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European
Qualifications
Framework



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Résumé

Vous commencez la lecture du troisième numéro du bulletin du Cadre Européen des Certifications (CEC) qui vous informe sur les derniers développements dans le domaine des cadres des certifications.

Dans l'éditorial, M. Gordon Clark, chef d'unité "Education et formation tout au long de la vie: stratégie 2020" de la DG EAC, retrace les développements du Cadre Européen des Certifications depuis ses origines en montrant le potentiel de ce dispositif, à travers les cadres nationaux, pour faciliter l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie. L'éditorial souligne également les défis pour atteindre les objectifs du CEC, qui sont notamment d'assurer la transparence des processus de référencement des cadres nationaux et d'assurer que les nouveaux certificats et les suppléments Euro-pass portent l'indication du niveau CEC à partir de 2012.

Ce troisième numéro contient en particulier des articles qui présentent les développements des cadres nationaux de certification dans trois pays: Autriche, Allemagne et Pologne. L'article sur l'Autriche présente les principes clés du futur cadre

national tout en expliquant certains choix et le processus de développement. L'article portant sur le futur cadre des certifications allemand met l'accent sur la façon dont la structure proposée a été testée sur des certifications existantes, dans plusieurs secteurs économiques et à plusieurs niveaux. Finalement, l'article des auteurs polonais montre comment, dans ce pays, le futur cadre national des certifications est considéré comme un élément intégral de la stratégie de l'éducation et formation tout au long de la vie.

Ces trois articles mettent l'accent sur les phases préparatoires pour le développement des cadres nationaux. En ceci, les articles sont complétés par un aperçu des résultats d'une sélection des projets européens pour expérimenter les principes du CEC. Les projets choisis portent plus particulièrement sur le domaine de l'enseignement supérieur.

Finalement, l'article du Cedefop informe sur une étude majeure portant sur les changements des rôles et fonctions des certifications dans nos sociétés. L'article présente les questionnements adressés par l'étude et également certains résultats clés.

Zusammenfassung

Sie lesen die dritte Ausgabe des EQR Newsletters, der Sie über die neuesten Entwicklungen im Bereich Qualifikationsrahmen informiert.

Im Leitartikel gibt Gordon Clark, Leiter des Referats Lebenslanges Lernen, DG EAC, einen Überblick über die Entwicklungen des Europäischen Qualifikationsrahmens seit seiner Entstehung und illustriert anhand der nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen das Potenzial des Instruments zur Erleichterung des lebenslangen Lernens. Der Leitartikel beleuchtet auch die Herausforderungen, um die Ziele des EQR zu erreichen, insbesondere in Bezug auf die Transparenz der Referenzierungsprozesse der nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen und den Verweis auf das EQR-Niveau auf allen neuen Qualifikationsbescheinigungen und Europass-Dokumenten von 2012 an.

Diese dritte Ausgabe enthält vor allem Artikel, die über die Entwicklungen nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen in drei Mitgliedstaaten - Österreich, Deutschland und Polen - berichten. Im Artikel über Österreich werden die wichtigsten Grundsätze des künftigen nationalen Rahmens

dargestellt und einige Entscheidungen sowie das Entwicklungsverfahren erläutert. Der Artikel über den künftigen deutschen nationalen Rahmen skizziert, wie die vorgeschlagene Struktur anhand bestehender Qualifikationen verschiedener Wirtschaftssektoren und Niveaus erprobt wurde. Der dritte Artikel beschreibt, wie der künftige polnische Qualifikationsrahmen als integraler Bestandteil der Strategie für lebenslanges Lernen angesehen wird.

Diese drei Artikel konzentrieren sich auf die Vorbereitungsphase für die Entwicklung nationaler Rahmen. Darüber hinaus wird ein Überblick über die Ergebnisse ausgewählter europäischer Projekte gegeben, die die Prinzipien des EQR erproben. Schwerpunkt der ausgewählten Projekte ist der Hochschulbereich.

Nicht zuletzt informiert ein weiterer Artikel über eine umfangreiche Studie von Cedefop über die Veränderung der Rollen und Funktionen von Qualifikation in unseren Gesellschaften. Die zentralen Fragen der Studie sowie einige wichtige Ergebnisse werden präsentiert.

Editorial

Gordon Clark, Head of Unit, A.1: Lifelong Learning: Strategy 2020, Directorate A, Directorate-General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, European Commission

My retirement from the Commission at the end of October has allowed me to reflect on achievements in European cooperation in the field of education and training. I truly believe that the development of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning is one of the biggest successes in this field. I also think that there is a huge potential in the implementation of the EQF, supported by national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), as a concrete instrument to promote lifelong learning, mobility, skills and jobs of citizens throughout Europe.

The essence and ideal of the EQF comes from a comprehensive and holistic definition of lifelong and “lifewide” learning, emphasising the need to value all stages and forms of learning and to build flexible pathways for learners without dead-ends. The first explicit mention of what was to become the EQF was in the Education Council Resolution on lifelong learning in 2002 that called for the development of a framework that supported the recognition of qualifications building on the achievements of the Bologna Process and promoting similar action in vocational education and training. Two years later the “Education and Training 2010” Joint Progress Report referred, for the first time, to the need for a single European framework of qualifications as a common reference for the transparency of qualifications.

The actual inspiration for the level and descriptors of the EQF was found in a study undertaken by Mike Coles and Tim Oates (2004), which called for the development of “zones of mutual

trust” for the transparency of qualifications. Mutual trust has, since then, been key to the EQF. The EQF is a voluntary exercise that builds on mutual trust between countries and between various stakeholders.

I feel that the way in which the EQF was carefully conceived and developed is in itself best practice for a successful European instrument resulting from our “open method of coordination” in education and training. It is best practice because it was built on research, expert advice, stakeholder involvement and widespread consultation throughout the Member States. In 2004, we established a group of experts from various countries, different education and training systems – general and vocational education and training, adult and higher education (including representatives from the Bologna Process) – and from employer, sectoral and trade union organisations, to define a possible framework covering all levels and forms of learning. The resulting Commission document in July 2005, which set out a blueprint for the EQF, was the subject of a broad consultation throughout Europe. At the end of the consultation process, a conference in Budapest provided very valuable input to the final EQF structure: the level descriptors were subsequently simplified, in close consultation with representatives of all Member States, to better accommodate the diversity of national qualification systems.

