

# OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

## DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2020

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Country	Scope of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Legal basis/stage of development	NQF linked to EQF	NQF/EQF website Qualifications register/database
<b>Albania</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and lifelong learning qualifications for adults and people undertaking specialised courses for professional development.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• wider competences</li> </ul>	NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018) (in Albanian)  Activation stage		<a href="https://www.arsimi.gov.al/">https://www.arsimi.gov.al/</a>  VET register: <a href="http://www.akafp.gov.al/lista-kombetare-profesionale/">http://www.akafp.gov.al/lista-kombetare-profesionale/</a>
<b>Austria</b>	Designed as a comprehensive NQF; currently includes qualifications awarded in formal education and training (higher education and VET qualifications); qualifications under the responsibility of other ministries such as defence and health. First non-formal/non-regulated qualifications included.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	Federal Law 14/2016 on the NQF (in German)  Operational	2012	<a href="https://oead.at/en/expertise/qualifications-and-comparability/nqf/">https://oead.at/en/expertise/qualifications-and-comparability/nqf/</a>  Qualifications register: <a href="http://www.qualifikationsregister.at">www.qualifikationsregister.at</a>
<b>Belgium-FL</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and from the professional qualifications system.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge/skills</li> <li>• context/ autonomy/ responsibility</li> </ul>	Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch)  Operational	2011, 2014 update	<a href="http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/">http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/</a>  Qualifications database: <a href="https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK">https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK</a>
<b>Belgium-FR</b>	Designed as a comprehensive framework; including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system. It currently includes vocational and secondary general education qualifications and qualifications awarded through validation at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5, as well as HE qualifications at levels 6 and 7.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge/skills</li> <li>• context/ autonomy/ responsibility</li> </ul>	Decree on cooperation agreement between the three francophone governments on the creation and management of CFC (2015) (in French)  Activation stage	2013	<a href="http://www.cfc.cfwb.be/">http://www.cfc.cfwb.be/</a>  Qualifications register: <a href="https://cfc.cfwb.be/index.php?id=certifications">https://cfc.cfwb.be/index.php?id=certifications</a>
<b>Belgium-DE</b>	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• occupational competence (knowledge and skills)</li> <li>• personal competence (social competence and autonomy)</li> </ul>	Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German)  Activation stage		
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to those awarded outside formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	Decision of the CoM on the adoption of the baseline qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) (in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian)  Activation stage		<a href="http://www.eqf.ba">http://www.eqf.ba</a>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight plus a preparatory level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competences (personal and professional)</li> </ul>	Decision No 96 of the CoM on the NQF (2012)  Activation stage	2013	
<b>Croatia</b>	Designed as a comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. It is a qualification and credit framework.	Eight, with sublevels at levels 4, 7 and 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• autonomy and responsibility</li> </ul>	CROQF Act (2013, amendments in 2016 and 2018) (in Croatian)  Activation stage	2012	<a href="http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en">http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en</a>  Qualifications register: <a href="https://hko.srce.hr/registar/">https://hko.srce.hr/registar/</a>

