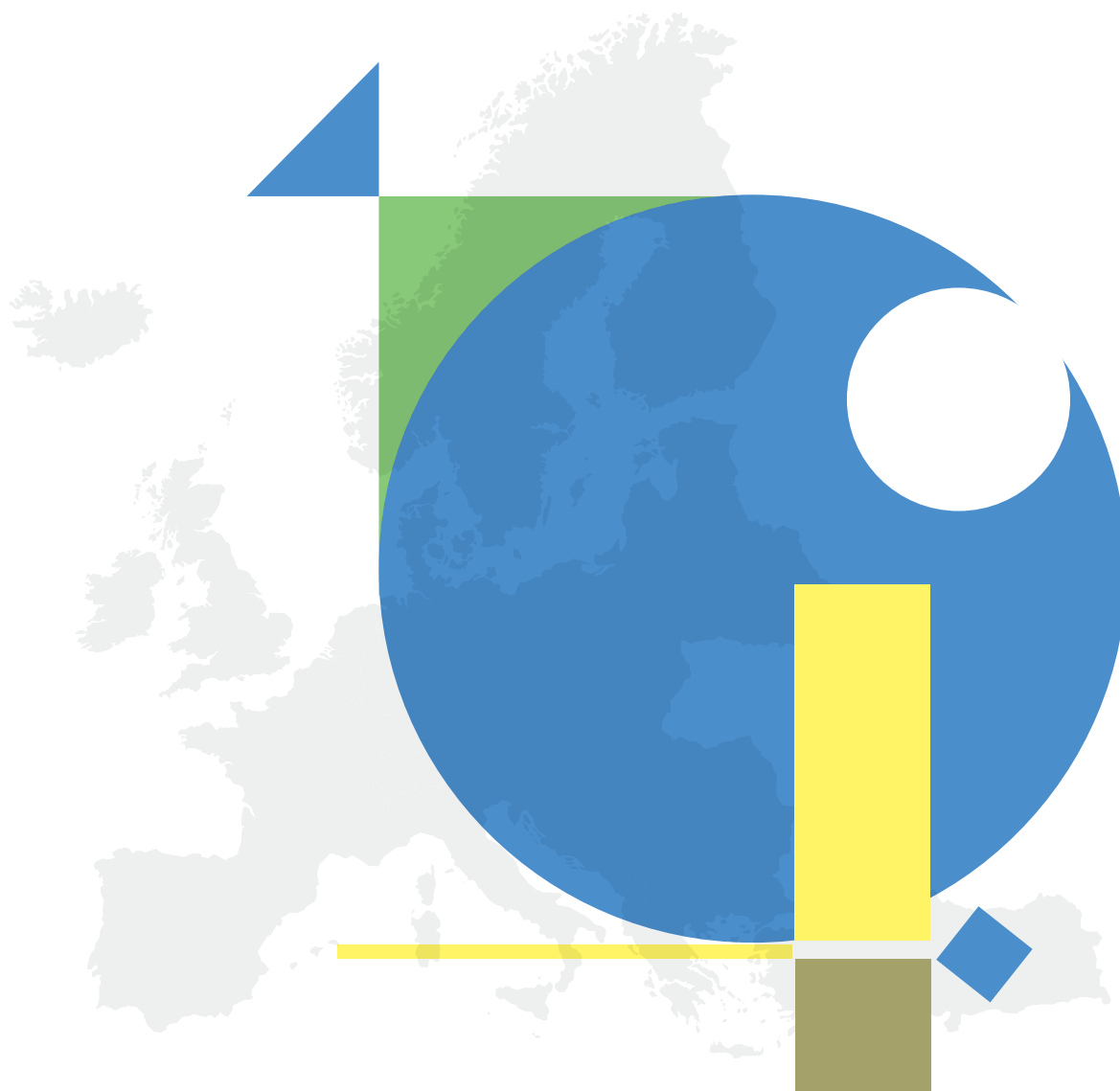




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EUROPEAN
INVENTORY
OF NQFs 2020
SERBIA

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SERBIA

European inventory of NQFs 2020

Introduction and context

NQF snapshot

The law on the national qualifications framework was adopted on 5 April 2018 and published in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* ⁽¹⁾ on 6 April 2018. The national qualification framework of Serbia (NQFS) has eight levels and four sublevels.