The careful preparation and consultation provided a strong basis for the Commission’s proposed EQF Recommendation in September 2006. As a result, the legislative process, leading to the adoption of the Recommendation by the Council and Parliament in April 2008, went very smoothly.

I must admit that the EQF has become even more successful than we ever expected with considerable political priority and commitment being given to its full implementation by Member States, social partners and stakeholders. By now, all countries participating in the “ET2020” strategy for European cooperation in education and training will have developed or are developing NQFs based on learning outcomes linked to the EQF. In almost all cases, national frameworks for the three cycles of higher education are integrated in comprehensive NQFs for lifelong learning, and these developments are supported by coordination at European level in the implementation of the EQF and the Bologna Process.

However, for the EQF to reach its full potential some key challenges have to be addressed. Trans-

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parency and coherence in the referencing of NQFs to the EQF is crucial. A lack of coherence between countries in referencing to the EQF could undermine mutual trust and trust in the referencing process itself. Special attention should be paid to referencing to EQF levels 1 and 2 and to EQF level 5 and 6.

Another challenge relates to how the EQF will have an impact on the lifelong learning and mobility of individuals. Therefore, it is important that by 2012 all new qualifications and Europass supplements should have an “EQF tag” that indicates the EQF level of that qualification and facilitates the understanding of the level of qualifications throughout Europe.

Finally, the successful implementation of NQFs is very important for the success of the EQF. Of course, NQFs are not a panacea. To bring about real change for citizens, it is necessary to integrate the validation of non-formal and informal learning and guidance systems and to be closely linked

with other measures aimed at the modernisation of education and training systems. However, NQFs can have and are having a major impact. On the one hand, they are effective tools for communication, mobility and transition between the worlds of education and employment, supporting employment and growth. On the other hand, by valuing and recognising learning wherever it takes place and by supporting the access, transfer and progression of learners, NQFs can provide real added value in addressing educational disadvantage and promoting social inclusion.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed so much since 2004 to the success of the EQF: experts, stakeholders, national representatives, the ETF and, of course, the small team of colleagues in DG EAC and Cedefop who have worked so hard on this initiative. I would like to pay a special tribute to Jens Bjornavold, who was inspirational and instrumental, at all stages, in the process from 2004 to the current date.



Education and Culture DG

Austrian National Qualifications Framework development

Sabine Tritscher-Archan (ibw)

Background

Work on the Austrian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) began in 2007 with a series of **scientific analyses** of the Austrian qualifications system looking at the key principles of an NQF, namely the learning outcome orientation in curricula/qualifications or existence of implicit hierarchies in the Austrian qualification system. This work led to the compilation of an NQF background paper which was subject to an **Austrian-wide consultation** in the first half of 2008. This paper addressed the most important questions regarding the implementation of an NQF, that is, the general approach that should be taken, the possible structure of the framework, the descriptors to be used, the classification procedure, the system architecture, the responsibilities of the stakeholders involved, etc.¹ The responses of more than 270 stakeholder institutions (from all spheres of education, including educational authorities, social partners, etc.) showed the variety of opinions on this subject matter and the partly opposing positions that some segments of education and training had in Austria. While the classification² of vocational education and training (VET) qualifications to levels 1 to 5 was undisputed, the possibility of allocating VET qualifications to **levels 6 to 8** was controversially debated. Stakeholders from the higher education area argued that only qualifications from the Bologna architecture, i.e. Bachelor-, Master- and PhD-degrees, should be placed on these levels. All other qualifications – formal as well as non-formal – should be classified on levels 1 to 5. This opinion was strongly opposed by VET stakeholder institutions that referred to the principle of ‘equivalence rather than equality’: there should be parity of esteem between qualifications, no matter where and how they were acquired. After one year of discussion following the outcome of the consultation, a compromise was reached. Towards the end of 2009 a **political paper** was accepted by the Austrian Ministerial Council that laid down the following **NQF structure** (cf. also Fig. 1 below) and **basic characteristics**:

- The Austrian NQF will comprise of **eight levels**, with levels 6 to 8 being divided into a ‘Bologna-strand’ and into a ‘non-Bologna-strand’. Bachelor-, Master- and PhD-degrees will be

classified on the basis of the Dublin descriptors, while qualifications outside the Bologna architecture will follow the NQF descriptors.

- The **EQF descriptors** will form the basis for the classification of qualifications to the Austrian NQF (see also part on ‘Pilot projects’ for explanation). Austria will not develop its own descriptors but rather provide explanations/details/specifications to the EQF descriptors (see also section on ‘Ongoing work’ below) from the perspective of the Austrian qualification landscape. These explanations should make the EQF descriptors more ‘tangible’ and should facilitate the classification.
- The Austrian NQF will focus on **transparency** (of the qualifications system) **and orientation** and will not be an instrument of regulation. This means that there will be no entitlements linked with a level classification of a qualification – neither in terms of access to qualifications placed on higher levels, nor in terms of salary classification.
- **All qualifications** – irrespective of the focus (general education qualifications and VET qualifications) and the learning context (for example initial VET or continuous VET) – will be classified to the NQF. Due to the complexity of the NQF development process and the fact that different ministries, departments and stakeholders need to be involved it was decided to work on the ‘formal qualification area’ (comprising qualifications that are based on legal regulations, i.e. laws, directives, etc.) and the ‘non-formal qualification area’ separately. Although, for qualifications from both areas, the same classification principles will apply in the end (see also section on ‘Ongoing work’ below), the starting situation, regarding stakeholders in charge and governance principles, differs. Thus, working groups deal with the questions attached to both areas separately.
- Classification in the NQF is **voluntary**. For a qualification to be placed on the NQF it is necessary that the authority that governs this qualification (for example the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Economics) applies for it (see also section on ‘Ongoing work’).

1 Cf. http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/15830/nqr_konpap_o8.pdf (27.09.2010)

2 The terms ‘classification’ and ‘allocation’ are used when relating qualifications to an NQF-level, while ‘referencing’ is used when relating an NQF-level to the EQF.

