



EUROPEAN INVENTORY OF NQFs 2020

NORWAY

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NORWAY

European inventory of NQFs 2020

Introduction and context

The performance of Norwegian 15-year-olds in reading and science has decreased compared to three years ago in the 2018 Programme for international student assessment (PISA).

The EU target of having underachievement below 15% in all three disciplines has not been met. Norway has surpassed the other EU 2020 targets. The proportion of early leavers from education is now below 10% (9.9%), however there is a significant gender gap (11.6% for males and 8.1% for females). Tertiary educational attainment is amongst the highest in Europe (49.1% in 2019, compared to the EU average of 40.3%) and the employment rate of recent graduates is exceeded only by Germany, Iceland, Malta and the Netherlands (European Commission, 2020).

As part of the government's strategy for better teaching professions ⁽¹⁾, an initiative to keep good teachers in the classroom has been piloted since 2015/16 on a new professional career path for teachers to become teacher specialists. Their main function will be teaching, but they can take on several other tasks related to their specialisation, like cooperating with universities and university colleges in development projects. Initially, the initiative was addressed to Norwegian language and mathematics teachers. Since 2019, the scheme has been expanded to include teachers in several other fields.

Based on the government's skills policy since 2013, including the Skills reform 2017-21 developed in close cooperation with the social partners and the Skills Policy Council ⁽²⁾, the Norwegian government presented a white paper on a skills reform to the Parliament in April 2020 ⁽³⁾. Upskilling, reskilling and closing the competence gap are the two main objectives. It focuses on establishing a flexible

-
- (1) Teacher Education 2025. National strategy for quality in teacher education:
https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/d0c1da83bce94e2da21d5f631bbae817/kd_teacher-education-2025_uu.pdf
- (2) The Skills Policy Council is monitoring the implementation of the National skills policy strategy 2017-21:
<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/3c84148f2f394539a3eefdfa27f7524d/strategi-kompetanse-eng.pdf>
- (3) Meld. St. 14 (2019-2020). Kompetansereformen – Lære hele livet (in Norwegian).
<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/afb66fbbcdfb47749f1b7007b559d145/no/pdfs/stm201920200014000dddpdfs.pdf>

system for skills to make sure the education system can offer flexible modules which can be combined with work. As a first step in the reform, the government, in cooperation with the social partners, is establishing programmes for training that target sectors and industries where workers are in particularly high need of upskilling or reskilling. The government is also funding the development of short, flexible courses, that can be combined with work, for more advanced digital skills such as cyber security, artificial intelligence and the internet of things. These courses will be designed in cooperation between businesses and universities, and vocational education institutions. To strengthen the vocational colleges' ability to respond better to the needs of the labour market, the government will suggest removing the restriction on the minimum length of the programmes which is currently half a year. Also, the government will put forward a strategy for higher vocational education and training (VET) during 2021.

The Norwegian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (NQF) developments were triggered both by the 2005 qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) and by the 2008 recommendation on the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and its inclusion in the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) in March 2009 (EEA Joint Committee, 2009). After extensive preparatory work involving main stakeholders, a comprehensive Norwegian national qualifications framework (*Nasjonalt kvalifikasjonsrammeverk for livslang læring* (NKR)) was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Research in December 2011 ⁽⁴⁾ and, following amendments of the relevant laws relating to education and training, further legally defined in a regulation in December 2017 ⁽⁵⁾.

Policy objectives

The NKR aims at describing the existing national education and training system in a transparent way to make it more understandable, at national and international levels. Focusing on improving the transparency of qualifications, the NKR was originally seen as a communication and information tool rather than as a tool for reform. However, through its focus on learning outcomes, an important aim of the NKR – underlined in the 2016 and 2017 white papers on vocational college

(4) The Norwegian qualifications framework for lifelong learning adopted by the Ministry of Education and Research on 15 December 2011, is available at: https://www.nokut.no/siteassets/nkr/20140606_norwegian_qualifications_framework.pdf

(5) Regulation FOR-2017-11-08-1846 on the Norwegian qualifications framework and its referencing to the EQF: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2017-11-08-1846>

education and higher education, respectively – is to support quality in education and training. More specific objectives include:

