LUXEMBOURG
European inventory on NQF 2014

Introduction

Following a Ministry of Education initiative, an outline of a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) was presented to the Council of Ministers in early 2009. Based on an initial governmental go-ahead, detailed work continued during 2010 and 2011, resulting in an eight-level Luxembourg qualifications framework (CLQ) covering all types and levels of qualifications.

The Law on Vocational Education and Training (VET) adopted in autumn 2008 ([1]) paves the way for the framework, in particular by stressing the need to promote a shift to learning outcomes, but no separate legislative basis has been introduced for the CLQ. The framework was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2012. This referencing was combined with self-certification to the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA). Implementation of the CLQ has been relatively slow during 2013-14, partly reflecting the lack of a clear legislative basis and an agreed strategy shared by all stakeholders on how to proceed.

Main policy objectives

Development and implementation of the EQF is seen as an opportunity to make explicit the existing education and training levels and the relationships between them. This is important not only for the users of qualifications (to support lifelong learning for individuals and to enable employers to see the relevance of qualifications), but also for education and training providers. The explicit levels of learning outcomes introduced by the framework are expected to function as a reference point for curriculum development and may help to improve overall consistency of education and training provisions. Increased transparency of qualifications is a key objective underpinning the CLQ, which is seen as contributing to the overall modernisation of national education and training. One element in favour of the CLQ is the geographic and labour market location of Luxembourg. Being host to a large number of workers from neighbouring

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([1]) http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2008/0220/2008A3274A.html [accessed 31.10.2014].

countries like Belgium, Germany and France, Luxembourg sees the development of the NQF as a way to aid comparison and recognition.

In a second stage, the CLQ may open up to qualifications awarded outside the existing, official system. This reflects the high number of citizens holding unofficial and non-recognised certificates and diplomas. To accomplish this, specific approaches to accreditation and quality assurance of these new qualifications will have to be put in place.

Stakeholder involvement

The NQF process is being coordinated by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education.

Following the first discussions on the framework in the Council of Ministers, broad consultation was launched towards the end of 2010. Besides general approval of the plans for the NQF, main comments were on the legal status of the framework and on lifelong learning, including the link to non-formal and informal learning. The specific character of the Luxemburgish labour market, and the implications of this for qualifications, was given particular consideration. The high immigration rate and the large proportion of foreign workers make it necessary to pay particular attention to the coherence of the frameworks with those of neighbouring countries.

The attitude of higher education to the NQF was originally sceptical, with stakeholders from this sector arguing that EQF levels 6 to 8 should be mainly based on the Dublin descriptors of the EHEA. Following discussions during 2009 and early 2010, a common set of descriptors have been accepted by all stakeholders. This also provided the basis for common referencing/self-certification to the EQF and QF-EHEA in 2012.

Framework implementation

Following completion of NQF referencing to the EQF in mid-2012, the process of implementation has slowed down. While the CLQ can be described as having reached an early operational stage, some steps remain to be taken before the framework can be deemed to have reached full operation. A first challenge is to sort out framework legislation, with politicians reluctant so far to develop a separate legal basis and referring mainly to the (learning outcomes) principles introduced by the 2008 Law on VET. A five-year strategy for the CLQ is currently (following elections in 2013) being considered and first priority is to clarify the

legal basis of the framework. This strategy will also require clarification of the relationship between the CLQ and a wider strategy on lifelong learning. The Luxembourg national coordination point plays an active role in implementation and is systematically seeking to promote the development and implementation of the framework. A particular challenge seems to be the highly differing expectations from stakeholders, suggesting a need to provide more systematic information on the framework to relevant parties.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

Luxembourg has introduced an eight-level reference structure. While the number of levels corresponds with the EQF, the descriptors reflect the national tradition and context. Descriptors are differentiated at each level according to knowledge, skills and attitude (*connaissances, aptitudes, attitudes*). While the level of detail is higher, the relationship to the EQF can be clearly identified. This is, for example, the case for the third (*attitude*) column which is based on the principles of responsibility, autonomy and context, as with the EQF.

The decision to use these concepts reflects gradual development of a learning outcomes or competence-based approach in VET. During the 1970s and 1980s this approach was influenced by the German tradition. The experiences related to the development of professional standards played a particularly important role as education standards were directly deduced from them. In recent years these approaches have been developed through extensive cooperation with other European countries, notably those with a dual VET system (Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland). Links to France are also strong, partly influencing the way qualifications are designed and described.

