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National qualifications frameworks development in Europe

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EXTRACT: Executive Summary

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Foreword

This Cedefop booklet ⁽¹⁾ covers the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in 34 countries: the 27 members of the European Union, two EEA countries (Lichtenstein and Norway) and five EU candidate countries (Croatia, FYROM, Iceland, Montenegro and Turkey).

The 2011 overview shows (Cedefop, 2009a; Cedefop, 2010b) ⁽²⁾ rapid progress towards establishing and implementing NQFs and linking national qualifications to EQF levels. Twenty-eight countries have developed or are developing comprehensive NQFs covering all types and levels of qualification.

This analysis shows that countries have largely completed the conceptualisation/design and consultation/testing stages and are moving into early implementation. Alongside Ireland, France, Malta and the UK – considered as implemented frameworks – ten other countries are now at an early stage. Involvement of stakeholders in all stages is seen as crucial but our analysis shows that the complexity and degree of involvement differs considerably between countries. While some countries have included a broad range of stakeholders, both from education and training and from employment, others have adopted a more technical approach, relying on the internal expertise of education and training ministries and agencies.

Fourteen frameworks have been formally adopted (mainly ministerial decisions, amendments to existing laws or separate law on NQFs), varying according to national systems and traditions.

The report shows that the two European framework initiatives, the EQF and the Qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA), are working well together. Increasingly countries see the qualifications framework for higher education as an integrated part of their comprehensive NQFs and have decided to carry out the referencing to the EQF and the self-certification to the qualifications framework for higher education in one go.

This report pays particular attention to the links between NQFs and validation of non-formal and informal learning, a link which is becoming stronger in most countries. Many quote the development of professional standards based on learning outcomes as a precondition for validating non-formal and informal learning.

⁽¹⁾ This booklet is extracted from the full report, which includes country specific information and will be available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6112_en.pdf

⁽²⁾ *Development of national qualifications framework* (August 2010). Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108_en.pdf; and *Development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe* (September 2009). Available from Internet: http://cedefop.europa.eu/en/files/6104_en.pdf [cited 20.9.2011].

Although evidence on the added value of NQFs to end-users (individual learners and employers) is still scarce, the impact can be observed at European and national levels. Processes so far have been characterised by debate on the conceptual and terminological challenges involved in increasing European cooperation in education and training. National level descriptors, while mirroring national systems and traditions, also are reflecting the EQF descriptors. In this way they stand out as useful and relevant instruments, both for European cooperation and for national reforms.

There is considerable national momentum in developing and putting NQFs into practice and linking national qualifications to the EQF. By the end of 2011, Belgium (Flanders), Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and THE UK will have finalised the process. Most other countries will follow in 2012 and the beginning of 2013.

We hope that this third report will contribute to better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of NQFs as tools for European cooperation, now increasingly influencing national education, training and qualifications systems and reforms.

The conclusions drawn in this report are based on analysis and interpretation by Cedefop and do not reflect the points of view of those who have generously shared their knowledge and expertise with us

As developments in this field are constant and rapid, Cedefop will continue to publish regular overviews of NQF developments in the coming period.

Christian Lettmayr
Acting Director

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Overview and main tendencies

National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) have, over a short period of time, developed into key instruments influencing national education, training and qualifications systems. While this can be observed world-wide ⁽³⁾, European developments ⁽⁴⁾ are now particularly consistent and strong. This executive summary aims to draw together the main findings and observations from the national chapters and identify some of the main challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

NQFs: overall progress

Covering developments in 34 countries ⁽⁵⁾ and 38 NQFs ⁽⁶⁾ this report shows that European countries are making rapid progress in developing, adopting and implementing national qualifications frameworks. Most countries have agreed on the objectives, the scope and the architecture of their frameworks. The following figures – reflecting the situation in mid-2011 – capture these developments:

- 28 countries are developing or have developed comprehensive NQFs covering all types and levels of qualifications;
- 4 countries have still to decide the overall scope and architecture of the framework (Czech Republic, FYROM, Italy, Liechtenstein);
- In four countries (Czech Republic, France, Italy, UK-England/Northern Ireland) NQFs cover a limited range of qualification types and levels or have diverse sub-system frameworks without clearly defined links;
- 26 countries have proposed or decided on an 8-level framework, the remaining covering frameworks with 5, 7, 9, 10 and 12 levels;
- All countries use a learning outcomes based approach level descriptors;
- 14 frameworks have been formally adopted (mainly through ministerial decisions, amendments to existing education and training laws or separate NQF laws, varying according to national systems and traditions);

⁽³⁾ The European Training Foundation (ETF) lists 120 countries where NQF developments currently are under way.

⁽⁴⁾ Unlike certain other countries, development in Europe focuses on comprehensive NQFs, including qualifications awarded in general education, VET, HE and adult learning.

⁽⁵⁾ 27 EU Member States, EEA countries (Liechtenstein and Norway) and candidate countries (Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro and Turkey)

⁽⁶⁾ This reflects that the UK has separate NQFs for England/Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland and that Belgium is developing separate frameworks for Flanders as well as the French- and German-speaking communities respectively.

- Only Ireland, France, Malta and THE UK can be described as implemented frameworks, though 10 countries are now entering an early implementation stage.

Substantial progress has been made compared to the situation in 2010. We can now see and compare the new generation of NQFs developing in Europe. While differences exist between countries, we can also observe convergence of basic principles and solutions. Since progress has largely been triggered by European developments, and thus responded to a shared set of objectives and a strict timetable, there has been a strong element of mutual learning between the countries involved. It is too early to say how this will influence the quality and future impact of the frameworks; this is something to be followed closely in the coming years.

NQFs: the European context

The formal adoption (in 2008) of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) can be seen as one of the main factors triggering the development of comprehensive national qualifications frameworks in Europe. The Recommendation invites Member States to ‘... relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010, in particular by referencing, in a transparent manner, their qualifications levels to the levels set out in Annex II, and where appropriate, by developing national qualifications frameworks in accordance with national legislation and practice.’ (European Parliament; Council of the European Union, 2008)⁽⁷⁾

While countries can, in principle, link their qualifications levels to the EQF without a NQF, almost all involved countries ⁽⁸⁾ now see the introduction of a national framework as the best way to meet the objectives of the Recommendation. There is broad agreement that NQF supports the introduction of explicit, learning outcomes based qualifications levels. Without these, the process of linking national qualifications levels becomes complicated. Some countries originally sceptical of the value of NQFs, for example Finland and Norway, have embraced the concept and are now actively involved in their development and implementation. Agreement on the crucial role to be played by NQFs in implementing the EQF is demonstrated by the increasing number of

⁽⁷⁾ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications frameworks for lifelong learning. Available from Internet:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>
[cited 7.10.2011]

⁽⁸⁾ The only exception is Italy which intends to reference its qualifications levels to the EQF without an established NQF. The Czech Republic has developed a NQF for vocational qualifications and a QF for higher education and will reference on the basis of these.

countries now finalising the formal referencing to the EQF. By the end of 2011 Belgium (FL), Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and THE UK ⁽⁹⁾ will have finalised the process. The remaining countries have indicated that they will follow during 2012 and the beginning of 2013. While the original 2010-deadline for referencing to the EQF has been missed, this is largely because most countries (apart from France, Ireland and THE UK) had to develop national qualifications frameworks from scratch. While countries have found this parallel process time and resource-demanding, the 2011 overview shows that much progress has been made, directly aiding referencing to the European framework. It also seems clear that the strict deadlines set by the EQF recommendation – while seen as unrealistically ambitious by some – have introduced a sense of urgency to the task and contributed to a ‘focusing of minds’, largely explaining why we now see such coherent development across Europe.

