



EUROPEAN
INVENTORY
OF NQFs 2024
MONTENEGRO

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1. Introduction

The Montenegrin Qualifications Framework (MQF) was adopted in 2010. It is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework consisting of eight qualification levels, with sub-levels at levels 1, 4 and 7, and includes all types and levels of qualification.

The Montenegro Qualifications Council (MQC) coordinates the framework. Montenegro is a candidate for EU accession and a full member of the EQF Advisory Group. It referenced the MQF to the EQF and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2014.

The MQF is at the operational stage.

2. National context

2.1 Policy context

Montenegro is committed to [European integration](#), and assimilates wholly to the EU agenda in education and training. It is implementing the [EU Council Recommendation on VET](#) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience and the [Osnabrück Declaration on VET](#), via its [National Implementation Plan \(NIP\)](#).

Montenegro's population was estimated at circa 600 000 in 2023 by the Statistical Office of Montenegro ⁽¹⁾ and is on a downward trend, due to migration and a reduction in natural population growth.

In 2023, Montenegro experienced strong economic growth, estimated at 5.8 %, largely driven by a successful tourist season and increased private consumption, supported by the influx of foreign nationals. However, it is expected that figures will show that this growth will slow between 2024 and 2026 ⁽²⁾.

In upper secondary education, almost 70 % of students were enrolled in VET programmes in 2022-23 –this represents a significantly higher proportion than most countries in the region. Participation in lifelong learning, including adult learning, remains low, with only 4.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) engaged in such programmes in 2022, compared to the EU average of 10.8 %. Women had a

(1) Cited in [Key policy developments in education, training and employment - Montenegro 2024 | ETF](#)

(2) EC, 2024a,c; IMF, 2024 as cited in [Key policy developments in education, training and employment - Montenegro 2024 | ETF](#)

slightly higher participation rate than men (5.1 % compared to 4.2 %³), and most adult learning occurs outside the formal education system, typically as part of publicly funded labour market initiatives.

Education and training reform

National VET priorities in Montenegro are defined by 4-year VET strategies. [The current VET Development Strategy 2020-2024](#) focuses on providing quality and inclusive education as the basis for lifelong learning, economic and social integration, personal and professional development of the individual, with an effective system of management and financing.

Its objectives include the development of qualifications relevant for the labour market, modularized educational programmes based on learning outcomes and including professional and key competences; establishment of a quality assurance system in vocational education at national and school levels in accordance with EQAVET; enabling access to training and qualifications for adults by supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning, recognition of prior learning, providing career guidance and counselling services and making information about qualifications and learning opportunities easily accessible.

Specific actions in VET are defined in the associated action plans and the National Implementation Plan for the Osnabrück Declaration (NIP). The general objectives and measures of the National Implementation Plan until 2025 include:

- (a) strengthening quality assurance in VET with a focus on work-based learning (WBL).
- (b) boosting the lifelong learning dimension within VET, aiming at increased participation; greening of VET programmes; greening VET and promotion of key competences.
- (c) stronger linking of VET provision to labour market needs, via development of national and regional skills intelligence systems; establishment of a graduate tracking system; improved and more extensive career guidance and counselling.
- (d) digitalising VET, through support to VET teachers and trainers.
- (e) NIP reconfirms the priority of developing qualifications that respond to the needs of the labour market, including meeting the demands of the green and digital transitions, and the development and recognition of skills in a lifelong learning perspective. It emphasises the role of the MQF in providing information about qualifications to end-users.

³ [Key policy developments in education, training and employment - Montenegro 2024 | ETF](#)

The [Education Reform Strategy for the Period 2025-2035](#) adopted by the Government in April 2025 aims to focus education on learning outcomes that are clearly defined according to the needs of the labour market and society, as well as to make education more responsive to the needs of the labour market and better prepared for employment. It also promotes lifelong learning as a key component of a modern education system.

It further aims to develop qualifications that are relevant to the needs of the labour market, especially in the context of the green and digital transitions and emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning. The Strategy envisages the reform of curricula in line with learning outcomes, thus ensuring the quality and relevance of education at all levels.

