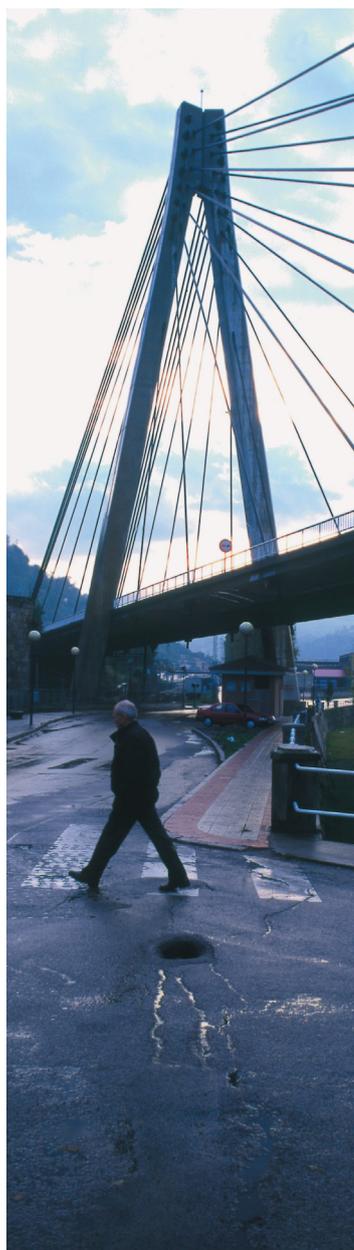


# April 2010 EQF NEWSLETTER



European  
Qualifications  
Framework



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## Résumé

Vous lisez le premier numéro du Bulletin du Cadre Européen des Certifications (CEC). Ce Bulletin est destiné à informer tous les décideurs, praticiens, experts et parties prenantes qui d'occupent des certifications et des acquis des apprentissages dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre du CEC au niveau national et européen. Le Bulletin CEC sera publié trois fois par an.

Dans l'éditorial du premier numéro, Odile Quintin, Directeur général pour l'Education et la Culture de la DG EAC souligne les développements et progrès importants enregistrés depuis l'adoption de la recommandation relative au CEC en avril 2008. Elle salue le travail que font les pays en vue de la mise en oeuvre du CEC et les mesures nationales connexes qui placent d'éducation et formation tout au long de la vie au cœur des systèmes promeuvent la mobilité de tous les citoyens à travers l'Europe.

Un article décrit les plateformes européennes qui soutiennent la mise en œuvre du CEC (le Groupe consultatif pour le CEC et les Points de coordination nationaux) et présente brièvement ce qu'implique le processus de mise en relation avec le CEC. Après cet aperçu européen, un article du CEDEFOP analyse le développement de cadres

nationaux de certifications, qui jouent un rôle important dans la mise en pratique du CEC. Au-delà des 32 pays qui participent au programme de travail Education et formation 2010 ainsi qu'à son successeur pour 2020, l'ETF estime que plus de 100 pays à travers le monde procèdent actuellement à l'élaboration ou à la mise en œuvre de cadres nationaux de certifications et se réfèrent au CEC pour concevoir leurs systèmes de certifications.

Au nom des deux premiers Etats membres ayant terminé le processus de référencement de leurs cadres nationaux de certifications au CEC, le Conseil de certifications de Malte et l'Autorité nationale irlandaise des certifications présentent un rapide aperçu des processus de mise en relation dans leur pays respectif. Ils soulignent également les principales difficultés rencontrées par les parties prenantes au cours du processus. .

Enfin, le Bulletin CEC fournit des liens vers des sources d'informations d'actualité, notamment le rapport sur la mise en relation des cadres de certifications du Royaume Uni au CEC et l'élaboration de cadres nationaux de certifications en Grèce et en Finlande.



## Zusammenfassung

Sie lesen die erste Ausgabe des EQR-Newsletters, der alle Entscheidungsträger, Akteure, Experten und Interessenvertreter, die sich im Rahmen der Umsetzung des Europäischen Qualifikationsrahmens (EQR) auf nationaler und europäischer Ebene mit Qualifikationen und Lernergebnissen befassen, über aktuelle Entwicklungen informieren soll. Der EQR-Newsletter wird künftig dreimal pro Jahr veröffentlicht.

Zu Beginn dieser ersten Ausgabe berichtet Odile Quintin, Generaldirektorin für Bildung und Kultur, DG EAC, über die wichtigsten Neuerungen und Fortschritte, die seit Annahme der EQR-Empfehlung im April 2008 erzielt wurden. Die einzelnen Länder leisten bei der Umsetzung des EQR gute Arbeit und sind überdies um die Erarbeitung nationaler Maßnahmen bemüht, die das lebenslange Lernen in den Bildungs- und Ausbildungssystemen verankern und die Mobilität der Bürger innerhalb Europas fördern sollen.