The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe is also a reflection of the Bologna-process and the 2005-agreement to promote a qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) ⁽¹⁰⁾. All countries covered by this report have responded and more than 10 are now formally linked (self-certified) to the QF-EHEA; the rest are expected to follow in the near future. While some countries have approached the EHEA and EQF as separate processes, an increasing number of countries now see the qualifications framework for higher education as an integrated part of their comprehensive national frameworks, choosing to carry out the referencing to the EQF and the self-certification to the QF-EHEA in one go (Malta and Finland exemplify this approach).

The launching of two separate European framework initiatives was by many seen as a recipe for confusion and failure: developments during the last couple of years have proved the sceptics wrong. As illustrated in the following chapters, the work carried out in the context of the QF-EHEA has provided an important input to the design of the comprehensive NQFs. While we can observe much debate (and controversy) on how to link higher education frameworks into the wider context of qualifications, most countries now agree that two framework initiatives can create synergies and support dialogue on how to increase permeability and progression. The ‘growing together’ of the two framework initiatives is also reflected in European level coordination, for example between the Council of Europe and the European Commission (supported by Cedefop).

⁽⁹⁾ Czech Republic, Lithuania and Finland will present their referencing reports in EQF AG in December 2011.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Available from Internet:
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/overarching.asp>
[cited 10.10.2011]

NQFs: stages of development

As outlined in the 2009 and 2010 reports, NQF developments can be distinguished according to the following broad stages (Cedefop, 2010c) ⁽¹¹⁾:

- Conceptualisation and design; during this stage countries analyse and define the rationale and main policy objectives of the future NQF.
- Consultation and testing; during this stage the NQF proposal is presented to, and discussed within, a broader group of stakeholders, normally as part of a public consultation process.
- Official establishment/adoption; at this stage the NQF is adopted and established, normally taking the form of a decree/law or in a formal agreement between stakeholders.
- Practical implementation; this stage moves the framework towards full scale applied practice and requires that institutions comply with the new structures and methods and that potential end-users are fully informed about the purposes and benefits of the framework. Eventually the NQFs must deliver benefits to end users, individuals and employers.

Countries have now largely completed the conceptualisation/design and the consultation/testing stages. The exchange of experiences between countries in conceptualisation/design has been extensive. While this mutual learning has been partly supported at European level (EQF test and pilot projects, EQF guidance notes, peer learning activities), extensive networking has also taken place directly between countries. A good example of this is the NQF networking between the five Nordic countries where development issues and ideas have been exchanged systematically over a two-year period.

The consultation/testing is a critical stage for involving stakeholders, for creating ownership and commitment and for building credibility. There is a considerable difference between countries in terms of complexity and depth of these processes. The German approach, with extensive involvement of stakeholders and systematic testing in four economic sectors, stands out as particularly thorough. The same can be said about the Croatian approach, with more than 200 meetings involving stakeholders from all areas of society. Some

⁽¹¹⁾ The Cedefop study *Changing qualifications - a review of qualifications policies and practices* (2010), identified the following policy development stages which have informed the stages presented and applied above:

- Policy discussions: no concrete implementation, for example discussions about the best approach to recognising the qualifications of immigrants.
- Policy: the direction is set but there is no concrete implementation yet, for example a law is passed to develop an NQF.
- Implementation: the infrastructure for change is put in place such as funding, management and a communications strategy.
- Practice through pilot schemes: people use the new arrangements, for example a learner is taught and assessed according to a new modular programme and qualification.
- Full scale applied practice: all old methods are adapted to the new methods.
- Effect: the new system delivers benefits to individuals, organisations and society.

other countries, for example the Netherlands, have focused on technical developments with relatively limited direct and active stakeholder involvement. In the Dutch case this has been balanced by the repeated use of open consultations, allowing everybody to react in writing on the proposal put forward. What is clear is that countries have to choose their own strategy for involving stakeholders: only future implementation will show whether the chosen approaches are sufficient to secure ownership and commitment to the frameworks.

While most countries have agreed on the framework-architecture, many are still working on their formal adoption. Due to differences in legal and administrative systems and traditions, the formal basis of the frameworks differs considerably. Countries can be divided into three main groups. The first have given their frameworks a specific legal basis adopted by their national parliaments: NQF-related laws have already been adopted in Belgium (FL), Czech Republic, France, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Montenegro and THE UK. Austria and Finland are also using this approach, but have yet to complete the process. A second group have introduced or are seeking to introduce amendments to existing laws on education and training to reflect the role and responsibilities of the NQF. Examples of this are Estonia, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and Turkey. A third group of countries have based, or seek to base, their framework on ministerial decisions and administrative decrees. Such decisions and decrees are normally linked to the existing legal basis of the national education and training system, but clarify the scope and the roles and functions of the framework. This approach can be found in Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Portugal and Sweden. Just under half the countries have completed the adoption stage. Existing road-maps indicate that the formal part of this stage will be mostly completed in 2012, leading on to actual implementation. Formal adoption is far from the end of the story, as illustrated in Belgium (FL) where a Parliamentary decision was made in the spring of 2009 but where actual implementation was halted for almost two years due to lack of agreement with the social partners.

A growing number of countries are now moving into the practical implementation stage. For those developing a NQF from scratch it is worth looking at the experiences of the few which already have a framework in place. The evaluation of the Irish framework is of particular interest as it systematically sums up a decade of development and implementation (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2009) ⁽¹²⁾:

⁽¹²⁾ *Framework implementation and impact study, report of study team.* Available from Internet: <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/FIISreportFINALsept2009.pdf> [cited 17.10.2011] or http://www.nqai.ie/framework_study.html [cited 17.10.2011]

- the implementation of an NQF requires time to develop understanding of key concepts and to promote cultural change;
- the importance of stakeholder involvement in all phases of development and implementation to ensure ownership;
- the NQF development is an iterative process, in which the existing education and training and the framework are progressively aligned with each other;
- it is important to find balance between implementation within subsystems (e.g. VET, HE, general education) and cross-system developments, e.g. quality assurance, progression and transfer of learning outcomes, validation of non-formal learning;
- the need for a framework to be loose enough to accommodate different types of learning;
- qualifications frameworks may be more enablers than drivers of change; alignment with other supporting policies, institutional requirements is needed.