2.2 NQF legal basis

The [Law on the National Qualifications Framework](#) was adopted in 2010, defining the principles and objectives of the framework, its levels and sublevels, qualification types and governance structure. Related regulations in education and training include the Law on national vocational qualifications ⁽⁴⁾. A set of rulebooks and methodological documents set out more detailed procedures for specific aspects of NQF development and implementation ⁽⁵⁾.

In May 2025, Montenegro's parliament adopted several amendments to the Law on the National Qualifications Framework. These provided for:

- (a) the introduction of microcredentials as a qualification type.
- (b) harmonisation of certain provisions within the NQF Law with amendments to the Law on Higher Education (see text below on related legislation).
- (c) harmonisation of the NQF law with other regulations.
- (d) Other legislation related to the MQF and the Law on the National Qualifications Framework includes:
- (e) the Law on National Vocational Qualifications, adopted in May 2025.

⁽⁴⁾ Law on national vocational qualifications [Zakon o nacionalnim strucnim kvalifikacijama], Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 80/08, 14/09, 80/10, 18/11, 40/11 and 40/16.

⁽⁵⁾ Rulebook on descriptors for qualification levels and sub-levels, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 51/11. Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from level 1 to level 5, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 21/12. Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from level 6 to level 8, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 21/12.

- (f) the Law on Vocational Education ⁽⁶⁾, which stipulates that qualifications acquired in secondary education are classified in the MQF according to the levels of education, as presented in the MQF Table.
- (g) the [Law on Higher Education](#) which specifies that study programmes are a basic component for the classification of higher education qualifications. The right to enrol in basic academic and applied studies is granted to a person who has acquired the appropriate level of education – MQF level 4.1. The Law defines a student's workload during the academic year as 60 ECTS credits. The Law introduces a diploma supplement as a public document that is attached to a diploma, providing more detailed insight into the level, nature, content, system and rules of study and the results achieved during the studies of the person to whom the diploma was issued.
- (h) the new Law on Adult Education, adopted in May 2025, which aims to ensure that every individual has access to education through various forms of learning. It seeks to support people in upskilling and re-skilling themselves to adapt to the modern, ever-changing labour market. The law stipulates that adult education can be provided in, or take place in, formal education, non-formal education, informal learning, and self-education contexts or environments.

3. NQF objectives and functions

The Law on the National Qualifications framework defines the MQF as an instrument for the classification, comparison, development and understanding of qualifications, the relationships between them, and the pathways for acquiring qualifications to meet the needs of the labour market and society.

The main objectives of the MQF as defined by the Law on the MQF are:

- (a) to achieve a clear definition of qualifications using learning outcomes.
- (b) validation of qualifications of different types within the qualification system.
- (c) supporting and promoting lifelong learning.
- (d) connecting and aligning the different parts of the education and training system.
- (e) indicating horizontal and vertical progression pathways across and within the education and training system.
- (f) aiding international comparability of qualifications.
- (g) promoting key vocational competences.

⁽⁶⁾ Law on Vocational Education. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro*, No. 04/02, 49/07, 45/10, 39/13, 47/17, 145/21

(h) quality assurance of the qualifications system.

Functions of the MQF are: dissemination of outcomes approaches in standards and qualifications; classification of qualifications in levels and sublevels; providing a structure for credit transfer; enabling linking of the country's qualification systems and qualifications – via the EQF - with those of EU countries; quality assurance of qualification development and acquisition through criteria-setting for inclusion of new qualifications; serving as a platform – facilitated by the coordinating body of the MQF – for cooperation among all stakeholders; increasing education system coherence by linking the different education and training subsystems; [supporting lifelong learning](#), especially to support adults by recognising their skills through qualifications; increasing employability via linking qualifications with labour market needs, and, most urgently, to equip Montenegrins for the transition to the digital and green economy.

4. Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

The Montenegrin National Qualifications Framework (MQF) is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework open to qualifications acquired through formal and non-formal or informal learning. It consists of eight qualification levels, with two sub-levels each at levels 1, 4 and 7.

Level descriptors are learning outcomes based, defined for each level or sub-level, and increasing in complexity from level 1 to 8. They follow the EQF categories of learning outcomes: knowledge (factual and theoretical), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (autonomy and responsibility) ⁽⁷⁾.