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<b>Cyprus</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of vocational qualifications.	Eight, with sublevels at levels 5 and 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	Decision of the CoM, No 67445 on establishing the CyQF (2008)  <i>Activation stage</i>	2017	<a href="http://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en/">http://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en/</a>
<b>Czechia</b>	National framework for vocational qualifications in VNFIL (the national register of qualifications, NSK) and the higher education qualifications framework.	Eight in NSK	National framework for vocational qualifications in VNFIL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competences (including knowledge and skills)</li> </ul>	Act on the verification and recognition of further education results (179/2006) <i>(in Czech)</i> <i>(in English)</i>  The national register of vocational qualifications (NSK) is <i>operational</i>	2011	<a href="http://www.nuv.cz/eqf">http://www.nuv.cz/eqf</a>  National register of qualifications -NSK (VNFIL system): <a href="http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/">http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/</a>
<b>Denmark</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to those awarded outside formal education and training. No qualification linked to EQF level 1.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	Administrative decision on the Danish NQF for LLL approved by the Ministers for Education; for Science, Technology and Innovation; for Culture; and for Economic and Business Affairs (2009) Integrated in sectoral legislation  <i>Operational</i>	2011	<a href="https://ufm.dk/en/education/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks">https://ufm.dk/en/education/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks</a>  Register of qualifications and programmes in the NQF: <a href="https://www.ug.dk/">https://www.ug.dk/</a>
<b>Estonia</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of occupational qualifications.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• scope of responsibility and autonomy</li> </ul>	Professions Act (2008) <i>(in Estonian)</i> <i>(in English)</i>  <i>Operational</i>	2011, 2016 update	<a href="https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/estonian-qualifications-framework-estqf/">https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/estonian-qualifications-framework-estqf/</a>  <a href="https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/qualifications/qualifications-framework">https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/qualifications/qualifications-framework</a>  Estonian education information system (EHIS), including all formal education qualifications: <a href="http://www.ehis.ee">www.ehis.ee</a>  Estonian register of occupational qualifications (professions register): <a href="http://www.kutseregister.ee">www.kutseregister.ee</a>
<b>Finland</b>	Comprehensive framework including all State-recognised qualifications. No qualification linked to EQF level 1.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integrated level descriptors include knowledge, skills and key competences</li> </ul>	Act on the national framework for qualifications and other competence modules (93/2017) <i>(in Finnish)</i> <i>(in English)</i>  Government Decree on the NQF (120/2017) <i>(in Finnish)</i> <i>(in English)</i>  <i>Operational</i>	2017	<a href="https://www.oph.fi/qualificationsframework">https://www.oph.fi/qualificationsframework</a>  Database of study programmes from VET, general and higher education: <a href="https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/">https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/</a>
<b>France</b>	NQF covers all levels and types of vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications and the national baccalaureate (general, technological and vocational). Open to qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complexity of knowledge</li> <li>• level of skills and know-how</li> <li>• degree of responsibility and autonomy</li> </ul>	Law No 2002-73 on social modernisation (2002) <i>(in French)</i>  Law No 2018-771 for the freedom to choose one's professional future (2018) <i>(in French)</i>  Decree No 2019-14 on the NQF of vocational and professional qualifications (2019) <i>(in French)</i>  <i>Operational</i>	2010	<a href="https://www.francecompetences.fr/">https://www.francecompetences.fr/</a>  National register of vocational and professional qualifications (RNCP): <a href="https://www.francecompetences.fr/recherche_certificationprofessionnelle/">https://www.francecompetences.fr/recherche_certificationprofessionnelle/</a>