The same kind of iterative and incremental processes can be observed in the other established frameworks, such as the French and the English/Northern Irish. The French framework is currently going through a revision which will change its current 5-level structure into an 8-level structure closer to the EQF. The English/Northern Irish has been through a series of reforms and changes since the original establishment of the NVQ framework in the late 1980s. The same kind of gradual change and development can be observed in Scotland. All this shows that the success of frameworks requires continuous and long term-work.

Most newly established frameworks have not yet started to deliver benefits to end users, individuals and employers. There are positive tendencies in this direction however; the Danish NQF now offers advanced internet solutions allowing users to explore the complexities of the Danish education and training system ⁽¹³⁾.

The purposes and objectives of NQFs

NQFs play a key role in linking national qualifications systems to the EQF reference levels and descriptors. International comparability and the need for a common qualifications language is of key importance to all the countries covered by this report. However, the rapid emergence of NQFs in Europe is directly linked to their expected roles and functions at national level. This report shows that these national roles and functions differ significantly between countries, ranging from frameworks with a strong regulatory function to frameworks of a purely descriptive nature whose impact can only be indirect.

⁽¹³⁾ See website on the Danish qualifications framework for lifelong learning, <http://en.iu.dk/transparency/qualifications-frameworks> [cited 17.10.2011]

David Raffe (Raffe, 2009a) ⁽¹⁴⁾ distinguishes between communication and reforming frameworks ⁽¹⁵⁾. The main role of the communication frameworks is to improve the description of existing qualifications systems and so clarify available options for stakeholders, be these learners or policy-makers. The communication framework is about making better use of what is already there. The reforming framework aims (explicitly) to improve the existing system by strengthening its coherence, relevance and quality. Part of this reform may imply developing new pathways and programmes or changing the division of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. We can identify both types of framework in Europe today. Countries like Croatia, Poland and Iceland explicitly stress the role of the NQF as an instrument for national reform: the learning outcome approach is seen as providing an instrument for increasing the coherence, quality and relevance of education and training. Other countries, for example Denmark and the Netherlands, stress that the role of the NQF is purely to increase transparency. The Netherlands goes far in listing functions not to be affected by the framework: it should not affect existing legislation; it should not directly influence transfer and progression between levels and institutions and the levelling gives no rights to titles or degrees. As is seen in the following chapters, most countries seem to sit between these two extreme positions.

While the French and the English/Northern Irish frameworks have been given a very explicit and strong regulatory role, this is normally not the case for the new frameworks. There are some exceptions. Some comprehensive frameworks build on sub-frameworks with some degree of regulatory function. This applies both to sub-frameworks in vocational education and training and to higher education. Several of the new frameworks will be given a role as a 'gate-keeper' for certificates and diplomas awarded outside the public systems. In these cases, as illustrated by discussions in the Scandinavian countries, frameworks will play an independent role in defining the scope of national qualifications systems. For most of the new frameworks the question is how they will be able indirectly to influence education and training systems and institutions.

To understand this challenge we need to understand the objectives now being pursued by European NQFs. While implementation of the frameworks is still at an early stage (with the exception of Ireland, France, Malta and THE UK), framework objectives have now been agreed in most countries, giving a clear indication of their profile and orientation. The following nine objectives are of particular importance, being listed in accordance to the frequency they are being used by countries:

⁽¹⁴⁾ *National qualifications frameworks in Ireland and Scotland: a comparative analysis, 2009.*
Available from Internet: http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/PDF%20Files/NQF_ECER_2009.pdf
[cited 7.10.2011]

⁽¹⁵⁾ Raffe also refers to 'Transformational frameworks', using this to capture the ambitious role of the early South-African NQF or the initial version of the New Zealand NQF.

1. Increase international transparency of education and training and aid comparison and transfer of qualifications by implementing the EQF; all countries share this objective and list it as an important reason for initiating work on the NQF.
2. Increase transparency of national qualifications systems; all countries agree on this and emphasise it as an explicit and central *raison d'être* for their NQF.
3. Promote lifelong learning; most countries see this as a role for NQFs.
4. Promote and speed up the shift to a learning outcomes based approach throughout education and training. While generally supported by all countries, approximately half pay particular attention to this shift and see it as a key future reform in education and training. This is exemplified by Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway and Turkey.
5. Improve the permeability of education and training systems to aid transfer and progression; this is a key-objective of many countries (following the emphasis on EQF). Germany, Romania and Turkey pay particular attention to permeability, stressing that weaknesses and barriers in their existing qualifications systems prevent learners from making progress. This objective can also take shape in the need to link subsystems and to reduce barriers to progression.
6. Aid validation of non-formal and informal learning; this is seen as a priority by many countries. The learning outcomes based levels provide a consistent reference point for validation and the implementation of NQFs will make it easier to develop comprehensive national approaches. Countries like Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway and Portugal all pay attention to the possible role of NQFs in promoting validation.
7. Approximately one third of the countries see the NQF as an important instrument for improving the consistency of national qualifications, using the learning outcomes descriptors as a reference point. This point is illustrated by both Denmark and Finland where the new outcomes based levels offer potential for systematic dialogue between stakeholders and institutions on relevance and quality.
8. Linked to the above is the view that NQFs will provide a reference point for quality assurance. While quality assurance arrangements already exist in most countries, the introduction of a comprehensive framework makes it possible to see how arrangements in different sub-systems interact and reinforce each other.
9. Several countries see the NQF as an instrument to strengthen cooperation between stakeholders and establish closer links to the labour market.
Other objectives are listed by one or a few countries:
10. Frameworks as an instrument for improving the parity of esteem between vocational education and training and higher education (Germany, Greece);

11. Frameworks as an instrument for monitoring education and training supply and demand (Estonia);
12. Frameworks as an instrument to increase the responsiveness of education and training systems to individual needs (UK);
13. Frameworks as an instrument to increase the skills orientation of qualifications (Germany);
14. Frameworks as an instrument to better express what is expected from individual learners (Norway);
15. Frameworks as a way to strengthen adult learning (Portugal);
16. Frameworks as a way to promote participation in secondary education (Portugal);
17. Frameworks as an instrument to promote social inclusion and equity (Croatia).

