



OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENTS IN **EUROPE** 2019

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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
Albania	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • wider competences	NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018) (in Albanian)		https://www.arsimi.gov.al/
Austria	Designed as a comprehensive NQF; currently, includes qualifications awarded in higher education and VET qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6 from formal education and training; it includes two qualifications from the health sector at level 8.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • competence	Federal Law 14/2016 on the NQF (in German) Operational	2012	https://oead.at/en/expertise/qualifications-and-comparability/nqf/
Belgium-FL	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and from the professional qualifications system. Development/inclusion of educational qualifications at levels 1-4 is in progress.	Eight	• knowledge/skills • context/ autonomy/ responsibility	Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch) Operational	2011, 2014 update	http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/
Belgium-FR	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	• knowledge/skills • context/ autonomy/ responsibility	Decree on cooperation agreement between the three francophone governments on the creation and management of CFC (2015) (in French) (Early) operational	2013	http://www.cfc.cfwb.be/
Belgium-DE	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	• occupational competence (knowledge and skills) • personal competence (social competence and autonomy)	Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German) (Early) operational		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • competence	Decision of the CoM on the adoption of the baseline qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) (in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian)		http://www.eqf.ba
Bulgaria	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight plus a preparatory level	• knowledge • skills • competences (personal and professional)	Decision No 96 of the CoM on the NQF (2012) (Early) operational	2013	
Croatia	Designed as a comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. It is a qualifications and credit framework.	Eight, with sublevels at levels 4, 7 and 8	• knowledge • skills • autonomy and responsibility	CROQF Act (2013, amendments in 2016 and 2018) (in Croatian) (Early) operational	2012	http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en

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Cyprus	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	• knowledge • skills • competence	Decision of the CoM, No 67445 on establishing the CyQF (2008) (Early) operational	2017	http://www.cyqf.gov.cy
Czechia	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: • competences (including knowledge and skills)	Act on the verification and recognition of further education results (179/2006) (in Czech) (in English) The national register of vocational qualifications (NSK) is operational	2011	http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/
Denmark	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	• knowledge • skills • competence	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 Operational	2011	https://ufm.dk/en/education/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks
Estonia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of occupational qualifications.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • scope of responsibility and autonomy	Professions Act (2008) (in Estonian) (in English) Operational	2011, 2016 update	https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/qualifications-framework/ https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/qualifications/qualifications-framework
Finland	Comprehensive framework including all State-recognised qualifications. No qualification linked to EQF level 1.	Eight	• integrated level descriptors include knowledge, skills and key competences	Act on the national framework for qualifications and other competence modules (93/2017) (in Finnish) (in English) Government Decree on the NQF (120/2017) (in Finnish) (in English) Operational	2017	https://www.oph.fi/qualificationsframework
France	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	• complexity of knowledge • level of skills and know-how • degree of responsibility and autonomy	Law No 2002-73 on social modernisation (2002) (in French) Law No 2018-771 for the freedom to choose one's professional future (2018) (in French) Decree No 2019-14 on the NQF of vocational and professional qualifications (2019) (in French) Operational	2010	http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/

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Germany	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; includes qualifications from general education, VET (initial VET and regulated further training), and from higher education.	Eight	- professional competence (knowledge and skills) - personal competence (social competence and autonomy)	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) Operational	2012	http://www.dqr.de/
Greece	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	- knowledge - skills - competence	Law on development of lifelong learning and other provisions (3879/2010) (in Greek) (Early) operational	2015	http://nqf.gov.gr/
Hungary	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	- knowledge - skills - attitudes - autonomy and responsibility	Government Decision 1229/2012 on the Hungarian qualifications framework (in Hungarian) (Early) operational	2015	https://www.magyarkepeses.hu/
Iceland	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, including certified adult learning. No descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1.	Seven, with sublevels at NQF levels 5 and 6	integrated level descriptors include knowledge, skills and competence	No overarching legal basis for the ISQF (its role and mandate are stated in a series of acts and decrees). Operational	2013	www.haefnirammi.is
Ireland	Comprehensive NQF 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	- knowledge - skills - competence	Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) (in English) Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (in English) Operational	2009	https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx
Italy	Designed as a comprehensive framework; it will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and regional qualifications.	Eight	- knowledge - skills - autonomy and responsibility	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)	2013 major national qualifications from formal education and training linked directly to EQF	https://anpal.gov.it/europa/european-qualifications-framework
Kosovo	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and non-formal and informal learning.	Eight	- knowledge - skills - wider competences	Republic of Kosovo (2008). Law 03/L-060 on national qualifications (in English) (Early) operational stage	2016	https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/national-qualifications-framework