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<b>Germany</b>	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; includes qualifications from general education, VET (initial VET and regulated further training), and from higher education.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professional competence (knowledge and skills)</li> <li>personal competence (social competence and autonomy)</li> </ul>	<p>Joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Economic Affairs and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Technology (2013) (in German)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2012	<p><a href="https://www.dqr.de/content_en/home.php">https://www.dqr.de/content_en/home.php</a></p> <p>DQR qualifications database: <a href="https://www.dqr.de/content/2316.php">https://www.dqr.de/content/2316.php</a></p>
<b>Greece</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge</li> <li>skills</li> <li>competence</li> </ul>	<p>Law on development of lifelong learning and other provisions (3879/2010) (in Greek)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2015	<p><a href="https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/qualifications-certification-en">https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/qualifications-certification-en</a></p> <p>Greek qualifications register: <a href="https://proson.eoppep.gr/en/Qualifications">https://proson.eoppep.gr/en/Qualifications</a></p>
<b>Hungary</b>	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning encompassing all State-recognised national qualifications acquired in general education, HE, and the vocational qualifications in the national vocational qualifications register.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge</li> <li>skills</li> <li>attitudes</li> <li>autonomy and responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>Government Decision 1229/2012 on the Hungarian qualifications framework (in Hungarian)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2015	<p><a href="https://www.hungarianqualification.eu/qualification_frameworks/eqf">https://www.hungarianqualification.eu/qualification_frameworks/eqf</a></p> <p>HuQF qualifications database: <a href="https://www.hungarianqualification.eu/search">https://www.hungarianqualification.eu/search</a></p>
<b>Iceland</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, including certified adult learning. No qualification linked to EQF level 1.	Seven, with sublevels at NQF levels 5 and 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>integrated level descriptors include knowledge, skills and competence</li> </ul>	<p>No overarching legal basis for the ISQF (its role and mandate are stated in a series of acts and decrees).</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2013	<p><a href="http://www.haefnirammi.is">www.haefnirammi.is</a></p> <p>A national database of qualifications is under development.</p>
<b>Ireland</b>	Comprehensive NFQ including all types and levels of qualification from formal education and training.	10 with five classes of award type: major, minor, special-purpose, professional and supplemental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge</li> <li>skills</li> <li>competence</li> </ul>	<p>Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) (in English)</p> <p>Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (in English)</p> <p>Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. (in English)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2009 2020 update	<p><a href="https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx">https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx</a></p> <p>The NFQ register of qualifications: <a href="https://irq.ie/">https://irq.ie/</a></p>
<b>Italy</b>	Designed as a comprehensive framework; it will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and regional qualifications.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge</li> <li>skills</li> <li>autonomy and responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>Interministerial decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and of the Ministry of Education, University and Research on the establishment of the NQF (2018) (in Italian)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2013 major national qualifications from formal education and training linked directly to EQF	<p><a href="https://www.anpal.gov.it/eqf">https://www.anpal.gov.it/eqf</a></p> <p>National qualifications database development currently being discussed.</p> <p>The Atlas of work and qualifications: <a href="https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org">https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org</a></p>
<b>Kosovo</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and non-formal and informal learning.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge</li> <li>skills</li> <li>wider competences</li> </ul>	<p>Republic of Kosovo (2008). Law 03/L-060 on national qualifications (in English)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2016	<p><a href="https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/national-qualifications-framework">https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/national-qualifications-framework</a></p> <p>Qualifications database: <a href="https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/registration-of-qualifications">https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/registration-of-qualifications</a></p>

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Latvia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	<p>Regulations No 990 of the CoM on the education classification of Latvia (2010) (in Latvian) (in English)</p> <p>Replaced by the Regulations No 322 of the CoM on the education classification of Latvia (2017) (in Latvian)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2011	<p><a href="http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en">http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en</a></p> <p>Latvian qualifications database: <a href="https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/">https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/</a></p>
Liechtenstein	NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) and NQF for higher education.	Eight	<p>Level descriptors of the NQF-VPQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competences (professional and personal)</li> </ul>	<p>Ordinance on the national qualifications framework of the Principality of Liechtenstein for VET qualifications (2017) (in German)</p> <p>Qualifications framework for higher education (2013) and included in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance (in German)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2016	<p><a href="http://www.nqfl.li/">http://www.nqfl.li/</a></p> <p>Supplements (with NQF/EQF levels): <a href="https://www.nqfl.li/?page=2295&amp;lan=de">https://www.nqfl.li/?page=2295&amp;lan=de</a></p>
Lithuania	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; currently includes qualifications from VET and higher education; revision and inclusion of general education qualifications at levels 1-4 is in progress.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characteristics of activities (complexity, autonomy, variability)</li> <li>• types of competences (functional, cognitive and general)</li> </ul>	<p>Government resolution on approving the description of the Lithuanian qualifications framework (2010) (in English)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2011	<p><a href="https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/en/information/qualifications-framework/">https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/en/information/qualifications-framework/</a></p> <p>Qualifications database: <a href="https://www.aikos.smm.lt/Registrai/Kvalifikacijos/SitePages/Pagrindinis.aspx">https://www.aikos.smm.lt/Registrai/Kvalifikacijos/SitePages/Pagrindinis.aspx</a></p>
Luxembourg	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• aptitudes</li> <li>• attitudes</li> </ul>	<p>Law on the recognition of professional qualifications (2016) (in French)</p> <p>Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications (2017) (in French)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2012	<p><a href="https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Comprendre/le-cadre-luxembourgeois-des-qualifications/en">https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Comprendre/le-cadre-luxembourgeois-des-qualifications/en</a></p> <p>Information on secondary education programmes: <a href="https://portal.education.lu/programmes/Home">https://portal.education.lu/programmes/Home</a></p> <p>Register of higher education diplomas: <a href="http://www.mesr.public.lu/enssup/registre_des_titres/index.html">http://www.mesr.public.lu/enssup/registre_des_titres/index.html</a></p>
Malta	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competences</li> </ul>	<p>Legal notice 294 on MQF for lifelong learning regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 327.431) (2012) (in English) (in Maltese)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2009, 2010, 2012 and 2016 update	<p><a href="https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/MQF.aspx">https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/MQF.aspx</a></p> <p>Register of accredited further and higher education institutions and programmes: <a href="http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/register/Pages/register.aspx">http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/register/Pages/register.aspx</a></p>