Fig. 1: Structure of the Austrian NQF

Level 8 – PhD	Level 8
Level 7 – Master	Level 7
Level 6 – Bachelor	Level 6
	Level 5
	Level 4
	Level 3
	Level 2
	Level 1

The acceptance of the political paper marked the ‘official’ beginning of the NQF development process. **Key actors** in this process are the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and the Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF). These ministries head the so-called **NQF Steering Group**, in which members of all ministries, the social partners and the *Laender* are represented. This 23-person committee decides on all important aspects of the NQF such as the Austrian specification to the EQF descriptors, the NQF governance structure, the classification process, etc. (see also ‘Ongoing work’).

Pilot projects

Important background information for the work of the NQF Steering Group was provided, in addition to the results of the NQF consultation, by **pilot projects** that have been carried out parallel to the political process of the NQF development. Hence the ‘top down’ (political) process has been strongly supported by a ‘bottom up’ (practical) analysis. Four sectors have been selected as pilot areas: **construction**,³ **electrical engineering**,⁴ **health**⁵ and **tourism**.⁶ The main objective of these pilot projects was to check how selected qualifications from the listed sectors could be classified to an NQF level on the basis of the EQF descriptors. Moreover, they also served to test the classification procedure that was already outlined in the NQF consultation paper. The question of whether the EQF descriptors would suffice for classifying Austrian qualifica-

tions or whether additional explanations, amendments or Austrian-specific descriptors would be necessary was also subject to this piloting.

In all of these projects, a series of **workshops** was carried out with experts and stakeholders (for example from the social partners, from companies, educational authorities, training providers, etc.) who discussed the questions connected to the projects’ objectives. As a consequence of these discussions it was decided that the Austrian NQF should – just as the EQF – have **eight levels** (see ‘Background’ above). The experts regarded it as possible to map the Austrian qualification landscape on a framework comprising eight levels. Moreover, Austrian-specific **descriptors** were not deemed necessary by the workshop participants. The experts concluded that such descriptors would also have to be abstract (like the EQF ones) because they should fit all qualifications. Thus, it was agreed that the EQF descriptors should form the basis for the classification but that they should be specified and explained in more detail drawing on the descriptions of Austrian qualifications (see ‘Background’ and also ‘Ongoing work’). It was also suggested during these workshops – and later taken into account – to classify ‘**reference qualifications**’ in order to better illustrate the requirements of a level. Challenges were seen regarding the **learning outcome orientation**. Although this shift to learning outcomes was broadly welcomed, it was reckoned that a lot of work was needed to make Austrian curricula ‘learning outcomes-fit’.

3 Tritscher-Archan, Sabine (2008): *NQR in der Praxis: Am Beispiel des Baubereichs. [The NQF in Practice – By the Example of the Construction Sector]*. ibw-Schriftenreihe Nr. 141. Wien.

4 Tritscher-Archan, Sabine (2009): *NQR in der Praxis: Am Beispiel des Elektrobereichs. [The NQF in Practice – By the Example of the Electrical Sector]*. ibw-Forschungsbericht Nr. 147. Wien.

5 *Lernergebnisorientierte Lernniveaus in den nichtärztlichen Gesundheitsberufen – eine ex ante Prüfung auf Machbarkeit und Funktionalität. [Learning Outcome Oriented Qualification Levels in Healthcare Professions – an Ex-Ante Examination of Possibility and Functionality]*. In: Markowitsch, Jörg (Hrsg.): *Der Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen in Österreich. Beiträge zur Entwicklung. [The Austrian National Qualifications Framework. Contributions to its Development]*. Studies in Lifelong Learning 3. Lit-Verlag. p. 227-240.

6 Luomi-Messerer, Karin und Lengauer, Sonja (2009): *Der Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen im Bereich Tourismus. Ergebnisse eines Pilotprojektes. [The National Qualifications Framework in the Tourism Sector. Results of a Pilot Project]*. In: Markowitsch, Jörg (Hrsg.): *Der Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen in Österreich. Beiträge zur Entwicklung. [The Austrian National Qualifications Framework. Contributions to its Development]*. Studies in Lifelong Learning 3. Lit-Verlag. S. 205-225.

Ongoing work

One more **pilot project** is supporting the NQF development work that is being undertaken at the moment (October 2010). This time, the focus lies on qualifications in the business-administrative field (commercial and office occupations). The main development tasks being carried out now are the definition of criteria for the NQF classification, of the classification procedure and the NQF governance structure. The results of this work will enter into an **NQF Manual**, which is due to be published by the end of 2010. This Manual will provide support throughout the entire NQF classification process. Some aspects of the content of the NQF manual are presented in Box 1.

Box 1: Key aspects covered by the prepared Austrian NQF Manual

The Manual address the following issues:

- How do qualifications have to be structured and described to be 'NQF-classifiable'?
- What information has to be provided when applying for classification?
- What criteria have to be met for the classification on a particular level?
- Which steps have to be taken when applying for classification?
- Who are the stakeholders involved in the NQF process and what are their tasks?
- Which implications does a classification have?

Moreover, it will also give information on the main actors/bodies involved in NQF matters (governance structure) and stipulate their tasks. One such important entity – the National Coordination Point (NCP) – has already been set up at the National Agency for Lifelong Learning/Austrian Exchange Service.⁷

Another important question that is being looked into at present is connected to the **legal status** of the NQF. A working group dealing with legal aspects was set up at the Ministry of Education. It is working out a proposal of whether and, if so, which legal framework should be given to the NQF.

The **time schedule** for the next steps in the NQF development process foresees that classification applications should be possible as of 1 January 2011. First qualifications from the 'formal qualification area' (see 'Background' for further explanation) will be placed on the NQF. At a later stage qualifications from the 'non-formal area' will be added. The report on the referencing of the Austrian NQF to the EQF will be drawn up in the course of 2011 and presented to the EQF Advisory Group towards the end of the year.

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7 Cf. http://www.lebenslanges-lernen.at/home/nationalagentur_lebenslanges_lernen/nqr_koordinierungsstelle/ (27.09.2010)

Designing a German National Qualifications Framework

The pilot phase – approach and results of the workgroup ‘metal/electro’

Natalie Morawietz (f-bb, DQR office)

A proposal for a National Qualifications Framework in Germany (DQR) was presented at the beginning of 2009¹. This proposal was to be discussed during a one year pilot phase aimed at finding a traceable and exemplary classification of selected qualifications that would form the basis for a consensus. The second objective of this pilot phase was to check the manageability of the DQR matrix of qualifications framework descriptors and to enhance it, if necessary. The testing process included the verification of:

- levels at which the qualifications taken as examples could be placed, bearing in mind the defined concept of competence; and
- the usability of the draft qualifications descriptors’ matrix, which should be adapted, if necessary.