Ein weiterer Artikel gibt einen Überblick über das EQR-Referenzverfahren und beschreibt einige der Organe, die die Umsetzung des EQR unterstützen (die EQF Advisory Group und die nationalen Koordinierungsstellen). In einem Artikel von CEDEFOP wird über die Einführung der national-

en Qualifikationsrahmen berichtet, die einen wichtigen Bestandteil des EQR bilden. Die Europäische Stiftung für Berufsbildung (ETF) schätzt, dass außer den 32 Ländern, die am Arbeitsprogramm „Allgemeine und berufliche Bildung 2010“ und am Nachfolgeprogramm, dem strategischen Rahmen "ET 2020" teilnehmen, derzeit über 100 weitere Länder einen nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen umsetzen oder entwickeln und den EQR als Grundlage für ihre Qualifikationssysteme verwenden.

Malta und Irland sind zwei der ersten Mitgliedstaaten, die die Koppelung ihrer nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen an den EQR abgeschlossen haben. Im vorliegenden Newsletter beschreiben Vertreter des Malta Qualifications Council und der National Qualifications Authority of Ireland das Verfahren aus der Sicht ihres jeweiligen Landes und berichten über die Probleme, mit denen die Beteiligten konfrontiert waren.

Nicht zuletzt enthält der EQR-Newsletter Links zu aktuellen Berichten wie zum Beispiel über die Verknüpfung des britischen Qualifikationsrahmens mit dem EQR sowie über die Umsetzung der nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen in Finnland und Griechenland.

# Editorial

Odile Quintin, Director-General for Education and Culture, European Commission

Almost two years have passed since the adoption of the recommendation of the Council and the European Parliament on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) on 23 April 2008. We are well into the implementation of the EQF. Indeed, 2010 is the first target date. By the end of this year countries are invited to reference their national qualifications systems to the EQF. They are doing it, and they are doing more than that. All Member States - as well as European Economic Area countries and candidate countries - have decided and taken action to implement this voluntary initiative, but they have also engaged in the development of national qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes. Countries acknowledge that the implementation of the EQF and related national measures are seen as levers for achieving such strategic objectives as making lifelong learning a reality in education and training systems and promoting mobility of all citizens throughout Europe. This potential of the EQF as a catalyst for reform and as a transparency tool is also widely acknowledged beyond Europe.

However, what does the 2010 target mean in practice - that national qualifications systems should be referenced to the EQF? Within the EQF Advisory Group, where countries are represented along with European social partners and other stakeholders, a set of criteria have been defined along which countries need to explain in a transparent way - in a written report - to other countries how their na-

tional qualifications system is set up and how their national qualifications levels relate to those of the EQF. This referencing report is widely discussed in the Advisory Group and published to be available for all citizens.

Three countries have published their reports: Ireland and Malta already in 2009, and the United Kingdom earlier this year. It is expected that some seven further countries will be able to finalise their referencing in 2010, while most of the others will need 2011 to achieve this process. This still allows all countries to indicate the appropriate EQF level in each new qualification they issue by 2012 - which is the second target date suggested by the EQF Recommendation.

Implementation is therefore progressing very well. However, the success of the EQF as a tool for citizens, organisations and institutions will depend on whether countries and stakeholders are acquainted with it and the underlying learning outcomes approach - and to what extent they benefit from it. Besides, the EQF will be crucial for the Europe 2020 Strategy and for the implementation of the New Skills for New Jobs Agenda. The learning outcomes approach promoted by the EQF lays the ground for a competence-based common language across countries and sectors, as well as between education, training and the labour market.

For the EQF to become a shared, useful tool and for the learning outcomes approach to be fully implemented it is essential to widen the debate to involve all policy makers, experts, practitioners and stakeholders dealing with qualifications and learning outcomes, disseminating information on related developments, enabling exchange on good practices and common challenges in Europe and beyond. This is done by the EQF National Coordination Points. Here, with the launching of the EQF Newsletter, which will be published three times a year, the Commission aim to contribute to the further development of a qualifications and learning outcomes community in Europe, and, thus support national and European discussions on the EQF.

Odile Quintin,  
Director-General  
for Education and  
Culture, European  
Commission



Education and Culture DG

# EQF Implementation – Progress since 2008

## 1. Introduction

Adopted in 2008 by the Council and the European Parliament, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is designed as a translation device between qualification systems and frameworks, to improve the understanding, comparability and portability of qualifications across Europe. Its im-

plementation relies on the voluntary participation of countries (EU/EEA Member States and candidate countries) that are invited to relate their national qualifications frameworks or systems to the eight reference levels of the EQF.

In particular, the EQF Recommendation<sup>1</sup> calls on the Member States to:

- Relate their national qualifications systems or frameworks to the EQF by 2010, by referencing, in a transparent manner, their qualification levels to the eight levels of the EQF;
- Ensure that by 2012 all new certificates, diplomas and ‘Europass’ documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate EQF level;
- Use an approach based on learning outcomes (what the learner knows, understands and is able to do) when defining and describing qualifications;
- Promote and apply common principles of quality assurance when relating qualifications in higher education and vocational education and training within national qualifications systems to the EQF;
- Designate National Coordination Points, which will be in charge of referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF levels in a transparent way, involving all relevant stakeholders in the process (cf. 2.2, below).

