



EUROPEAN  
INVENTORY  
OF NQFs 2024  
**SLOVAKIA**

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## 1. Introduction

Cedefop's work on qualifications frameworks dates back to 2003. The Centre has contributed to the conceptual development of the European qualifications framework (EQF) and has supported its further implementation, working alongside national authorities and stakeholders to introduce and develop national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). This report is part of the European inventory of NQFs, which systematically maps and analyses NQF developments in countries participating in the EQF process. The inventory is updated biennially in close cooperation with the EQF Advisory Group, the European Commission and the European Training Foundation. The report provides a detailed description of the structure of the Slovakian NQF and its institutional arrangements. It also examines the framework's implementation and its impact on broader policy areas, focusing on key developments since 2022.

Since 2009, Slovakia has been implementing an eight-level comprehensive NQF (*Slovenský kvalifikačný rámec*, SKKR), which includes all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training, as well as a sub-framework of occupational qualifications awarded outside the formal education system. Its level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The SKKR was referenced to the EQF in 2017.

## 2. National context

### 2.1 Policy context

In 2022, public expenditure on education as a percentage of gross domestic product was 4.5%, close to the EU average of 4.7%. In 2021, compulsory pre-school education from age five was introduced to address low participation rates in early childhood education and care. Nevertheless, in 2022 the rate was 78.6%, well below the EU 2030 target of 96%. In 2023, the share of early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) was relatively low at 6.4%, compared to the EU average of 9.5%. Tertiary educational attainment (aged 25-34) improved significantly, reaching 39.8% in 2023 (EU average at 43.1%) (European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport & Culture, 2024). In 2023, participation in upper secondary initial vocational education and training (VET) was 67.7%, significantly higher than the EU average of 49.1%. At post-secondary level, vocational pathways are the only option for learners, and the same applies to short-

cycle tertiary education <sup>(1)</sup>. In 2022, participation in adult learning (in the previous 12 months) increased to 49.5%, which is 10 percentage points above the EU average. However, the number of training hours per person was rather low at 32 (European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport & Culture, 2024). A main focus of the Strategy for lifelong learning and counselling 2021–2030 (EPALE Slovensko, 2021) is the national qualifications system and the SKKR. The strategy also highlights the system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, ‘smaller’ qualifications and micro-qualifications (micro-certificates) as a means to increase the flexibility of the qualifications system, and short-cycle tertiary programmes at SKKR level 5 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2023), which will be introduced by the new law on higher education in autumn 2025 <sup>(2)</sup>.

## 2.2 NQF legal basis

Work on the SKKR began with a 2009 government decision on the EQF implementation. The 2009 [Lifelong Learning Act](#), amended in 2012, provided the legal background for developing a national qualifications system and framework. The 2024 [Act on Adult Education](#) aims to develop an adult education system, promoting a culture of lifelong learning, non-formal education and a personalised approach to learning. The SKKR is integrated into this act as an umbrella term, covering all education and training subsystems. The framework has also become the legal basis for recognition of prior learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning. This act has also introduced micro-certificates (see Section 4.2), individual learning accounts, which will finance programmes leading to SKKR qualifications, and new quality assurance processes for validation arrangements (see Section 6.1) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

The 2018 [Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#) introduces internal rules for higher education institutions to ensure that their qualifications correspond to the relevant SKKR level (European Commission & Cedefop, 2020) (see Section 4.4).

## 3. NQF objectives

The specific objectives of SKKR implementation are (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017):

- (a) to increase transparency of the education system, both for individuals and employers, as well as for international comparison;

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(1) More information at Eurostat [[educ\\_uoe\\_enra13](#)], accessed 3 April 2025.

(2) Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth.

- (b) to increase transparency of qualifications by describing them in terms of learning outcomes rather than inputs;
- (c) to better match education and training with labour market needs through a more demand-oriented education system;
- (d) to strengthen relationships between all stakeholders involved in education, and to develop general principles for validation and recognition of qualifications;
- (e) to modernise education through the application of quality principles in the process of acquiring qualifications;
- (f) to increase quality in the processes of verification and recognition of qualifications.