While not complete, this list provides an insight into the range of objectives addressed by European NQFs. Though there is no one-to-one relationship between listed objectives and actual (future) impact, most frameworks seems to embrace some elements of reform-orientation. As it is not based on direct administrative and legal regulation of qualifications (at least for the moment), this reforming role seems largely to rest on the shift to learning outcomes, introducing common language and stakeholder engagement and coordination. A coherent and systematic shift to learning outcomes is essential if objectives related to European comparability, national transparency and permeability, coherence of qualifications systems and validation are to be realised. This means that the future success of NQFs will largely depend on their ability to promote the use of learning outcomes in a consistent way.

Main characteristics of NQF design

As emphasised by many authors (Cedefop, 2010b, 2010c; Raffe, 2011b; Allais, 2010 and 2011b), contextual factors are important in shaping NQFs. These include the size of the country, diversity of the education system, its governance arrangements, degree of centralisation/decentralisation, the structure of labour markets and the 'culture of policy making' (Raffe, 2011b) ⁽¹⁶⁾. This has to be kept

⁽¹⁶⁾ NQFs may use alternative change processes to achieve an objective such as updating standards and making them more relevant to the labour markets. They may do this through stakeholder involvement, regulation or by unitising qualifications. These different change processes may correspond to different principles of governance or 'modes of coordination of social life', as proposed by Thompson et al. 1991. Three models are suggested: bureaucratic/hierarchical model, developments of networks, and markets. Countries with bureaucratic or hierarchical traditions of governance may rely more on regulation, countries where (social) partnership is stronger may rely more on a common language and on stakeholder engagement and coordination, and countries with stronger market-led approaches may rely more on unitisation and the transparency of qualifications.

in mind when comparing the main characteristics and the architecture of European national qualifications frameworks.

Qualification levels

Almost all countries have now decided on the number of levels in their NQF; only Italy and Lichtenstein remain. Most (26 out of 34) have proposed or adopted an eight-level structure. While some countries clearly see it as important to operate with the same number of levels as the EQF, this is normally not the only or main reason for adopting eight levels. The majority have based their decision on lengthy consultation and careful analysis of existing (normally implicit) qualifications levels ⁽¹⁷⁾. This is exemplified by Austria where a combination of research and consultation fed into the final decision on eight levels. The first draft of the Belgian (FL) framework was based on a 10-level approach but was reduced to eight following intense analysis and national discussions. The Polish NQF was originally (2009) envisaged as a 7-level framework, closely resembling the existing institutional system. Following a thorough analysis of the learning outcomes basis of the new framework it was decided to introduce a new level 5 as an intermediate between upper secondary and higher education. This level is still 'empty' but can be 'filled' with new qualifications, both 'short cycle' academic and advanced vocational qualifications. The Polish case is illustrative as it demonstrates the difference between input- and outcome-based principles for levelling. While an input-based approach would have to reflect the institutional structure of the country, the learning outcomes based levels can be defined more independently from these institutions and structures, emphasising how knowledge, skills and competence increase in complexity and depth from one level to another. As illustrated by the Polish case, this makes it possible to use the levels as reference points not only for existing qualifications (and their providers) but also for new and developing qualifications.

It is clear that the EQF has played a decisive and partly independent role in promoting convergence. The first Dutch framework proposal contained as many as 13 levels but was reduced to eight as the result of a combination of content-analysis and political pressure. The fact that some countries have adopted the EQF levels and their descriptors as the basis for their national framework further demonstrates this wish for convergence; the Estonian, Cypriot and Portuguese cases exemplify this. This combination of national considerations and European convergence is illustrated by current developments in France where the existing 5-level structure (since 1969) will (probably) be replaced by an 8-level framework.

⁽¹⁷⁾ This reflects that the number of levels in the EQF was not chosen arbitrarily or in a vacuum but tried to capture an 'average' European qualifications systems.

The broad consensus on an 8-level structure is contrasted by some 'first generation' frameworks: Scotland operates with 12 levels; Ireland has adopted 10 levels and England, Wales and Northern Ireland nine (including entry levels). Slovenia has also proposed 10 levels. At the other end of the scale, Iceland and Norway have proposed 7-level frameworks.

Some countries, e.g. England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Netherlands have introduced entry (or access) levels in their frameworks. This addresses the challenges on how to include and reward learning achievements at elementary level, below EQF level 1. Bulgaria has proposed to introduce a NQF level 'zero', covering preschool education. Belgium (FL), Hungary and Iceland have all considered entry levels but decided not to go forward with this. In Belgium social partners feared that introducing an entry level could have negative, stigmatising effects. This discussion on lower levels underlines the importance attributed to an inclusive framework. Frameworks must be able to address the diverse learning needs of the entire population, not only those who have already gained a formal qualification. Those countries having introduced entry or access levels argue that these are directly beneficial to individuals with learning difficulties, to drop-outs from formal education and to adults lacking formal qualifications, for example migrants with low levels of formal qualifications. For these, entry levels form a ladder into the qualifications framework.

Level descriptors

Level descriptors, in draft versions or formally adopted, are now available for 32 countries, in native language and some in English ⁽¹⁸⁾. The following section provides a first interpretation of these descriptors and how they differ and/or converge. An important question is the extent to which these descriptors are able to reflect the EQF descriptors and so provide an instrument for European dialogue and cooperation. Also relevant is the extent to which these descriptors are able to reflect the realities of the national qualifications systems and thus provide an instrument for national dialogue, cooperation and development?

A first group of countries use the EQF descriptors directly or align themselves closely to these: Estonia, Cyprus, Austria and Portugal are examples. Most of these countries have, however, prepared additional explanatory tables or guides with more detailed level descriptors in order to use the frameworks operationally. This is exemplified by Estonia where detailed level descriptors have been prepared for four sub-frameworks: higher education, vocational education and training, professional qualifications, and general education. The frameworks of Croatia, Greece, Malta, and Slovakia are also closely aligned to the EQF

⁽¹⁸⁾ Examples of national level descriptors will be included as Annex 3 in the full report.

descriptors; they depart from the three main pillars of knowledge, skills and competence but introducing some changes to the detailed descriptors.

A second group of countries has changed and re-phrased the third 'competence' column of the EQF. While all these countries include autonomy and responsibility as key elements in their descriptors, they tend to incorporate additional dimensions like learning competences, communicative/social/professional competences. In Finland aspects such as entrepreneurship and languages have been added. This may be seen as a way of including and making explicit the dimension of key competences and skills/competences for lifelong learning. Key competences are also emphasised in the Icelandic, Maltese and Norwegian NQFs. The inclusion of the term 'evaluation' in the Polish framework indicates that individuals must be able to reflect on own knowledge, skills and competences and also to judge on how to improve them. In Latvia, analysis, synthesis and assessment are included. Poland also uses the term social competences to identify the third column. This is defined as identity/autonomy, cooperation, responsibility, assessment/awareness of self and of team and understanding of implications of decisions and actions. The tendency to redefine the third column of the descriptors may be seen to reflect the fact that the EQF recommendation operates with two different definitions of competence. While the competence-concept used for the descriptors (third column) is limited to 'autonomy' and 'responsibility', the general definition (In Annex 1 of the EQF Recommendation) points to an overarching understanding where competence is about applying knowledge, skills, and personal, social, methodological and professional competences. The redefinition of the third column can be seen as an effort to address what many have characterised as incoherence in the EQF descriptors. The simple solution to this problem is to introduce more restricted and targeted headlines: this is exemplified by 'responsibility and independence' (the Netherlands), 'general competence' (Norway) and social competence (Poland).⁽¹⁹⁾ All countries adjusting the third column agree on the relevance and importance of 'autonomy' and 'responsibility' as key features for describing qualifications levels.