Qualifications from four occupational areas and fields of activity were selected for the testing phase. The areas/fields of activity were:

- metal working and electrical engineering
- trade
- health
- information technology

Qualifications (between 12 and 16 of them) from these areas were referenced to the levels of the DQR draft during the DQR pilot phase so that at least one qualification, if possible, would be assigned to each of the eight DQR levels.

Expert workshops were the main testing method used. There are several reasons for choosing this approach, including:

- The ‘expert workshop’ format is very appropriate for a discussion covering more than one field of education and training, which is indeed necessary for the development of an overarching qualifications framework. It is thus possible to present, discuss and document different circumstances, approaches and concepts.
- The involvement of experts from different fields, including ministries, education and training representatives, enterprise and associations provided the opportunity to verify whether or not the DQR draft is easy to handle from all perspectives.

Classification approach

The DQR descriptors are not geared to input factors such as learning periods, learning locations or learning context. Instead they describe learning outcomes achieved by learners at the end of their learning period. A description in terms of learning outcomes is necessary in order to compare all fields of education and training, since learning outcomes represent the only common comparable element of all learning paths. This is unrelated to the formal completion of a step in the schooling process (passing an examination, receiving a certificate, further access certificates gained). This approach corresponds to the technically accurate use of the terms ‘input’, ‘output’ and ‘outcome’.

- ‘Input’ means the implementation of resources (for example time, learning and working aids);
- ‘Output’ is the immediate result of the ‘input’ (for example examination passed); and
- ‘Outcome’ is the long-term effect of an activity (here the learning process).

Learning outcome orientation in the DQR means that qualifications are analysed with regard to the action skills (*Handlungskompetenz*) stated in the description of the qualification. This active aspect is expressed by using verbs in the competence descriptions in the DQR.

The German education and training system and the qualifications are currently not systematically defined in terms of learning outcomes. Therefore, the documents which define qualifications (for example curricula or qualification regulations) had to be analysed in terms of outcome, in order to relate the qualifications to the DQR descriptors. In other words the qualifications definitions had to be evaluated with regard to the (sometimes merely implied) learning outcomes they aimed to achieve in order to be compared to the competence definitions in the DQR draft and the EQF requirements. Matches with the level descriptors of the DQR draft were identified on this basis.

Two possible approaches to identifying qualifications levels emerged during the testing phase:

¹ The proposal and more information about the DQR developments can be found here: <http://www.deutscherqualifikationsrahmen.de/>

- An ‘inductive’ approach, based on analysing the learning content listed in a curriculum. In this approach an input-oriented description of a qualification was ‘translated’ to learning outcomes.
- A ‘deductive’ approach based on hypotheses concerning the structural features of a competence acquired through learning. Through this approach the content of a source text was summarised into (approximately five to ten)

functions that correspond to the expected typical requirements needed for an occupation the qualification prepares for.

The objective of this exercise was to reference every selected qualification to a level of the DQR draft and to justify this decision in precise terms. The results have been documented in a common form, the structure of which is illustrated in the table below:

Table 1: Structure of the form used to define qualifications levels

Qualification name			
Documents and sources used			
Proposed level classification			
Competence area	Category/ Subcategory	Level	Explanation
Professional competence	Knowledge (depth and breadth)		
	Skills (instrumental and systemic skills, judgement)		
Personal competence	Social competence (team/ leadership skills, involvement and communication)		
	Self-competence (autonomy, responsibility, reflectiveness and learning competence)		

The testing approach outlined above and the issues faced are illustrated in more concrete terms through the example of the *Kfz-Mechatroniker* (mechatronics technician) below.

Results of the workgroup ‘metal/electro’

The 3.5-year apprenticeship *Kfz-Mechatroniker* is a dual vocational training course, after which course graduates are able to work independently on complex assignments and to plan all the necessary work steps. They analyse the vehicle system and check and repair breakdowns and dysfunctions. They acquire the specific knowledge required for various applications through special information systems.

In general it is expected that 3/3.5-year professional apprenticeships will be classified at DQR level 4 or 5. In the testing process it was important to pay attention to some newly introduced qualifications, which have been upgraded because the professions they prepare for deal with a complex and more challenging environment.

In order to arrive to the conclusion about the referencing of these qualifications it was also relevant to analyse input factors in order to draw conclusions about learning outcomes connected to some qualifications. Each qualification has been classified according to the learning outcomes a graduate is expected to have achieved at the moment of acquisition of the qualification. Subsequent professional experience and improvements in competence have not been taken into account.

The following difficulties emerged during the pilot referencing:

It is very common in the German education system to develop progressive education and training pathways whereby one (specific) qualification is a precondition for accessing education and training leading to another qualification. However, it appears that given the eight level structure of the DQR, certain qualifications that are a precondition for accessing a course leading to other qualifications are difficult to link to the DQR levels in a way that would reflect this progression. The 8-level structure ignores minor differences in learning outcomes and is likely to give a generalised view of the level of qualifications. Each level of the DQR therefore includes a certain latitude. For instance, a classical upgrading training can be linked to the same DQR level as a qualification which actually represents a prerequisite for such training. Admission requirements do not play a decisive role in classifying qualifications.

So far both approaches used (inductive/deductive) have shown that clear referencing into one level is very difficult and that a certain blurring of the boundaries remains, allowing deviations on the scale of a level. It therefore became necessary to take a holistic view of qualifications in order to be able to identify a definite link to one level of the DQR.

When considering double qualifications (for example programmes that result in achievement of two bachelors), each has been judged separately. While a double qualification is likely to improve professional chances and develop the competence of an individual, this is not relevant for the DQR which takes into account single qualifications and not personal biographies.

In the end, the results of the working group 'metal/electro' show that analysing a single qualification using the DQR descriptors alone does not provide a meaningful understanding of the qualification. Taking into account how the qualifications relates to other qualifications and fields are necessary to give a full picture of the range of qualifications in the German qualifications system.