Sub-levels descriptors within a level are similar but were introduced to address the different types of qualifications related to the requirements of the labour market.

4.2 NQF scope and coverage

The MQF includes four qualification types:

- (a) Educational qualifications are attained upon completion of a formal education programme in general education, VET, and higher education, and represent attainment of an education level.
- (b) National Vocational Qualifications or NVQs, are based on occupational standards. They can be acquired following an assessment of the candidate

⁽⁷⁾ Level and sublevel descriptors are defined in the rulebook on level and sublevel qualification descriptors, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 51/11. Pravilnik o opisu nivoa i podnivoa kvalifikacija (www.gov.me)

on completion of formally recognised training, either: part of a formal education programme in the form of modules or courses; an adult education programme; a special training programme in higher education; or through validation of non-formal and informal learning.

- (c) Additional qualifications are other qualifications that are acquired outside those programmes leading to the educational or vocational qualifications mentioned above. They supplement a person's qualification level, testifying acquisition of additional knowledge, skills, and competence, and may be a prerequisite for working in a specific field.
- (d) Microcredentials are obtained upon completion of an education programme, following a prescribed assessment to achieve the required qualification scope. It can be recognized in the process of acquiring a professional qualification or an education level qualification.

Primary and secondary general education qualifications are allocated to MQF levels 1 and 4, VET qualifications correspond to MQF levels 2-5, while higher education qualifications are allocated to MQF levels 6-8. National Vocational Qualifications can be allocated to any MQF level.

Overview of the Montenegrin National Qualifications Framework

NQF levels	Educational qualifications (formal education)	National vocational qualifications (NVQs) (*)	EQF levels
8	Diploma of doctoral studies	NVQ	8
7.2	Diploma of master studies (**) Diploma of master studies	NVQ	7
7.1	Graduate specialist academic and applied studies diploma Higher education diploma (**) First cycle academic and applied studies diploma (**)	NVQ	
6	Diploma of first cycle academic and applied studies	NVQ	6
5	Diploma of post-secondary vocational education	NVQ	5
4.2	Master craftsman examination certificate	NVQ	4
4.1	Upper secondary school leaving diploma (general, gymnasium) Upper secondary school leaving diploma (vocational, four years)	NVQ	
3	Diploma of secondary vocational education (three years)	NVQ	3
2	Diploma of lower vocational education (two years)	NVQ	2

NQF levels	Educational qualifications (formal education)	National vocational qualifications (NVQs) (*)	EQF levels
1.2	Certificate of completed primary education (nine years)	NVQ	1
1.1	Certificate of completed first cycle of primary education or completed functional literacy programme	NVQ	

(*) Labour-market-oriented qualifications, attained through assessment of vocational ability to perform sets of tasks linked to an occupation. Demonstrated knowledge, skills and competences can be acquired through formal or nonformal learning, including special education programmes or part of a formal education programme that corresponds to an occupational standard.

(**) Pre-Bologna diplomas, in use until adoption of the Higher Education Act of 2002.

Source: Adapted from the Montenegrin Ministry of Education, 2014.

The MQF allows qualifications to be organised into modules or units of learning outcomes. Each module may cover specific knowledge, skills or competences that can be acquired through shorter education or training programmes.

4.3 Use and renewal 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.

In the context of the development of a system of professional qualifications for Kosovo, there are two main applications of the term 'standards'. Occupational standards are descriptions of expected work tasks and responsibilities in an occupation. Learning outcomes within the adopted qualification standards are measures of assessed learning achievements.

As indicated above, defining occupational standards should be the starting point for development of curricula and assessment for outcomes-based VET qualifications and competence-based VET programmes.

The specifications for a vocational education and training qualification also include a requirement for evidence of consultation with labour market stakeholders.

4.4 Quality assurance arrangements

Qualifications and educational programmes are developed based on learning outcomes at all MQF levels. The Law on the MQF introduced the learning outcomes orientation as a standard for all levels of qualification.