## 4. Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

### 4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

The [SKKR](#) <sup>(3)</sup> is an overarching framework with eight learning outcomes-based levels and includes qualifications from all subsystems. It is organised in four sub-frameworks (based on sectoral legislation): for general education, VET <sup>(4)</sup>, higher education <sup>(5)</sup>, and occupational qualifications (awarded outside the formal system, through further education, adult education and validation of non-formal learning) <sup>(6)</sup>. Qualifications in the first three sub-frameworks reflect both a level of qualification and a level of achieved education; occupational qualifications are not connected to an education level and usually respond to labour market needs. According to the 2024 Act on Adult Education, in specific cases in secondary VET, schools can issue – in addition to a certificate of VET qualification and a certificate of the final examination in the relevant apprenticeship field – a certificate of an occupational qualification (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge (general and vocational/professional), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (responsibility, autonomy and social competences). According to the Strategy for

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<sup>(3)</sup> More Information on the [SKKR and the national qualifications register](#) (in Slovak).

<sup>(4)</sup> General and vocational qualifications are governed by the Education Act ([Act No 245/2008 Coll. on education and training](#)) assigned to SKKR levels 1 to 5.

<sup>(5)</sup> Higher education qualifications (assigned to levels 6 to 8) are governed by the Higher Education Act.

<sup>(6)</sup> Occupational qualifications, assigned to SKKR levels 2 to 7, are governed by [Act No 568/2009 Coll. on lifelong learning](#), amended in 2012.

LLL and counselling, descriptors for SKKR level 0 should be introduced to cover low-skilled groups at risk <sup>(7)</sup>.

Qualifications included in the SKKR are described by measurable and assessable learning outcomes. In this regard, the framework does not distinguish between qualifications acquired through formal education (academic, initial vocational) and non-formal education and informal learning, but it allows comparison of their levels by comparing learning outcomes (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017).

#### 4.2 NQF scope and coverage

The SKKR is a comprehensive framework, covering all subsystems of formal education (VET, general and higher education) <sup>(8)</sup>, as well as including regulated training and qualifications awarded outside formal education (occupational qualifications at SKKR levels 2 to 7). There are more than 7 500 levelled qualifications <sup>(9)</sup>.

The occupational qualifications sub-framework has been designed to cover segments of current VET qualifications (units of learning outcomes), focusing mainly on occupation-specific competences without including the general education part of VET qualifications <sup>(10)</sup>. Units of learning outcomes are not included individually in the framework but as parts of occupational qualifications. According to the Strategy for LLL and counselling, the number of qualifications in this sub-framework should be increased (including through the development of micro-certificates) to make qualification routes more flexible and better reflect emerging labour market needs. Sectoral councils will play a crucial role in developing the new qualifications (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2023; European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

When the SKKR was established, a distinction was made between full and partial occupational qualifications: a full qualification could be achieved only through formal education and training, while qualifications awarded outside the formal system were considered partial. Following the adoption of the 2024 Act on

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(7) Two national projects are in the pipeline, aiming to introduce SKKR level 0 by 2028 (Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth).

(8) Conservatories provide both upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education in integrated programmes focused on music and drama (six-year programme) or dance (eight-year programme). These programmes lead to vocational qualifications at SKKR levels 4 (*maturita*) and 5 (*absolutorium*).

(9) The national qualifications register (NQR) includes 1 000 qualifications (see Section 7.5).

(10) Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth.

Adult Education, these two types of qualifications have been merged under the term occupational qualifications. Some occupational qualifications entitle the holder to perform all tasks within an occupation; others allow performance of one or a limited set of tasks within that occupation. In principle, the latter can be stacked to enable individuals to perform all tasks within an occupation, but this option is seldom used as they already give access to the labour market (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

According to the 2024 Act on Adult Education, a ‘micro-certificate’ provides evidence of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired after completing a small volume of learning of at least 25 hours. The SKKR is currently open but does not include micro-certificates. Micro-certificates can be obtained through programmes in secondary and higher education. These micro-certificates will not be directly included in the SKKR, but they will be related to SKKR qualifications. A specific type of micro-certificate can be an occupational qualification, which meets the conditions set out in the qualification standard. Provided that those programmes leading to micro-certificates meet the same criteria applied for qualifications they will be included in the framework as occupational qualifications (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