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Latvia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • competence	Regulations No 990 of the CoM on the education classification of Latvia (2010) (in Latvian) (in English) Replaced by the Regulations No 322 of the CoM on the education classification of Latvia (2017) (in Latvian) Amendments to Education Law (2015) and to Vocational Education Law (in force since 2015) Operational	2011	http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en
Liechtenstein	NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) and NQF for higher education.	Eight	Level descriptors of the NQF-VPQ: • knowledge • skills • competences (professional and personal)	Ordinance on the national qualifications framework of the Principality of Liechtenstein for VET qualifications (2017) (in German) Qualifications framework for higher education (2013) and included in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance (in German) (Early) operational	2016	http://www.nqfl.li/
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	• characteristics of activities (complexity, autonomy, variability) • types of competences (functional, cognitive and general)	Government resolution on approving the description of the Lithuanian qualifications framework (2010) (in English) (Early) operational stage	2011	https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/en/information/qualifications-framework-2
Luxembourg	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	• knowledge • aptitudes • attitudes	Law on the recognition of professional qualifications (2016) (in French) Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications (2017) (in French) (Early) operational	2012	http://www.men.public.lu/fr/actualites/grands-dossiers/formation-adultes/clq/index.html
Malta	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • competences	Legal notice 294 on MQF for lifelong learning regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 327.431) (2012) (in English) (in Maltese) Operational	2009, 2010, 2012 and 2016 update	https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/MQF.aspx

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Montenegro	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	• knowledge • skills • competence	Law on the MQF (2010) (in English) (Early) operational	2014	http://www.cko.edu.me/default.aspx
Netherlands	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 bellow EQF level 1 included at entry level.	Eight, including a sublevel at level 4 (4+), and an entry level	• context, • knowledge • skills • responsibility and independence	Approval of the NLQF by the Dutch Government and the Dutch Parliament (2011) (in Dutch) Law on NLQF in preparation Operational	2011, 2019 update	https://www.nlqf.nl/english
North Macedonia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, and from vocational qualifications.	Eight, with sublevels at levels 5, 6, 7	• knowledge • skills • competence	Law on the MQF for lifelong learning (2013) (in English) (Early) operational	2016	http://mrk.mk/?lang=en
Norway	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	• knowledge • skills • general competence	Ministerial Decision on the NQF (2011) (in English) Regulation on the NQF for lifelong learning and on the referencing to the EQF for LLL (2017) (in Norwegian) Operational	2014	https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/
Poland	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	• knowledge • skills • social competence	Law on the integrated qualifications system (2015) (in Polish) Operational	2013	https://prk.men.gov.pl/en/2en/ http://kwalifikacje.edu.pl/ https://www.kwalifikacje.gov.pl
Portugal	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	• knowledge • skills • attitudes	Ministerial order on the NQF (2009) (in Portuguese) Operational	2011	http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx
Romania	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	• knowledge • skills • responsibility and autonomy	Government decision on the approval of the NQF (2013) (in Romanian) Government decision amending and supplementing GD No 918/2013 on the approval of the NQF (2018) and harmonised with the 2017 EQF recommendation (in Romanian) Operational	2018	http://www.anc.edu.ro/
Serbia	Designed as a comprehensive and integrated NQF, and will include 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	• knowledge • skills • abilities and attitudes	Law on the NQF for Serbia (2018) (in Serbian)		http://noks.mpgn.gov.rs/en/