- (a) improve communication and mobility within the education sector and between the education sector and the labour market;
- (b) offer a description of what a pupil/apprentice/graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of learning;
- (c) describe the workings of the Norwegian system in a new manner, which will pave the way for improved education and career guidance;
- (d) aid the comparison of qualifications from other countries, via the EQF and the QF-EHEA;
- (e) open the way for the development of new instruments for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The NQF is not itself regulating education and training, though it defines minimum standards and levels for learning outcomes in all accredited study programmes. It provides general descriptors for learning outcomes and the level descriptors play a key role in clarifying the similarities and differences between qualifications. They are a point of reference for developing and updating qualifications. In this way the framework acts as a tool for improving the quality and relevance of qualifications and for increased transparency and mobility. Today, while the main objectives remain the same, the NQF is a strong regulating tool for education and training through quality assurance and through development of curricula.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

The NKR consists of seven levels and covers qualifications from general, vocational and higher education. The numbering of the seven levels starts at level 2 to ensure a structure that better parallels the levels of the EQF. Qualifications in the NKR generally represent full attainment of a formal education or training level, except at level 3 which includes partially completed upper secondary education and training. Levels 5 and 6 have two sublevels each, with different level descriptors, duration and credits; sublevels 5.1 and 6.1 accommodate full qualifications defined by learning outcomes of lower complexity compared to those at sublevels 5.2 and, respectively, 6.2. The learning-outcomes-based level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge (*kunnskap*), skills (*ferdigheter*), and general competence (*generell kompetanse*). At level 4, two parallel sets of level descriptors have been developed: one for vocational education and training and one for general education.

There is no descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1.

Table 1. **Main NQF level descriptor elements defining levels 2 to 8 in Norway**

Level descriptor elements		
Knowledge	Skills	General competence
Understanding of theories, facts, concepts, principles and procedures in a discipline, subject area and/or profession.	The ability to apply knowledge to complete tasks and solve problems. There are different types of skill: cognitive, practical, creative and communicative.	The ability to use knowledge and skills in an independent manner in different situations in study and work contexts, by demonstrating the ability to cooperate, the ability to act responsibly, and a capacity for reflection and critical thinking.

Source: Cedefop (2018). *Analyses and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries*.

There is broad consensus in Norway on the relevance of the learning-outcomes approach. Knowledge promotion (*Kunnskapsløftet*), a wide-ranging reform of primary, lower and upper secondary education and training, started in 2004 and implemented in 2006, has been particularly significant; it required comprehensive redefinition and rewriting of learning objectives at these levels. An important reason for using learning outcomes is to encourage curriculum consistency at national level. While adaptation is possible at local level, national consistency is important for reasons of quality and to support validation of prior learning. Today's curricula are based on the Knowledge promotion reform and include the core curriculum ⁽⁶⁾, quality framework ⁽⁷⁾ and subject curricula. The core curriculum elaborates on the aims stated in the Education Act ⁽⁸⁾, designates overarching goals for education and training, and sets forth the basis for primary and secondary education and training as a whole in terms of the values, culture and knowledge in which it is grounded. The quality framework, with the learning poster, elaborates on the Education Act and its statutes and sets out the principles that schools and training establishments are to follow in their teaching and training. It must be adapted to local and individual needs and conditions. Subject curricula

⁽⁶⁾ Ministry of Education and Research (1994). *Core curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education in Norway*.

https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/lareplan/generell-del/core_curriculum_english.pdf

⁽⁷⁾ Directorate for Education and Training (2006). *National curriculum for knowledge promotion in primary and secondary education and training: the quality framework*.

https://www.udir.no/globalassets/upload/larerplaner/fastsatte_lareplaner_for_kunnskapsloeftet/5/prinsipper_lk06_eng.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ The Education Act: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1998-07-17-61>

designate the aim, main subject areas, fundamental skills, competence aims, and criteria for making assessments in a given subject.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training ⁽⁹⁾ has developed a framework for basic skills which is a tool for developing and revising national subject curricula. The five basic skills – oral skills, reading, writing, digital skills and numeracy – are defined as basic to learning in school, work and social life. These skills are fundamental to learning in all subjects as well as a prerequisite for the pupil to show his/her competence and qualifications. All subject-specific curricula describe how the five basic skills contribute to developing the pupils' competence and qualifications and how these skills are integrated into the subject.