While the referencing of national qualifications systems and frameworks to the EQF is an autonomous national process, coherence and transparency are necessary to generate mutual trust between all

countries and stakeholders. For this purpose, the Commission established European platforms for cooperation and coordination in 2008.

## 2. Platforms supporting the implementation of the EQF

### 2.1 The EQF Advisory Group

The remit of the EQF Advisory Group is to ensure that the EQF is implemented in the most coherent and transparent way. It discusses challenges and provides guidance to national authorities in their referencing to the EQF.

The EQF Advisory Group is composed of the representatives of 32 participating countries and European social partners (BusinessEurope, CEEP, UEAPME, ETUC) and other stakeholders (Eurochambers, EUA, EUCIS-LLL, Public Employment Services), as well as the Council of Europe. The participation of the Council of Europe is crucial for the coordination of developments regarding the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the EQF. The Advisory Group is chaired by the European

Commission and supported by Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

The EQF Advisory Group meets several times per year<sup>2</sup>. Among the themes it has covered over the past two years have been:

- A set of 10 criteria and procedures for referencing national qualification frameworks and systems to the EQF<sup>3</sup> (cf. in chapter 3 below);
- A structure for cooperation at European level to ensure the transparency of the referencing process
- The presentation and discussion of referencing reports
- The promotion of quality assurance and mutual trust among countries in the context of the EQF

1 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning:  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>

2 As of February 2010 five meetings of the group have been held.

3 The ten criteria and procedures for referencing to the EQF can be found here: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/ireland\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/ireland_en.pdf)

- Developments in sectoral qualifications
- The development of a common language between education and labour

In order to address specific issues, the EQF Advisory Group may design a mandate for and delegate a sub-group to further explore a specific topic. The sub-group will produce a proposal for discussion and/or adoption by the EQF Advisory Group. So far, sub-groups have been working on developing the referencing criteria, identifying challenges and

issues regarding quality assurance underpinning the referencing process, and EQF related developments in sectors. The Learning Outcomes Group specifically supports discussions at national level on the use of learning outcomes.

To ensure continuity between meetings and to contribute to the planning of the agenda of meetings, the Advisory Group Bureau was set up. It is composed of Advisory Group representatives from the three presidency countries (previous, present, next) and two representatives of stakeholders.

## 2.2 The National Coordination Points

The Recommendation calls for Member States to designate National Coordination Points (NCPs) in order to support and guide the relationship between national qualifications systems and the EQF. The NCPs have a two-fold mission. On the one hand, they are to ensure the quality and

transparency of the referencing process, and, on the other hand, they should inform and promote the use and understanding of the EQF within the countries.

The **NCP list** can be found at the back of this newsletter.

## 3. The referencing process

‘Referencing’ means the process by which a level in a national qualifications framework or system is related to one of the eight EQF levels. It is the result of the national referencing processes which will in time enable the EQF to fulfil its purpose to serve as a tool for recognition and mobility across Europe.

**The success and use of the EQF depend on the quality and transparency of the referencing process.**

### 3.1 Qualifications, national qualifications frameworks and the EQF

National qualification frameworks (NQFs) already exist in some European countries. Since very recently this includes Belgium (Flanders), France, Ireland, Malta and the UK. Most other countries participating in the EQF, as well as many others outside Europe are also developing NQFs (as discussed in

the ETF article on page 10). NQFs enable countries to assign a level to each qualification within a coherent, comprehensive set of levels defined in learning outcomes (what learners should know, understand and be able to do to hold a qualification at that level).

### 3.2 Referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the EQF

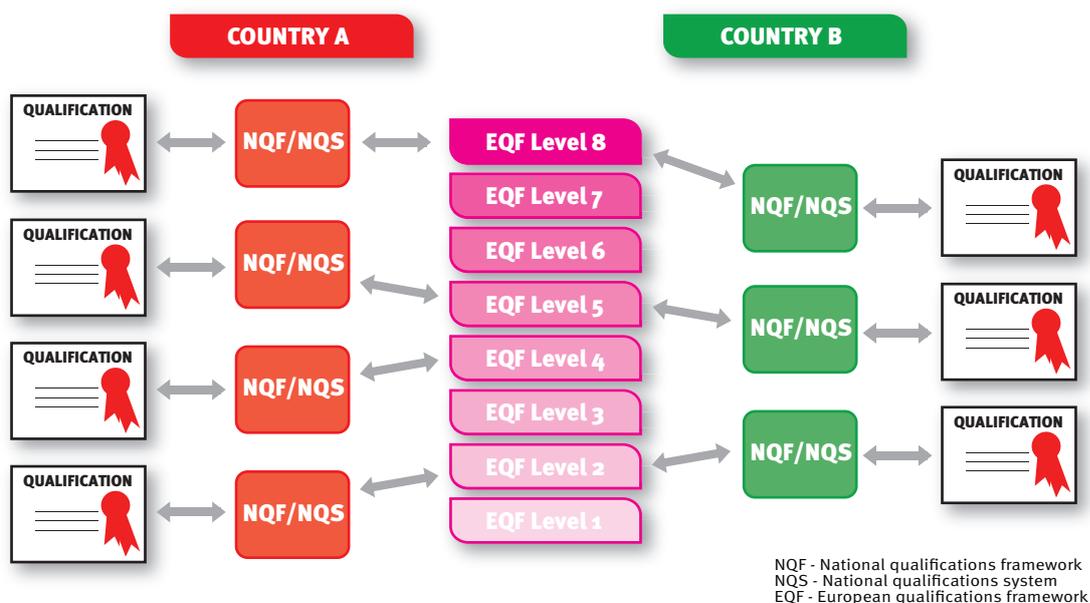
Referencing is coordinated by the NCP, which, in accordance with national legislation and practice, may need to bring together several national authorities. It is a national process, but participation of international experts is one of the agreed criteria and procedures.