International qualifications are included in the SKKR, provided they are offered under a qualification standard which is already part of the sub-framework of occupational qualifications. International qualifications are those offered in more than three countries; they are usually developed in the banking, insurance and IT sectors (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

Table 1. **Slovak national qualifications framework (SKKR)**

SKKR levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Diploma ( <i>Vysokoškolský diplom</i> ) + Certificate of State exam ( <i>Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške</i> ) + Diploma supplement ( <i>Dodatok k diplomu</i> )	8
7	Diploma ( <i>Vysokoškolský diplom</i> ) + Certificate of State exam ( <i>Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške</i> ) + Diploma supplement ( <i>Dodatok k diplomu</i> )	7
	Certificate of occupational qualification ( <i>Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii</i> )	
6	Diploma ( <i>Vysokoškolský diplom</i> ) + Certificate of State exam ( <i>Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške</i> ) + Diploma supplement ( <i>Dodatok k diplomu</i> )	6
	Certificate of occupational qualification ( <i>Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii</i> )	
5	<i>Maturita</i> certificate ( <i>Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i> ) + Certificate of apprenticeship ( <i>Výučný list</i> )	5

	<i>Maturita certificate (Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške)</i>	
	<i>Certificate of final post-secondary exam (Vysvečenie o absolventskej skúške) + Absolutorium diploma (Absolventský diplom)</i>	
	<i>Certificate of occupational qualification (Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii)</i>	
<b>4</b>	<i>Maturita certificate (Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške) +Certificate of apprenticeship (Výučný list)</i>	<b>4</b>
	<i>Maturita certificate (Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške)</i>	
	<i>Certificate of occupational qualification (Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii)</i>	
<b>3</b>	<i>Certificate of final exam (Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške) + Certificate of apprenticeship (Výučný list)</i>	<b>3</b>
	<i>Certificate of occupational qualification (Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii)</i>	
<b>2</b>	<i>Lower secondary education certificate with supplement (Vysvedčenie s doložkou)</i>	<b>2</b>
	<i>Certificate of final exam (Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške) + Certificate of apprenticeship (Výučný list)</i>	
	<i>Certificate of occupational qualification (Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii)</i>	
<b>1</b>	<i>Primary education certificate with supplement (Vysvedčenie s doložkou)</i>	<b>1</b>

Source: European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania (2017) and the [EQF NCP website](#).

### 4.3 Use of learning outcomes

The 2024 Act on Adult Education further promotes the use of learning outcomes. For example, it sets out how they should be used in developing assessment standards for a qualification <sup>(11)</sup>.

In general education, the shift to learning outcomes was marked by the 2008 Education Act. This strengthened quality assurance measures, introduced performance standards defined in knowledge, skills and competences, and established a two-level model of curriculum for both general education and VET: State curricula and school curricula (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017). Assessment standards specify criteria and assessment procedures for achieving performance standards that correspond to the respective school environment (Cedefop & ReferNet Slovakia, 2019).

In VET, the learning outcomes approach has been reinforced through the 2009 <sup>(12)</sup> and 2015 Acts on VET. Since 2015, curricula for dual VET have been developed based on requirements from chambers and employers' representatives;

<sup>(11)</sup> Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth.

<sup>(12)</sup> [Act 184/2009 on VET](#) and amendments to certain acts (in Slovak).

companies offering practical training directly participate as co-authors of the respective school educational programmes. Since 2019, the same educational programmes apply for school-based VET (with practical training in school workshops or facilities, or with contracted segments of practical training in companies) and dual VET (Cedefop & ReferNet Slovakia, 2019). In 2022, a revision of State curricula was implemented, focusing on key competences.

The implementation of the Act on quality assurance of higher education has substantially promoted the use of learning outcomes in this sector (see Section 4.4).

#### **4.4 Quality assurance arrangements**

According to the Education Act, quality of education and training is monitored and evaluated by schools, the State School Inspection, the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements<sup>(13)</sup> and the Ministry of Health<sup>(14)</sup>. In adult education, the Accreditation Commission for Further Education<sup>(15)</sup> is an advisory body of the education ministry<sup>(16)</sup>, which validates an education institution's ability to provide educational programmes and recommends that the ministry issues a certificate of accreditation if the requirements are met. There has been strong consensus and support for the SKKR from all quality assurance bodies and the Slovak community so far (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017).