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Slovakia	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	• knowledge • skills • competences	Act on Lifelong Learning (2009) and amendments to certain acts (2012) (in Slovak) (Early) operational	2017	http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/
Slovenia	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	• knowledge • skills • competences	Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (2015) (in Slovenian) Operational	2013	https://www.nok.si/en
Spain	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight proposed	• knowledge • skills and abilities • competence	Royal Decree 1027 (2011) establishing the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES): levels 5-8 (in Spanish) Advanced development stage of NQF for LLL (MECU)		http://www.mecd.gob.es/mecu
Sweden	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.	Eight	• knowledge • skills • competence	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) (Early) operational	2016	https://www.seqf.se/
Switzerland	NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) and NQF for higher education (nqf.ch-HS).	Eight	Level descriptors of the NQF-VPQ: • knowledge • skills • competences (professional and personal)	Ordinance on the NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) (2014) (in German) (in French) Adoption of the qualifications framework for the Swiss higher education area (nqf.ch-HS) (2009) (in French) (in German) Operational	2015	https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/education/mobility/nqf-vpet.html
Turkey	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	• knowledge • skills • competence	Regulation on the procedures and principles of its implementation (TQF Regulation) (2015, updated in 2019) (in Turkish) (in English) Regulation on the quality assurance of qualifications to be included in the Turkish qualifications framework (2018) (in Turkish) (in English) (Early) operational	2017	http://www.tyc.gov.tr/

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UK – England and Northern Ireland	Regulated qualifications framework (RQF) covering all regulated general/academic and vocational qualifications and a framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ).	Eight, including entry levels. Entry levels 1 and 2 are below EQF level 1	Level descriptors of the RQF: • knowledge and understanding • skills	General conditions of recognition (2018) (in English) Operational	2010 joint UK referencing report; UK (England and Northern Ireland) 2019 update, including referencing of the FHEQ to the EQF	https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/
UK – Scotland	Comprehensive credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) including all levels and types of qualification.	12 , of which, levels 1 and 2 are below EQF level 1	• knowledge and understanding • practice: applied knowledge, skills and understanding • generic cognitive skills • communication numeracy and ICT skills • autonomy, accountability and working with others	Government green paper ‘Opportunity Scotland: a paper on lifelong learning’ (1998) (in English) An introduction to the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (2001) (in English) Operational	2010 joint UK referencing report; UK (Scotland) 2018 update	http://www.scqf.org.uk/
UK – Wales	Credit and qualifications framework of Wales (CQFW) including all level and types of qualification. It consists of three pillars: regulated qualifications, HE qualifications and lifelong learning.	CQFW: eight, including entry levels. Entry levels 1 and 2 are below EQF level 1	Level descriptors of regulated qualifications: • knowledge and understanding • skills Level descriptors of lifelong learning pillar: • knowledge and understanding • application and action • autonomy and accountability	The CQFW Common Accord (CCA), 2002 (in English) Operational	2010 joint UK referencing report; UK (Wales) 2019 update	https://beta.gov.wales/qualifications

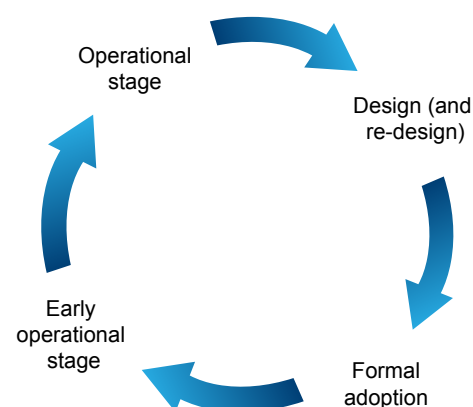
Source: Cedefop.

Stages of NQF development and implementation

Cedefop uses five stages⁽¹⁾ to monitor NQF development and implementation. These are:

- (a) conceptualisation and design;
- (b) official establishment/formal adoption;
- (c) (early) operational stage;
- (d) operational stage;
- (e) evaluation, impact and (re)design.

Figure 1. **Circular and iterative character of NQF developments**



The stages are presented in the form of a circle signalling the continuous, circular and iterative nature of NQF developments; their relevance and impact depend on continuous feedback from stakeholders and users.