Those in charge of the referencing process analyse the descriptors of the national qualification framework or system and compare them to the level descriptors of the EQF, collecting evidence for national decisions to match levels. It is a challenging task because national levels may be more or less than eight levels (for example, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework has 12 levels). Even if there are eight levels they may not automatically

correspond to the EQF levels (see figure 1 on the following page).

Countries that have referenced to the EQF so far (Ireland, Malta and the UK) have all undertaken extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including awarding bodies, providers, employers, trade unions and chambers for example. The importance of this consultation process is being continuously emphasised as a contribution to the quality and legitimacy of the referencing process and the ownership of its results (see for example articles provided by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Malta Qualifications Council on pages 7 and 8).

Figure 1: Referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the EQF.



### 3.3 The referencing report

The immediate outcome of the referencing process is a 'referencing report' which explains, in a transparent and easily understandable manner, the national framework(s) or system and the arguments behind the decision to reference NQF levels to

specific EQF levels. The report is presented to the EQF Advisory Group who discusses and comments on it with a view to improving its clarity and informs future referencing processes.

### 3.4 The results of referencing

The 'real world' end-result of the referencing is a structure which allows a learner, an employer, an authority, or an education and training institution to weight a qualification from another country against a qualification from one's own country that they are familiar with. This is done by using the EQF level of the 'foreign' qualification as a yardstick. This matching will become possible as the referencing will allow national authorities to indicate an EQF level to each new qualification in the national system.

Besides the improved understanding of qualifications abroad, there are national benefits in undertaking the EQF referencing process. The referencing process should bring together all stakeholders in a discussion and decisions on issues regarding making explicit what is currently tacit in many qualifications systems - for example, the relationship among national qualifications from different sub-systems and their levels. This has been one key message from countries that have already completed the referencing exercise.

### 3.5 How far is this process as of today

Referencing to the EQF started last year (2009) with Ireland and Malta. At the beginning of 2010 the UK also made public its referencing reports. More referencing reports are expected in 2010 and most participating countries have announced their intention to reference to the EQF by 2011 or 2012.

Published referencing reports can be found here:

**Ireland:** <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingReportfinalJune2009.pdf>

**Malta:** <http://www.mqc.gov.mt/referencingreport?l=1>

**UK:** <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/27193.aspx>

# Referencing the Irish National Framework of Qualifications to the EQF

Sean O'Reilly, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland<sup>1</sup>

Ireland regards the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as an important instrument to support mobility and lifelong learning. The ability of the EQF to support portability of qualifications provides key benefits to individuals holding qualifications recognised through the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ later in the text). It also provides additional encouragement for stakeholders to engage with the national framework in order to achieve such benefits.

The process to reference the Irish NFQ to the EQF was completed in June 2009. The National Qualifications Authority, as the designated National Coordination Point, convened a national Steering Committee to assist it in the process. The committee included representatives of the national education and training sectors in addition to three international experts.

Ireland verified the compatibility of levels 6 to 10 of the Irish NFQ to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) in 2006. This experience informed the EQF referencing process and provided a model approach to this referencing which, in turn, simplified the work of the Steering Committee.

Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders was an important part of the referencing process. Consultation has played a key part of the development and implementation of the NFQ in Ireland and appropriate structures and processes are well established. These were utilised during the referencing process to seek feedback but also to disseminate general information on the EQF to national stakeholders. Examples include a national seminar, publication of draft reports on the Authority website and information bulletins which were sent to over 800 contacts<sup>2</sup>.

The international experts played a crucial role in ensuring that the referencing report achieved its core objective: that of helping to describe the national education and training system to an international audience. The challenge of describing the different sectors, their distinct statutory quality assurance arrangements and the different legal relationships to the NFQ was noted by the Steering Committee and by the international members in particular. This resulted in a specific section being added to the referencing report. This section provides an overview of the system but also refers to additional information sources.

Two key issues of concern were identified during the referencing process by Irish stakeholders. These concern the relationship of sectoral qualifications/frameworks to national qualifications systems and the EQF; and the relationship of the EQF to Directive 2005/36/EC on recognition of qualifications related to regulated professions<sup>3</sup>. The first issue particularly relates to sectoral qualifications that transcend national boundaries. There is general support that such qualifications should be accommodated in national qualifications frameworks and the EQF but there is no clear view as yet as to how this might be achieved and particularly how external quality assurance would apply. The second issue was raised specifically by organisations operating both within the domains of the Directive on recognition of qualifications related to regulated professions and the EQF and concerned the perceived lack of clarity on how the Directive will relate to the EQF.