In 2018, an [Act](#) introduced a new system of accreditation in higher education institutions, aiming to increase the importance of quality assurance in line with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA (European Commission, 2020). The accreditation process for the study programmes should follow the general principles of the SKKR. The Act also refers to internal rules of higher education institutions on the design, approval, delivery and modification of their study programmes. These rules ensure that the standards of the study programmes and the intended learning outcomes correspond to the relevant SKKR level descriptors. The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education<sup>(17)</sup>, operational since 2020, has developed relevant internal quality assurance standards and study programme standards, ensuring compliance with the EQF quality assurance principles. These standards are based on the 2015 standards

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(13) More information about [NIVAM](#) (in Slovak).

(14) [Ministry of Health](#) is responsible for the professional part of healthcare programmes at secondary healthcare schools.

(15) [Accreditation Commission for Further Education](#) (in Slovak).

(16) [Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth](#).

(17) In 2024, the [Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#) became a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area. By 2022, all Slovak higher education institutions and universities had successfully adapted to the new standards. They have put in place internal control mechanisms to ensure the quality of the educational process and have reviewed all their study programmes. This process has resulted in the modification of most study programmes and almost 2 500 cancellations, bringing quality assurance closer to European standards (European Commission & Cedefop, 2020; 2022; 2024).

The 2024 Act on Adult Education has set the basis for the development of a reinforced quality assurance system for the sub-framework of occupational qualifications, especially regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning. It introduced the accreditation process for institutions that will perform validation arrangements. The Act also states that the validation of achieved learning outcomes will be carried out according to the assessment standard of the relevant occupational qualification. In addition to the completion of an accredited training programme, including passing an examination, it has introduced the candidate's portfolio as a systemic assessment tool necessary for obtaining the occupational qualification (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024). According to the Act on Adult Education, the Sector Councils Alliance (SCA) has become the accreditation body for adult education programmes. The alliance's supervision of programmes related to digital and green skills has become even stronger, as it is now responsible for accrediting providers of such programmes (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2023).

## 5. Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The education ministry maintains overall competence and responsibility for the SKKR's development and implementation and is the highest approval body for qualifications and the national qualifications register. The memorandum of cooperation, signed in 2014 with the labour ministry <sup>(18)</sup>, aimed for better alignment between labour market needs and the education system <sup>(19)</sup> (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017). The SKKR governance structure consists of the State Vocational Education Institute, which hosts the EQF NCP and plays a coordination and technical role in SKKR day-to-day

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<sup>(18)</sup> [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#).

<sup>(19)</sup> Stakeholder involvement from the world of work was vital, including employers' chambers, unions, confederations and other professional associations.

implementation, supported by the 24 sector councils <sup>(20)</sup>. ŠIOV is also the contact point for other EU initiatives (EQAVET, ECVET, European Agenda for adult learning). The functions of the EQF NCP include promoting the SKKR, EQF and Slovak qualifications, managing the process of referencing the SKKR to the EQF, and maintaining the national qualifications register and its links to European portals (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017).

The main strength of the current governance structure of the SKKR is the active participation of stakeholders, including the Slovak Rectors' Conference and Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education; this requires effective communication strategies yet to be developed. ŠIOV participates directly in the QF-EHEA network and ensures information transfer to relevant bodies. ŠIOV cooperates with national and international stakeholders: the education ministry, national institutions in education, education providers and NGOs, and EQF NCP contact points in other Member States. The drafting and approval of the Strategy on LLL and counselling and of the Act on Adult Education were supported by an extensive public consultation process with stakeholders (working groups, roundtables, expert groups, etc.) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2020; 2022). Activities related to the introduction and implementation of the SKKR were mainly project-based. Since 2016, ŠIOV has been financed by a yearly renewable contract with the education ministry and uses financial support from the Erasmus+ programme to develop its activities (European Commission & Cedefop, 2020). One staff member of the department of lifelong learning is responsible for the daily running of the SKKR.

