NQFs across Europe: main trends and developments

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Overview of NQFs in Europe
Countries in the EQF process

41 EQF countries – 36 countries have linked their NQFs to EQF

The sample of this analysis is 38 country-specific reports
Are we progressing?

- NQFs are becoming more mature
- Countries are working in updating their referencing reports
- Countries are opening-up their NQFs
- Long way to go…
NQF scope and coverage
In which ways NQFs have evolved?

- National authority ET ministry
- Awarding body/providers
- System
- Multiple state, private, international providers
- Full
- Outside formal ET
- Size of qualifications
- Partial, micro
- Acquisition of qualifications
- Validation
- Programmes
Developing comprehensive NQFs

- In 13 countries at least one type of a levelled qualification can be considered as a microcredential.
- 6 countries have already included international qualifications and 5 are planning to do so.
- In some cases, countries incorporate professional qualifications as a sub-framework.
Coverage of NQFs

- More advanced NQFs tend to be more open.
- Considerable progress in including qualifications awarded outside formal education and training.
- More countries plan to include such qualifications in their frameworks.
NQFs and validation

Linking an NQF with VNFIL is another way to make the framework more inclusive.

In 17 countries, NQF and validation policies are explicitly linked.

One of the main functions of NQFs is to support VNFIL procedures.

The most common approach is using level descriptors, learning outcomes and standards included in the NQF in VNFIL.
Raising awareness of NQFs
Progress made… still a long way to go

- Two main target groups:
  - NQF developers and implementers
  - System beneficiaries and end users
- Awareness of NQFs/EQF among end users has gradually increased, but often remains the lowest.
- Individuals most often use NQF/EQF levels to ease their international mobility and orientation within the ET system.
- 24 NQFs are used by labour market stakeholders; 15 countries have reported that NQF/EQF levels are used in job ads and/or recruitment procedures (usually not extensively).
NQF communication tools

Coverage of NQF databases/registers

- NQF website: 27
- Workshops, conferences, seminars: 18
- Technical handbooks: 18
- Brochures and leaflets: 16
- Other: 11
- Social media: 10
- Videos: 10
- Events (job fairs): 8
- Networking: 7

Single NQF database:
- 9

Multiple databases:
- 10

No NQF database:
- 4

No NQF qualifications included
Cover(s) some NQF qualifications and others
Cover(s) some NQF qualifications
Cover(s) all NQF qualifications
Indicating NQF/EQF levels

- VET: 31
- Higher education: 28
- General education: 21
- Qualifications outside formal system: 15
- NQF levels not indicated on qualifications: 3

Source: Cedefop.
NQFs interacting with their ecosystem
NQF objectives
Main areas of NQF use

- Design, review and renewal of qualifications: 28
- Quality assurance of qualifications: 28
- Labour market stakeholders: 24
- Education and training providers: 24
- Recognition of qualifications: 22
- Guidance and counselling practitioners: 17
- Legislative and regulatory documents: 7
### Main areas of NQF impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and comparability of qualifications</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting learning outcomes</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue and cooperation between ET and the labour market</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation of non-formal and informal learning</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permeability in ET (reducing barriers between sectors)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue and cooperation across ET sectors</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parity of esteem between different types of ET</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas of influence</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Success factors and the way ahead

Main success factors in NQF implementation

01 Stakeholder engagement
02 Legal basis Institutional structure
03 Coherence with other policies
04 Political commitment

Main future priorities

01 Expand NQF coverage
02 Supporting stakeholders to use the framework
03 Further support VNFIL
04 Developing a database-Register
05 Raise awareness
NQF online tool
Welcome

The NQF online tool is a rich source of information on the qualifications frameworks and systems of the 41 countries participating in the European qualifications framework (EQF) process. Policy-makers, researchers, and the wider public can learn about the structure and scope of the NQFs, and get information on their implementation, impact and future priorities.

The NQF online tool presents, through an interactive map/grid, information on the state of play of the NQF of each country in 2018, 2020 and 2022. Information is organised in thematic categories, and can be compared for two countries (Country comparison). In addition, through the EQF users can compare qualification types between two countries (Qualification comparison), and have an ‘Overview’ of the main features of all NQFs across Europe.

The information displayed in the tool is collected biennially by Cedefop together with the European Commission and ETF, in cooperation with countries and the EQF national coordination points.