A third group of countries use competence as an overarching concept reflecting existing national traditions. This is the case in Belgium (Flanders, Wallonia), Germany, France, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands and Slovenia. All these countries emphasise the holistic and integrative nature of competence as an ability of a person to use knowledge, skills, attitudes and other personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work and study situations, and for professional and personal development. The overall NQF structure in Germany is guided by the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* understood as 'readiness to use

⁽¹⁹⁾ The EQF will be evaluated in 2013 and this provides an opportunity to adjust the heading of the third 'competence' pillar in accordance with the changes introduced nationally.

knowledge, skills and personal, social and mythological competences in work and study situations and for occupational and personal development'. The German national framework (DQR) differentiates between two categories of competence: professional and personal. Methodological competence is understood as transversal and is not separately stated within the DQR matrix. In the Netherlands competence is understood as an integrative concept, aiming to cover a wide range of human abilities to cope with complex tasks. According to Westerhuis (2011, p. 76), (the term) '... integrative stands for the fact that 1) competences are multi-dimensional and 2) competent performance is only possible if all dimensions are addressed accordingly to a set of standards.'

The development and implementation of level descriptors raises two important questions on the credibility of the EQF and its usefulness for increasing transparency and comparability in Europe:

- are national descriptor models sufficiently comparable to support and improve understanding across national borders?
- is there a risk that the introduction of comparable level descriptors at national and European level will have a normative effect; implicitly and without debate imposing a particular understanding of learning and of knowledge, skills and competences?

In the first case, in spite of diverse national solutions, there is clear convergence between countries in the way they are defining their descriptors. This convergence is a first, and necessary, step towards shared language on qualifications in Europe. It is partly the result of the extensive exchange of experiences in relation to the international focus on key competences, learning outcomes and frameworks. The Finnish and Icelandic approaches build their strategies on key competences into the descriptors, making it possible to observe a direct link to standards, curricula and assessment.

Convergence in terminology is an important first step but is not sufficient. One of the first real tests of the comparability of descriptors is the referencing to the EQF. Early experiences indicate that existing descriptors are only partly able to capture the differences and similarities between countries. This is exemplified by the continuing debate on locating school leaving certificates, giving access to universities. While it is up to each country to decide on which level to place these qualifications, there is intensifying debate between countries on justification for particular decisions. The Netherlands has decided to reference one of their school leaving certificates (the VWO) to level 5 of the EQF, arguing that this is where 'best fit' can be observed. While this decision is respected by other countries, some see it as a problem that these Dutch qualifications give the same access rights to university education as other European upper secondary leaving certificates (normally referenced to level 4) and up to now have been treated as equivalent by recognition authorities (ENIC/NARICs). This indicates that countries, at least in contested cases like this, need to document in detail how

descriptors have been used and interpreted. The Dutch case also illustrates that 'best fit' always will be a compromise between content and political considerations and that there is a need to specify how the balance between these factors has been struck in each case.

The second question – the normative impact of the descriptors – was much debated during the first stage of the EQF developments and is again an issue due to adoption and implementation of national descriptors and frameworks. A key point is whether learning outcomes descriptors, represented by the EQF and NQFs, point towards a fragmented and 'atomised' approach failing to take into account the 'holistic nature' of competences and the occupations and contexts where these competences are developed and applied (the debate on *Beruf* in Germany is an example of this). As noted by Mehaut and Winch (2011, p. 31), the idea of autonomous workers – who can plan, control, coordinate and evaluate their own work – differs from the notion of 'autonomy' and 'responsibility' presented in the third column of the EQF. This latter approach, according to Mehaut and Winch, refers to a more limited managerial hierarchy overlooking and/or underestimating the self-direction which is inevitably a key feature of any competent individual. There are important differences in use of learning outcomes, illustrated by the German and English cases. In the former, learning outcomes are understood as 'occupational capacity', very much reflecting the holistic approach and ideology referred to above. In England, outcomes have traditionally been understood more narrowly in terms of work tasks. While this distinction needs to be treated with caution – it is to some extent an ideological position frequently presented independently of empirical documentation – it underlines some of the dangers facing the level descriptors and the shift to learning outcomes they are promoting.

The role of sub-frameworks ⁽²⁰⁾

Most national qualifications frameworks introduced since 2005 are comprehensive frameworks, addressing all types of qualifications at all levels. This means that they, and their descriptors, have to reflect a huge diversity of purposes, institutions, traditions and cultures. One of the fundamental challenges faced by comprehensive frameworks, Young and Allais state (Young and Allais, 2009 and 2011), is to take into account the epistemological differences in knowledge and learning that exist in different parts of education and training.

Education and training in most countries is organised in separate and distinct tracks (Tuck, 2007, p. 21). This is especially so in the sub-systems general

⁽²⁰⁾ A sub-frameworks is a framework, which covers only one sub-system (e.g. HE, VET) and is part of an overarching comprehensive framework

education, vocationally oriented education and training and higher education: academically and professionally oriented HE is sometimes organised as separate tracks, sometimes integrated. When pursuing a lifelong learning agenda, many countries aim to strengthen the links between these sub-systems, in particular between general education and VET (e.g. bridging courses in Portugal, Slovenia reforms) and VET and higher education (e.g. Norway, Scotland). A key objective of comprehensive NQFs is to address these links and try to reduce barriers, aiding progression and transfer.

Due to the weak regulatory role of the frameworks – and their dependence on creating an indirect impact – it is still uncertain to what extent they will be able to influence the relationship between sub-systems. In most countries the rules for qualifications design and award are embedded in each of the sub-systems: it is too early to say how the introduction of a national, learning outcomes based approach will influence the practises of each sub-system. It might be seen as a weakness that few European frameworks have formulated an explicit strategy on how to build and develop the relationship between the comprehensive framework and the sub-systems they inevitably have to relate to and build on. Effort has been made in the Polish NQF where consistent level descriptors have been developed for the overarching national level, for the sub-systems and also for framework in professional or economic sectors. This makes it possible to introduce a coherent learning outcomes approach, covering all levels, which at the same time is able to clarify the specific character of each sub-system.