Sector councils play a key role in developing, monitoring and updating national occupation and qualification standards and proposing their allocation to SKKR levels, as well as developing and monitoring the national occupations register and the national qualifications register. They also promote communication between the labour market and the world of education, especially through the design of learning outcomes in line with SKKR level descriptors (European Commission & Cedefop, 2020). In 2023, the Sector Councils Alliance (SCA) was introduced, composed of the labour and education ministries and several employer and trade union organisations <sup>(21)</sup>. It is planned that the SCA will become a key actor in education and training because responsibility for maintaining the National Qualifications

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<sup>(20)</sup> The role of sector councils is defined by [Act No 5/2004 on employment services](#) and on amendment of certain laws (in Slovak).

<sup>(21)</sup> Founders of the SCA include the Federation of Employers' Associations of the Slovak Republic, the National Union of Employers, the Association of Industrial Unions and Transport, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic and the Joint Trade Unions of Slovakia.

System (NQS) has been transferred from the education ministry to the SCA. The SCA's main activities also include:

- (a) coordinating and updating the National System of Occupations (NSO) and National Qualifications System (NQS);
- (b) cooperating in the creation and updating of qualification standards and assessment standards;
- (c) proposing changes to the conditions for verifying qualifications;
- (d) quality assuring further education programmes, including their compliance with the current and future needs of the labour market;
- (e) sharing information and experience from the implementation of NSO and NQS through publicly available information portals (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2023).

## 6. Recognition and validation of prior learning

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

The 2009 lifelong learning Act (amended in 2012), which introduced the SKKR and the use of learning outcomes-based qualifications, the 2017 referencing of the SKKR to the EQF, and the inclusion of 1 000 SKKR learning outcomes-based qualifications in the national qualifications register were necessary preconditions for the gradual development of a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) (Vantuch, 2019). The 2021 Strategy on LLL and counselling prioritised the development of a VNFIL system. The 2024 Act on Adult Education introduced the accreditation process for institutions offering validation arrangements, reinforcing the quality assurance in the system. Validation arrangements are based on the assessment standard of the relevant occupational qualification (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024).

Validation arrangements can lead only to occupational qualifications, as validation is not yet linked to qualifications from the other three SKKR sub-frameworks. The ESF-funded project 'System of verification of qualifications' (SOK) has developed assessment manuals for 314 occupational qualifications, and has piloted the procedures for obtaining some of them through validation. Requests for validation were related to 43 qualifications; 2 702 individuals obtained qualification certificates (Vantuch, 2024; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2023). The pilots have focused on qualifications at SKKR levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022). Following the adoption of the 2024 Act on Adult Education, occupational qualifications awarded through validation are used not only for labour market purposes but also for progression between different education levels and

subsystems <sup>(22)</sup>. The 2021 Strategy on LLL and counselling has also suggested that the vocational *maturita* examination (SKKR level 4) and the qualification ‘technician-specialist’ (SKKR level 6) could be achieved via VNFIL.

## **6.2 Recognition of foreign qualifications**

The recognition of foreign diplomas and professional qualifications falls under the competence of the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas (CRD), which is supervised by the education ministry. Professional recognition refers to professional qualifications necessary to perform a regulated profession. Academic recognition enables, for example, individuals to continue their studies. It is possible to recognise only the level of education, or also the equivalence of the study field. The centre is part of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) networks. The CRD uses the SKKR in its procedures. According to the 2024 Act on Adult Education, authorised institutions can recognise a professional qualification awarded in another country. The recognition procedure should align with the requirements for including qualifications in the SKKR <sup>(23)</sup>.

# **7. NQF implementation and impact**

## **7.1 Stage of implementation**

The SKKR has reached the activation stage. SKKR implementation structures, such as a stable governance, working instruments (for example, databases) and procedures for allocating qualifications to levels, are in place. The Strategy for lifelong learning and counselling 2021-2030, includes a specific chapter on the main strategic actions for the SKKR implementation. The 2024 Act on Adult Education has strengthened the role of the framework as a crucial element of the qualifications system. Work has started on linking national databases with Europass. A future priority is to develop a single information portal for the country’s qualification system (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

## **7.2 Procedures for including qualifications in the NQF**

The ministries of education, health, defence and internal affairs (responsible for qualifications related to firefighters, rescuers and the police force), along with sector councils (responsible mainly for occupational qualifications), are the eligible

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<sup>(22)</sup> Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth.