For more information on the Irish referencing to the EQF see the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland web-site where you can also find the referencing report: [http://www.nqai.ie/interdev\\_eqf.html#ref](http://www.nqai.ie/interdev_eqf.html#ref)

Údarás Náisiúnta  
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann  
National Qualifications  
Authority of Ireland



1 NQAI: <http://www.nqai.ie/index.html>

2 These Bulletins can be consulted on the NQAI web-site: [http://www.nqai.ie/interdev\\_eqf.html](http://www.nqai.ie/interdev_eqf.html)

3 For more information see the European Commission Internal Market web-site: [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/qualifications/future\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/future_en.htm)

# The Referencing Process: A European and International value to Malta's Qualifications

Dr James Calleja and Doris Mangion, Malta Qualifications Council

Education is one of the sectors in which Malta aims to achieve excellence by 2015 as investment in human resources is one of the identified priorities towards economic competitiveness and social cohesion and development. This sector is undergoing a reform whereby the education system, new policies and new institutions are integrating the European tools spearheaded by the Lisbon Strategy.

The process to give Malta's qualifications an international dimension goes back to 2005 when Legal Notice 347 established the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC). MQC's primary objective was to steer the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), which was eventually launched in June 2007 and to act as the EQF National Co-ordination Point. Consultation with stakeholders including student representatives, public and private training providers and social partners was instrumental in shaping the MQF and its referencing to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

The Referencing Report for further consultation was published and officially launched by the Minister of Education in November 2009.

From a Maltese perspective, the qualifications framework serves as a catalyst for change, innovation and the establishment of a national network of stakeholders involved in training and education, industry and businesses and the welfare of workers, young people and adult learners. For the first time in the history of education in Malta, the framework of qualifications brought different people around the same table to discuss one common concern: the relevancy of education and training to employability. In Malta, stakeholders of education and employment were brought together not only through the consultation process on the qualifications framework but also under the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. Following this experience, more and more people in Malta are looking at education from a different perspective namely, that

it relates not only to one's own personal enrichment but that it should equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and competences needed in today and tomorrow's labour market.

A second important challenge which is being met is that of reform and innovation. The Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) has spearheaded a number of reforms such as the introduction of a new School Leaving Certificate which covers all formal, informal and non-formal learning; the accelerated process to adopt the European Credit Transfer System across all courses in higher education; the introduction of the ECVET system in vocational and professional training; the design and publication of occupational standards related to vocational qualifications and lately the design of an Awards system that matches the level descriptors of the Malta Qualifications Framework. A further ongoing challenge which followed the setting of the MQF has been the process to validate informal and non-formal learning and to classify such learning with the MQF. A policy document was launched in 2008 and since then various stakeholders' activities on a national level have been organized to ensure that the process is transparent and meets the standards and criteria established by the various business sectors and education. Furthermore, during 2010, a new legislation will be enacted to quality assure all public and private training provision, align qualifications to the MQF and set standards for licensing and accreditation of all further and higher education institutions and programmes. The added value of the MQF has undoubtedly been that it acted as a wake-up call to policy-makers on issues related to quality, standards and employability.

More information on the Malta Qualifications Framework can be found on [www.mqc.gov.mt](http://www.mqc.gov.mt)

The referencing report can be accessed here:  
<http://www.mqc.gov.mt/referencingreport?l=1>



# Development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) in Europe

Slava Pevac Grm and Jens Bjornavold, Cedefop

One of the important dimensions of the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). As Cedefop's 2009 mapping of NQFs developments show (available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/5030.aspx>), policy-makers see them as a tool to help link national qualifications levels to the EQF. But they are also increasingly perceived as an instrument for national reforms. Member States view fragmented national qualification systems with concern; they see that comprehensive NQFs can support the implementation of more coherent lifelong learning policies and practices, remove barriers between institutions and sub-systems of education and training (for example, vocational education and training, general education, higher education and adult learning) and facilitate access, transfer and progression. NQFs can also take into account, and thus make visible, the whole learning landscape, including learning outside the formal education and training system. Member States perceive NQF development as a long-term process, and emphasise a pragmatic step-by-step approach.

In five European countries (Belgium (Flanders), France, Ireland, Malta and UK) NQFs are in place. All other Member States aim to or are in the process of developing a comprehensive NQF, which clearly indicates the support for the EQF. Comprehensive NQFs will cover a broad range of qualifications from different sub-systems of education and training. The main role of the new generation of NQFs is to support communication and transparency, for example to clarify relationships vertically and horizontally and between different types of qualifications, certificates and diplomas. Increasing the transparency of qualifications is seen as a prerequisite for:

- valuing different types of knowledge, skills and competences (including non-formal and informal learning),
- developing new learning pathways,
- motivating individuals to learn throughout their lives and
- creating a better supply of learning opportunities.