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Polish National Qualifications Framework development in the context of a lifelong learning strategy planning

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An experts' proposal for a Polish National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was presented in January 2010. This proposal concluded the first stage of Poland's preparation for developing an NQF. In the present, second, stage, this document is being discussed and developed into the final model proposal.

The development and implementation of the NQF in Poland is closely linked to the preparation of a lifelong learning implementation framework which will take the form of a strategic Government document. The Polish Government created structures for steering the process involving various institutions and Ministries that have a role in promoting lifelong learning in Poland. In February 2010, the Prime Minister launched a special inter-ministerial task force for the development of a document presenting the Polish lifelong learning implementation framework, chaired by the Minister of Education, Ms Katarzyna Hall. The task force is supported by a Sub-Committee on the development of a National Qualifications Framework led by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The task force includes, among others, representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Economy, and is supported by an experts' group that is responsible for the co-ordination of activities leading to the development and implementation of the NQF in Poland.

So far, the sub-committee has focused on the development of glossary of the NQF as well as adopting an implementation framework, based on the proposed model. The sub-committee also recommended the modification of the initial experts' proposal and inclusion of an additional qualification level, which would be placed between the proposed fourth and fifth levels. This means that the initially-proposed fourth and fifth levels will be modified and the proposed levels 5, 6 and 7 will become levels 6, 7 and 8. As a result, the Polish NQF will have eight levels, similar to the European Qualifications Framework.

Introduction of an additional level 5 seems to fill the potential gap that could have emerged in the qualifications structure if only seven levels were used. In particular, this gap could concern qualifications awarded by some post-secondary education institutions (mainly in the field of vocational

education and training), whose level of learning outcomes are higher than the proposed level four (including the school leaving certificate) but lower than level six (including bachelor degrees and equivalent non-university qualifications). This is the case with certain qualifications for teachers (language teachers and primary school teachers) social workers, master craftsmen as well as some other post-secondary professional courses. Additionally, in the future it can be expected that the expansion of post-secondary education will lead to further demand for education (and qualifications) at this level.

The Government's work on the NQF development and implementation is supported through a project funded by the European Social Fund, conducted by the Educational Research Institute in Warsaw and named *The development of substantive and institutional assumptions of NQF and implementation of the National Register of Qualifications for lifelong learning*. The main goals of the project include the development and consultation of the Polish model of National Qualifications Framework and preparation of the report on the referencing of the NQF to the EQF to be adopted by the Government. It is expected that the NQF implementation will also help to develop a system, which will allow the assessment and validation of individuals' learning towards learning outcomes stated in the description of qualifications. The project is organized in four main phases/areas:

1. Development of the NQF model and the EQF referencing report;
2. Development of National Qualifications Register and supporting research;
3. Preparation of an institutional framework for NQF implementation and related operationalising processes;
4. NQF dissemination at national and international level.

As a result, the National Qualifications Framework in Poland will have two main objectives:

- To register and describe qualifications that result from achievement of all types of learning: formal, informal and non-formal;
- To improve the link between education and training and future labour market needs.

One of the most important pre-conditions for the achievement of these objectives, the success and proper recognition of the NQF in Poland, is close co-operation with stakeholders. Stakeholders include not only governmental institutions, but also educational and labour market institutions as well as social partners and civil society. In order to engage these partners in the NQF development, a broad national consultation on the proposed model will be launched in November 2010.

The introduction of principles of the NQF, namely the focus on learning outcomes and quality assurance, is also underway in higher education. Legislative amendments have been prepared which embed the NQF principles into the laws applicable to higher education institutions. This legislative action is accompanied by a series of around 60 country-wide seminars addressed to universities and schools.

Examples of recent seminars and meetings include:

- In August 2010 representatives of stakeholders involved in NQF development, including higher education, vocational education and training and labour market partners met in a coordination meeting. The main aim of the meeting was to inform about the progress achieved and ensure the complementarity of and synergies between activities conducted towards the development of the NQF in Poland. The NQF development touches upon activities of many stakeholders and it is important to co-ordinate the different developments, in order to develop a coherent framework from the perspective of all stakeholders.
- In September 2010 experts and representatives of stakeholders, including social partners, discussed the issue of an additional level (level five) following the recommendation of the NQF Steering Committee. As a result of this meeting, further work in three sub-groups of experts and stakeholders representatives prepared their assessment of the need for a new level five.
- Also in September 2010, an experts' seminar took place to inform about the project implemented by the Educational Research Institute. The seminar was addressed primarily to the experts and government institutions involved in the current work on implementing the NQF in Poland.

In the near future the following developments are expected:

- The work on the development of level 5 in the Polish NQF will be finalised in autumn 2010 and a decision on whether to include such level and what the implications would be is to be made.
- The broad national consultation on the NQF in Poland is due to be launched in November 2010. It will be based on a presentation of the Polish qualifications system and will invite a wide range of stakeholders to contribute. In parallel, targeted discussion in specific working groups will also continue with broad involvement of stakeholders, social partners and experts. The aim of this debate is to finalise the Polish NQF.

The operational coordination of the NQF development and implementation process is ensured by the Polish NQF project office. The project office is responsible for the preparation of institutional and organizational aspects of the implementation process for the Polish Qualifications Framework, including work on the EQF referencing report. Any questions and requests for information about the NQF development in Poland should be addressed to this office (see contact details below).

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Highlights from a selection of EQF pilot projects in the area of higher education

This article presents a selection of findings from a sample of EQF pilot projects funded through the centralised actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme. The projects presented here have been selected because of their thematic focus. They all explore and test the principles of the EQF in the context of higher education. In the upcoming issues of the EQF newsletter more project findings with other thematic focus will be presented.

EQF Pro - Articulation between vocational and academic learning in University Education

Contribution from Oliver Janoschka and Michel Feutrie, EUCEN¹

The objective of the EQF-Pro project was to develop evidence-based recommendations to policy makers and stakeholders engaged in development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in order to enhance the capacity of NQFs to ensure progression and flexibility of learning pathways for individuals. The EQF Pro partners were universities from nine countries² participating both in the Bologna Process and the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and one non-EU country involved in the Bologna Process.

The EQF Pro project explored what was happening with regard to NQF developments in relation to lifelong learning and progression on the basis of 29 case studies and conclusions of meetings and workshops with external partners.