The NQFS law defines four qualification types:

- (a) general: basic education and secondary education;
- (b) vocational education and adult education;
- (c) academic: higher education;
- (d) vocational: higher education.

The NQFS law sets the conditions for the institutional framework:

- (a) an NQFS Council for strategic management of further NQF development and implementation. The Council is an advisory body that gives recommendations on planning and development of human capital in accordance with public policies in lifelong learning, employment, career guidance and counselling.
- (b) a Qualification Agency that performs administrative and technical tasks for the Council.
- (c) sector skills councils whose main function is to define the needs for qualifications in the labour market in Serbia.

The law on adult education defines recognition of prior learning (RPL) as one of the paths for acquisition of qualifications. The NQFS law foresees RPL procedures, based on the standard of qualifications, for qualifications at levels 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the NQF, and exceptionally, at NQF level 4. Operational details will be regulated in a bylaw. A pilot to implement RPL started in 2020.

Serbia is an EU candidate country and participates in the EQF advisory group. Serbia completed the referencing of the NQFS to the EQF in February 2020.

The implementation structure is in place, main working methods and instruments have been developed and put in place. The NQFS is gradually playing a role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications at national and international level. Therefore, Serbia is at the activation stage.

⁽¹⁾ Hereafter mentioned as *Official Gazette*.

Policy context

Serbia is an EU candidate country. The economic reform programme (ERP) in the process of accession to the European Union for the period 2020-22 identifies main challenges in the areas of labour market and employment, education and skills, social inclusion and social protection. The ERP builds on various strategic documents such as the national employment strategy 2011-20 and the strategy for education development in Serbia 2012-20.

The main objectives of the national employment strategy 2011-20 are:

- (a) encouraging employment in less developed regions and development of regional and local employment policies;
- (b) improving the quality of human capital (this includes development of career counselling, competence development of the unemployed by establishing a system of short training and RPL);
- (c) institutional capacity development and expansion of active employment policy programmes;
- (d) reducing the duality in the labour market.

The main objectives set out in the strategy for education development 2012-20 are:

- (a) increasing the quality of the process and outcomes of education to the maximum attainable level;
- (b) increasing participation in the Republic of Serbia at all education levels;
- (c) achieving and maintaining the relevance of education;
- (d) increasing the efficiency of the use of education resources.

Another important strategic document in this context is the digital skills development strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2024 (*Official Gazette*, No 21 of 6 March 2020) ⁽²⁾.

Serbia has begun the process of devising its education strategy for the period 2020-27. The adoption of the new strategy is expected by mid-2021.

NQF legal basis

There is one main legal act for the NQFS, the law on the national qualifications framework of Serbia adopted by parliament in April 2018 ⁽³⁾. Amendments to the law on NQFS were adopted in early 2020. The law on foundations of the education

⁽²⁾ <http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/21/2/reg/>

⁽³⁾ *Official Gazette* No 27/2018.
<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ZAKON-NOKS-18.pdf>

system, law on higher education and law on adult education are coherent with the NQFS.

Based on the law on NQFS, the following bylaws were adopted ⁽⁴⁾:

- (a) rulebook on the content and appearance of the initiative form for the development and adoption of qualification standards (*Official Gazette* No 53 of 9 April 2020);
- (b) rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services (*Official Gazette of RS*, No 43 of 19 June 2019);
- (c) rulebook on standards and manner of conducting the procedure of recognition of prior learning (*Official Gazette* No 148/2020)
- (d) rulebook on the methodology for the development of qualification standards (*Official Gazette of RS*, No 156/2020);
- (e) rulebook on the content and method of maintaining the Register of the national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette* No 159/2020);
- (f) rulebook on the system for classification and coding of qualifications in the National qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia; (*Official Gazette* No 159/2020).