Most European countries have proposed or adopted eight-level frameworks, though some earlier frameworks, e.g. in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Ireland, have adopted be-

tween 8 and 12 levels. Levels are defined in terms of learning outcomes. Many countries use EQF level descriptors (along with Dublin descriptors used the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area) as a starting point for the development of more detailed level descriptors that suit national needs, circumstances and goals. Some countries (such as Malta, Finland and Slovenia) emphasise key competences in their level descriptors (learning to learn, communication and social skills, entrepreneurship and judgment skills). Germany uses the term competence as an overarching concept (in line with its tradition), distinguishing 'professional' and 'personal' competence. The development of level descriptors is currently taking place in many countries.

One of the important characteristics of the current developments is that the NQFs provide a platform for dialogue and consensus-building among various stakeholders from different education and training sub-systems, the labour market and the social partners. In most cases the national ministries of education coordinate the process, in close co-operation with ministries of higher education and research (where they are separate ministries) and ministries of labour for example. Other ministries may also be involved (economy, health, labour, regional development), reflecting the fact that many different bodies award qualifications.

Despite the rapid development of NQFs across Europe, the process is facing a range of challenges. NQFs are not only technical instruments; they also have a political and social dimension. As such, they need to engage a broad range of stakeholders from different fields and at different levels, including education and training providers. In many countries, the relationship between higher education and vocational education and training is now being discussed and qualifications and qualifications levels renegotiated on the basis of the learning outcomes approach. Cedefop's mapping exercise showed that the learning outcomes approach is already integrated in many current reforms affecting various sub-systems of education and training in Member States. But its successful implementation in institutions – which will require opening up national qualification systems to learning that occurs outside formal systems, will remain a major challenge for the coming years.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/>



CEDEFOP

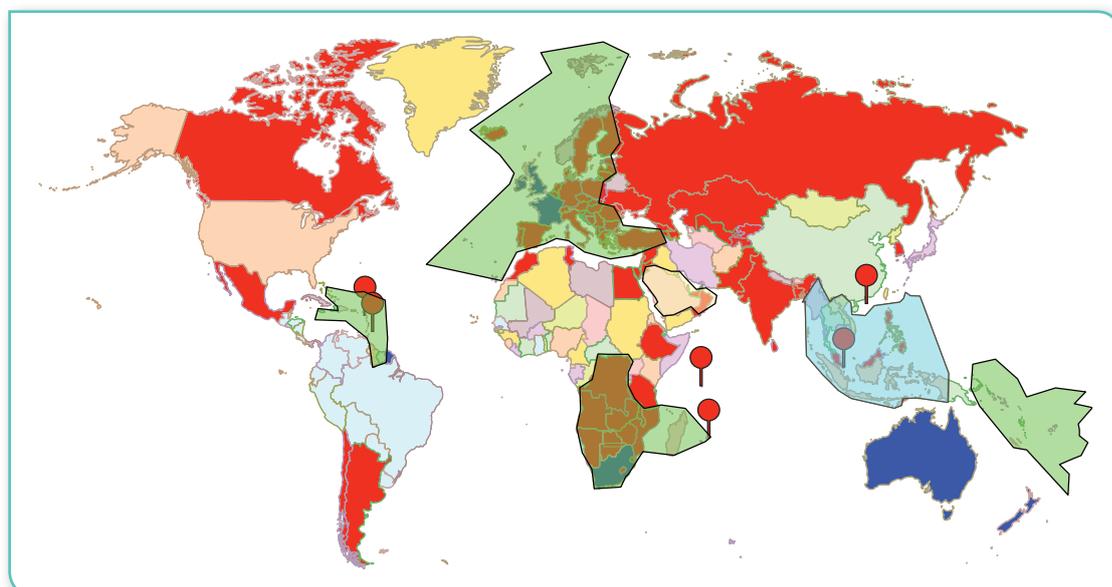
# The External Dimension of the European Qualifications Framework Developments in EU Partner Countries and Beyond

Arjen Deij and Borhene Chakroun, European Training Foundation (ETF)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is not only a reference for the 32 countries participating in the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme and its 2020 follow-up that are represented in the EQF Advisory Group. Countries world-wide are looking at the EQF as a reference for their qualifications systems. The European Training Foundation (ETF) estimates that 100 countries world-wide are

currently developing or implementing national qualifications frameworks. Moreover, a substantial number of these countries are involved in so-called regional or transnational frameworks that have been established to link the qualifications frameworks and systems of a number of countries (see Figure 2 below). Many of these countries and transnational frameworks are making reference to the EQF in one way or another.

Figure 2: The world map below provides an overview of the current developments.