The starting point of the project was that the role of qualifications frameworks in supporting lifelong learning is that of facilitating the identification of common reference points for different education sub-systems and offering new opportunities for the development of progression possibilities for individuals. The challenge of smooth progression and transition between different education and training sub-systems is particularly crucial at the intermediate levels of national qualifications levels:

- those that, in principle, would be referenced to level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) – and in the case of higher education qualifications to the short cycle in the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA); and,

- those that are expected to be referenced to EQF level 6 – and in the case of higher education qualifications, they would relate to the first cycle of the QF EHEA.

The analysis showed that the regulations, the different cultures of education and training, tradition, institutional arrangements or insufficient coordination still appear as serious obstacles for the implementation of smooth educational pathways between sub-systems. The project identified four major scenarios in which country situations can be grouped:

- Cases where transition and permeability between subsystems are facilitated. Transition is only controlled by selection procedures verifying in general if students have the required level in term of knowledge and understanding.
- Cases where transition is conditionally opened. Transition is possible if students succeed in bridging courses. The duration of these bridging courses is variable according to countries and according to disciplines.
- Cases where transition is theoretically possible, but the tubular organisation of higher education and tradition do not encourage students to move from one subsystem to another.
- Cases where there is no transition between sub-systems. If students want to enrol in universities after a learning path in a post-secondary non-university institution, they have to re-start from the beginning and to provide the qualification required for access to a university.

Based on these findings, the project partners agreed that access, progression and transition between educational sub-systems could be facilitated by the use of learning outcomes as a common language, thus encouraging dialogue between institutions focused on the provision of services supporting the individuals in their learning paths, in particular through guidance and counselling and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The establishment of a NQF is, as well as the EQF, a stepping stone for promoting continuity and progression. The EQF encourages countries to develop comprehensive frameworks integrating different qualifications from sub-systems in order to present a consistent and coherent system covering most qualifications awarded in a country. It does not mean necessarily to change the structure and the design of each subsystem and existing

1 European Association for University Lifelong Learning www.eucen.eu

2 Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, France, Poland, Romania, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Russia

qualifications but to make them compatible and to provide an articulated vision about possible learning pathways to citizens, educational and training institutions and stakeholders.

In light of their findings, the project partners formulated a number of recommendations, all related to qualifications frameworks development, the use of learning outcomes and possibly credit systems. These recommendations include messages to policy makers:

- When developing the NQF consider the whole national system from the point of view of continuity and progression in a lifelong learning perspective.
- Make sure the shift to a learning outcomes approach leads to another shift: a learner-centred approach in institutions.
- Provide examples and evidence on use of NQFs for lifelong learning.

The final report as well as the executive summary of the EQF Pro project can be downloaded here: <http://www.eucen.eu/EQFpro/index.html>

HE-LEO - Competence Orientation and Learning Outcomes in Higher Education

Based on Cendon, E et al (2008) Implementing Competence Orientation and Learning Outcomes in Higher Education - Processes and Practices in Five Countries³

The HE-LEO project was concerned with the development of learning outcomes-based approaches in the design of higher education programmes, as expected by the qualifications frameworks development. The project was inspired by the observation that, despite the rhetoric, it was still the case that even new programmes developed by higher education institutions focused on specifying the inputs rather than the outcomes.

The objective of the project was to inspire higher education institutions to change their current practice and move towards outcome-based and learner centred approaches by providing evidence (through case studies) of how this can be done and how qualifications frameworks can support this process. The project partners were universities and ministries in five countries⁴. At the level of a sample of higher education institutions in selected subject areas, the project partners analysed the obstacles to the development of competence-based or learning outcomes-based approaches and developed workable approaches that could be used in university practices.

The project considered that qualifications frameworks – the European, national but even sectoral or institutional ones (if existing) – are to be considered by higher education institutions as “helpers” when they design a new programme. Obviously these frameworks do not contain a sufficient level of detail to serve as a basis when designing a qualification (and that is not their objective either) but they provide useful reference points regarding both the type of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence or other taxonomies) and their level in terms of breadth, complexity, etc. Other reference points that can support the design of specific learning outcomes at programme level can be:

- Surveys of employers’ needs and expectations;
- Information about the demand for generic competences;
- The practice in partner institutions within the country or abroad.

The use of these instruments as references for qualifications design was exemplified through the different case studies. For example, the German case study of the University of Oldenburg highlighted a number of interesting ways in which the use of learning outcomes can improve and support the education provision of this institution:

- The use of learning outcomes at the level of modules (programme components) significantly facilitates the development of joint programmes. The explicit formulation of learning outcomes enables the partner universities to clearly define areas where courses offered by one institution complement those offered by another and hence design a balanced joint programme which offers learners continuity in their pathway as well as the best that can be offered by each of the institutions;
- It also supports international cooperation and exchanges of students as it enables full recognition of the credit for modules that the learner has achieved abroad;
- Learning outcomes also enable the institution to clarify the profile of programmes it offers as compared to the profile of programmes offered by other higher education institutions that deliver qualifications in the same field/area.
- Finally the use of learning outcomes and the fact that these are regularly reviewed and updated enhances the quality of qualifications.

The case study also shows the way the university collects information from different parties (namely employers, teaching staff and the students themselves) about what the expected learning outcomes are, how they translate into the programme and

³ Full reference: Cendon, Eva; Prager, Katharina; Schacherbauer, Eva; Winkler, Edith; Eds. 2008. Implementing Competence Orientation and Learning Outcomes in Higher Education - Processes and Practices in Five Countries. Krems, July 2008 http://www.he-leo-project.eu/he_leo-handbook/processes_and_practices/

⁴ Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, and Spain

assessment practice. This in particular highlights the importance of multi-disciplinary (or cross-curricular) skills and competences. The case study stresses the fact that skills and competences that are typically neglected in an input based model, can be made explicit and related to the teaching/learning and assessment practice in a learning outcomes based programme.

