

# ROMANIA

## European inventory on NQF 2014

### Introduction

Romania has adopted a learning outcomes-based national qualifications framework (NQF) for lifelong learning; the Romanian national qualifications framework (ROQF) by government Decision No 918/2013 <sup>(1)</sup>. This aims to bring together nationally-recognised qualifications from both initial and continuing vocational education and training (CVET), apprenticeship, general and higher education, and helps integrate validation of non-formal learning into the national qualifications system.

The framework builds on reforms in vocational education and training (VET) and development of competence-based qualifications since the 1990s. The National Council for Adult Training was established with responsibility for coordinating the national register of (vocational) qualifications and for putting the validation system into practice (authorising validation centres, certifying individual assessors, issuing formal competence certificates, etc.). Parallel work was carried out in higher education, steered by the Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and has been taken forward in a partnership between universities and representatives of the social and economic environment. A qualifications framework for higher education, in line with the Bologna process and the European qualifications framework (EQF), has been implemented. Self-certification was completed in 2011.

One of the main challenges in recent years was to link these two development processes, structures and stakeholders from VET, higher education and the labour market in a more comprehensive framework. An important step was taken in June 2011 when the National Council for Adult Training and the Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education were merged into one single body – the National Authority for Qualifications (Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari) (ANC) – responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive NQF.

Reform of the Romanian education system is underpinned by legislation, mainly the National Education Law (Law No 1/2011) <sup>(2)</sup>, with subsequent

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<sup>(1)</sup> Government Decision No 918/2013 regarding approval of the NQF.  
[https://isj.educv.ro/sites/default/files/H.G.918\\_2013.pdf](https://isj.educv.ro/sites/default/files/H.G.918_2013.pdf) [accessed 15.10.2014].

<sup>(2)</sup> National Education Law No 1/2011. <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/14847> [accessed 15.10.2014].

amendments, aiming to open up and upgrade the education system. Promoting a broad, lifelong learning perspective, the law also emphasises importance of validation.

## Main policy objectives

Apart from its transparency function, the ROQF is seen as a tool to support national reforms and modernisation of education and training, opening up a possibility to address several issues such as coherence and progression in the education system, use of validation, adult participation and transitions between work and education. Romania faces a challenge in raising quality of education. There is also a reported lack of coherence in the qualification system and lack of progression possibilities between initial VET, CVET and higher education systems. Several qualifications frameworks (notably for VET and higher education) exist and there is a lack of validation of non-formal and informal learning within formal education needed to support entry and mobility within education. Adult participation in lifelong learning is low (1.4% in 2012) (European Commission, 2013). Additionally, qualifications should respond better to labour market needs and there is a need for greater transparency of learning outcomes and labour force mobility. National qualifications also need to be understood abroad and linked to the EQF.

Development of a comprehensive NQF addresses the following policy objectives:

- (a) integration and coordination of national qualification subsystems;
- (b) improvement in transparency;
- (c) making access to lifelong learning for all easier;
- (d) assuring progress;
- (e) improving qualification quality in line with needs of the labour market and broader society.

## Stakeholder involvement

The Ministry of National Education initiated work on a comprehensive framework in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly. Other ministries as well as social partners and stakeholders from education and training were involved. The ANC – coordinated by the Ministry of National Education – is responsible for work on the ROQF.

The main body responsible for development and implementation of a comprehensive ROQF, is the ANC, established in June 2011. It brings together two institutions: the National Council for Adult Training, in charge of CVET qualifications, and the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education, responsible for higher education qualifications.

This single legal entity – coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports – has the following competences:

- (a) proposes elements of national policies and strategies, draft legislation on the NQF;
- (b) develops, implements and updates the NQF and manages the national qualifications register;
- (c) develops and updates methodologies for NQF implementation;
- (d) develops instruments needed for monitoring, evaluation and control of the NQF;
- (e) quality assures implementation of the NQF;
- (f) manages the national qualifications register (Romanian Ministry of Education and ANC, 2014, pp. 30-31).

## Framework implementation

The qualifications framework is firmly based on national legislation and adopted by Government Decision No 918/2013 <sup>(3)</sup>. It has a clear governance structure. However, it is not operational yet. Stakeholders need to agree on how to implement it.