<sup>(23)</sup> Source: Internal communication with the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth.

bodies for requesting qualifications to be included in the SKKR. All NQR qualifications are described in the form of a qualification card (see Section 7.5).

To be included in the SKKR (and in the NQR), qualifications should:

- (a) be labour market relevant (based on a consent from stakeholders);
- (b) have a learning outcomes-based standard;
- (c) fulfil the quality requirements stipulated by the legal regulations of the four sub-frameworks.

If these requirements are met, a new qualification card is created by an expert group, which also suggests an SKKR level for the qualification. This card is subject to a consultation process within the relevant sector council and with other stakeholders. The education ministry is responsible for the final approval, following a fine-tuning process. The qualification is then included in the NQR. The transparency of the levelling process is ensured by a semantic analysis of the learning outcomes of a given qualification against the SKKR level descriptors, complemented by a table with statistical data related to the number of learning outcomes used. Qualifications are levelled to the SKKR based on the 'best fit' principle <sup>(24)</sup>. According to the 2024 Act on Adult Education, the proposal for a new education programme leading to a new qualification should be initially approved by the relevant sector council; inclusion in the NQR is the last step of the process (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017; European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

### 7.3 Indicating EQF/NQF levels

Since the school year 2018-19 SKKR/EQF levels have been indicated on diploma supplements issued by universities and higher education institutions. Certificates or diplomas of qualifications from the other three sub-frameworks also indicate SKKR/EQF levels. These levels are also shown on all qualifications included in databases (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024) <sup>(25)</sup>.

### 7.4 NQF dissemination

ŠIOV has been disseminating information about the framework to increase its visibility. The main communication channels include sector councils, seminars (for example, on [microcredentials](#)) and conferences for stakeholders, training courses for teachers, other national and international events, information materials, the SKKR webpage and social media. Employers and education staff are the main

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<sup>(24)</sup> The methodology is presented in detail in the SKKR [referencing report](#) to the EQF.

<sup>(25)</sup> [2019 Decree No 124/2019](#) on SKKR/EQF levels on certificates of occupational qualifications (in Slovak). [Decree No 123/2019](#) on the level of SKKR/EQF on diploma supplements issued by universities and higher education institutions (in Slovak). New [forms](#) of certificates from primary and secondary schooling (in Slovak).

target groups. ŠIOV has established cooperation with the Euroguidance centre, mainly in relation to the system of verification of qualifications (SOK) project. The country has also developed expert documents to help different stakeholders use the framework <sup>(26)</sup>.

### 7.5 Qualifications databases and registers

The SKKR together with the national qualifications register (NQR) are the two main pillars of the national system of qualifications. Their development was closely related. Qualifications are included in the NQR in the form of qualifications cards. Each card contains, in Slovak, general information on the qualification, such as the title, field of study, learning pathway and SKKR level; a qualification standard, describing the learning outcomes expressed in knowledge, skills and competences; an assessment standard; and guidelines for validation and certification of learning outcomes). Further, the NQR includes data on entry requirements and the relationship to occupations or occupational fields for each qualification. Some 1 000 qualifications at levels 2 to 8 are described in learning outcomes, and included in the NQR; of these, about one third can be obtained in formal education and two thirds through non-formal and informal learning <sup>(27)</sup>. Only general education qualifications at level 1 are not yet included in the register, although they are included in the SKKR (European Union, Europass & Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, 2017). The learning outcomes descriptions published on the NQR are also used on Europass certificate and diploma supplements <sup>(28)</sup> (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

The NQR is closely related to the National Occupations Register (NOR), which includes occupational standards composed of professional knowledge, professional skills and general competences. The NOR can be accessed through the Career Gateway (*Karierna Brana*), which is a common platform of the National System of Occupations and the National Qualifications System.

The database of the national system for accreditations and learning opportunities (ISDV) was revamped. The content of the database was updated; further, the newly developed data model is aligned to the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications (LOQ) schemas. Existing data structures for qualifications,

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<sup>(26)</sup> [Cedefop's European handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes](#) was translated in Slovak.

The [Guidelines for the experts in qualifications development](#) (2020, in Slovak).

The study [New elements of qualifications systems for skills development](#) (2023).