In addition to the above outline case study from Germany, the project documentation contains case studies from:

- Austria – which shows the process and tools put in place by the Graz University of Technology to develop learning outcomes based programmes – including templates and a guide to writing qualification profiles;
- Bulgaria – this case study presents the findings of a review of qualification profiles, curricula and course unit descriptions with regard to coherence of approaches used to define these by the staff in charge. It shows that a lot of variations exist and that there is no common understanding of the terminology and structures to be used. The case study consequently recommends the use of examples, templates, clear definitions, standardised general competence descriptions, etc. to improve the overall quality of these documents.
- Hungary – the Hungarian case study is written from a different angle and presents the development of a qualifications framework and the design of learning outcomes descriptors in the framework also outlining the challenges for the implementation of the framework by higher education institutions;
- Spain – this example also takes the qualifications framework perspective. It shows the way learning outcomes descriptors can be used to develop a framework, at the level of a university, that is specific to a particular faculty or programme (examples used are architecture and engineering and mechanical engineering) giving coherence to the qualifications profiles within these specialisations.

Further information on the project can be found here: <http://www.he-leo-project.eu/>

HEQ – Bridges – Building Bridges between EQF and EHEA

The HEQ-Bridges project analyses the development and implementation of qualifications frameworks in the area of higher education in seven countries⁵. Among its products the project aims at:

- publication of a comparative report looking at the seven countries participating in the project; the report will outline the similarities and especially the differences in designing the methodologies for NQF development and the comparability of qualifications frameworks for higher education;
- publication of a Good Practice Guide for the design/description of qualifications from two very complex sectors of activity: the air transport industry and mechatronics;

The partner organizations are from different sectors: higher education, training providers, sectoral authorities, national qualifications authorities and the working methodology is mainly based on research, exchange of experience, workshops, analyses, case studies and comparative studies.

The HEQ-Bridges project is still ongoing and therefore the full findings cannot be presented here yet. It was therefore decided to show here only an aspect of the project work. The following SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis regarding the qualifications framework development in the countries concerned by the project was part of the project report on *Diversity and Comparability in the Implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks for Higher Education*. The table on the following page is adapted from that report.

⁵ France, Germany, Ireland, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Spain

HEQ-Bridges SWOT analysis of NQF development with focus on higher education

This analysis was based on national reports prepared by the Council of Europe. Council of Europe asked all countries participating to the Bologna process to submit a SWOT analysis of their qualifications frameworks developments for the meetings held in Strasbourg on November 9-10, 2009.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>All countries in the project are in the process of developing and implementing their national qualifications frameworks;</p> <p>Countries apply the methodology for the implementation of the Overarching Framework of Qualifications (OFQ) for EHEA, based on the 10 steps elaborated by the Council of Europe;</p> <p>There are designated bodies responsible for the development of the NQFs in all countries;</p> <p>Germany, Malta and Romania have a single national methodology for the development of a qualifications framework that is in concordance with both the QF for EHEA and EQF;</p> <p>In all countries, NQFs help making the higher education systems clearer and more transparent;</p> <p>Universities began designing study programs based on learning outcomes; they are becoming aware of the importance of NQFs;</p> <p>Reinforcement of the relations with employers; contribution of different stakeholders; increase of communication and cooperation between them;</p> <p>The process is visible for the public; It is based on specific local needs; general information on NQFs is publicly available (websites);</p> <p>There is interest of national authorities to link the implementation of the two overarching frameworks at national level;</p> <p>Students/graduates agree with the NQF as an instrument to match the universities' provision with the labour market needs.</p>	<p>Discontinuity of the political will;</p> <p>Question of terminology, semantic and translation of terms including the fact that the understanding of learning outcomes is poor; definitions of competences; relations between knowledge, skills and attitudes are still largely unclear;</p> <p>Identifying the correspondence of some learning outcomes with a certain NQF level is sometimes problematic;</p> <p>The Bologna Process is not well known;</p> <p>The relationship between degrees issued through the old and new systems is difficult;</p> <p>The relations of higher education institutions and vocational education and training are difficult;</p> <p>The advantages and reasons for labour market representatives to get involved are not clear (not clearly communicated); the involvement of employers is poor;</p> <p>The methodology for developing NQF is still not coherent;</p> <p>The terminology used in EQF and Directives on Recognition of qualifications are not coherent.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Society is aware of the importance of NQF developments;</p> <p>The NQF is part of and links to the whole reform process of Higher Education;</p> <p>It facilitates the recognition process within the EHEA;</p> <p>There are existing networks and international support that can facilitate the NQF developments;</p> <p>The link with the two overarching frameworks is being made;</p> <p>Increased international mobility can support the implementation of NQFs; NQFs can also contribute to the internationalization of higher education;</p> <p>NQF developments have the support of international institutions;</p> <p>They facilitate lifelong learning, including after graduation of a Bachelor or Master's programme;</p> <p>They enable curricula modernization and restructuring of the study provision, based on society needs/demands.</p>	<p>Society is tired of the constant reforms;</p> <p>Interdependency to neighbouring countries;</p> <p>The transition to a knowledge based society is not accepted by the whole society;</p> <p>There is a risk that NQFs will be based on formal qualifications systems which were not based on learning outcomes;</p> <p>Low involvement of employers; unclear expectations from their side;</p> <p>Too many stakeholders can create conflicts of interest;</p> <p>The process could be perceived as a purely bureaucratic one;</p> <p>The large number of certifications/accreditations can make the whole understanding of the system more difficult and less transparent.</p> <p>If the level descriptions and learning outcomes descriptions are too detailed, there is some risk of fragmentation of skills and competences and the evaluation of qualifications levels may become complex.</p>

Further information on the project can be found here: <http://www.heqbridges.eu/>

New Cedefop study: The changing roles and functions of qualifications

Jens Bjornavold, Cedefop

Since 2008, Cedefop has been working on a major study of the roles and functions of qualifications in modern societies. Building on a diversity of data sources, including country case studies and an extensive review of international research in this area, the study provides one of the most extensive and in-depth analysis of qualifications published so far. The findings are directly relevant to ongoing reforms of qualifications systems at both national and European level. An international team with members from Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France and the UK has supported Cedefop in carrying out the study. The study will be available in electronic format from the website of Cedefop in early December 2010 and in print (English, French and German) in early spring 2011. Some of the messages of the report are outlined here.

The roles and functions of qualifications

Qualifications – or the certificates and diplomas awarded following successful completion of education, training or other learning processes – are important for us as individual citizens. They influence our ability to get a job, to carry out an occupation or a profession, to pursue lifelong learning, to move between countries as well as influencing our general social standing and status. But qualifications are also important for a number of other reasons:

- Qualifications are important for employers and enterprises: they signal what a potential employee is expected to know and be able to do.
- Qualifications are important for education and training: they state that the teaching and training activities (the input) leading to a particular certificate or diploma is of relevance and holds a certain quality.
- Qualifications are important for policy makers: they provide a focal point for education and training policies, not least by offering a tangible measure of output.
- Qualifications are of key importance to statisticians and researchers: they offer a measurable entity for analysing the supply of knowledge and skills in our societies.