#### LEGEND:

<b>Dark blue:</b>	Countries with fully functional qualifications frameworks
<b>Red:</b>	Countries that are developing qualifications frameworks
<b>Light blue:</b>	Countries that have introduced competency based training systems
<b>Transparent green:</b>	Regional or transnational qualifications frameworks under development
<b>Transparent blue:</b>	Mutual recognition sectoral arrangements of the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations)
<b>Transparent orange:</b>	Prospective Gulf Cooperation Countries regional framework (in principle agreed but not under development yet)
<b>Not indicated:</b>	the Virtual University for the Small and Island States of the Commonwealth Transnational Qualifications Framework (small states all over the world)

The countries not directly involved in the EQF implementation process but that are closely following EQF developments can be basically grouped into three categories:

1. Industrialised countries that seek cooperation with Europe;
2. Partner countries around Europe with which Europe is developing special relationships, including candidate countries and potential candidate countries, the Eastern Partnership countries in Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean

near countries in North Africa and the Middle East and finally countries in Central Asia.

3. Other countries in Southern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America where the EU is providing assistance to education and labour market reforms.

In this article the focus is on current developments in partner countries. The developments beyond these countries will be covered in an upcoming issue of the EQF newsletter.

## Progress on NQF developments in partner countries and links to EQF and Bologna Process

This section outlines findings from the recent inventory of progress on NQF developments in partner countries that was presented to the EQF Advisory Group in February 2010.

In order to analyse progress across countries these were clustered into different groups. In total 23 out of the 29 partner countries are now considering, developing or are currently in the process of implementing qualifications frameworks:

- Lebanon, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova are exploring what the implications of a qualifications framework are for their education and training reforms and developing early concepts.
- In Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kazakhstan a qualifications framework is a clear policy objective, supported by programmes and donor funded projects and national policy documents, but the concepts and objectives still need fine-tuning.
- In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt the vision for a qualifications framework has been set and agreed. It is now clear what NQF developments are planned, and the first steps towards design have been made, including draft legislation.
- Montenegro, Armenia, Russia, Tunisia and Croatia are at an advanced stage of the design of their frameworks and have identified levels, qualification types, implementation mechanisms and will start with testing these new features.
- Georgia, Kosovo (as defined by UNSC regulation 1244), and Turkey are in the process of early implementation. They have established new regulatory institutions to coordinate their frameworks. These countries have adopted laws and are developing their first new qualifications.
- Frameworks have been legislated by new laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Croatia, Tunisia, Turkey and Georgia.

## References to EHEA QF and EQF

There are strong links to the Bologna Process and to the EQF in almost all partner countries.

Albania, Turkey, Egypt, Kosovo (United National Security Council Resolution 1244) all propose to use the EQF levels as their national levels; while Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Morocco have accepted or are developing 8 levels.

Less strong links exist in Tunisia (agreed 7 levels), Jordan (proposed 7 levels) and Russia (proposed 9 levels), but discussions continue in each of these countries to move to 8 levels.

No levels have yet been agreed in Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, Lebanon, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. However, there is an overall trend towards eight levels.

Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are participating or at least are eligible for the EQF process. But ten partner countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, who are members of the Council of Europe, are directly involved in the Bologna Process but not in the EQF implementation. Of these, six have nevertheless already agreed or established comprehensive national qualifications frameworks. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia a higher education framework will be established first. In Turkey parallel developments are on-going. But these countries are now also moving towards comprehensive frameworks. Moreover, Kosovo (United National Security Council Resolution 1244) is de facto preparing for aligning its NQF to both the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the EQF. There is therefore a predominant trend towards comprehensive frameworks aligned to the EQF.

References to the EQF are also appearing in bilateral cooperation arrangements of European Union with several countries (Morocco, Turkey, Caucasus Countries). Only Belarus, Tajikistan and Lebanon make no reference to the EQF so far.

The above mentioned references to the EQF imply that there are expectations to link partner countries' NQFs to the EQF at a certain stage of development: an issue that will need to be addressed in the coming years.

# What's New

## Finnish National Qualifications Framework Development

In summer 2009 the Finnish Committee for the preparation of the national qualifications framework (NQF) prepared a report analysing the Finnish qualifications system in view of an NQF development. The English version of this report is now available online: [http://www.opf.fi/mobility/qualifications\\_frameworks](http://www.opf.fi/mobility/qualifications_frameworks).

Amongst other issues the report outlines the basic principles for a Finnish NQF and provides a proposal for the framework structure as well as its governance (principles for placement of qualifications on levels) and administration (maintenance, updating and further development). The report also contains a summary of quality assurance approaches in the Finnish qualifications sub-systems (general education, vocational education and training and higher education) and a reflection on future developments and possible expansion of the proposed qualifications framework.

This Finnish NQF proposal is currently in the process of consultation.

## Development of the National Qualifications Framework in Greece

The launch of the consultation on the development of a national qualifications framework (NQF) in Greece took place on 25 February 2010 through a conference gathering representatives from all stakeholders. Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs - Anna Diamantopoulou illustrated the rationale behind the development of the proposal for the Greek NQF. This was then presented in further detail by the Secretary General for Lifelong Learning - Efthimios Bakas and was followed by an extensive discussion with the audience.

