

BELGIUM (German-speaking community) European inventory on NQF 2014

Due to its federal structure, Belgium has the challenge of developing and implementing more than one national qualifications framework (NQF). The federal state comprises three regions (Flanders, Walloon region and Brussels-capital region) and three communities (Dutch-, French- and German-speaking). Education is delegated to community level, giving each community wide responsibilities for financing and organising their respective education, training and qualifications systems.

While the Dutch- and French-speaking communities have been working on national frameworks since 2005-06, the German-speaking community started developing its own qualifications framework only recently. Despite adaptation to each specific context, all three frameworks have substantial similarities. Further, an amendment to Belgian Federal Law on general structure of the education system was adopted in 2012, stating that European qualifications framework (EQF) levels will be used as a common reference for the three communities in Belgium; this helps address the challenge of linking the three frameworks, and potentially easing mobility of Belgian citizens within the country. At this stage, however, all three frameworks will be referenced separately to the EQF.

Introduction

The German-speaking community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (*Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft*, QDG) on 18 November 2013. Being the smallest part of Belgium (geographically and in terms of population) the framework reflects the work done in the Flemish- and French-speaking parts of Belgium but is also inspired by the German qualifications framework (DQR). The 2013 Decision envisages that a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning will be linked to the QDG, stating that a central validation point will be set up within the next five years.

Main policy objectives

A main objective for the framework is to strengthen national and international comparability of qualifications. While subject to Federal laws on education

applying in Belgium, the geographic location of the region means that citizens are likely to cross regional or national borders for living and working. This makes it a priority to clarify the relationship between own qualifications and those awarded in the neighbouring countries. The framework will also promote equivalence between general and vocational education and training, and the shift to learning outcomes is an important step in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability.

Stakeholder involvement and implementation

The framework has been developed over a relatively short time, involving all main education and training stakeholders in the region. This includes the social partners who normally play a key role in an education and training system inspired by that of Germany, both for general and vocational education and training.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

An eight-level, learning outcomes based framework have been introduced. The framework builds on the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* (action competence) and distinguishes between subject/occupational specific and personal competences. Level descriptors will be based on the categories outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 **Level descriptors of the German-speaking community of Belgium, main categories**

Action competence (<i>Handlungskompetenz</i>)			
Subject/occupational oriented competence (<i>Fachliche Kompetenz</i>)		Personal competence (<i>Personale Kompetenz</i>)	
Knowledge	Skills	Social competence	Autonomy

Source: Ministry of the German-speaking community, 2013.

The framework is seen as an instrument for promoting a learning outcomes or competence based approach across the different parts of education and training in the region. It distinguishes between general and vocational qualifications (reflecting the parallel distinction made in Flanders and the French-speaking part of Belgium). General upper secondary education (*Abitur*) is placed at level 4 while the three cycles of bachelor, master and doctor are placed at levels 6-8. In vocational education and training, completed apprenticeship (dual

system) is at level 4. A master craftsman with two years of training is placed at level 5, one with three years of training at level 6.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

A system for validating non-formal and informal learning is seen as an integrated part of the QDR (see chapter 5, articles 14-15, of the decree).

Referencing to the EQF

It is not clear when referencing to the EQF will take place.

Table 2 **German-speaking community's qualifications framework**
(Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft)

QDG levels	General education qualifications	Vocational education and training qualifications
8	Doctoral or postdoctoral degree/habilitation <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer Promotion oder Habilitation auf Doktoren- bzw. Professorebene)</i>	
7	Master degree (long duration) <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines Hochschulstudiums langer Dauer auf Masterebene)</i>	Master degree upon successful completion of dual track higher education (long duration) <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines dualen Hochschulstudiums langer Dauer auf Masterebene)</i>
6	Bachelor degree <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines Hochschulstudiums kurzer Dauer auf Bachelorebene)</i>	Master craftsperson certificate upon successful completion of a three-year master craftsperson programme <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer dreijährigen Meisterausbildung mit dem Meisterbrief)</i> Professional bachelor degree upon successful completion of dual track higher education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines dualen Hochschulstudiums kurzer Dauer auf Bachelorebene)</i>
5		Master craftsperson certificate upon successful completion of a two-year master craftsperson programme <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer zweijährigen Meisterausbildung mit dem Meisterbrief)</i> Successful completion of supplementary

QDG levels	General education qualifications	Vocational education and training qualifications
		secondary vocational education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer Ausbildung im ergänzenden beruflichen Sekundarunterricht)</i>
4	Successful completion of upper secondary general education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Oberstufe des allgemeinbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)</i>	<p>Successful completion of upper secondary technical and arts programmes <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Oberstufe des technischen oder künstlerischen Sekundarunterrichts)</i></p> <p>Attestation of competence upon successful completion of year 6 in vocational education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des sechsten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts mit Befähigungsnachweis)</i></p> <p>Successful completion of year 7 (complementary year) in vocational education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des siebten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)</i></p> <p>Journeyman certificate upon successful completion of an apprenticeship <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer mittelständischen Lehre mit dem Gesellenzeugnis)</i></p>
3	Successful completion of lower secondary general education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Unterstufe des allgemeinbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)</i>	<p>Successful completion of lower secondary technical, vocational or arts programmes <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Unterstufe des technischen, künstlerischen oder berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)</i></p> <p>Certified partial qualification acquired in year 2 of an apprenticeship <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer zertifizierten Teilqualifikation im zweiten Jahr der mittelständischen Lehre)</i></p>
2	Successful completion of 'common' year 2 in secondary education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des zweiten gemeinsamen Jahres des Sekundarunterrichts)</i>	<p>Successful completion of year 3 in vocationally-oriented education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des dritten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)</i></p> <p>Attestation of competence certifying lower secondary special needs education <i>(Befähigungsnachweis der Unterstufe des Fördersekundarunterrichts)</i></p>
1	Successful completion of primary education <i>(Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Grundschule)</i>	Certificate upon successful completion of year 2 in vocationally-oriented education <i>(Das Studienzeugnis des zweiten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts)</i>

Source: Ministry of the German-speaking community, 2013.

List of abbreviations

EQF	European qualifications framework
DQR	German qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
QDG	Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft [German-speaking community's qualifications framework]

References

[URL accessed 6.2.2015]

Ministry of the German-speaking community (2013). *Dekret zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft* [Decree establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking community].

<http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/pdf/Mbbs/2014/02/13/126688.pdf>