Several other bylaws are expected concerning additional quality assurance mechanisms and external evaluation of publicly recognised organisers of adult education activities (PROAEA).

The education system of the Republic of Serbia is regulated by the following laws ⁽⁵⁾:

- (a) the law on foundations of the education system (*Official Gazette* No 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other law and 6/2020);
- (b) the law on preschool education (*Official Gazette* No 18/10,101/17,113/17 – other law and 10/19);
- (c) the law on primary education (*Official Gazette* No 55/13,101/17,27/18 – other law and 10/19);
- (d) the law on secondary education (*Official Gazette* No 55/13,101/17and27/18 – other law);
- (e) the law on dual education (*Official Gazette* No 101/17) ⁽⁶⁾;
- (f) the law on adult education (*Official Gazette* No 55/13,88/17 – other law and 27/18 – other law);

⁽⁴⁾ http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/sr_lat/zakoni-i-propisi/

⁽⁵⁾ <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/dokumenta-i-propisi/zakonski-okvir/>

⁽⁶⁾ <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/zakon-o-dualnom.pdf>

- (g) the law on dual model of studies in higher education (*Official Gazette* No 66/2019) ⁽⁷⁾;
- (h) the law on the national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette* No 27/18, 6/20);
- (i) the law on education inspectorate (*Official Gazette* No 27/18).

Policy objectives

Education and training reforms

2020 is the last year of the current strategy for education development; the process of drafting the new strategy has begun. The main objectives set out in the strategy for education development 2012-20 are:

- (a) increasing the quality of the process and outcomes of education to the maximum attainable level; assisted by scientific knowledge on education and respectable educational practice;
- (b) increasing participation at all education levels, from preschool education to lifelong learning;
- (c) achieving and maintaining the relevance of education, particularly where fully or partially funded by public sources, by aligning the educational system structure with immediate and developmental needs of individuals and economic, social, cultural, media, research, educational, public, administrative and other systems;
- (d) increasing the efficiency of the use of all education resources, i.e. completion rate within the stipulated period, with minimum extended duration and reduced dropout rates.

The action plan ⁽⁸⁾ for the implementation of the strategy for education development in Serbia was adopted in 2015. It describes individual activities (actions) defined by objectives and priorities of the strategy and the method of their implementation, deadlines, key actors and facilitators, including the monitoring tools and performance indicators.

In the ERP 2020-22 Serbia will focus on the reform of secondary vocational education by further implementation of the dual education system, introduction of Industry 4.0 into the dual education system, implementation of a dual model of higher education studies, further development of the national qualifications framework, and the establishment of regional training centres. These reforms

⁽⁷⁾ <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ZAKON.pdf>

⁽⁸⁾ http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Akcioni_plan.pdf

should ensure a more efficient education system response to the needs of the economy and labour market, technological innovation and the need for modern competences.

Aims of NQF

The aim of the NQFS is to structure and improve the qualification system in such a way that it is aligned with the requirements of socioeconomic development, supports lifelong learning and facilitates workforce mobility ⁽⁹⁾.

The goals of establishing the NQFS are ⁽¹⁰⁾:

- (a) ensuring the readability and transparency of qualifications, as well as their interconnection;
- (b) developing qualification standards based on the needs of the labour market and society as a whole;
- (c) ensuring a learning outcomes-based education system;
- (d) improving access and flexible learning paths in both formal and non-formal education;
- (e) ensuring identification and recognition of non-formal education and informal learning;
- (f) affirming the importance of key, general and cross-curricular competences for lifelong learning;
- (g) improving cooperation between relevant stakeholders and social partners;
- (h) ensuring a quality assurance system concerning the development and acquisition of qualifications;
- (i) ensuring comparability and recognition of qualifications acquired in the Republic of Serbia with those acquired in other countries.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

NQF scope and structure

The NQFS is an instrument to identify, create and classify qualifications in accordance with the demands of the labour market, lifelong learning, science and society in general.

