MONTENEGRO
European inventory on NQF 2014

Introduction

Montenegro has developed a comprehensive national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (MQF), based on learning outcomes. It includes all formal education qualifications (from general education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education) as well as a system of national professional qualifications, which can be acquired though validation of non-formal learning. The MQF is intended to give a clear overview of different paths to qualifications and how they are interconnected, as well as to allow for development and comparison of qualifications.

In 2010, the Montenegro parliament passed the national qualifications framework law (*Zakon o nacionalnom okviru kvalifikacija*) ([1]), which defines principles and objectives of the MQF, structure of levels and sublevels, qualification types to be included and governance structure. This legislation was followed by a period of adoption of methodology-related documents and rules, and setting up sectoral commissions in 2011-12. Also, the qualifications department at the Ministry of Education was established and tasked with responsibilities of the national coordination point (NCP).

Main policy objectives

The government sees MQF development and alignment to the European qualifications framework (EQF) as an important political priority. The law on MQF defines its principles and main policy objectives, focusing on principles of learning outcomes defined as knowledge, skills and competences; importance of quality assurance in all phases of qualifications development; establishing cooperation among stakeholders; and creating conditions for transfer of credits.

The main goals of the MQF as defined by law are:

(a) supporting the shift to learning outcomes-based qualifications;
(b) linking education and training more effectively to the labour market;
(c) better integrating various education and training subsystems;

([1]) Law on NQF. http://www.qas.ac.me/docs/reakreditacija/r5.pdf [accessed 10.10.2014].

(d) making progression possibilities (vertical and horizontal) within the education and training system visible;

(e) supporting lifelong learning and aiding recognition of non-formal and informal learning;

(f) improving international comparability of qualifications;

(g) ensuring quality of qualifications.

Stakeholder involvement

The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for developing and implementing the MQF. NCP responsibilities lie with the qualifications department at the ministry.

Different institutions are involved in developing and awarding qualifications at different levels. Also, various partners have been involved as members of working groups, councils, committees and commissions in defining the framework concept, setting procedures and responsibilities for development of qualifications that are part of the framework, drafting regulations, as well as in drafting a referencing report.

Framework implementation

The eight-level MQF is perceived as a framework for reforms and modernisation of the qualifications system in Montenegro. It is a comprehensive framework, encompassing qualifications at all levels and all degrees of complexity. The MQF aims to improve quality and availability of qualifications, in line with labour market and societal needs; to improve transparency and support recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The framework has entered an early operational stage. Implementation is ongoing, including work on information and transfer and dissemination of experience and knowledge from pilot undertakings. Development of qualifications is under way, and criteria and procedures for placing qualifications in the framework have been decided. A qualifications register, maintained by the NCP, includes all details on new qualifications.

The National Council for Qualifications, established in 2011 under provisions of the 2010 Law on the MQF ([2]), has overall responsibility for the national qualification system and framework. The council consists of representatives from

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([2]) See http://www.qas.ac.me/docs/reakreditacija/r5.pdf [accessed 10.10.2014].

ministries, institutions involved in development of qualifications, employment services, universities, the social partners and chambers of commerce and representatives of employers and trade unions. The council is a permanent body, whose principal tasks are to:

(a) take decisions on inclusion and classification of qualifications in the MQF;
(b) make proposals for new qualifications to institutions in charge of developing qualifications;
(c) take decisions on the methodological documents for classification of qualifications;
(d) adopt guidelines for sectoral commissions.

For each of 15 qualification sectors, defined by the national qualifications framework law, the Qualifications Council has set up sectoral commissions. These sectoral commissions also involve a range of partners, such as the National Council for Education and the Higher Education Council. Revision of qualifications and development of new qualifications is underway. Since 2011, the National Council for Qualifications has considered 95 proposals for development of new or revision of existing qualifications (Montenegrin Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 61).

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

The MQF has eight levels, based on learning outcomes with sublevels at levels 1, 4 and 7. They cover all types of qualifications in formal education (in general education, VET and higher education).

The first four levels include qualifications from primary, secondary general and vocational education. Level 5 is an intermediate level between upper secondary education and higher education (post-secondary VET qualifications). Levels 6 to 8 include qualifications awarded in higher education. The framework also includes old pre-Bologna qualifications.

It is important to note that all MQF levels accept labour market-oriented professional qualifications, as defined by the law on national vocational qualifications (NVQ) adopted in 2008 ([3]). This law defines procedures regulating validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The law also refers to 'other qualifications'.

([3]) Law on national professional qualifications (*Zakon o nacionalnim strucnim kvalifikacijama*).
http://www.iccg.co.me/1/dok/regulativa/Zakon%20o%20nacionalnim%20i%20strucnim%20kvalifikacijama.pdf [accessed 7.10.2014].