A (draft) EQF referencing report was presented in June 2014. The ROQF, as proposed for referencing, is a classification framework. Its future reforming role to support development and revision of qualifications and quality assurance arrangements is acknowledged. One explicit aim of the ROQF is to support lifelong learning. Currently, the ROQF comprises all educational stages and levels of education (from primary school education to doctoral level). It can be regarded as a comprehensive framework. However, it is restricted to qualifications from formal education and training; levels 6 to 8 are limited to qualifications awarded by higher education institutions. The question arises on how open or closed the framework will be in the future; what actual role will it play in supporting lifelong learning, access, progression and participation (especially

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<sup>(3)</sup> Government Decision No 918/2013 regarding approval of the NQF.  
[https://isj.educv.ro/sites/default/files/H.G.918\\_2013.pdf](https://isj.educv.ro/sites/default/files/H.G.918_2013.pdf) [accessed 15.10.2014].

of adults)? Will it become a tool for recognition of lifelong learning achievements? The links between the framework for higher education in place since 2011 and the framework for lifelong learning are not clear.

## Level descriptors and learning outcomes

The ROQF describes eight levels of qualification that can be acquired in the education and training system and by validation of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning arenas. National level descriptors are identical to EQF level descriptors. They are defined as knowledge (theoretical and factual), skills (cognitive skills – use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking – and practical skills, manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) and scope of responsibility and autonomy.

Extensive previous work on national level descriptors for the qualifications framework for lifelong learning – defined as knowledge, abilities and transversal competences – was not taken forward and integrated into the government decision. The concepts applied in the previous NQF proposal were broadly shared with the framework for higher education – already self-certified to the qualification frameworks in the European higher education area (National Qualifications Authority, 2011), potentially paving the way for smooth integration of this framework into the framework for lifelong learning. Eight generic level descriptors were identified within three broad categories (knowledge, abilities and transversal competences). Knowledge was subdivided into two strands: knowledge, understanding and use of specific language and explanation and interpretation. The concept of abilities included application, transfer and problem-solving; critical and constructive reflection; and creativity and innovation. Transversal competences referred to autonomy and responsibility; social interaction; and personal and professional development. In future developments and implementation it remains to be seen how these two parallel processes and frameworks will be linked and integrated.

There is commitment and visible preoccupation to strengthen the learning outcomes approach as part of the national reform programme. Law of Education (1/2011) <sup>(4)</sup> embraces a learning outcomes approach and provides a clearer legislative framework. Changes in national policies are mainly generated by the European legislative framework; in recent years also influenced by workforce

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<sup>(4)</sup> National Education Law No 1/2011. <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/14847> [accessed 15.10.2014].

migration and student mobility. Low results in the 'programme for international student assessment' (PISA) (OECD, 2014) put pressure on general education and teacher training (initial and continuous) to have more comprehensive understanding of learning outcomes and use of knowledge and skills in real life situations.

As reported for a Cedefop study on learning outcomes (Cedefop, forthcoming), the learning outcomes concept is not widely shared. There are many different interpretations due to various linguistic and pedagogic concepts.

In VET, a learning outcomes approach responds directly to social and economic needs. Many learning programmes developed in VET are based on competences. Occupational standards are used in CVET and are based on actual elements of competence to be proved at the workplace. Vocational training standards based on learning outcomes have been developed in collaboration with the social partners and approved by the Ministry of National Education. New curricula have been designed.

Adult education has a weak tradition in Romania. There are two factors which keep the learning outcomes approach at an early stage: very low participation of adults in lifelong learning (1.4% in 2012) and a very diversified institutional landscape with different types of institutions, programmes and organisational arrangements.

Within higher education, qualifications are linked to the credit structure of the European credit transfer system (ECTS). Applying this is compulsory for all higher education institutions in Romania. Use of a competence-based model is part of higher education reform. However, many competences for study programmes are not well-defined to differentiate between bachelor and masters levels. There is a challenge in using competence-based models in designing curricula, learning resources and assessment tools (Cedefop, forthcoming).

## Validating non-formal and informal learning and links to the NQF <sup>(5)</sup>

As indicated above, the National Law of Education No 1/2011 <sup>(6)</sup> reaffirms validation's role in lifelong learning policies. The chapter on lifelong learning creates the legal framework for developing lifelong learning community centres

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<sup>(5)</sup> This section draws mainly on input from European Commission et al., 2014.