⁽⁹⁾ The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (2020). *Report on referencing national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area.*

⁽¹⁰⁾ National qualifications framework in the Republic of Serbia.
<http://noks.mps.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Национални-оквир-квалификација-у-Републици-Србији.pdf>

It defines processes and institutions (bodies, organisations) responsible for defining qualifications and qualification standards, methods and conditions for acquiring, comparing and recognition of qualifications, along with other mechanisms for quality assurance.

The NQFS consists of eight levels and four sublevels. Levels 6 and 7 are each divided into two sublevels, reflecting qualifications of different volume at the same NQF level. For example: level 6.1 (180 ECTS) and level 6.2 (240 ECTS).

NQFS level descriptors have been defined in terms of learning outcomes and use the domains knowledge, skills and abilities and attitude.

Types of qualifications

The NQFS law defines four qualification types:

- (a) general qualifications: this type of qualification covers primary education and gymnasium education.
- (b) vocational qualifications: covering vocational secondary education and training. This type of qualification also includes secondary artistic qualifications.
- (c) academic qualifications: covering accredited academic study programmes (bachelor, master, specialised and doctoral studies). This type of qualification also includes academic artistic qualifications.
- (d) applied qualifications: covering accredited applied study programmes (bachelor, specialised and master).

Qualifications belonging to regulated professions are determined by a separate law, in accordance with EU Directive 2013/55/EU, and are an integral part of the NQFS.

For the moment, Serbia does not foresee partial qualifications being included in the NQF but, through non-formal education in accordance with a qualification standard, it is possible to recognise sets of learning outcomes or individual vocational competences acquired, or to obtain a certificate for a partially accomplished standard of vocational competences.

Quality assurance of qualifications

The NQFS law describes quality assurance as 'managing the process of developing qualifications based on standards and learning outcomes, as well as the quality system in the process of acquiring and evaluating qualifications'

The NQFS law describes specific arrangements and procedures for:

- (a) the qualification standard: this describes the qualification itself and the link with the occupational standard. However, as occupational standards are not developed yet, job descriptions are used. A methodology for development of

the qualification standard has been adopted and is published in the *Official Gazette*. In addition to the basic qualification data, the qualification standard also includes data on the connection of the qualification with the occupational standard(s), which enables the integration of data from the education system and data from the labour market;

- (b) submitting an initiative to develop and adopt a qualification standard: an initiative for developing and adopting standards for a new qualification can be submitted by a sector skills council, the Council for Vocational Education and Adult Education, the National Education Council, the National Council for Higher Education, the National Employment Service, a higher education institution, a State body or other legal entity (a company, PROAEA, etc.). The proposal is submitted to the Qualifications Agency, which assesses whether the proposed qualification standard is already covered by an existing qualification standard in the register; if so, the applicant will be notified. If this is not the case, the agency will send the proposal to the relevant sector skills council for a recommendation. On a positive recommendation by the sector skills council the agency will develop the proposed qualification standard;
- (c) drafting a new qualification standard: the agency will draft the new qualification standard and submit it within 60 days to the NQFS Council. On positive advice of the Council, the Minister responsible for education will adopt the new qualification standard for inclusion in the register;
- (d) inclusion in the register: the Qualification Agency enters qualifications in the national qualifications' subsector of the register. General and vocational qualifications of NQFS levels 1 to 5 that are adopted by the minister responsible for education are added to the register by the Qualifications Agency within eight days from the date of receipt of the act by the ministry. Academic and vocational qualifications of NQFS levels 6.1 to 8 that are accredited in accordance with the law governing higher education are registered in the national qualifications subsector of the register by the agency after receiving an accreditation notification from the National Body for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Use of learning outcomes and standards

The NQFS is based on qualification standards and learning outcomes. The description of learning outcomes is one of the elements of a qualification standard.