The situation concerning use of learning outcomes (or 'competences') in Luxembourg education and training has varied between subsectors. Recent years have brought about a change and most qualifications are today described through learning outcomes. In initial vocational education, the 2008 law enabled introduction of a module-based system referring to learning outcomes. All qualifications have been described using learning outcomes and can be accessed via the register of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training ([2]). Higher education is organised in modules lasting one semester, each constituting assessable units allocated credit points (European credit transfer and

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([2]) See http://programmes.myschool.lu [accessed 22.10.2014].

accumulation system). These modules are now increasingly defined and described using learning outcomes.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning ([3])

The 'model' of validation in Luxembourg has emerged from consultation based on long-standing dialogue with different education and training stakeholders, leading to adoption of national legislation. Validation is an individual right in Luxembourg and citizens from other European Union countries are granted the same rights to it. The legal framework on validation consists of several laws. Validation is referred as validation of non-formal and informal learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience)* (VAE); it can lead to the award of full qualifications or part of a qualification, provided that the candidate can supply evidence that the total length of his/her prior learning experience amounts to at least three years and is effectively related to the targeted qualification. All qualifications included in the NQF in Luxembourg can be acquired through VAE, except the secondary school leaving certificate.

The approaches to VAE and methodologies implemented can differ slightly in practice in secondary and higher education, but are generally consistent and encompasses four stages: identification, documentation, assessment and certification. The standards used to support delivery of validation in Luxembourg are the same as those used in formal education and training (based on modular training curricula and/or on competence frameworks).

Outside formal education and training, a validation procedure is in place at the Luxembourg Lifelong Learning Centre (LLLC), the training department of the Chamber of Employees (Chambre des salariés*)*. Some qualifications delivered by the LLLC can be obtained either via participation in evening classes or by a validation procedure, with full or part qualification awarded. Following the 2008 law reforming the VET sector, all VET and LLLC curricula are now based on learning outcomes to aid validation.

Referencing to the EQF

Luxembourg referenced its qualifications levels to the EQF and the QF-EHEA in June 2012 as illustrated in Table 1.

([3])   This section is based on European Commission et al., 2014.

Table 1   **Level correspondence established between the CLQ and the EQF**

CLQ	EQF
Level 8	Level 8
Level 7	Level 7
Level 6	Level 6
Level 5	Level 5
Level 4	Level 4
Level 3	Level 3
Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 1

Source: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2012.

Important lessons and future plans

While a solid basis for a NQF has been established in Luxembourg, implementation has slowed following referencing to the EQF in 2012. This reflects the lack of a clear legal basis and some uncertainty among stakeholders regarding the national role of the CLQ. The CLQ can be considered to have reached an early operational stage. Reaching full operation requires that steps are taken to clarify, among all stakeholders, the role to be played by the framework in the coming years and the legal/political principles on which this work is to be based.

Main sources of information

The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (Ministère de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle) acts as NCP. http://www.men.public.lu [accessed 20.10.2014].

Table 2   **Qualifications framework of Luxembourg**

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma Certificate following specific training course in medicine (*Diplôme de formation spécifique en médecine générale*)	8
7	Master diploma	7
6	Bachelor diploma	6
5	Master craftsman diploma (*Brevet de maitrise*) Advanced technician's diploma Specialised advanced technician's diploma	5
4	Secondary school leaving certificate Technical secondary school leaving certificate Technician diploma (*Diplôme de technicien*)	4
3	Vocational aptitude diploma Certificate attesting completion of middle cycle technical secondary education Certificate attesting completion of five years secondary education	3
2	Vocational capability certificate (*Certificat de capacité professionnelle*)	2
1	Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle, technical secondary education	1

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2012.

List of abbreviations

CLQ	Luxembourg qualifications framework
EQF	European qualifications framework
LLLC	Luxembourg Lifelong Learning Centre
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework for the European higher education area
VAE	validation des acquis de l'expérience [validation of non-formal and informal learning]
VET	vocational education and training

References

[URLs accessed 22.10.2014]

European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014. Country report: Luxembourg*.

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training; Ministry of Higher Education and Research (2012). *Report on referencing the Luxembourg qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area*. https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/Referencing%20report.pdf