Qualification standards include the following mandatory elements stipulated in the [Law on the MQF](#): title and type of qualification, level or sub-level, qualification code, credit value, learning outcomes description of qualification (specification), and content - entry requirements, mandatory and optional modules, assessment methods and criteria for assessment of learning outcomes.

Occupational standards are used to develop both VET qualifications and the NVQs. It is possible to attain a vocational qualification (or part of one) by completing a specific module of a relevant VET programme. An NVQ can be recognised to enable access to a formal VET programme.

VET programmes are developed on a modular basis, in line with qualification units - units of learning. Key competences are an integral part of qualification standards and are promoted in education and training programmes.

The work on the establishing a VNFIL system is in progress. It is possible to attain a vocational qualification, or part of one, by completing a specific module of the VET programme, or through the VNFIL process. A vocational qualification can be recognised to continue education in a formal VET programme.

4.4 Quality assurance arrangements

Institutions or providers that propose and develop qualifications must adhere to bylaws, methodologies and procedures adopted in secondary legislation by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation. These include:

- (a) the [Rulebook](#) on description of levels and [sub-levels in the NQF](#).
- (b) the [Rulebook](#) on procedures for developing [qualifications from the first to the fifth level of the MQF](#).
- (c) [Guidelines for the development of qualifications](#) for Levels 1 to 5.
- (d) the Methodology for [assigning qualification codes](#).
- (e) the [Basis for modularization and credit evaluation](#) of vocational education programmes.
- (f) the [Guidelines for the work of the sectoral commissions](#).
- (g) the [Rulebook](#) on the manner and procedure of assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies in the process of acquiring vocational qualifications.

The VET Centre and the Bureau of Educational Services submit proposals for qualifications at Levels 1-5, while HEIs do so at Levels 6-8. Other entities may also propose new qualifications.

Submissions for authorisation to develop a qualification must provide detail on the qualification type, give the title, the need on the labour market, and specify the related standard(s), occupational if vocational in nature, educational if more general.

Development of a qualification – of any type - begins with a qualifications standard. The development path then divides according to the qualification type (see Table in Section 4.2):

- (a) in formal education i.e., for the type, 'educational qualifications', those vocational in nature are developed based on several related occupational standards; while those in general education are developed against educational standards.
- (b) in so-called non-formal education, i.e., for the type 'NVQs', these are developed based on a single occupational standard.

Depending on the qualification type, either the VET Centre or the Bureau of Educational Services establishes a Commission to prepare the standard, and - again depending on the type of qualification planned – that may be either an occupational standard or an educational standard.

Other requirements in developing a qualification include developing assessment standards and programmes linked to the qualification.

5. Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

5.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation has overall responsibility for education policy and provides strategic direction for MQF development and implementation. The framework is managed by the Montenegro Qualifications Council, in cooperation with the National Council of Education and the Higher Education Council, which also provide policy advice to the Ministry.

Responsibilities of the National coordination point for the EQF (EQF NCP) lie with the Division for Qualifications at the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, established in 2011. The role of the EQF NCP is to ensure harmonisation of the MQF to the EQF and international cooperation in qualifications framework development; to maintain the qualifications register; to propose procedures for qualification development; to ensure access to information about the MQF; to implement the measures adopted by the Qualifications Council; and to provide administrative and technical assistance.

The Montenegro Qualifications Council (MQC) was established to improve the qualifications system and to steer the MQF's development⁽⁸⁾. Its main tasks include approval and inclusion of qualifications in the MQF; establishing, coordination and monitoring the work of Sectoral Commissions; proposing the development and improvement of qualifications; and adopting methodological documents.

MQC is a permanent body, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, higher education institutions, the Employment Agency of Montenegro, the Chamber of Economy, employers' associations, trades union, the national VET Centre, the Bureau for Educational Services, and the Examination Centre. The presidents of the National Council for Education and the Higher Education Council are also members, ensuring coordination of work on the qualifications system.

5.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The National Council of Education approves formal education programmes and examination catalogues and determines the compatibility between education programmes and qualification standards. It is responsible for the qualification attainment process, and organisation of learning and teaching in formal education, adult education, and special education. Its work is supported by the Bureau for Education Services and the VET Centre.