Learning outcomes are part of different standards used in the Serbian education system ⁽¹¹⁾:

- (a) education standards: these standards include general cross-curricular competences describing the goals and outcomes of general pre-university education, as well as the key competences based on the European framework of key competences for lifelong learning;
- (b) qualification standards: these standards are based on a description of the duties (vocational competences) and tasks (units of competence) for a specific occupation or group of occupations and cover knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes at the level of the overall qualification;
- (c) certification standards: these standards are used in primary, general secondary and secondary vocational education (including adult education) and include assessment criteria based on learning outcomes and aimed at the evaluation of the final achievement of competences prescribed in the education and qualification standards;
- (d) standards in higher education: these include standards for the initial accreditation of higher education institutions and standards for accreditation of study programmes. The first standard is respecting the Dublin learning outcome descriptors for a given study level. The second, concerning study programmes, describes general and subject-specific competences of graduates of a specific study programme in terms of learning outcomes.

Credit systems

The NQF law mentions credits in terms of ECTS points for higher education programmes only. The descriptions of the qualifications in the NQFS database ⁽¹²⁾ gives volume of qualifications in years for qualifications at level 1-5 (in years or in hours) and in ECTS points for qualifications at level 6-8 (e.g. level 6.1, 180 ECTS).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

Based on the NQFS law and NQFS council, a qualification agency and 12 sector skills councils have been established.

⁽¹¹⁾ The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (2020). *Report on referencing national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area.*

⁽¹²⁾ <http://noks.mps.gov.rs/en/>

An NQFS Council for strategic management of NQFS development and implementation is appointed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and is an advisory body.

The Qualification Agency performs administrative and technical tasks and expert support for the Council and proposes quality assurance measures throughout the education system.

The sector skills councils' main task is to define the need for qualifications in the labour market in Serbia.

Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The NQFS Council is an advisory body that gives recommendations on the process of planning and development of human resources in accordance with public policies in the field of lifelong learning, employment, career guidance and counselling. The NQFS law describes the main competences of the Council as follows:

The council:

- (a) proposes qualification standards for all levels of the NQFS;
- (b) proposes to the government the establishment of sector skills councils for specific sectors of work or activities;
- (c) monitors the work of the sector skill councils and makes recommendations for the improvement of work based on regular reports on the work of the sector skills councils;
- (d) provides the minister responsible for education with opinions about the recommendations of the sector skills councils regarding enrolment policy in secondary schools and higher education institutions;
- (e) makes recommendations on the process of planning and development of human resources in accordance with the strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia;
- (f) makes recommendations on improving the relationship between education and labour market needs;
- (g) gives opinions on standards for self-evaluation and external quality assurance of PROAEA (publicly recognised adult education organisations);
- (h) performs other duties in accordance with this law.

The Qualification Agency has been established to provide quality assurance and professional support to the NQF Council and other competent organisations in all aspects of the development and implementation of the NQF. The agency has the status of a legal entity. The NQFS law describes the main competences of the agency as follows:

- (a) considers initiatives for the introduction of new qualifications;