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<b>Montenegro</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of national vocational qualifications (NVQs).	Eight, with sublevels at levels 1, 4 and 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	Law on the MQF (2010) <i>(in English)</i>  Operational	2014	<a href="http://www.cko.edu.me">http://www.cko.edu.me</a>  National register of qualifications: <a href="http://www.cko.edu.me/ckoview/Default.aspx">http://www.cko.edu.me/ckoview/Default.aspx</a>
<b>Netherlands</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (except primary education). Open to qualifications offered outside the formal education system. Qualifications below EQF level 1 included at entry level.	Eight, including a sublevel at level 4 (4+), and an entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• context,</li> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• responsibility and independence</li> </ul>	Approval of the NLQF by the Dutch Government and the Dutch Parliament (2011) <i>(in Dutch)</i>  Law on NLQF in preparation; expected to enter into force in 2021/22  Operational	2011, 2019 update	<a href="https://www.nlqf.nl/english">https://www.nlqf.nl/english</a>  NLQF database: <a href="https://database.nlqf.nl/">https://database.nlqf.nl/</a>
<b>North Macedonia</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, and vocational qualifications.	Eight, with sublevels at levels 5, 6, 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	Law on the NQF (2013, updated in 2016) <i>(in English)</i>  Activation stage	2016	<a href="http://mrk.mk/?lang=en">http://mrk.mk/?lang=en</a>  Register of qualifications: <a href="http://registar.mrk.mk/">http://registar.mrk.mk/</a>
<b>Norway</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. No descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1.	Seven, with sublevels at levels 5 and 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• general competence</li> </ul>	Ministerial Decision on the NQF (2011) <i>(in English)</i>  Regulation on the NQF for lifelong learning and on the referencing to the EQF for LLL (2017) <i>(in Norwegian)</i>  Operational	2014	<a href="https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/">https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/</a>  Databases of qualifications and study programmes: <a href="https://utdanning.no/">https://utdanning.no/</a> <a href="https://www.studyinnorway.no/">https://www.studyinnorway.no/</a>
<b>Poland</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to regulated and non-statutory qualifications awarded outside formal education and training.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• social competence</li> </ul>	Law on the integrated qualifications system (2015) <i>(in Polish)</i>  Operational	2013	<a href="https://prk.men.gov.pl/en/2en/">https://prk.men.gov.pl/en/2en/</a>  Integrated qualifications register: <a href="https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/en/">https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/en/</a>
<b>Portugal</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the national system for the recognition, validation and certification of competences.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• attitudes</li> </ul>	Ministerial order on the NQF (2009) <i>(in Portuguese)</i>  Operational	2011	<a href="http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx">http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx</a>  National qualifications catalogue: <a href="http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Qualificacoes">http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Qualificacoes</a>  Database of higher education courses and institutions: <a href="http://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pesquisa_cursos_instituicoes?plid=372">http://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pesquisa_cursos_instituicoes?plid=372</a>
<b>Romania</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to qualifications obtained through validation of non-formal and informal learning.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• responsibility and autonomy</li> </ul>	Government decision 918/2013 on the approval of the NQF (2013) <i>(in Romanian)</i>  Government decision 132/2018 amending and supplementing GD No 918/2013 on the approval of the NQF (2018) and harmonised with the 2017 EQF recommendation <i>(in Romanian)</i>  Operational	2018	<a href="http://www.anc.edu.ro/">http://www.anc.edu.ro/</a>  National register of professional qualifications: <a href="http://www.anc.edu.ro/rncp/">http://www.anc.edu.ro/rncp/</a>  National register of qualifications for higher education: <a href="http://www.anc.edu.ro/registru-national-al-calificarilor-din-invatamantul-superior-rncis/">http://www.anc.edu.ro/registru-national-al-calificarilor-din-invatamantul-superior-rncis/</a>