Changing roles and functions?

Building on a broad range of sources, including the research carried out by Cedefop in recent years, two key messages can be drawn from the study.

- Firstly, qualifications are surprisingly stable and there is no indication that their overall influence and value is diminishing. While it is possible to observe fluctuations in the value of qualifications ('over-qualification'), the basic functions of qualifications to signal and demonstrate learning as well as to regulate access to occupations and labour markets seem to be largely unchallenged.
- Secondly, qualifications have their limitations. We can increasingly observe, for example in the recruitment practices of enterprises, that qualifications rarely stand alone as a means to capturing the knowledge, skills and competences of a potential employee. The future development of qualifications thus requires a discussion on how certificates and diplomas can be supplemented and complemented by other instruments and tools in a more systematic way; and how individuals can better document and represent all their skills and competences, not only those formally assessed.

Qualifications, through their strengths and weaknesses, thus play indispensable roles in our societies. However, as demonstrated extensively by the study, these roles vary between countries and sectors. In some cases we can observe that qualifications increase in importance, making it impossible for individuals to access employment and education without the right formal certificate or diploma. There are still a significant number of occupations in Europe where the right to pursue professional activities are directly regulated by qualifications. In other occupations less weight is given to a single qualification, thereby radically weakening its regulatory function.

The study provides a unique source for a better understanding of qualifications and of the dynamics of change characterising the field. Qualifications systems are constantly undergoing internally driven improvements; the shift to learning outcomes, the rapid development of national qualifications frameworks and the opening up of qualifications

to learning outside schools are good examples of this. But qualifications are also changing due to external pressure. The global economy is increasingly having an impact on qualifications, for example in the form of increased cooperation (as in the EU) but also in the form of international qualifications gaining their value beyond national borders.

Scenarios for developing qualifications

The study outlines a set of scenarios indicating the choices policy makers and stakeholders face regarding the future development of qualifications. These scenarios point to four basic questions to be addressed by policy makers and stakeholders in the coming years:

- Should qualifications become more **flexible** in the sense that they should provide the learner with ease of access, build on a wide range of learning modes and be combined according to the needs and the time-perspective of the individual learner?
- Should qualifications focus more on **stability and predictability**, making sure that their overall value (currency) and signalling power is consistently strengthened?
- How strong a role should be given to **the suppliers** of qualifications (education institutions, awarding bodies etc.)?
- How strong a role should be given to **the users and demanders** of qualifications (for example social partners)?

These questions, extensively addressed in the report, point to the political implications of the work on qualifications. Both at European and national level there is a need to systematically reflect on the possible choices as regards the future development of qualifications, qualifications systems and (increasingly) qualifications frameworks.

The need for continued work

While this study can be seen as a synthesis of an extensive research effort by Cedefop and others during the last few years, it should not be seen as a final and concluding statement but as a starting point for future research and policy development.

- The study provides a starting point for researchers to go deeper into a part of modern societies which in many cases is overlooked and taken for granted.
- The study provides, through its reflection on policy options and choices, an important input to policy developments at European, national and sector level.



CEDEFOP

What's New

UK EQF International Seminar on Recognition of Prior Learning

25 November 2010, the Royal Society, London

Recognition of prior learning takes on increasing importance with the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework and UK vocational qualification reform. Keynote speakers Mike Coles, Ruud Duvekot and Simon Witts will discuss the added value of national qualifications frameworks in implementing the European Qualifications Framework and address contemporary issues in implementing recognition of prior learning. There will be peer learning workshop sessions addressing sectoral perspectives and methodological approaches. Delegates are invited from across the UK and European Union. The agenda, list of speakers, venue details and delegate registration website are all at <http://www.eventsforce.net/UKRPL>. Book soon, the deadline for registration is approaching.

The Compatibility of Qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand

In June 2010, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority published the results of a common project to improve the basis on which the two countries recognise each others' qualifications. As a basis for this work the two countries have compared their national qualifications frameworks which result in statements regarding compatibility of qualifications at the different levels using terms such as *strong*, *moderate* or *weak* compatibility. These statements will inform the recognition processes which remain fully within the competence of the national authorities in charge of recognition. The existence of qualifications frameworks and country-specific level descriptors facilitated this process. The fact that Ireland had already referenced its framework to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework for EHEA also eased this process.

The report from the project can be found on the website of the Irish National Qualifications Authority: <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/nzqaandnqaiframeworks06.09.10.pdf>

French EQF referencing report

France has officially presented the outcomes of the referencing of the French National Qualifications Framework to the EQF on 11-12 October 2010 during the meeting of the EQF Advisory Group. The full report will be published soon and an article about the French experience from the EQF referencing will be published in the next EQF Newsletter.

Poland to launch public consultation on a proposal for a National Qualifications Framework

In November 2010, Poland will launch a public consultation on a proposal for a Polish National Qualifications Framework which aims at stimulating country-wide discussion and collecting feedback from a broad range of stakeholders. For more information about the developments of the Polish NQF see the article in this newsletter.

EQF Implementation virtual community is launched

The European Commission and Cedefop have recently launched the restructured EQF Implementation Virtual Community. The purpose of this virtual community is to serve as an information and communication platform among policymakers, experts, social partners and other stakeholders involved and interested in the implementation of the EQF. It is planned to disseminate information on national and European events on the EQF and national qualifications frameworks. The library of the virtual community includes European and national policy documents, relevant research, various items of the EQF note series, EQF newsletters and discussion papers from conferences. The EQF Implementation Virtual Community is open - upon registration - to everybody who is interested in EQF developments. You can register to the Virtual Community here <http://communities.cedefop.europa.eu/eqfimplementation>.

If you would like to share interesting information related to the implementation of the EQF with other colleagues, please send an email to the following email address: EAC-EQF-NEWSLETTER@ec.europa.eu.

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 Winter 2010. If you would like to subscribe to the EQF Newsletter, please register by sending an email to the following email address:

eac-eqf-newsletter@ec.europa.eu

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