- (b) provides expert support to the sector councils and prepares proposals for the qualification standard;
- (c) provides administrative and technical support to the work of the sector skills councils;
- (d) keeps the registry and takes care of the entry of data into the appropriate sub-registries;
- (e) classifies and encrypts qualifications according to the national qualifications classification system (CLASSNQFS);
- (f) performs recognition of foreign school documents;
- (g) performs the procedure for recognition of a foreign higher education document for the purpose of employment (professional recognition), in accordance with this law and the law regulating higher education;
- (h) performs first validation of the foreign study programme, in accordance with the NQFS law and the law regulating higher education;
- (i) grants approval to organisations for obtaining the status of PROAEA;
- (j) decides on the amount of the fee for the procedures of recognition of foreign school documents and higher education documents;
- (k) keeps records of professional recognition in accordance with the NQFS law and the law regulating higher education;
- (l) provides external quality control of the PROAEA, once every five years;
- (m) at the request of the ministry responsible for education, issues a report on the fulfilment of requirements regarding the plan and programme of adult education activities, programme implementation and staffing;
- (n) prepares development projects, analysis and research relevant to the development of qualifications;
- (o) monitors and measures the effects of the implementation of (new) qualifications on employment and lifelong learning;
- (p) proposes measures for the improvement of quality assurance in the entire system;
- (q) performs other duties in accordance with this law.

Sector skills councils are advisory bodies established on the principle of social partnership. The main task is to define the need for qualifications within a certain sector in secondary, vocational, higher and adult education. The NQFS law describes the competences of the sector skills councils as follows:

- (a) analyse existing qualifications and determine those necessary in a specific sector;
- (b) identify the qualifications to be modernised;
- (c) identify qualifications that no longer meet the needs of the sector;
- (d) make a decision on the drafting of standards of qualifications within the sector;

- (e) give an opinion on the expected outcomes of knowledge and skills within the sector;
- (f) promote dialogue and direct cooperation between the world of work and education;
- (g) promote opportunities for education, training and employment within the sector;
- (h) identify opportunities for training adults within the sector;
- (i) consider the implications of the national qualifications framework on qualifications within the sector;
- (j) propose lists of qualifications by levels and types that can be acquired by recognising prior learning;
- (k) perform other duties in accordance with this law.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

VNFIL arrangements

The NQFS law defines recognition of prior learning (RPL) as one of the paths for acquisition of qualifications. The law foresees RPL procedures, based on the standards of qualifications, for qualifications at levels 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the NQFS. Operational details are defined by the bylaw.

A working group developed the *Concept of recognition of prior learning* in 2015. This concept note describes the framework for the introduction and development of the RPL system in the Republic of Serbia. It defines the basic principles, assumptions, guidelines and standards for the future organisation and implementation of RPL. In June 2019, a new working group was formed to implement activities within the project *Support to the establishment of the national qualifications framework in the Republic of Serbia*. As part of this project a RPL piloting plan has been prepared, qualifications and schools were selected to be involved in piloting, and the RPL procedure and different guidelines and rulebooks have been drafted:

- (a) draft guidelines for quality assurance for RPL providers;
- (b) draft guidelines for assessing the RPL process;
- (c) draft rulebook on standards and the manner of implementing the procedure for recognition of prior learning;
- (d) guide for schools for acquiring the status of PROAEA.

In the coming period the concept of RPL will be piloted ⁽¹³⁾ in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and specifically the National Employment Service (NES). As part of the pilot, special attention will be paid to training schools and NES advisors to implement the RPL procedure.

NQF implementation and impact

Key achievements and main findings

After the adoption of the NQFS law in 2018, the NQFS Council, the Qualification Agency and the sector skills councils were established in 2019. They started working on the further implementation of the NQFS. An important milestone was the referencing of the NQFS to the EQF in February 2020.

Further progress has been made with the development of RPL procedures which will be piloted as of the end of 2020. The qualification standard has been revised and 32 standards based on this new methodology, and with involvement of the sector skills councils, had been adopted by the end of 2020. A total of 26 out of these 32 qualification standards were published in the *Official Gazette* in 2020; the remaining six standards are expected to be published in 2021.

Significant progress has also been made with the new NQFS register.