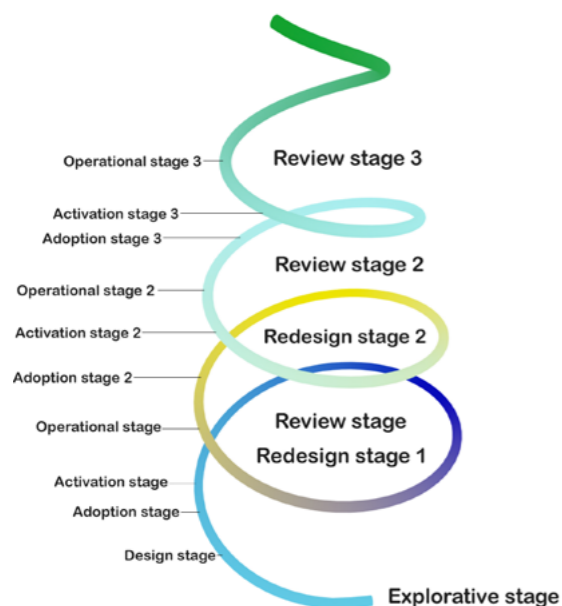
Country	Scope of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Legal basis/stage of development	NQF linked to EQF	NQF/EQF website Qualifications register/database
<b>Serbia</b>	Designed as a comprehensive and integrated NQF, including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, and non-formal and informal learning.	Eight, with sublevels at levels 6 and 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• abilities and attitudes</li> </ul>	<p>Law on the NQF for Serbia (2018) (in Serbian)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2020 It was referenced to the EQF in 2020 – now not indicated.	<p><a href="http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/">http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/</a></p> <p>National qualifications database: <a href="http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/qualifications-database">http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/qualifications-database</a></p>
<b>Slovakia</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Includes a sub-framework of occupational qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competences</li> </ul>	<p>Act on Lifelong Learning (2009) and amendments to certain acts (2012) (in Slovak)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2017	<p><a href="http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/">http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/</a></p> <p>National qualifications register: <a href="http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/kartoteka-kariet-kvalifikacii#/">http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/kartoteka-kariet-kvalifikacii#/</a></p>
<b>Slovenia</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, from the system of national vocational qualifications and non-regulated supplementary qualifications.	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competences</li> </ul>	<p>Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (2015) (in Slovenian)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2013	<p><a href="https://www.nok.si/en">https://www.nok.si/en</a></p> <p>SQF qualifications register: <a href="https://www.nok.si/en/sqf-register">https://www.nok.si/en/sqf-register</a></p>
<b>Spain</b>	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills and abilities</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	<p>Royal Decree 1027 (2011) establishing the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES): levels 5-8 (in Spanish)</p> <p>Advanced design stage of NQF for LLL (MECU)</p>		<p><a href="http://www.mecd.gob.es/mecu">http://www.mecd.gob.es/mecu</a></p> <p>Qualifications in the formal education system: <a href="https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es">https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es</a></p> <p>The National repertoire of professional certificates: <a href="https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-pub-formacion/repositorio-certificados-profesionalidad.html">https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-pub-formacion/repositorio-certificados-profesionalidad.html</a></p>
<b>Sweden</b>	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	<p>Ordinance (2015:545) on qualifications framework for lifelong learning, including the general framework (in force since October 2015) and the application procedure (in force since January 2016). (in Swedish)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2016	<p><a href="https://www.myh.se/In-English/EQF/">https://www.myh.se/In-English/EQF/</a></p> <p>Register of qualifications: <a href="https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Kvalifikationer">https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Kvalifikationer</a></p>
<b>Switzerland</b>	NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) and NQF for higher education (nqf.ch-HS).	Eight	<p>Level descriptors of the NQF-VPQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competences (professional and personal)</li> </ul>	<p>Ordinance on the NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) (2014) (in German) (in French)</p> <p>Adoption of the qualifications framework for the Swiss higher education area (nqf.ch-HS) (2009) (in French) (in German)</p> <p>Operational</p>	2015	<p><a href="https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/mobility/nqf-vpet.html">https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/mobility/nqf-vpet.html</a></p> <p>The List of assigned vocational and professional qualifications (July 2020): <a href="https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20151046/index.html">https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20151046/index.html</a></p> <p>A database of all state-recognised occupations and professions: <a href="https://www.becc.admin.ch/becc/public/bvz">https://www.becc.admin.ch/becc/public/bvz</a></p>
<b>Turkey</b>	Designed as a comprehensive NQF; it will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the national vocational qualification system.	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge</li> <li>• skills</li> <li>• competence</li> </ul>	<p>Regulation on the procedures and principles of its implementation (TQF Regulation) (2015, updated in 2019) (in Turkish) (in English)</p> <p>Regulation on the quality assurance of qualifications to be included in the Turkish qualifications framework (2018) (in Turkish) (in English)</p> <p>Activation stage</p>	2017	<p><a href="http://www.tyc.gov.tr/">http://www.tyc.gov.tr/</a></p> <p>TQF qualifications database: <a href="http://portal.tyc.gov.tr">http://portal.tyc.gov.tr</a></p>