<sup>(6)</sup> National Education Law No 1/2011. <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/14847> [accessed 15.10.2014].

with a specific role in increasing access to validation for disadvantaged communities and also emphasises use of lifelong learning portfolios in formal education. Creation of these centres, however, is still under discussion.

The legislative framework for the ROQF states that qualifications obtained through non-formal and informal education will be included in the NQF, using ROQF level descriptors. At the moment, the methodology allows only for level 4 or lower to obtain a qualification through validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, it is important to note that in the ROQF, validation is still linked only with occupational standards that relate to CVET qualifications, and is not yet operational with regard to formal education. According to ANC, the current system in Romania is rather, parallel to the formal system, and the bridge between the two is still not fully developed. It is not possible to obtain formal qualifications (full or partial) through validation of non-formal and informal learning. The validation system is mainly for adults and people who do not tend to go back to the formal system. However, this is an open discussion at the moment.

There are already 146 assessment centres and 49 900 people were assessed and certified, of which about 21 900 people were assessed and certified during 2010-13. There has been an increase in numbers of assessment centres and beneficiaries of validation. Interest in validation has been stimulated by the lifelong learning programme in Romania in recent years. In particular, a growing number of non-governmental organisations are interested in mobility and non-formal learning projects linked to Youthpass and Europass.

## Referencing to the EQF

The first referencing report was presented to the EQF in June 2014. It was published on the ANC website. It focuses on describing the national education and training system and how the ROQF and associated development processes and responsibilities meet the 10 referencing criteria.

Table 1 **Level correspondence between the Romanian qualifications framework and the EQF**

ROQF	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: Romanian Ministry of Education and ANC, 2014.

A substantial section of the report is dedicated to describing strategies for lifelong learning and the adult system in Romania, which have gained increased importance under recent legislation. The strategy for lifelong learning is based on four pillars: access; relevance; learning attitude and partnerships. Recent indicators show that adult participation in lifelong learning remains at a very low level, 1.4% in 2012.

## Important lessons and future plans

It is important to have good cooperation between different stakeholders and structures. Merging the National Council for Adult Training and the Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education into a single body – the ANC – responsible for development and implementation of a comprehensive NQF is seen as an important step in supporting more coherent approaches.

Increasing participation in adult learning remains a challenge. Recent amendments to legislation on adult training establish completed and certified adult training as part of the national education and training system. Legislation also requires permanent community learning centres to be established by local authorities, in partnership with education providers. The centres will play a key role in implementing lifelong learning initiatives at local level, focusing on education and training, information and dissemination and personal development. Activities will include second-chance programmes and validation. Establishing

these centres is expected to help increase participation rates for underrepresented groups.

As to the referencing process, the ANC will complete the process and send a document to the EQF advisory group to be presented there. No time schedule is indicated in the referencing report. Also, adding references to ROQF and EQF levels to certificates, diplomas and supplements is planned, without an indication of a time schedule.

Information is scarce on further future plans and strategies for implementation.

#### **Main sources of information**

[URLs accessed 19.9.2014]

ANC: [www.anc.edu.ro](http://www.anc.edu.ro)

Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale*): <http://edu.ro/>

Romanian Ministry of Education and ANC, 2011.

Romanian Ministry of Education and ANC, 2014.

## List of abbreviations

ANC	Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari [National Qualifications Authority]
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ROQF	Romanian national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training

## References

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Cedefop (forthcoming). *Application of learning-outcomes approaches across Europe*.

European Commission (2013). *Education and training monitor 2013: Romania*.  
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European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Romania*. [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/87074\\_RO.Pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/87074_RO.Pdf)

OECD (2014). *PISA 2012 results in focus: what 15-year-olds know and what they can do with what they know*. Paris: OECD Publishing.  
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[http://www.anc.edu.ro/uploads/images/info\\_utile/Referencing\\_the\\_ROQF\\_to\\_EQF\\_mai%202014\\_final.pdf](http://www.anc.edu.ro/uploads/images/info_utile/Referencing_the_ROQF_to_EQF_mai%202014_final.pdf)