The shift to learning outcomes is seen as an essential part of national qualifications framework development. The NQF Act introduced orientation towards learning outcomes as a standard for all levels of qualifications. Methodologies were developed to support redesign of qualifications defined in terms of learning outcomes. In VET, occupational standards were introduced as a basis for development of qualification standards and curricula. In higher education, revisions or proposals for upgrading study programmes were launched.

Validating non-formal and informal learning and links to the NQF [4]

Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is regulated by a law on national vocational qualifications (2008) [5] and a series of rule books, and linked to acquiring vocational qualifications. Assessment is performed by the Examination Centre, according to assessment standards adopted by the National Council for Education.

According to this legislation, a nationally-recognised vocational qualification can be acquired by assessment of prior learning and be used for work or education continuation purposes. Assessment is performed against occupational standards. Many educational programmes are being modularised, allowing candidates to attain a single qualification or a specific module based on an occupational standard or several modules over time. However, a vocational qualification certificate does not equal a diploma, a formal education level document.

Validation is seen as a way to meet needs of young people and adults with a loose connection to formal schooling and needs of the labour market, as well as supporting lifelong learning. In the near future, it is a priority to intensify activities on implementation of validation described in existing legislation.

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[4] This section draws mainly on input from European Commission et al., forthcoming.

[5]
http://www.iccg.co.me/1/dok/regulativa/Zakon%20o%20nacionalnim%20i%20strucnim%20kvalifikacijama.pdf [accessed 7.10.2014].

Referencing to the EQF

Following Government Conclusion No 06-1934/3, a working group was set up in 2012 to draft a referencing report. Members of the group represent the Montenegrin Employers Federation, Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, Employment Agency of Montenegro, Educational Trade Union of Montenegro, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education Services, Examination Centre, Centre for Vocational Education and State and private universities.

One integral report, linking MQF levels to EQF levels and verifying compatibility with the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) was presented in October 2014.

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

MQF	EQF
Level VIII	Level 8
Level VII-2	Level 7
Level VII-1	
Level VI	Level 6
Level V	Level 5
Level IV-2	Level 4
Level IV-1	
Level III	Level 3
Level II	Level 2
Level I-2	Level 1
Level I-2	

Source: Montenegrin Ministry of Education, 2014.

Important lessons and future plans

The main aim for the period from 2012 onwards is to put the MQF into practice. Capacity-building among institutions remains an important task, as does improving cooperation with partners.

Significant efforts are being made to redefine and further develop qualifications to reflect the learning outcomes perspective and allow for alignment to the MQF. An important activity is raising awareness of the framework among stakeholders.

Challenges include further development of qualifications of different types and levels in different sectors; helping with realising individualised learning paths and improving quality assurance of assessment of learning outcomes.

Main sources of information
[URLs accessed 7.10.2014]

MQF website: http://www.cko.edu.me
Montenegrin Ministry of Education: http://www.mpin.gov.me/en/ministry

Table 2   **The national qualification framework in Montenegro**

Types/levels of qualifications			
NQF levels	**Formal education/ educational qualifications**	**Vocational qualifications (qualifications attained outside formal education and assessed by relevant bodies)**	**EQF levels**
8	Diploma of doctoral studies	NVQ	8
7.2	Diploma of master studies (**) Diploma of master studies	NVQ	
7.1	Graduate specialist academic and applied studies diploma Higher education diploma (**) First cycle academic and applied studies diploma (**)	NVQ	7
6	Diploma of first cycle academic and applied studies	NVQ	6
5	Diploma of post-secondary vocational education	NVQ	5
4.2	Master craftsman's examination certificate		
4.1	Upper secondary school leaving diploma (general, gymnasium) Upper secondary school leaving diploma (vocational, four years)	NVQ	4
3	Diploma of secondary vocational education (three years)	NVQ	3
2	Diploma of lower vocational education (two years)	NVQ	2
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	

(*)   The procedure for additional qualifications will be developed in the next stage.
(**)   Pre-Bologna diplomas, until adoption of the Higher Education Act 2002.
Source: Adapted from the Montenegrin Ministry of Education, 2014.

List of abbreviations

EQF	European qualifications framework
MQF	Montenegrin qualifications framework
NCP	national coordination point
NVQ	national vocational qualifications
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework for the European higher education area
VET	vocational education and training

References

[URLs accessed 7.10.2014]

European Commission et al. (forthcoming). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014. Country report: Montenegro.*

Montenegrin Ministry of Education (2014). *Referencing the Montenegrin qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area.*
http://www.cko.edu.me/Library/files/Montenegrin%20%20Referencing%20and%20Self%20referencing%20Report%20.pdf