Renewal and improvement of subjects in primary and lower secondary education and in upper secondary education and training is now well under way. The renewal builds on the *Knowledge promotion* reform, ensuring continuity for teachers and pupils alike. The focus is on more in-depth learning and better understanding, measures set out in a 2016 white paper ⁽¹⁰⁾. The white paper was adopted by the Parliament, with some amendments, in October 2016. The new curricula will be used incrementally from 2020.

The learning-outcomes approach is widely accepted in education and training, as well as among social partners. The NKR is also an important part of quality assurance mechanisms and intrinsically connected to the systematic work on quality in education. All higher education institutions were requested to adopt learning outcomes in line with the descriptors for levels 6 to 8 of the national qualifications framework in all study programmes by the end of 2012. In many sectors, however, it has taken longer. There is currently a major restructuring of national curriculum regulations in health and welfare, including to make these more future-oriented. The learning outcomes should be formulated in accordance with the NKR and national and international regulations. The task of developing curricula for health and welfare education programmes has been named RETHOS ⁽¹¹⁾. New national curriculum regulations are being developed for 20 programmes that will be statutory and must be adhered to by all the higher education institutions concerned. The curricula will be implemented in the period

⁽⁹⁾ <https://www.udir.no/in-english/>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Report No 28 to the Storting, 2015-16, on in-depth learning and better understanding; a renewal of the Knowledge promotion reform.
<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-28-20152016/id2483955/>

⁽¹¹⁾ The RETHOS project 2017-20. This is a joint project between the four following ministries: Education and Research (which has the project secretariat); Health and Care Services; Labour and Social Affairs; Children and Equality. It follows a 2012 white paper on welfare education to draft revised guidelines – including learning outcomes – for all relevant study programmes.

2020-21. According to the plan, RETHOS will also cover specialisation programmes; this is currently in the planning phase.

For vocational college education (*fagskole*), level 5, the deadline set for the implementation of learning outcomes was the end of 2014, as work at this level started later than in higher education. In 2014 and 2015, NOKUT engaged an expert panel to assess the learning outcomes proposed in all applications for accreditation of new study programmes; this has helped the vocational colleges in developing and using learning outcomes in all programmes. Compliance with the NKR and the use of learning outcomes is included in the regulations on NOKUT's supervision and control of the quality of vocational college education and of higher education ⁽¹²⁾. This means that learning outcomes are assessed as part of all accreditations and reaccreditations of study programmes.

The NKR is indirectly providing a basis for validation of prior learning and informal competences in the Norwegian system. Arrangements related to validation of prior learning (VPL) have a thorough legal basis and are referenced to the learning outcomes of qualifications in the formal system for education and training and NQF. This has had a considerable impact on VPL.

There has been no national decision on the implementation of ECVET credits. Possible implementation of ECVET was assessed in a public consultation in 2015, involving major stakeholders such as the social partners. The conclusion outlined several possible strands of action, but no measures have been initiated. ECVET is used in Norway only as a project tool for cross-border mobility in VET.

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The regulation on the NKR and the referencing to EQF are embedded in legislation in the education system.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the overall development and implementation of the national qualifications framework. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) has the role of national coordination point (NCP) for the EQF. The coordination point is responsible for information, guidance and maintenance. It serves as information centre, coordinates activities related to the NKR and the EQF, and is responsible for the main web presentation ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ Regulation FOR-2017-02-07-137 on the supervision of the quality of education in higher education: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2017-02-07-137>

⁽¹³⁾ NOKUT NCP: <https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/>

NOKUT, established in 2003, is a professionally independent agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. NOKUT's role is to assure the quality of higher and vocational college education in Norway and to recognise and inform about foreign qualifications. The agency is also Norwegian ENIC-NARIC information centre and national contact point for the diploma supplement and for the directive for regulated professions.

Quality assurance in Norwegian higher education is a dual responsibility. All higher education institutions are responsible for the quality of their own educational provisions, and it is NOKUT's responsibility to ensure that all institutions follow the legal requirements and provide education of high quality.