The Higher Education Council provides expert opinion on regulations in the field of higher education and proposes improvements in higher education. The [Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education](#) oversees quality assurance in higher education, particularly the accreditation of study programmes, reaccreditation and ranking of higher education institutions, and proposals for improving quality of higher education.

In addition to the three Councils, involvement of stakeholders in MQF implementation is carried out through 15 Sectoral Commissions set up as permanent bodies of the Qualifications Council, one for each of the 15 MQF sectors defined in the Law on the MQF. These are composed of representatives of employers, trades unions, universities, relevant ministries, and institutions involved in education development⁽⁹⁾. Sectoral commissions analyse and identify labour market needs in skills and qualifications; propose new occupational standards, or revision of existing ones; develop the basic profiles/specifications of qualifications; give opinions on the compliance of proposed new qualifications with

⁽⁸⁾ Decision of the Government of Montenegro on constitution of the Qualifications Council, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 29/11.

⁽⁹⁾ [Their composition](#) is published on the MQF website

occupational standards; validate examination catalogues (as indicated above, these set out assessment procedures and criteria); and consider initiatives for the development of new qualifications.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare approves occupational standards upon the proposal of the Qualifications Council, and adult education programmes that lead to the acquisition of vocational qualifications.

Other key institutions are the VET Centre, responsible for the coordination of the development of occupational standards, qualification standards and educational programs in vocational and adult education; and the [Examination Centre](#), which conducts the external assessment of knowledge, skills, and competences for primary and secondary education.

Representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and the Union of Employers are also members of the sectoral commissions, the Qualifications Council, and the National Council for Education.

6. Recognition and validation of prior learning

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

There is a legal framework enabling validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) for the award of vocational qualifications at MQF levels 1-5. The relevant legislation includes:

- (a) Law on the National Qualifications Framework, adopted in 2010, and amended in 2025.
- (b) new law on national vocational qualifications, adopted in 2025.
- (c) new law on adult education, adopted in 2025.

As secondary legislation, the rulebook ⁽¹⁰⁾ defining the procedures for VNFIL was adopted in 2019.

The Law on national vocational qualifications stipulates that NVQs can be acquired via formal programmes and via direct assessment of knowledge, skills, and competences. Assessment for vocational qualifications at MQF levels 1-5 is carried out by licensed adult education providers based on examination catalogues. Examination catalogues are developed for each vocational qualification based on qualification standards.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Rulebook on the manner and procedure of assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies in the process of acquiring vocational qualifications, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 13/2019

Under the new Law on National Vocational Qualifications, adopted in May 2025, the Examination Commission is formed by the Examination Centre from licensed examiners on the official list of examiners.

Higher education institutions can carry out assessments and award vocational qualifications at MQF levels 6-8. In accordance with the Law on Higher Education, accreditation is carried out by the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education.

For the period 2019-2022, a total of 2,160 certificates were issued following VNFIL procedures, 1,172 of them for vocational qualifications, and mainly in accounting and construction ⁽¹¹⁾.

6.2 Credit systems

The Montenegrin Credit Transfer System (MCTS) was introduced by the Law on the MQF to determine the size of qualifications. Credits are transferable and can be allocated to qualifications and their units, as well as to programmes or their modules. One MCTS credit refers to 25 hours of workload. The minimum size of educational qualification is 60 credits, corresponding to one academic year.

The MCTS is aligned to the European Credit System for Vocational Education (ECVET) and to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The use of the ECTS has been a requirement for higher education institutions since 2004.

6.3 Promoting lifelong learning

The Montenegrin Credit Transfer System (MCTS) was introduced by the Law on the MQF to determine the size of qualifications. Credits are transferable and can be allocated to qualifications and their units, as well as to programmes or their modules. One MCTS credit refers to 25 hours of workload. The minimum size of educational qualification is 60 credits, corresponding to one academic year.

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7. NQF implementation and impact

7.1. Stage of implementation

The MQF is advanced in implementation and has reached an operational stage. 1,062 qualifications are placed in the MQF.

⁽¹¹⁾ [Validation of non-formal and informal learning – Montenegro | ETF](#)

The legal basis and governance structures for MQF implementation are in place and operational, significant progress has been made with the development and inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications database. Efforts are continuing to review and redefine existing qualifications and educational programmes and develop new ones based on the learning outcomes approach, at all MQF levels.