As already noted in 2010, some countries have introduced a clear distinction between levels 1-5 and levels 6-8, the latter being restricted to qualifications awarded by traditional higher education institutions (in line with the Bologna cycles). While visible in the Danish framework, the division can also be found in Bulgarian, Greek, Icelandic and Latvian frameworks.

Another group of countries, including Belgium (Flanders), the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, and Austria, have reached a compromise, where levels 6-8 have been divided into parallel strands. One strand covers academic qualifications, the other vocationally/professionally oriented higher level qualifications awarded outside the 'Bologna cycles'. In some cases similar descriptors may be used for the two strands (Belgium Flanders); in others different descriptors are used.

Parallel level descriptors can be also found at lower levels. In the Norwegian NQF parallel descriptors are proposed for level 3 (distinguishing between the general and vocational strands of upper secondary education) and level 4 (capturing the diversity of post-secondary VET programmes).

If the comprehensive national qualifications frameworks are going to play a bridging or integrating role in the future, this interaction between the different levels and sub-systems needs to be much more clearly understood and defined.

As the development of qualifications frameworks for the higher education area has shown, sub-frameworks are playing an important role in the development of NQFs. The framework in Scotland was built in steps, combining implementation of the overarching framework with the gradual development of sub-frameworks.

Scope of the national qualifications frameworks

European frameworks are not developing in a vacuum, but are embedded in particular political and cultural contexts. Many NQFs build on existing reforms in education and training sub-systems (as in VET) which have changed the way qualifications are designed (for example, introducing occupational standards) (Cedefop, 2009a)⁽²¹⁾. Triggered by the same European initiatives, many of the new qualifications frameworks share common characteristics. Very often these characteristics differ from the 'first generation frameworks', especially in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and France (and, outside Europe, in South Africa and New Zealand). Assuming that emerging European frameworks are just copies of the old (NVQ-based) frameworks is not confirmed by the evidence. Raffe (2011a) makes a distinction between outcomes-led (like the English NVQ framework) and outcomes-referenced frameworks. Outcome-led frameworks can be seen as the most radical approach as they tend systematically to reduce the influence of input factors like duration and institutional origin; this promotes qualification truly independent of delivery mode or learning approach. Comprehensive NQFs in Europe are outcomes-referenced and see learning outcomes as an important (although not the only) element for developing a common language across sectors. These frameworks also (although to varying degree) take input factors into account, trying to reflect institutional and programme structures, and accepting that volume and learning mode varies and matters. Comprehensive frameworks may include outcomes-led as well as outcomes-referenced sub-frameworks. The sub-frameworks for professional qualifications included in comprehensive NQFs in Estonia and Slovenia exemplify outcome-led approaches.

Framework scope also depends on the success in including the results of learning taking place outside public education and training, for example in the labour market. This tendency is partly about valuing and including the certificates and qualifications awarded by enterprises and sectors and partly about using the frameworks to stimulate the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

⁽²¹⁾ *The dynamics of qualifications: defining and renewing occupational and educational standards.* Available from Internet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/5053.aspx> [cited 7.10.2011]

Sweden illustrates this perspective well, see opening up of the framework to the labour market as a main objective.

NQFs in national education and training strategies

Grootings (2008) and Raffe (2011b) emphasise that qualifications framework development must be part of broader policy context. Isolated frameworks operating outside mainstream policy developments are probably of limited use: policy breadth is required.

Cedefop evidence clearly shows that NQF developments in Europe are embedded in, and part of, broader policy initiatives: lifelong learning strategies underpin developments in Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, Austria, Portugal and Finland; improving permeability between different sub-systems of education and training is key to German developments. The Portuguese case provides a particularly good example of the importance of policy breadth.

Portugal

The development of the Portuguese national qualification system and national qualification framework is part of broader reform initiatives and programmes in education and training: the New opportunities initiative and the Agenda for the reform of vocational training. These reforms aim to raise the low qualifications level of the Portuguese population (youngsters and adults).⁽²²⁾ Three main goals are emphasised:

- to reinforce vocational/technical pathways as real options for young people; (Oliveira Pires, 2010).⁽²³⁾
- to upgrade the education and qualification level of the adult population;
- to promote attainment of secondary education as a minimum level of qualification in Portugal. (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação, 2011)⁽²⁴⁾

For young people, the reform focuses on measures to prevent early school leaving: it sets out achieving secondary level qualifications as the minimum acceptable for everyone. For adults, the new opportunity is given to all who have not completed secondary education, e.g. by expanding opportunities for education and training complemented with a broad mechanism of recognition, validation and certification of competences.

The framework is one out of several measures introduced to promote reforms but it supports a collaborative model of policy-making, based on partnership and networks across sectors.

National qualifications frameworks: open and inclusive?

The majority of frameworks cover all officially recognised qualifications (general education, vocational education and training and HE) awarded by national authorities. The Danish framework, for example, refers to 'all levels and types of official, publicly recognised qualifications'.

The definition of 'national authority' varies but normally includes ministries of education, higher education and labour. Ministries of economic affairs, agriculture and healthcare may also be involved depending on the national situation. Both the Finnish and the Swedish NQFs cover qualifications awarded outside the remit of Ministry of Education, for example related to armed services, police, and agriculture. The same is the case for the Netherlands and Austria. Many frameworks (e.g. Belgium Flanders, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Slovenia) introduce the distinction between educational qualifications, awarded

⁽²²⁾ Despite fact that there have been attempts to invest in qualifications over the last two decades, the number of early school leavers (aged 18-24) is still among the highest in EU countries (in 2010, 28.7%) and the total population having at least upper secondary education was 31.9% in 2010 (Eurostat data)

⁽²³⁾ The National Qualifications Agency set the objective that 50% of those enrolled in upper secondary level should achieve a vocational qualification. See *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010 country report Portugal*, p. 1. Available from Internet: <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77477.pdf> [cited 7.10.2011]

⁽²⁴⁾ The referencing of [the Portuguese] national qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework. p. 13. Available from Internet: http://www.eqf-ref.eu/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=100&Itemid= [cited 19.10.2011]. Portugal has raised the compulsory schooling age to 18 years.

within formal education and training, and occupationally-oriented qualifications, very often referred to as 'professional qualifications', based on national occupational standards and with strong involvement of labour market actors.

In Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden discussions are continuing on how to open up towards qualifications delivered by enterprises or sectors currently outside the remit of public authorities. Both the Dutch and the Swedish see their NQFs as a tool to include all kind of qualifications, including those outside the official, public sector. In the Dutch case, those bodies already responsible for awarding (vocational) diplomas and certificates will act as gatekeepers, making sure that these external qualifications meet the same quality criteria as 'normal' qualifications. The same kind of gatekeeper function is also outlined in the Norwegian case where social partners will play an important role in overseeing developments. Work to bring these different awards together in one framework is important for two main reasons:

- it will improve the overall transparency of qualifications, allowing learners and employers to take into account official 'public' as well as 'private' qualifications;
- it will improve the consistency of these two main types of qualification as the same learning outcomes principles have to be applied and basic quality assurance requirements have to be observed.

Sweden

The aim to develop an inclusive framework open to qualifications awarded outside the public system – in particular in the adult/popular education sector and in the labour market – is emphasised in the original 2009 decision. This focus on the inclusive character of the framework responds to particular features of Swedish education and training. First, adult and popular education is generally very strong, helping explain why Sweden consistently scores high in all international comparisons on adult and lifelong learning. These courses are offered by a wide range of stakeholders and institutions, their link to the ordinary public system not always being fully transparent and clear. Second, a very important part of VET is carried out by enterprises and sectors. While upper secondary education (Gymnasieskolan) offers a full range of (three year) vocational courses, acquiring a full qualification (enabling someone to practise a vocation) will often require additional training and certification at work. The diverse and extensive system of labour market based training established for this purpose is not easy to overview and a link to the NQF is seen as crucial in increasing overall transparency. A proposal on how to include these 'external' qualifications was presented to the Ministry in April 2011, suggesting that a National Council for Qualifications is set up. This Council – including all relevant stakeholders – would become the 'gatekeeper', making sure that qualifications aspiring to be included in the framework meet nationally established quality criteria and requirements.

The French NQF can be seen as an advanced example of this kind of inclusive framework. It already covers three main types of qualification:

- those awarded by French ministries, cooperating with the social partners through a consultative vocational committee (*Commissions Professionnelles Consultatives, CPC*);
- those awarded by training providers, chambers and ministries but where no CPC is in place;

- those set up and awarded by social partners under their own responsibility.

The Danish framework for lifelong learning includes full and supplementary qualifications; the latter in particular acquired in adult education and training. This also points towards a more open, flexible and inclusive framework, for example making it possible to include adult education and training and establish a link to work-based training in the private sector. In Austria, discussions continue on how to include learning outcomes from informal learning and qualifications/certificates from non-formal learning without an equivalent in formal education. The focus is on quality criteria which have to be met – based on the EQF/NQF definition of qualification – to consider a bundle of learning outcomes as a qualification, which can be included in the NQF. A number of awards made by professional and international awarding bodies are now included in the Irish framework of qualifications.

Other countries – for example Belgium Flanders, Slovenia, Finland, – have signalled their intention to open up the NQF to qualifications awarded by sector specific organisations, chambers, companies and other private providers.

These developments clearly demonstrate one of the most important features of the new European frameworks: their intention to open up to a broader range of learning providers and awarding institutions. The key challenge is developing quality assurance arrangements ensuring the currency and value of all qualifications. This again requires systematic and strong involvement and commitment of relevant stakeholders.

As stated by Allais (2011b), ‘Employers tended to see the frameworks as something coming from educational institutions, and educational institutions to see frameworks as coming from industry.’ Whether this will change depends on the ability of the NQFs to be inclusive to all qualifications and learning outcomes, not just those awarded by public authorities on the basis of formal education and training in traditional institutions. Their relevance to enterprises, sectors, labour markets and individuals will be crucial for their overall success.

NQFs and validation of non-formal and informal learning

In 2010 Cedefop concluded (Cedefop, 2010b, p. 20) that the success of NQFs partly depends on their ability to aid support functions like validation of non-formal and informal learning and credit transfer arrangements. These are concrete measures supporting progression and permeability and will largely decide whether frameworks make any difference to individuals. This analysis of NQF developments 2011 clearly shows an increased focus on validation of non-

formal and informal learning at policy and practice level. (GHK, 2011)⁽²⁵⁾ The Portuguese and Finnish experiences illustrate this.

Portugal

The comprehensive NQF in Portugal aims to develop the national system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) and to give new impetus to promoting the attractiveness of vocational training. It is now fully integrated into the national qualifications system and framework.

It integrates two main processes:

- educational RVCC, aiming to improve the education level of adults who have no basic or secondary education certificates;
- professional RVCC, for adults who have no vocational qualifications in their occupational areas.

Adults can acquire a basic or secondary level of education certificate and vocational qualification. The certificates have the same value as those awarded in formal education and training. RVCC processes are based on national standards for education and training (e.g. key competences in adult education and training reference framework) and integrated in the national catalogue of qualifications, which is used as a reference for vocational qualifications. 452 New opportunities centres throughout the country offer integrated services to adults.

Finland

In Finland, NQF development has made a positive contribution to validation of informal and non-formal learning. First, it has led to new and intensified discussions about validation of prior learning in the country. Second, the development of NQF has meant that learning outcomes (in terms of knowledge, skills and competences) have been defined for all levels. It is expected that the elaboration of learning outcomes for each level will make it easier than before to assess prior learning, using the learning outcomes described in the NQF. Third the framework introduces the concept of 'complete competences' to address acquired learning outcomes not part of the existing qualification system. These competences cover a broad area and accrue in most professions and at all levels e.g. continuing training offered to candidates from universities and polytechnics.

In a number of countries there is a clear link between NQF development and validation of non-formal learning. In Austria, a newly published strategy on lifelong learning reinforces 'competence orientation' and uses European 'Key competences framework for lifelong learning' (2006) as a reference point for ten action strands. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an important part of this action plan. In line with the vision of the strategy, all learning outcomes, irrespective how they have been acquired, should be recognised and all relevant stakeholders should jointly develop and implement coherent strategy for validating non-formal learning. Five concrete measures are proposed, including setting up 'bodies responsible for qualifications' acquired outside formal education and training, further strengthening the learning outcomes orientation in

⁽²⁵⁾ Further measure to implement the action plan on adult learning. Lot 1 – Updating the existing inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. p. 25-27. Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/inventory_en.pdf [cited 7.10.2011]

curricula in all education sectors, and implementing pilot projects (BMUKK, 2011). ⁽²⁶⁾ A similar approach can be observed in Denmark.

Many countries emphasise that developing professional standards based on learning outcomes is a precondition for validation of non-formal learning. This is the case in the Czech Republic, where arrangements for validation are closely linked to the development of professional standards. Estonia, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey also link validation, standards and frameworks. The main aim and challenge in these countries is better links between this parallel system of recognition of non-formal learning and formal education and training. In Slovenia, one of the explicit aims of the NQF is to strengthen the capacity to certify knowledge, skills and competence that have not yet been incorporated in formal education and training programmes; it also aims to provide better links and transferability between education and training and certification systems. In Romania, the system of validation of non-formal learning has been set up parallel to formal VET. The link to the formal system has not been established yet and the results of validation of non-formal and informal learning are not recognised in the formal system: competences certified through validation of non-formal and informal learning cannot support formal education entry or mobility. However, the new Law of national education, adopted in 2011, provides for better integration of validation and national qualifications framework at the national level. According to this law, professional qualifications awarded via validation can be related to all levels of the NQF.