# Stages of NQF development and implementation

The following six stages describe the development of national qualifications frameworks (1):

- (a) explorative stage;
- (b) design stage;
- (c) adoption stage;
- (d) activating stage;
- (e) operational stage;
- (f) review stage.

Figure 1. **The cyclical character of NQF developments**



To be able to deliver according to expectations, frameworks continuously need to adapt to changing context and requirements and to the feedback from stakeholders involved. Evaluation forms an intrinsic part of framework developments at all stages.

## 1. Explorative stage

The explorative (orientation) stage is characterised by initial discussions on policy challenges and the possible ways to address these. This stage can take several different forms. Countries may have systematically identified clear problems (for example a lack of transparency of qualifications and/or the need for reforming qualification systems) where a qualification framework is seen as a relevant solution.

Stage indicators are:

- (a) the role of qualifications frameworks in general is understood;
- (b) international practice and experience on qualifications frameworks has been considered;
- (c) identification of/agreement on policy challenges and policy objectives, including consultations of main stakeholders;
- (d) analysis of anticipated benefits (ex ante assessment);
- (e) clarification of the strengths and weaknesses of the NQF instrument in the national context;
- (f) clarification of the strengths/weakness of NQFs relative to other instruments in the national context;
- (g) coalition of stakeholders established.