There are two main entrances to quality assurance in Norwegian higher education. The first relates to accreditation of educational provisions and the second to audits, supervisions and revision of accreditation. Accreditation is mandatory and universal for all formally recognised higher education. The accreditation formula combines institutional and programme accreditation. Institutional accreditation gives universities and university colleges certain rights to self-accredit programmes. Thus, new provisions in accredited institutions that go beyond the self-accreditation authority must be accredited by NOKUT. NOKUT accredits vocational college education programmes and supervises quality. Vocational colleges can, under certain conditions, receive accreditation for subject areas.

Central to the Norwegian education and training system below tertiary level is the Education Act. It covers primary, lower and upper secondary general education and VET, including apprenticeship training, for young people and adults, delivered by both public and private institutions. It states that the Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for national policy development and administration of all levels covered by the act. The counties and municipalities are responsible for organising and financing within their jurisdiction.

Norway has a well-established and regulated system of cooperation between social partners and the government. They negotiate through collective bargaining to control wage levels and influence prices. This tripartite cooperation is also important in upper secondary VET. The Education Act gives the social partners representation in all important advisory bodies for upper secondary VET at national and county level. The National Council for Vocational Education and Training gives advice on an overarching level. Eight Vocational Councils give advice in specific groups of trades, one for each VET programme. The County Vocational Board for each county gives advice on quality, career guidance, regional development and the provision in the county to meet local labour market needs.

For vocational college education, the social partners are consulted through the National Council for Tertiary Vocational Education. This council has less of a formal function than the vocational training councils have at upper secondary level, as the education and training providers at this level design their own programmes. Skills Norway ⁽¹⁴⁾ hosts the secretariat.

As quality assurance at primary and upper secondary levels is embedded in the legal framework, the State is responsible for inspecting all activities stipulated in the Education Act. The Ministry of Education and Research has delegated this responsibility to the Directorate for Education and Training ⁽¹⁵⁾. The directorate is responsible for developing and supporting inspections, to ensure unified inspection throughout the country and to provide guidance on legislation.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways ⁽¹⁶⁾

There are laws and regulations on validation of non-formal and informal learning for each level of education and training covered by the NKR. Validation of prior learning is based on agreed common principles that have been developed for many years as part of overarching lifelong learning policies since these were launched through the 1998 white paper on the Competence reform (Meld. St. 42 (1997-98) *Kompetansereformen*). One of these principles is that the validation process should be voluntary and of benefit to the individual. Although participation in validation is voluntary, the legal framework guarantees the rights of individuals to undertake it.

In Norwegian legislation and practice, validation comprises all prior learning: formal, non-formal and informal. In terms of validation, there is no distinction between these different kinds of learning, as it is not seen as useful to categorise in which arena the learning has taken place.

Responsibility for local provision in primary, lower and upper secondary education (levels 2 to 4) is decentralised to municipality and county education administrations respectively and VPL is based on the learning outcomes described in the curricula. Statutory rights for adults to complete upper secondary education

⁽¹⁴⁾ Skills Norway: <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/english/>

⁽¹⁵⁾ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training: <https://www.udir.no/in-english/>

⁽¹⁶⁾ This section draws on input from: Ure, O.B. (2019). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Norway*.

and

The implementation of validation arrangements in Norway (Skills Norway, April 2019).

and training were introduced in 2000 and for primary and lower secondary education in 2002. At this level, the outcome of validation of VPL can be a document showing that the individual has achieved a full qualification (certificate); if the individual has not achieved a full qualification, the document awarded is a 'certificate of competence'. In VET, individuals must pass the final trade examination to obtain the final VET (trade or journeyman's) certificate.

Validation for admission to vocational college education was introduced with the original law for this level in 2003; the possibility to grant exemption from parts of programmes was introduced through regulation in 2013. Adults from the age of 23, without required formal qualifications, may be validated for admission to studies and/or exempted from parts of a study programme based on VPL. In higher education, VPL is regulated by law stating that adults from the age of 25, without required formal qualifications, may be validated for admission to studies and/or exempted from parts of a study programme based on prior learning. At levels 5-8, each institution provides validation procedures based on the learning outcomes of the relevant study programme. Each institution is autonomous, so there are no general procedures for VPL. However, in 2013, as a follow-up of a 2009 white paper on the education strategy ⁽¹⁷⁾, Skills Norway developed two guidelines on assessing prior learning together with representatives from the sectors: one related to admission to vocational college education, and one to recognition of prior learning in (as part of) higher education.