Qualifications registers and databases

The register consists of a national qualifications sub-register, a qualification standard sub-register and a sub-register of publicly recognised adult education providers (PROAEA). The national qualifications sub-register is established for the purpose of managing qualification data, classified according to the level and type, in accordance with CLASSNQFS. The qualification standard sub-register is established for the purposes of data management on qualification standards. The PROAEA sub-register is established for the purpose of managing the data on PROAEA.

The qualifications database is managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) in the electronic form. The data in the qualifications database are accessible through the official website ⁽¹⁴⁾ of the NQFS MoESTD in Serbian and English. By the end of 2020, 156 qualifications were entered into the qualifications database, of which 101 had the qualification standard.

⁽¹³⁾ The pilot is conducted with support of the IPA 2014 project *Development of and integrated national qualifications framework in Serbia*.

⁽¹⁴⁾ <http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/qualifications-database/>

A new NQFS register is under development. The different elements of the register have been defined and, based on these definitions, software is in development. A pilot with the new register started at the end of 2020. The NQFS register will be an integral part of the Unified information system of education for the Republic of Serbia, enabling an easy exchange of data between different sub-registers. The bylaw on the NQFS register has been forwarded for publication in the *Official Gazette* and is expected to be adopted by the end of 2020.

Qualification documents

NQF and EQF levels are not yet included on certificates, diplomas and Europass supplements. A revision of the bylaw concerning certificates and diplomas is foreseen for 2021.

Career information and guidance

A national strategy for career guidance was adopted in 2010 ⁽¹⁵⁾. The focus of the strategy was on coordinating activities between the stakeholders of the relevant sectors: youth, education and employment.

The law on the foundation of the education system, its subsidiary laws on primary education, secondary education and adult education mention career guidance and counselling as a part of the school activities and introduce career guidance programmes in schools. The law on youth emphasises the importance of career guidance and defines aims and activities.

In 2019, the *Rulebook on standards for career guidance and counselling services* was adopted (*Official Gazette* No 43/19). Standards of career guidance and counselling services are part of public policies applied by State bodies, institutions and other organisations in the fields of education, employment, social protection and youth policy ⁽¹⁶⁾.

In accordance with Article 11 of the law on the national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia, in 2019, the Council for the national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia adopted recommendations for implementing the plan for the application of standards of career guidance and counselling services ⁽¹⁷⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Strategija karijernog vodenja i savetanja u Republici Srbiji, *Official Gazette* No 16/2010.

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/reg/viewAct/828f5355-f5dc-42dd-a088-f0fb4ff84b79>

⁽¹⁷⁾ http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Nacionalni_akcioni_plan_zaposljavanja_2020.pdf

The national employment action plan for 2020 planned to promote, inform about and train people in relation to the standards of career guidance and counselling services ⁽¹⁸⁾.

In accordance with these documents, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, in cooperation with NGOs specialised in career guidance and counselling services, provided training to private providers on the standards of career guidance and counselling services. Career guidance and counselling has also been included in numerous continuing professional development programmes for teachers and assistants in formal education, from primary to secondary and adult education providers.

Recognition of foreign qualifications

The process of recognition of foreign qualifications is carried out by the ENIC/NARIC Centre as an organisational unit of the Qualifications Agency. The NQFS Law distinguishes between recognition of foreign school documents and those from foreign higher education. The law stipulates recognition procedures and criteria for admittance to further education. Foreign qualifications receiving recognition are considered equivalent to the corresponding public document obtained in Serbia.

Referencing to regional frameworks

Referencing to regional frameworks

Serbia referenced its NQF to the EQF in February 2020 and self-certified in the same report against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (Bologna process).

International cooperation

Serbia has adopted the Riga 2015 conclusions on a new set of medium-term deliverables in VET for the period 2015-20. MTD 3 is related to the NQF: Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning.