The completion of this stage is reached when most of these indicators are fulfilled.

## 2. Design stage

At this stage, countries negotiate objectives and design the architecture of the framework, in some cases supported by testing of solutions. The design stage involves the negotiation and design of governance structures, directly influencing the selection of stakeholders and the way these are to be involved. A critical part of this stage is the elaboration of learning-outcome-based level descriptors. While normally influenced by existing approaches, most NQFs adapt descriptors to national contexts and needs. This elaboration influences the NQF in two important ways: vertically by defining the number of levels and the relationship between these; horizontally by defining the relationship between the key domains of knowledge, skills and competence. The design stage, for the first time, brings the stakeholders involved together in a systematic way; triggering dialogue and potentially paving the way for longer term commitment. A design phase leaning too much towards direct 'policy copying', failing to adopt the framework to the national context, may weaken the role to be played by the NQF in national policies.

Stage indicators are:

- (a) formal working group or equivalent is established;
- (b) agreement on the stakeholders to be involved in development and implementation and how these will contribute in governing the NQF;
- (c) rationale/purpose, scope and objectives of the NQF have been agreed;
- (d) involvement of international experts/donor funded projects if applicable;
- (e) technical and conceptual work linked to the development of level descriptors and how this influences the relationship (vertically and horizontally) between types and levels of qualifications;
- (f) awareness-raising to ensure buy-in and commitment of key stakeholders;
- (g) possible testing of NQF design in restricted areas.

The completion of this stage is reached when most of these criteria are fulfilled.

## 3. Adoption stage

At this stage countries officially establish or formally adopt an NQF. Formal adoption means different things in different countries, reflecting the respective national, political and legislative context and culture. It can range from the introduction of specific NQF acts or government decisions to amendments of existing laws and regulations or stakeholder agreements. While formats vary across European countries, formal adoption is generally a prerequisite for implementation.

Stage indicators are:

- (a) NQF policy has been officially established/formally adopted (by NQF act, government decision, stakeholder agreement);
- (b) roles and responsibilities between different stakeholders have been formally agreed and defined in legal acts or other documents;
- (c) some clarity regarding financial and human resources has been reached;
- (d) an implementation strategy has been adopted (including a roadmap, capacity building needs, financing).

The completion of this stage is reached when most of these criteria are fulfilled.

## 4. Activation stage

The activation stage, also referred to as a preparatory operational stage, is characterised by the consolidation of governance and the concrete building up of administrative and technical capacity and expertise. Experience shows that this phase requires time and that not all capacities will be available at the same time. During this stage we see the gradual but distinct shift from an internal focus (on the design and adoption of the framework) to an external focus where end users of different categories are addressed. During this stage the practical interaction of the NQF with the existing qualification system(s) and qualifications is determined.

Stage indicators are:

- (a) implementation structures in place (stable and agreed governance structures, day-to-day administrative capacities in place, predictable financing);
- (b) main working methods and instruments being put in place (databases, communication strategies, quality assurance arrangements, by-laws and administrative regulations);

(1) Based on Cedefop; ETF; European Commission (2020). *Qualifications frameworks and their development stages* [unpublished].



- (c) end-users are being made aware of the existence and the services of the NQF;
- (d) the NQF is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes and for the continuous revision and renewal of qualifications;
- (e) criteria and procedures for allocation of qualifications to levels in place and allocation of qualifications continue;
- (f) the NQF is gradually playing a role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications at national and international level;
- (g) the NQF is gradually supporting reform and renewal of education, training and qualifications systems at national level.

The completion of this stage is reached when most of these criteria are fulfilled.