Norway together with Belgium (FL), Iceland and Ireland took part in the Erasmus KA3 project VISKA 2017-20 (visible skills for adults) ⁽¹⁸⁾. The project ran from March 2017 to February 2020 and was managed and coordinated by Skills Norway. VISKA addressed the need to make the skills of low-skilled adults, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees more visible, in order to enhance their employability, improve their access to education and training offers and support active engagement in society. In Norway, the focus was on developing methods and processes to increase the access of migrants to validation of prior learning processes, education and work. During the trial period, 612 asylum seekers went through the two first phases of the validation process (identification and documentation) using an electronic tool for self-registration (*Kompass*) ⁽¹⁹⁾ followed by career guidance. A total of 74 persons also finalised the two last phases (assessment and certification) against upper secondary education and training.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Report No 44 to the Storting, 2008-09. The education strategy.

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-44-2008-2009-/id565231/>

⁽¹⁸⁾ VISKA report: <https://www.viskaproject.eu>

⁽¹⁹⁾ *Kompass* comprises 15 languages and has many similarities with the EU Skills Profiling Tool for Third Country Nationals.

The VISKA project was given an exemption from the regulations in the Education Act to carry out assessment in languages other than Norwegian and Sami as it was essential to the trials to allow candidates to speak their own language and to use interpreters. It was a strong recommendation from the project that assessment in upper secondary education for this target group depends on the regulations of the Education Act opening for assessment in languages other than Norwegian and Sami. The regulations in question have now been changed in that respect ⁽²⁰⁾.

There are validation mechanisms in enterprises (such as the 2018-21 social partner agreement on documenting workers' competence, Paragraphs 18-4 ⁽²¹⁾). Internal validation procedures at the workplace, linked to wage negotiations or competence development in companies, can be found outside the formal system of validation. In these instances, validation references are based on local requirements defined by the company concerned.

Although the Norwegian VPL system has a firm foundation in legislation and at policy level, and has developed in a positive direction over the years, challenges remain. A crucial factor in a successful VPL system is trust: that the system has legitimacy across all levels of the education sector as well as in the labour market. In certain areas of education, non-formal and informal learning may not be seen to have equal value to formal learning. Also, mistrust can spring from a lack of knowledge about validation, or lack of clarity and coherence in routines and processes. In the labour market, mistrust may be at the root of a perceived lack of interest in and acceptance of validation, for similar reasons. The substantial regional variations in practice may also serve to undermine trust in the VPL system. According to Skills Norway's report on the implementation of validation arrangements in Norway, the challenges related to information, practice and statistics should be further discussed. To improve access to VPL and awareness and knowledge about the possibilities and limitations of the system, information is of major importance. Although much information can be found online, it still takes a lot of sifting through to find the right detail. Most is in Norwegian only and is not easily accessible for newly arrived migrants, a relevant target group for VPL.

Challenges linked to practice relate to good processes and strong staff environments. Improvements that might strengthen the trust in the VPL system include support for staff in the form of better, more robust and updated ICT systems for better data flow and clearer descriptions of procedure for both staff and candidates.

⁽²⁰⁾ <https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2019-12-02-1691>

⁽²¹⁾ *Basic agreement between the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises, 2018-21:*
<https://www.nho.no/siteassets/publikasjoner/basic-agreement-lo-nho-2018-2021.pdf>

A sound base of statistical evidence is crucial for research and development of the validation system, as well as for governance and policy development. Several studies, most recently the 2018 NIFU report (NIFU 2018:10) ⁽²²⁾, point out a great many shortcomings in this area. One major reason, especially at primary and secondary levels of education, is that the systems for collecting data are inadequate and disconnected. The situation is considerably better for higher education but only for admission, not for exemption. There is no statistical evidence on validation for working life.

In sum, information, practice and statistics are areas in VPL in need of improvement across all levels of education. Deficiencies in the VPL system may hinder efficiency and effectiveness; deter potential candidates and frustrate staff; and weaken trust in the system both within education and in working life (Skills Norway, 2019).