MoESTD and the Qualifications Agency receive support from the IPA 2014 project Development of and integrated national qualifications framework in Serbia, to develop the capacity of the agency and the standards and bylaws that should

⁽¹⁸⁾ http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Nacionalni_akcioni_plan_zaposljavanja_2020.pdf

support the further implementation of the framework. IPA20 is on the way and will focus on the development of non-formal education and further capacity building of the PROAEAs, sector skills councils, Institute for the Improvement of Education and Qualifications Agency.

Important lessons and future plans

Implementing the NQF law has required new institutional arrangements, an NQF Council, a Qualification Agency and sector skills councils. Coordination of tasks and competences between these new institutions and existing ones will be a significant challenge and conditional for successful implementation of the NQF law.

The newly established Qualifications Agency is currently working with 60% of its planned staffing levels and the new staff need capacity building to help them perform their duties. The capacity building of the agency is crucial for the further implementation of the NQFS. The IPA14 and the future IPA20 projects support capacity-building of the Qualifications Agency.

Another challenge will be to find the right balance between processes and procedures to ensure the quality of qualifications and the flexibility required to respond quickly to changing labour market needs. This cannot be solely the task of the sector skills councils, which operate at national level. Structural arrangements to involve stakeholders at national, regional and local level can provide continuous insight into obstacles and opportunities on the labour market and a solid basis for the sector councils, qualification agency and NQF council to act on.

After all the work on the NQFS, it will be important to communicate the framework to the different stakeholders. This can go hand-in-hand with the further developments and implementation of the framework.

During 2020, Covid-19 slowed down implementation of the NQFS. Adoption of bylaws on the development of qualification standards, the new NQFS register, CLASSNQFS, standards and the procedure for recognition of prior learning, were delayed as it was difficult to organise the required consultation processes with social partners. Further, due to the pandemic, the pilots to test the RPL procedure had to be postponed.

Main sources of information

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (2020). *Report on referencing national qualifications framework of the Republic of Serbia to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area.*

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (2012). *Strategy for education development in Serbia 2020.*
<http://erasmusplus.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Strategy-for-Education-Development-in-Serbia-2020.pdf>

Overview of laws and bylaws under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia:
<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/dokumenta-i-propisi/zakonski-okvir/>

The national qualifications framework of Serbia (NQFS)

NQFS level	NQFS sub-level	Qualifications	EQF level
8		Doctoral studies volume of 180 ECTS credits (with previously completed integrated academic, i.e. master academic studies)	8
7	7.2	Specialised academic studies scope of at least 60 ECTS credits (with previously completed master academic studies)	7
	7.1	Integrated academic studies scope of 300 to 360 ECTS credits Master academic studies scope of at least 60 ECTS credits, with previously achieved bachelor academic studies scope of at least 240 ECTS credits Master academic studies scope of at least 120 ECTS credits (with previously achieved bachelor academic studies scope of 180 ECTS credits) Master applied studies scope of at least 120 ECTS credits (with previously achieved bachelor applied studies scope of 180 ECTS credits)	
6	6.2	Bachelor academic studies scope of at least 240 ECTS credits Specialised applied studies scope of at least 60 ECTS credits	6
	6.1	Bachelor academic studies scope of at least 180 ECTS credits Bachelor applied studies scope starting from 180 ECTS credits	
5		Craftsman, i.e. specialist education lasting up to two years or one-year non-formal adult education lasting minimum of six months	5
4		Four-year secondary school education (vocational education, arts education, general education)	4
3		Secondary vocational education lasting three years, non-formal adult education with training duration of minimum 960 hours	3
2		Vocational training lasting up to one year, education for work lasting up to two years, informal adult education with 120-360 hours of training	2
1		Primary education, primary adult education, primary music education, primary ballet education	1

Source: <http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/>

Acronyms

CLASSNQFS	national qualifications classification system
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
EQF	European qualifications framework
ERP	economic reform programme
NES	national employment services
NQF	national qualifications framework
NQFS	national qualifications framework of Serbia
PROAEA	publicly recognised organiser of adult education activities
RPL	recognition of prior learning