We hope the wealth of information presented will inspire and support all those interested in developing transparent and accessible education and training systems, and those navigating through the various European qualification types.

Detailed information on 2022 developments in the accession and pre-accession countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine) will be available in the second quarter of 2024.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>REPORTING YEAR</th>
<th>SCOPE OF THE FRAMEWORK</th>
<th>NUMBER OF LEVELS</th>
<th>LEVEL DESCRIPTORS</th>
<th>LEGAL BASIS/STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>NQF LINKED TO EQF</th>
<th>NQF/EQF WEBSITE</th>
<th>QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER/DATABASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and lifelong learning qualifications for adults and people undertaking specialist courses for professional development.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>knowledge, skills, competences</td>
<td>NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018) (in Albanian) Activiation stage</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>The National Catalogue of VET qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>The NQF is open to all types of qualifications from the formal and non-formal sectors. General education qualifications are not yet included in the framework.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>knowledge, skills, competence</td>
<td>Federal Law 14/2016 on the NQF (in German)</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Qualifications register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-DE</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>occupational competence (knowledge and skills), personal competence (social competence and autonomy)</td>
<td>Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German)</td>
<td>2011, 2014 update, 2023 update</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Qualifications database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-FL</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>The NQF includes all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and professional qualifications that can be awarded both inside and outside formal education.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>knowledge / skills, context / autonomy / responsibility</td>
<td>Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Qualifications register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-FR</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>The framework includes educational and professional qualifications awarded by the public sector and skills certificates awarded through the validation of non-formal and informal learning.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>knowledge / skills, context / autonomy / responsibility</td>
<td>Decree on cooperation agreement between the three francophone governments on the creation and management of CTC (2015) (in French)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Qualifications register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to those awarded outside formal education and training.</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>knowledge, skills, competence</td>
<td>Decision of the CoM on the adoption of the baseline qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) (in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Website</td>
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</table>
Use the interactive map or the countries grid to display information on NQF developments across Europe. It is possible to compare countries based on reporting year, stage of development and whether the NQF has been linked to EQF.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting year</th>
<th>Stage of development</th>
<th>NQF linked to EQF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>- Any -</td>
<td></td>
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Map view
Grid view
Select two countries and compare their qualification types through the EQF. For a detailed overview and analysis of NQF level descriptors in Europe, please click here. To discover more on NQF qualification databases, you can check the Europass portal.

Select countries to compare qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reporting year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reporting year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-- Select country --</td>
<td>-- Select year --</td>
<td>-- Select country --</td>
<td>-- Select year --</td>
</tr>
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</table>

EQF Levels

Compare
### Austria (2022)

#### NQF 8
- Doctorate (Doktorgrad)
- Level 8 professional qualifications in the health sector awarded by the Federal Ministry of Health

#### NQF 7
- Master's degree (Master: bzw. Diplomgrad)

#### NQF 6
- Bachelor's degree (Bachelorgebied)
- Master craftsman (Meister)
- Master of agriculture (Landwirtschaftlicher Meister/In)
- Engineer (Ingineer)
- Health qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Health – nurse responsible for general care (NL 2005/36/EG) (Verantwortlicher für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege (Diplomierten Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger))

#### NQF 5
- VET college/school leaving certificate – 5-year programmes (HBS)/Reife- und Diplomprüfung der berufsbildenden höheren Schulen)
- Level 5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Defence – staff non-commissioned officer (Stabsunteroffizier oder Stabsunteroffizierin (StAUs, Erstverwendung))
- Level 5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Justice – senior prison officer (Ereignisleiter in der Verwaltungsgruppe Z 26 im Justizressort (Bereichsführenden Grundausbildung – mittleres Management))
- Level 5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (Diakon Akademik)

### Ireland (2022)

#### EQF 8
- Doctoral degree
- Higher doctorate

#### EQF 7
- Master's degree
- Postgraduate diploma
- Level 9 professional award

#### EQF 6
- Honours bachelor's degree
- Higher diploma
- Level 8 professional award

#### EQF 5
- Ordinary bachelor's degree
- Level 7 professional award

**Key competencies:**
- Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge.
- A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems.
- Effective management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change.
- Review and develop performance of self and others.
Thank you

For further information:
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Policy brief: Building a European qualifications map
NQF online tool
European Inventory of NQFs
Project page