The MQF is seen as part of the wider set of economic, labour market and education policies to support human capital development. Its aims are aligned with policy priorities for education development outlined in the national strategic documents.

Montenegro is a candidate for EU accession and a full member of the EQF Advisory Group. The MQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2014.

7.2 Indicating RQF/NQF levels

NQF and EQF levels are indicated on almost all documentation for nearly all qualification types, that is on certificates, diplomas, degrees etc. and certificate and diploma supplements.

7.3 NQF dissemination

Tools to facilitate promotion and use of the MQF include:

- (a) the [Handbook](#), 'National Qualifications Framework in Montenegro'.
- (b) a [video](#) with basic information about the framework, its alignment with the EQF, and its benefits for individuals, employers, and educational Institutions.
- (c) a [flyer](#), which contains basic information about the MQF and the EQF, including referencing of the MQF to the EQF, with a diagramme of the comparability of the MQF and EQF levels; plus how the MQF can support citizens, employers and educational institutions.
- (d) the [NQF website](#). It publishes notes and decisions of MQC meetings, regulations and other formal documents adopted by competent authorities and bodies in Montenegro, plus links to the qualifications database.

7.4 Qualifications databases and registers

Qualifications adopted by the Qualifications Council are entered in the [database of qualifications](#). The qualifications database, the [MQF Registry](#), currently includes more than 417 qualifications from formal VET (diplomas) and from the national vocational qualifications system (certificates) at MQF levels 2-5. Qualifications are classified according to type, size, MQF level and sector, and ISCED.

The VET Centre is working towards publishing occupational standards, VET programmes and curricula, and adult education programmes on the governmental portal ⁽¹²⁾.

Qualifications in the MQF Registry are presented in Montenegrin, and some in English. Data fields for the electronic publication of information on qualifications with an EQF level adhere to Annex VI of the EQF Recommendation, and so include title of the qualification, EQF level, knowledge and skills, description of learning outcomes, credits, further information on qualifications, expiry date, and relationship to occupational fields.

7.5 Use of NQF in recognition of foreign qualifications

Recognition of foreign qualifications is based on the comparison of a qualification with the corresponding qualification standard in Montenegro¹³. Qualifications recognition bodies use the NQF as a basis when recognising foreign qualifications, in particular to ensure that foreign qualification standards correspond to national levels and are recognised in the context of the EQF.

The responsibility for recognizing foreign certificates and endorsements has been transferred from the adult education organizers to the VET Centre. This change will enable a more centralized and coordinated approach to the process of recognizing foreign qualifications.

7.6 Career guidance and counselling

The Centres for professional information and counselling of the [Employment Agency of Montenegro](#) provide information on occupations, secondary school curricula, and on learning and employment opportunities. NQF levels are used in job descriptions to indicate the required level of a qualification. The [National Europass Centre](#) promotes the implementation of Europass in the country.

7.7 Awareness and use of the NQF

The NQF levels are used to present information about qualifications to labour market stakeholders and individuals, including job descriptions, employment statistics by the Employment Agency of Montenegro, or information related to the labour market needs in qualifications. Information about relevant MQF principles

(12) Standardi zanimanja, obrazovni programi, ispitni katalozi - Centar za stručno obrazovanje (www.gov.me)

(13) Law on Recognition of Foreign Educational Documents and Equalization of Qualifications. Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 57/2011 and 42/2016. wapi.gov.me.doc (live.com)

and procedures for qualification development is available for education and labour market stakeholders ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Awareness and use of the MQF of course varies by user group.

Decision-makers at the national level, including the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue, the Employment Agency and other relevant institutions, show a very high level of awareness of the MQF and EQF. These frameworks are an integral part of strategic documents, education reforms, employment policies and human resources development. The NQF and the EQF are used as tools to improve the quality of qualifications, labour mobility and transparency of education and training systems.

