

ALBANIA

European inventory on NQF 2014

Introduction

The national strategy for employment and skills 2014-20 was presented in February 2014, bringing together, as part of the same strategic plan for the first time, VET for young people and adults, active policies for employment, and social inclusion. The strategy is ambitious, aiming to increase employment by aligning VET to labour market needs, in turn promoting inclusion and cohesion. Complying with the European employment strategy 2020, the employment and skills strategy is seen as bringing Albania closer to EU integration (since June 2014, Albania is a candidate country for EU entry).

With unemployment a major challenge in the country, the employment and skills strategy aims to reduce youth unemployment by eight percentage points (the rate was 30% in 2013 for youth aged 15-24), and bring long-term unemployment down from 75% to 60% of total unemployment. Increasing the share of students choosing VET programmes, increasing the employment of VET graduates, and boosting the participation of women are further aims.

The Albanian qualifications framework (AQF) is to become one of the pillars of effective policies for employment, education and training, according to the employment and skills strategy, and AQF implementation is considered instrumental to strong governance of the labour market and qualification systems. VET is currently centralised, with limited involvement of social partners and low responsiveness to local needs, and low attractiveness to learners. There are two separate VET provider systems: vocational schools and vocational training centres. When both systems are to deliver qualifications to the common AQF (in future), their structures and provision could be streamlined and better aligned to labour market needs.

AQF development has been continued over several years, a major contribution being made in a project (EC CARDS 2006 VET 3) implemented in 2008-10. EU recommendations and standards and the Bologna process have also been strong drivers for the AQF development. The law on the Albanian qualifications framework (Law No 10 247 dated 4.3.2010) was adopted in 2010, followed by an AQF implementation plan and recommendations and additional regulations for the AQF and subsystems. (These were project developments.)

Further development and implementation of the AQF came to a halt with the financial crisis and ensuing budget cuts. However, the National Agency for

Vocational Education and Training and Qualification (NAVETQ) worked on developing a national list of occupations, vocational qualifications and VET curricula, together with numerous donor organisations and stakeholders. Current projects include VET reform and a pilot on validation.

Main policy objectives

One of the four main strategic objectives of the employment and skills strategy is to provide quality VET for youth and adults. Another strategic objective is to strengthen governance of the labour market and qualification systems, including developing and implementing the AQF. Actions to reach the AQF goal include:

- (a) review of work already undertaken: the AQF law of 2010 will be revised and implemented. Amendments to the law will be arranged in by-laws. The work done on qualifications by NAVETQ and in different donor projects will be reviewed alongside offered by public or private VET providers or universities. Evaluation and certification of qualifications will be revised;
- (b) establishment and operationalisation of sector committees: sector committees with social partner representation and a minimum representation of 30% qualified women will be established. Each committee will review the qualifications required within its sector and will participate in revising the national list of professions, developing occupational standards and vocational qualifications for priority sectors, and placing these in the AQF database;
- (c) revision and linking of curricula to the AQF: curricula will be revised and interlinked on the basis of AQF qualifications and standards, and referenced to AQF levels;
- (d) selecting bodies and putting in place procedures for validation.

The law on the AQF is due to be revised now that the process has been revitalised. According to current law, some of the main objectives of the AQF are to:

- (a) provide a basis for comparison of achievements in all parts of the education system and national and international training;
- (b) stimulate the development of qualifications, based on internationally comparable standards of knowledge, skills and wider competences;
- (c) encourage the development of lifelong learning, including skills for adults;
- (d) promote flexible and individualised learning and support transfer and progress;
- (e) improve employment opportunities and learning for individuals;
- (f) be an instrument for quality improvement.

Stakeholder involvement

The employment and skills strategy was developed in extensive consultation with different stakeholders, including the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualification (NAVETQ), the National Employment Service, trade unions and the business sector. The process was supported by ILO and the ETF.

AQF development has taken place in various stages and projects over several years, with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities sharing the responsibility. NAVETQ will take the lead in all AQF-related actions drawn up in the employment and skills strategy.

Framework implementation

The employment and skills strategy includes actions aimed at developing and implementing the AQF. Revision of existing legislation is foreseen, as well as reviews of work already carried out on vocational qualifications. The establishment of sector committees is planned, to review and develop occupational standards. Procedures for validation are also part of the plan.

So far, information on how these plans will be put into practice is lacking.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

The law on the AQF (2010) describes a comprehensive eight-level framework that corresponds to the EQF. Three types of qualifications are identified:

- (a) general qualifications at secondary school level; AQF levels 1 to 4;
- (b) higher qualifications offered at, or in cooperation with, universities; AQF levels 5 to 8;
- (c) vocational qualifications provided in VET schools, training centres or at the workplace; AQF levels 2 to 5.

The eight levels of the AQF are to be defined by level descriptors described in terms of theoretical and factual knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, and autonomy and responsibility.

Despite including many innovative elements, the new curricula for VET and higher education still take an input- and subject-based approach. Work remains to be done in moving towards an approach based on learning outcomes and competence levels.

Validating non-formal and informal learning and links to the NQF

The action plan for the employment and skills strategy specifies a national system for validation, as in D2.4, 'Actions to be taken'.

- (a) 'Selecting bodies and putting in place procedures for the validation of qualifications, skills assessments, certification and the validation/ recognition of prior learning.
- (b) Appointment of special bodies and establishment of procedures for the validation of qualifications assessments of knowledge, skills and competences; certification; and validation of prior learning.
- (c) Establishment of a national system to recognise qualifications, work experience, skills obtained/received abroad.'

Referencing to the European qualifications framework (EQF)

Although the intention is to link the AQF to the EQF, there are currently no plans for practical steps on this. The focus for the coming years will be on AQF implementation and strengthening of the qualification system and the labour market.

Important lessons and future plans

VET reform activities in the past were often developed in isolation, with limited impact on the labour market and qualification systems. The renewed emphasis on the AQF could provide the necessary structure and quality mechanisms for reforming VET.

However, NAVETAQ is a small agency with limited resources. If it is to drive AQF developments and implementation, more resources need to be allocated.

Main sources of information

[URLs accessed December 2014]

Inventory of NQF recent developments in ETF's partner countries – Albania
(Update based on an ETF fact finding mission in May 2014 and on the Albanian national employment and skills strategy 2014-20)

Law No 10 247 dated 4.3.2010 – Albanian qualifications framework (LIGJ Nr.10 247, datë 4.3.2010 - PËR KORNIZËN SHQIPTARE TË KUALIFIKIMEVE):

<http://80.78.70.231/pls/kuv/f?p=201:Ligj:10247:04.03.2010>

ETF press release on the national strategy for employment and skills 2014-20:

http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania_National_Employment_and_Skills_Strategy_Launch_EN

ILO press release on the national strategy for employment and skills 2014-2020:

http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS_237056/lang--en/index.htm

List of abbreviations

AQF	Albanian qualifications framework
EQF	European qualifications framework
NAVETQ	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualification
NQF	national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training

References

[URLs accessed 5.2.2015]

Albanian Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (2014a). *The national strategy for employment and skills 2014-20*.

http://www.sociale.gov.al/files/documents_files/Strategjia_per_Punesim_dhe_Aftesim_2014-2020.pdf

Albanian Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (2014b). *Action plan and indicators for the national strategy for employment and skills 2014-20*.

http://www.sociale.gov.al/files/documents_files/Albania_EMP-SKILLS_STRATEGY_ActionPlan_2014_.pdf