NQF implementation and impact

The NKR is operational and included in relevant regulations on education and training. All qualifications in the Norwegian formal education system are included in the NKR; most formal qualifications are included *en bloc* per type of education programme. Quality assurance of qualifications in the formal education system is secured through the legislation on all education levels in the system. The NKR has been incorporated into these laws and regulations by explicitly referring curricula and study programmes to the relevant level descriptors.

The question of opening up the framework to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training has been extensively discussed but no decision has been taken so far. In the Norwegian strategy for skills policy 2017-21 ⁽²³⁾, the strategy partners have agreed to make it easier to document skills acquired at work and to develop a method and model for evaluating skills acquired in the workplace. Linked to the strategy, a project led by four of the social partners has developed a method for describing qualifications based on trade needs in the retail trade ⁽²⁴⁾. An external evaluation of the project concluded that the model had clarified

⁽²²⁾ *Realkompetansevurdering: En studie av systemet for vurdering av realkompetanse i utdanning og arbeidsliv, NIFU-rapport, 2018:10.* <https://nifu.brage.unit.no/nifu-xmlui/handle/11250/2502219>

⁽²³⁾ *Norwegian strategy for skills policy, 2017-21.* https://www.kompetansenorge.no/contentassets/06b4044721e849ed8116604f9af4fa5/norwegian_strategy_for_skills.pdf

⁽²⁴⁾ Skjerve, T; Simeou, E. (2018). *A Balancing Act – Describing skills acquired in the workplace.* <https://www.virke.no/Statistikk-Rapporter/a-balancing-act/>

requirements for competence in the retail trade but that testing on a larger scale is needed to see the added value for the labour market and the individual.

A public committee has recently provided a green paper on lifelong learning for change and competitiveness (NOU 2019:12), which suggested the development of a procedure for assessment of non-formal training programmes against a quality standard to enhance comparison with formal education. This proposal is taken forward in the recent white paper on the Skills reform. The government will support initiatives to develop methods for describing competence acquired in working life, but it is up to the branches themselves if they want to introduce common standards for how to describe and test such competence. The government will also support a more comprehensive testing of the model for evaluating skills acquired in the workplace, if this becomes relevant.

NOKUT uses the national qualifications framework to support recognition of qualifications and aims at taking national qualifications frameworks into account more systematically in methodologies for recognition of foreign education and training when possible. In autumn 2018, NOKUT carried out public consultation on proposed changes in the criteria for general recognition of higher education to bring them more in line with developments in the field; this included the recommendation on revised criteria and procedures for the assessment of foreign qualifications, a subsidiary text of the Lisbon recognition convention ⁽²⁵⁾. According to NOKUT, the recognition of upper secondary and post-secondary VET qualifications is challenging because of the great variation in vocational education and training systems at these levels. NOKUT is therefore exploring ways in which this connection can be supported better and in which the EQF and the NQFs can help communicate and support recognition of foreign qualifications. Current EQF-relevant databases are *Utdanning.no* and *Study in Norway* ⁽²⁶⁾. The database *Utdanning.no* gives information about education and training possibilities and programmes in upper secondary education and training, vocational college education, higher education, folk high schools (boarding schools without exams and grades), and further and continuing education (flexible courses or education offers at all levels, often based on professional experience). This database also

⁽²⁵⁾ *Revised recommendation on criteria and procedures for the assessment of foreign qualifications* (adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee at its fifth meeting, Sèvres, 23 June 2010):

https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Criteria%20and%20procedures_En.asp

⁽²⁶⁾ <https://www.utedning.no/> and

<https://www.studyinnorway.no/> (study programmes taught through English, extracted from *utedning.no*).

offers different tools for use in career guidance. The database includes, to a lesser degree, level descriptors and level indicators. Learning outcome descriptions don't figure in the database. *Study in Norway* contains study programmes in English in higher education extracted from *Utdanning.no*.

NKR levels are currently included on most diplomas from vocational college education. In higher education, NKR levels are included on the diploma supplement, automatically and free of charge to all graduates. NKR and EQF levels are included on certificate supplements in vocational upper secondary education and training. The Norwegian NQF regulation states that all new diplomas and certificates from the formal education system can indicate NQF levels and that EQF levels can be indicated on supporting documents. There are no plans to introduce further demands.