1. Conceptualisation and design

During this stage countries analyse and define objectives, rationale and architecture for an NQF; the resulting outline forms the basis for dissemination, discussion and technical testing. This is also the stage when relevant stakeholders buy into the process.

Progress indicators:

- (a) rationale and objectives have been agreed;
- (b) the architecture, and the conceptual and technical bases have been created;
- (c) awareness raising, consultation and buy-in of key relevant stakeholders;
- (d) technical testing through projects in selected economic areas.

2. Official establishment/formal adoption

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.

In many European countries formal adoption of frameworks has taken longer than initially expected, causing delays in implementation.

Progress indicators:

- (a) NQF policy has been officially established/formally adopted (by NQF act, government decision, stakeholder agreement, etc.);

- (b) roles and responsibilities between different stakeholders have been agreed and defined in legal acts or other documents;
- (c) implementation strategy has been adopted (including a roadmap, capacity building needs, financing, etc.).

3. (Early) operational stage

The early (preparatory) operational stage is characterised by concrete implementation actions taken by a country, fully engaging all relevant stakeholders. The recognition of this separate stage reflects the fact that NQF developments require sufficient time, as the move from formal adoption to full operation is demanding and critical for the success of the framework.

Progress indicators:

- (a) implementation structures in place (e.g. fine-tuning governance structures, deciding on leading NQF organisation or partnership);
- (b) introduction and implementation of tools and measures (e.g. by-laws, databases, communication strategies, quality assurance arrangements);
- (c) capacity building of institutions;
- (d) continuing and finalising the allocation of qualifications to levels;
- (e) updating and/or redesigning qualifications based on learning outcomes.

4. Operational stage

The operational stage is the stage of full implementation. The NQF adds value and contributes to meeting the objectives set at the operational stage.

Progress indicators:

- (a) the NQF is a permanent and visible feature of the national education, training and qualifications system, improving transparency 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);
 - ii. indicating NQF levels on certificates and diplomas;
 - iii. providing a reference point for development and review of standards and curricula;
 - iv. providing a reference point for assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
 - v. supporting teachers, trainers and guidance/counselling staff;
 - vi. providing a platform for cooperation of stakeholders across education, training and employment;
 - vii. directly supporting end-users (learners, parents, citizens) to progress in learning and work, notably through qualifications registers and databases;
- (b) the NQF is a permanent feature of the national education, training and qualifications systems, supporting reform and renewal by:
 - i. helping implement learning outcomes across sectors and institutions;
 - ii. opening up to, and including, non-formal qualifications and other types of qualifications;
 - iii. providing information to both education and training, and labour market stakeholders; helping to structure information on skills supply and demand; assisting guidance and career development; helping to identify learning pathways; facilitating certification of experiences gained at work, etc.

5. Closing the circle: NQF evaluation/review and impact

NQFs need to evolve constantly to be relevant and of value. An NQF policy needs to be regularly reviewed and evaluated with respect to its implementation processes, contribution, impact, and to make sure it fulfils its purpose and brings added value to learners and other stakeholders.

Figure 1 above illustrates the circular (and iterative) character of NQF developments, pointing to a need for continuous evaluation and review of the conceptual basis, technical design and stakeholder involvement and buy-in. Another important element at this stage is agreeing on the design and methodology needed to review and evaluate an NQF.

¹ Informed by the five stages in the change process identified in Cedefop's 2010 study on changing qualifications: (a) policy discussions; (b) policy; (c) implementation; (d) practice through pilot schemes; and (e) full-scale applied practice. Cedefop (2010). Changing qualifications: a review of qualifications policies and practices. Luxembourg: Publication Office. Cedefop reference series; No 84; p. 17. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3059_en.pdf



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FURTHER INFORMATION

Slava Pevec Grm

Slava.Pevec-Grm@cedefop.europa.eu

and

Jens Bjørnåvold

jens.bjornavold@cedefop.europa.eu



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE

Postal: Cedefop, Service Post, 570 01 Themi, GREECE

Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

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