It is proposed that the Greek NQF will be composed of 8 qualifications levels accommodating all types and levels of qualifications in the country. Further information on the proposal and the con-

sultation can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs at [www.opengov.gr/ypepth/](http://www.opengov.gr/ypepth/)

## Referencing of the Qualifications Frameworks of the UK to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

26-27 April 2010 Edinburgh

Following the referencing of the UK qualifications frameworks to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the National Coordination Points in the UK: the Welsh Assembly Government; the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF); the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), will be holding an international conference to mark the occasion. The conference will invite stakeholders to share their experiences and will include representatives from the higher and further education sectors; economic sectors and awarding organisations together with presentations from European partners that will include an international perspective.

The UK referencing report can be found at [http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QFUK\\_Joint\\_Report\\_140pp.pdf](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QFUK_Joint_Report_140pp.pdf)

## EQF Notes - Added value of NQFs.

The European Commission, in cooperation with Cedefop and the European Training Foundation publishes a series of EQF Notes to support debate and action related to the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) at national and European level.

EQF Note 1: *Explaining the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* was published in June 2008 for the launching event of the implementation of the EQF. EQF Note 1 informed stakeholders about the general context of the establishment of the EQF in the form of questions and answers.

The Commission has now published the second note in the European Qualifications Framework Series: *Added Value of National Qualifications Frameworks in Implementing the EQF*. This note is targeted at policy makers and qualifications experts and aims to support the design and implementation of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) as tools for implementing the EQF at national level. EQF Note 2 is available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/note2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/note2_en.pdf)

The EQF Newsletter presents news and articles on developments related to the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework. This newsletter is produced by GHK Consulting on behalf of the European Commission.

The next issue of the EQF Newsletter will be published in Summer 2010. If you would like to subscribe to the EQF Newsletter, please register by sending an email to the following email address:

[eac-efq-newsletter@ec.europa.eu](mailto:eac-efq-newsletter@ec.europa.eu)

Please forward any comments or suggestions regarding the EQF Newsletter to the same email address.



CEDEFOP



# Annex: National Coordination Points

Country	National Coordination Point	Address
AT	OeAD GmbH-National Agentur Lebenslanges Lernen	Schreyvogelstrasse 2 1010 Wien-Austria
BE-FR	Service Francophone des Metiers et des Qualifications - SFMQ	Rue Lavalée, 1 1080 Bruxelles
BE-FL	Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training	Koning Albert II-iaan 15 (lokaal 2B17) B-1210 Brussels
BG	Ministry of Education, Youth and Science	2A Kniaz Dondukov blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
CZ	National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education	Weilova 1271/6, 102 00 Praha 10, Czech Republic
DE	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung	Hannoversche Str. 28-30 10115 Berlin, Deutschland
DK	Danish Agency for International Education	Fiolstraede 44, 1171 København, Denmark
EE	Estonian Qualification Authority	Mustamäe tee 16, 10617 Tallinn, Estonia
EL	General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning	37, A.Papandreou str. Maroussi, Office 3127, PC 15180, ATHENS
ES	Ministry of Education	C/General Oraa 55 ES - 28006 Madrid
FI	Finnish National Board of Education Ministry of Education	P.O.Box 380 FI-00531 Helsinki
FR	Commission Nationale de Certification Professionnelle	immeuble les Boroméés 2 1 avenue du stade de France 93217 St Denis la Plaine, France
HR	Vlada Republike Hrvatske	Markov trg 2, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
HU	Ministry of Education and Culture	10-14. Szalay u., Budapest, 1055 Hungary
IE	National Qualifications Authority	Jervis House, Jervis Street, Dublin 1, IRELAND
IS	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Sölvhólgötu 4, 150 Reykjavík, Iceland
IT	ISFOL	Via GB Morgagni 33 00161 Roma, Italy
LT	Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training	Gelezinio Vilko str. 12, LT-01112 Vilnius
LU	Ministère de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle	29, rue Aldringen, L-2926 Luxembourg
LV	Academic Information Center	Valnu 2 LV 1050 Riga, Latvia
MT	Malta Qualifications Council Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport	16/18 Tower Promenade S LC 1019 Sta Lucia, Malta
NL	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	PO BOX 16375, 2500 BJ The Hague, The Netherlands
NO	Ministry of Education and Research	Box 8119, NO-0032 Oslo, Norway
PL	Ministry of National Education	Wesolowskiego, 16 PL - 04-691 Warsaw
PT	National Agency for Qualifications	Avenida 24 de Julho, nº 138, 1399-026 Lisboa
SE	Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education Box 145, 721 05 Västerås	Ingenjör Bååts gata 19, 722 12 Västerås Sweden
SI	Institute for Vocational Education and Training	Ob železnici 16, 1000 Ljubljana
SK	Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic	Stromova 1; LLL Department; 813 30 Bratislava; Slovak Republic
TR	Vocational Qualifications Authority of Turkey	Atatürk Bulvari 227 Kat 9-10-11 Kavaklıdere ANKARA - Turkey
UK - Wales	Welsh Assembly Government	Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ
UK - Scotland	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership	39 St Vincent Place, G1 2ER, Glasgow, UK
UK - England and Northern Ireland	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment of Northern Ireland jointly	83 Piccadilly, London W1J8QA