The recommendation paper [SKKR – What Next?](#) (2023).

<sup>(27)</sup> More information on the [statistics page of the NQR](#) (in Slovak).

<sup>(28)</sup> More information on [Europass certificate and diploma supplements](#) (in Slovak).

accreditations, and applicants (lectors and learners) now comply with the European Learning Model (ELM) schema and can be published on the Europass platform via the Qualification Dataset Register (QDR) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

The education ministry has also created the [national classification of education](#), which is a list of current and withdrawn education and training study fields and programmes, including higher education. The classification contains 7 597 qualifications offering limited information on each one, including NQF/EQF level; it was last updated in 2018. The two registers are not interconnected. All SKKR qualifications are published in these registers (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

### **7.6 Awareness and use of the NQF**

Learners and education and training providers are becoming aware of the framework through the indication of EQF/SKKR levels on diplomas, certificates and supplements, and through activities organised by the EQF NCP. Nevertheless, the level of awareness and use of the SKKR among end users (learners, jobseekers, employees, employers) and trade unions remains low. Education and training providers and other authorities responsible for designing qualifications, along with employer representatives participating in sectoral councils, have a thorough understanding of the framework and use it in developing and approving new qualifications. Quality assurance bodies and recognition authorities are already fully aware of and use the framework, while counselling practitioners have a moderate level of awareness and use of the SKKR (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

### **7.7 Monitoring and evaluating the NQF**

No evaluation of the SKKR has been carried out so far (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

### **7.8 Impact of the NQF**

The SKKR acts as an enabler for introducing a VNFIL system in the country (see Section 6.1). The SKKR is used to further promote quality assurance in higher education. The relevant 2018 Act aims to ensure that the intended knowledge, skills and competences of higher education programmes correspond to the relevant SKKR level. In 2022, most programmes were modified accordingly (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

The influence of the framework is evident in the transparency and comparability of qualifications, and in the design of qualifications standards and curricula in terms of learning outcomes. The SKKR does not distinguish between

qualifications acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning, allowing their levels to be compared by comparing learning outcomes. Further, the development of the occupational qualifications sub-framework fosters the flexibility of qualifications, as it is open to combined qualifications and micro-certificates (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

Cooperation between the members of sectoral councils from the labour side and the education authority in setting up the qualification standards has also been strengthened, as the SKKR increasingly provides a platform for cooperation.

Since 2009, the SKKR has been a core element of policies promoting LLL. This role is reinforced by the current Strategy on LLL and counselling and the recently adopted Act on Adult Education.

## 8. Referencing to the EQF

The SKKR was referenced to the EQF in 2017. An updated referencing report is planned for 2025, covering the developments in the validation system and including a self-certification against the QF-EHEA criteria (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

## 9. Reflections and plans

The SKKR has been populated with a significant number of qualifications, described in learning outcomes; 1 000 of them have been included in the NQR. Important steps have been taken to promote VNFIL, but more needs to be done. Quality assurance policies in higher education are now explicitly linked to the SKKR. Through the sector council alliance, the SKKR implementation has provided an appropriate platform to strengthen cooperation between the labour market and the world of education.

The 2024 act on Adult Education is an important milestone in the SKKR implementation, integrating the framework as an umbrella term covering all subsystems of education and training. The act has introduced micro-certificates as a crucial element of the qualifications system, as well as individual learning accounts, and it has reinforced the quality assurance of the validation system. Progress in these areas, along with developing a single information portal on qualifications, are the main future priorities.

Key challenges include reducing barriers between the different parts of education and training, supporting individual progression, and strengthening the learning outcomes approach (for example, by offering adequate expertise,

materials and professional assistance to teachers) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

## Acronyms

CRD	Centre for recognition of diplomas
EHEA	European higher education area
EQF	European qualifications framework
EQF NCP	National coordination points of European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
LLL	lifelong learning
NQF	National qualifications framework
NQR	National qualifications register
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework in the European higher education area
ŠIOV	State Vocational Education Institute [Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania]
SKKR	Slovak qualifications framework [Slovenský kvalifikačný rámec]
SOK	ESF-funded project system of verifying qualifications [Systém overovania kvalifikácií]
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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National qualifications register (NQR).