There is little clear evidence for the impact of the NQF. An evaluation has been in planning in 2019 and 2020 and should begin in 2021. Changes in legislation concerning higher vocational education ⁽²⁷⁾ have prompted a more comprehensive evaluation, including consideration of parallel structures for vocational and higher education, and an overall impact review (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Referencing to the EQF

Norway referenced its national qualifications framework to the EQF in June 2014, along with the self-certification to the QF-EHEA.

Important lessons and challenges

The learning-outcomes approach is widely accepted in education and training, as well as among social partners. The NKR is an important part of quality assurance mechanisms and intrinsically connected to the systematic work on quality in education. Different mobility tools, including the EQF, provide common reference points between authorities and stakeholders in education and training.

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a huge impact on the Norwegian economy, working life and, not least, the education sector. The unemployment rate has increased significantly, and education institutions report increases in the number of applicants. In the revised national budget for 2020 submitted on 12 May the

⁽²⁷⁾ New legislation for higher VET from 2018 makes it possible to have higher VET degrees with a duration of three years:

<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2018-06-08-28>

government proposes to establish 5000 new student places at vocational colleges, university colleges and universities. These student places will be established in fields of study where there is a great need for competence in the years ahead, such as technology, health and social care, and teacher training (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, revised national budget 2020).

Main sources of information:

- NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) is the national coordination point: <https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-efq/>
- Databases of qualifications and study programmes:
<https://utdanning.no/>
<https://www.studyinnorway.no/>
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research – Information on NKR:
https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utdanning/voksnnes_laering_og_kompetanse/artikler/nasjonalt-kvalifikasjonsrammeverk/id601327/ (in Norwegian)
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research: *Referencing the Norwegian qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA)*:
<https://europa.eu/europass/sl/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-efq>

The Norwegian qualifications framework (NKR)

NKR levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degrees (<i>ph.d, dr. philos., ph.d. in artistic development work (from 2018)</i>) Diploma for artistic development programme (<i>Diplom, kunstnerisk utviklingsprogram</i>)	8
7	Master degree (<i>Mastergrad</i>) Master of Arts Master of business administration (MBA) Master of international business (MIB) Master of technology management Master of laws Candidata/candidatus medicinae Candidata/candidatus medicinae veterinariae	7

	Candidata/candidatus psychologiae Candidata/candidatus theologiae		
6.2	Bachelor degree (<i>Bachelorgrad</i>) Diploma for general teacher education programme (<i>Vitnemål fra allmennlærerutdanning, Vitnemål fra grunnskolelærerutdanning</i>)	6	
6.1	University college degree (<i>Høgskolekandidatgrad</i>)		
5.2	Diploma for vocational college education (1.5 to 2 years, 90 – 120 credits) (<i>Vitnemål fra fagskoleutdanning</i>)	5	
5.1	Diploma for vocational college education 0.5 to 1.5 years, 30 – 90 credits) (<i>Vitnemål fra fagskoleutdanning</i>)		
4	A. Certificate for upper secondary vocational education and training (<i>Vitnemål fra videregående opplæring, yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram</i>) Craft certificate (<i>Fagbrev</i>) Journeyman certificate (<i>Svennebrev</i>)	B. Certificate for upper secondary general education (<i>Vitnemål fra videregående opplæring, studieforberedende utdanningsprogram</i>)	4
3	Document of competence for partially completed upper secondary education (<i>Kompetansebevis</i>)	3	
2	Certificate for primary and lower secondary education (10 years) (<i>Vitnemål fra 10-årig grunnskole</i>)	2	
-	Not part of the NQF	1	

Source: Adapted from Regulation on the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning and its referencing to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (FOR-2017-11-08-1846) – Annex II

<https://lovdata.no/static/SF/sf-20171108-1846-03-01.pdf?timestamp=1579568777000>

Acronyms

EEA	European economic area
EQF	European qualifications framework
EU	European Union
NKR	Nasjonalt kvalifikasjonsrammeverk for livslang læring [national qualifications framework for lifelong learning]
NOKUT	<i>Nasjonalt kompetansesenter for utenlandsk utdanning</i> [Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education]
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area
VET	vocational education and training
VPL	validation of prior learning

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