documents: National education strategy for 2013-22 ⁽⁶⁾; Programme for increasing employment for 2014-20 ⁽⁷⁾; draft non-formal adult education development action plan ⁽⁸⁾. There is currently no formal strategy in place, but the laws referred above enable people to validate their learning in the VET and higher education sectors, and employment (though this last option is not yet fully developed). The conceptual model of the NQF includes the possibility of acquiring qualifications through validation of non-formal and informal learning; however, there are no concrete measures in place to support take-up. Regulations for validation and recognition of qualifications include three main elements: assessment regulations, assessment methods, and assessment and accreditation of institutions. The standards system is still incomplete with only VET standards in place, so procedures for validation are mainly developed within VET.

An accredited competence assessment institution has the right to assess competences acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes,

⁽⁵⁾ 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).

⁽⁶⁾ Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (2013). *National education strategy for the period 2013-22*. No XII-745, 23 December 2013. <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.463390>

⁽⁷⁾ Government of the Republic of Latvia (2013). *Programme for increasing employment for the period 2014-20*. No 878, 25 September, 2013. http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=456810&p_tr2=2

⁽⁸⁾ Draft non-formal adult education development action plan for 2014-16 [*Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo plėtros 2014-16 metų veiksmų planas*]. <http://www.smm.lt/web/lt/teisesaktai/teisesaktuprojektai> [accessed 10.11.2016].

employment activities or informally. The list of accredited competence assessment institutions is published on the website of the QVETDC ⁽⁹⁾. A representative from formal VET (a VET teacher) is one of the three assessors on the competence assessment panel that operates in each of the accredited institutions.

The 2010 order on recommendations on the assessment and recognition of non-formally acquired competences in higher education institutions only briefly outlines this process for higher education, leaving full responsibility for the development of validation (including methodologies and the process) to higher education institutions themselves.

NQF implementation

While the LTQF entered into an early operational stage following referencing to the EQF in 2011, there has been a continuous process aiming at developing the work. The impact of the framework is visible in three main ways. First, Lithuania was one of the first countries (together with Denmark) to start indicating NQF and EQF levels in the annexes of VET certificates and diplomas since 2016. While still limited to initial and continuing VET qualifications, this approach will be extended to other parts of education and training (but will require changes in regulations). Second, the LTQF levels are used as a reference point and benchmark for review and renewal of qualifications. This is illustrated in the design and implementation of the occupational standards, covering both initial VET and higher, professional education and training. Third, the LTQF has been used as a reference point for developing post-secondary VET qualifications at level 5 of the NQF. The development and implementation of the LTQF demonstrated this missing link in the national education and training system and has directly influenced reform and modernisation of the system

⁽⁹⁾ List of accredited competence assessment institutions (not available in English): http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1488 [accessed 10.11.2016].

Referencing to the EQF

The Lithuanian NQF was referenced to the EQF in November 2011, with one integrated report covering both the EQF and QF-EHEA. The report outlines a one-to-one relationship between LQF and EQF levels.

Further sources of information:

The Qualification and VET Development Centre has been appointed as the EQF national coordination point: <http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/en/>

The Lithuanian national qualifications framework (LTQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree	8
7	Master degree	7
6	Bachelor degree Professional bachelor degree	6
5		5
4	Matura certificate (on completion of the secondary education programme and passing <i>matura</i> examinations) VET diploma (completion of initial and/or CVET at attainment level 3)	4
3	Vocational qualification certificate (completion of initial and/or CVET at attainment level 2)	3
2	Basic education certificate (completion of basic education programme and testing learning outcomes) (grades 5 to 10)	2
1	Primary education certificate (completion of primary education programme) (grades 1 to 4) Qualification certificate (completion of CVET at attainment level 1)	1

Source: QVETDC, 2012.

List of abbreviations

EQF	European qualifications framework
LTQF	Lithuanian qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework for the European higher education area
QVETDC	Qualifications and VET Development Centre
VET	vocational education and training

References

European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2016). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016: country report: Lithuania*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

QVETDC (2012). *Referencing the Lithuanian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: national report 2012*. Vilnius: QVETDC.
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/LTQF_EQF_report_ENG.pdf