## 5. Operational stage

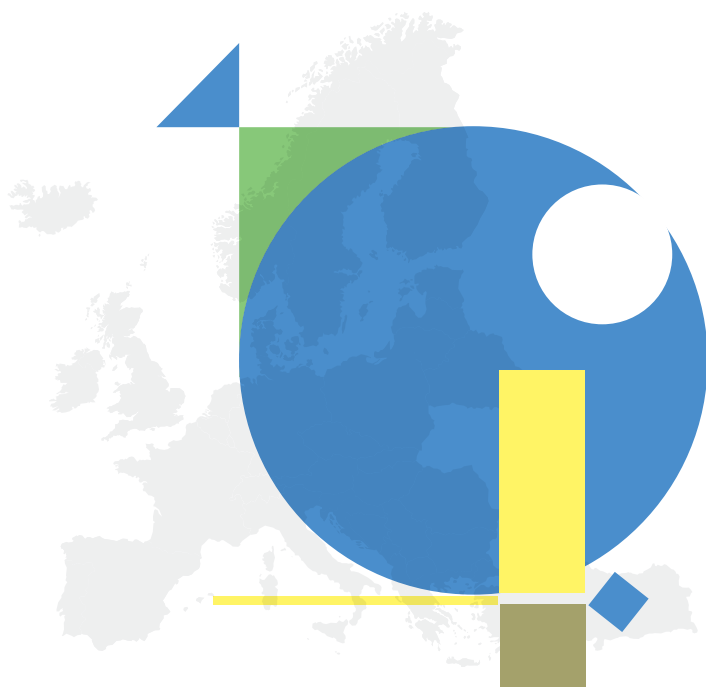
The operational stage is the stage of full implementation. The NQF adds value and contributes to meeting the objectives identified and negotiated during previous stages.

Stage indicators are:

- (a) the NQF is a permanent and visible feature of the national education, training and qualifications system, improving transparency and comparability of qualifications by:
  - i. providing a map of, and reference to, all nationally recognised qualifications; this is the case for comprehensive frameworks (implemented in most European countries), including all levels and types of qualification (VET, HE, general education, adult education and adult learning);
  - ii. indicating NQF levels on certificates and diplomas and/or Europass supplements;
  - iii. qualifications registers or databases include all relevant information on the content and profile of single qualifications, including NQF/EQF level and learning outcomes, directly supporting end-users (learners, employees, employers) to progress in learning and work;
  - iv. quality assurance mechanisms for the design, registration, renewal and the award of qualifications are in place;
  - v. providing a platform for cooperation of stakeholders across education, training and employment;
  - vi. providing a reference point for development and review of standards and curricula;
  - vii. providing a reference point for assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
  - viii. supporting teachers, trainers and guidance/counselling staff;
  - ix. supporting recognition of qualifications for further learning and the labour market;
  - x. supporting cross-border mobility of students and workers;
- (b) the NQF is a permanent feature of the national education, training and qualifications systems, supporting reform and renewal by:
  - i. assuring that qualifications are fit for purpose;
  - ii. promoting learning outcomes as a common language bridging institutions and stakeholders in education and employment;
  - iii. including all types of qualifications, certificates and credentials; this includes private and international qualifications;
  - iv. reducing the barriers to transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes; encouraging lifelong and life-wide learning;
  - v. encouraging a learning outcomes-based dialogue between stakeholders to aid the review and renewal of qualifications;
  - vi. helping to structure information on skills supply and demand;
  - vii. assisting guidance and career development;
  - viii. helping to identify learning pathways;
  - ix. supporting certification of experiences gained at work.

## 6. Review stage

While qualifications frameworks need to be continuously monitored and evaluated, some countries organise periodical independent reviews. Although the review is running in parallel with the operations, it is proposed here as a separate stage as it has a separate focus from the implementation. During the review, the added value to set objectives, the functionality of the framework, and the commitment and involvement of stakeholders are evaluated. Recommendations from reviews frequently lead to further adaptations in the arrangements of NQFs.



# OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

## DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2020



### FURTHER INFORMATION

[https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/  
events-and-projects/projects/national-  
qualifications-framework-nqf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf)



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