As can be expected, the Centre for Vocational Education and the Agency for Quality Control and Assurance in Higher Education engage daily with the qualification system, playing a key role in the implementation of the MQF and participate in its further development and application. The quality assurance bodies use the NQF and EQF level descriptors as a basis for the accreditation of qualifications, ensuring that qualifications are aligned with national and international standards. They analyse whether qualifications correspond to the appropriate level within the NQF and whether they meet the stipulated criteria for the quality of education and training.

Educational institutions, including schools, universities, other higher education institutions and adult education providers are very often familiar with the NQF and EQF, as these frameworks are key to the development of programmes and the recognition of qualifications. These institutions are involved in the process of developing qualifications.

Students focus primarily on academic content and qualifications that are relevant to their immediate educational goals and are usually not fully aware of the MQF. Awareness may be higher among VET or AE students/learners as their programmes are more directly linked to the recognition of qualifications and mobility between countries. At higher education levels, greater use of the MQF and EQF is expected for the purposes of comparability of degrees and mobility.

Employers involved in the dual education system are familiar with the MQF. Representatives of the business sector are involved in the work of the Qualifications Council and sectoral commissions, as well as in working groups working on the development of occupational standards and qualification standards.

Trade unions participate in certain advisory bodies and working groups dealing with education and the labour market.

(14) European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

Employment services often work with educational institutions, employers and policymakers to match skills needs in the labour market with the supply of qualifications. The NQF and EQF help them assess the level and relevance of candidates' qualifications, especially when it comes to international workforce or recognition of prior learning.

The Employment Agency of Montenegro provides information on occupations, secondary school curricula, as well as on education and employment opportunities. The levels of the MQF are used in job descriptions to indicate the required level of qualifications.

Employees and job seekers are often not fully aware of the NQF and EQF unless they are directly involved in sectors or industries that are relevant to VET or retraining. Awareness levels may be higher among those interested in international mobility or seeking internationally recognised qualifications. Most employees and job seekers will not be fully aware of these frameworks unless they are directly relevant to their employment opportunities or career progression.

Although qualification levels have become an important tool in identifying and matching skills to labour market needs, most citizens are still not fully aware of the ways in which they can use the framework. Citizens use information about qualification levels (both MQF and EQF levels) in building their CVs.

Parents, the general public and policymakers in Montenegro still have a moderate understanding and use of the NQF and EQF. Parents are usually not familiar with the specific qualification levels or framework system, while the general public is often unaware of its role in the education system and the labour market.

7.8 Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

No systematic evaluation of the NQF's use or impact has been carried out ⁽¹⁵⁾.

7.9 Impact of the NQF

Based on experience so far, the framework has played a key role in improving the qualifications system and improving education and training programmes. It has influenced the review, renewal, and quality assurance of qualifications. Processes and procedures for qualification development have become more transparent. It has also supported dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders across education and training sectors, and between education and the labour market ⁽¹⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁾ European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

⁽¹⁶⁾ European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

The MQF plays an important role in improving the transparency of qualifications, both nationally and internationally. Through the NQF, Montenegro has established clear standards for all qualifications, which means that qualifications recognised within the system must be aligned with national criteria. Qualifications at all levels, from primary education to higher education qualifications, are subject to uniform quality standards.

The implementation of the MQF has had a significant impact on promoting the use of learning outcomes in education broadly. In qualifications, it has sharpened the orientation of qualifications, since each one that is developed and included in the NQF must have clearly defined learning outcomes that relate to the specific knowledge, skills, and competences that the candidate should possess after acquiring the qualification.

The MQF significantly contributes to improving vertical and horizontal progression within and beyond the education system. By introducing a single framework that covers all levels of education and training – from primary to higher education, including formal, non-formal and informal learning – the MQF enables better linking of different education sectors, as well as establishing clear pathways for transition between them. Units have become credit-evaluated and transferable from one qualification to another.

Though its guidance for defining standards, which must be described in outcomes, the framework allows all forms of learning to be valued regardless of the way in which they were acquired, formal, non-formal or informal.

The Employment Service of Montenegro uses the MQF as a basis for better understanding the competences of unemployed persons and guiding them towards appropriate training and occupations. Employers recognize the role of the MQF in job advertisements and internal recruitment procedures. The unemployed and students use the MQF and EQF to assess their qualifications on the national and international market.

Qualification levels in Montenegro are linked to EQF levels, which allows qualifications acquired in Montenegro to be more easily recognized and valued abroad. The NQF and EQF levels are indicated in the diploma supplement and other educational documents, which helps employers and educational institutions in the EU to recognize the level of knowledge and skills of citizens from Montenegro.

8. Referencing to the EQF

8.1 Referencing to the EQF

Montenegro completed the process of referencing the MQF to the EQF and self-certification against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) in 2014. A [joint report](#) is published on the Europass portal.

8.2 International cooperation

Montenegro is a candidate for EU membership, and a participating country in the establishment of a regional economic area in the Western Balkans. The country is a member of the EQF Advisory Group.

The Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (AKOKVO), established in 2017, became an associate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2019 and a full member of the [Central Eastern European Network of Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies](#) in 2020.

Montenegro ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 2004.

Montenegro continues to participate in the EU Erasmus+ programme as a partner country and the [regional ERISSE](#) projects, which include initiatives on developing regionally-based occupational and qualification standards.

The EU aids Montenegro in education and labour market reforms under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). In the area of education, the specific objective for the 2021-2027 programme period is to strengthen access to, and quality of, inclusive education, including vocational education and training, participation in Early Childhood Education and Care and lifelong learning opportunities at all levels. In particular, the programme will support the quality, effectiveness, and labour market relevance of education, including vocational education, and training systems to provide people with skills adjusted to digitalisation, technological change, innovation, and economic change.

9. Reflections and plans

National actors consider that the incentive of EU membership has been a strong propellant of the country's quite rapid development and implementation of its NQF. Proportionate legislation, institutional arrangements – notably clear allocation of roles and functions by institution – and the mobilisation of providers and employers, trades unions and others has brought about their commitment and support.

The challenges related to MQF implementation include the need to improve the match between the skills and qualifications demanded on the labour market and those provided through the education and training system. A wider and more systematic involvement of labour market stakeholders is needed to improve analysis and anticipation of skills and qualifications needs.

Enhancing the capacity of sectoral commissions so that they are able adequately to articulate the labour market and society's needs, identify qualification and skill gaps, and propose development of qualifications of different types and levels, remains a key challenge for the upcoming period ⁽¹⁷⁾.

The necessity to communicate the MQF beyond the education and training system and to make it more visible and understandable to all relevant stakeholders and the public has become apparent. [Providing information on qualifications and learning opportunities to end-users](#), in particular adults and employers, has been prioritized to promote lifelong learning and adult participation.

The work on the establishing a VNFIL system is also on the [reform agenda](#). Certain elements of the Montenegrin education and training system provide a good basis for future work on VNFIL: the principles underlying the MQF, particularly the shift to learning outcomes; modular design of VET qualifications; well established provision for development of professional competences; licencing of staff involved in the assessment for national vocational qualifications (NVQs); and work to expand the network of licenced adult education providers.

The main challenges to be tackled to advance VNFIL implementation include improving quality assurance mechanisms and procedures for assessment of non-formal and informal learning; addressing the lack of information about VNFIL, both among the general public and among labour market stakeholders; and promoting VNFIL opportunities in a systematic manner.

There is a need to improve the quality assurance system in adult education – through increasing flexibility and strengthening the accreditation process, self-evaluation and external evaluation of adult education activities.

Other important key [measures and policies](#) that have been put in place or are planned include revision and development of qualifications and programmes in line with MQF principles and labour market needs; modularization of educational programmes based on learning outcomes and inclusion of key competencies; and improving the quality assurance system.

⁽¹⁷⁾ European Commission, & Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

Acronyms

CEENQA	Central Eastern European Network of Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies
EU	European Union
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession, the EU support programme for candidate and potential candidate countries
MCTS	Montenegrin Credit Transfer System
MESI	Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
MQC	Montenegro Qualifications Council
MQF	Montenegrin Qualifications Framework
NCP	National Coordination Point
NIP	National Implementation Plan
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning
WBL	Work-Based Learning

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Further Information

[Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation](#)

[Montenegrin NQF website](#)

[The Register of Qualifications](#)