In Sweden and the Netherlands, with long traditions of learning outcomes and validation, the official aim is to further open up towards learning taking place in non-formal settings: enterprises, adult and popular education. Increased focus on quality arrangements and criteria characterise these debates.

The impact of NQFs: description of status quo or drivers of change?

Several authors (Young, 2011; Allais, 2011a and 2011b; Bohlinger, 2011) have discussed the rapid development of NQFs in Europe (and beyond) criticising the lack of evidence of added value and ability to respond to stated (and ambitious) objectives. The same authors also frequently point out that 'first generation frameworks' (in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the UK) have different flaws, making them unsuitable as blue-prints for general expansion of national qualifications frameworks. As articulated in this executive summary, and to be demonstrated in the national chapters, European developments are now

⁽²⁶⁾ *Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen in Österreich*. Available from Internet: http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/20916/IIIarbeitspapier_ebook_gross.pdf [cited 10.9.2011]

gradually providing more evidence on the impact of the frameworks. While still limited and scattered – reflecting that frameworks are still at an early stage of development and implementation – this evidence now make it possible to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

Impact at European and international level

NQFs are now making a difference at European level. Triggered by the EQF and QF-EHEA, the number of national qualifications frameworks in the EU/EEA and the candidate countries to the EU has increased from three (Ireland, France and the UK) to 34 countries in a period five years. While the number of national frameworks alone provides little evidence of impact (some would say this is an example of ‘blind policy copying’), the processes leading to these frameworks are of key significance. These processes have, from the start, been characterised by intensive debate on the conceptual and terminological challenges of increasing European cooperation in education and training. The developments of the new European NQFs have been more about reaching a common understanding of existing challenges (and values) in education and training than on the adoption of a particular structure or number of levels. This is exemplified by the (surprisingly) intense debate on ‘competences’ which immediately started after the launching of the first EQF proposals. This debate has been taken forward at national level and helped countries in developing frameworks that reflect their national systems and culture. The development of NQF descriptors in more than 30 countries shows, beyond much doubt, that this is not ‘blind policy copying’ but a particular national processes trying to define the character and direction of overall qualifications systems.

While frequently demonstrating the problems involved in developing a shared language, the new learning outcomes based descriptors now provide an important instrument for future cooperation – in particular as a reference for further developing the quality and content of qualifications and as a way to support transfer and recognition of qualifications across institutional and national borders. As the European Training Foundation has demonstrated, the impact of the qualifications frameworks cannot be limited to the European context: NQFs may become instruments for world-wide dialogue on the content and value of qualifications. Recent initiatives in India and China to start developing frameworks point in this direction, as does formal dialogue between the EU and Australia on the links between the EQF and Australian qualifications framework.

Coordination and stakeholder involvement

The development of NQFs has required involvement of a broader set of stakeholders than what is normally the case: these include both the public and the private sector. While governance of education and training is normally carried out within sub-systems (general, vocational and higher education), the concept of a comprehensive framework has forced countries to broaden the approach. This is illustrated by the German qualifications framework which includes not only federal and regional (Länder) representatives, those from different parts of education and training, but also representatives of the social partners, particular economic sectors and researchers. This new composition of stakeholders – emphasising the link between education and work – has changed the dynamic of discussions and forced stakeholders to go beyond their own position and look at the interaction and relationship between sectors and institutions. It has brought out into the open a series of tensions and conflicts of interests, thus establishing a realistic basis for moving forward and for meeting agreed objectives. While developing a German NQF, due to the size and complexity of the country, can be seen as a particularly daunting challenge, the same dynamic can be observed in most countries covered by this report.

An interesting feature is the growth in ambitions which can be observed as frameworks move from early design into adoption and implementation; the Norwegian framework illustrates this change. Treated with caution from the start by many stakeholders – not least the social partners – a main criticism in the final consultation in spring 2011 is that the reform-potential of the framework is not fully used. The employer organisation for service and trade, for example, stresses the potential of the framework for linking education and work.

While this broadening of participation and involvement is a clear feature of framework developments across Europe, there is no guarantee that countries will be able to sustain the situation. There is a danger that the formal adoption of the framework, and referencing to the EQF, will tempt countries into a 'mission accomplished' mode. As shown in the evaluation of the Irish NQF in 2010, the success of the frameworks depends on a continuous process in which stakeholder involvement is gradually broadened and (in particular) deepened.

NQFs and the shift to learning outcomes

The use of learning outcomes to define and describe qualifications has been developing independently of frameworks for a long time. This is seen in Nordic countries where learning outcomes and competence concepts has been systematically introduced into education and training prior to framework developments.

However, there is now clear evidence that countries are using the new frameworks to initiate concrete and more systematic work in this area. Many of the countries in this report note practical initiatives and developments, in particular in VET and higher education. General education is lagging behind in some countries, but developments can also be observed in this field. These developments are also demonstrated by other Cedefop studies, for example on standards (Cedefop, 2009a) ⁽²⁷⁾ and on curriculum developments (Cedefop, 2010a). ⁽²⁸⁾.

The use of learning outcomes in established and emerging frameworks responds to the need to ensure coherence and overview. In several countries frameworks are used to identify those parts of the qualifications system not described through learning outcomes, so providing a reference for future developments. Croatia, Iceland and Poland illustrate this systematic use of the frameworks to promote learning outcomes: all are using frameworks to influence and change the way qualifications are defined and described in the different sub-systems. Polish efforts in higher education during 2009-10 illustrate this, as do Croatian and Icelandic efforts to redefine vocational education and training qualifications. The Norwegian framework clarified that existing qualifications in post-secondary VET (Fagskoler) had not been defined according to learning outcomes; a direct result of the framework is the revision of these qualifications according to the overall principles now introduced at national level.

Learning outcomes based level descriptors in comprehensive NQFs introduce common language across sectors of education and training, helping make the system more coherent and permeable. Further reforms can build on that what is exemplified by change currently under way in Ireland.

NQF developments also clarify some of the dangers and limitations of the learning outcomes approach. Existing quality assurance approaches are only partly oriented towards learning outcomes: how to quality assure the way learning outcomes are defined and applied is emerging as a critical issue for frameworks.

⁽²⁷⁾ *The dynamics of qualifications: defining and renewing occupational and educational standards*. Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2009. (Cedefop panorama series). Available from Internet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/5053.aspx> [cited 7.10.2011]

⁽²⁸⁾ *Learning outcomes approaches in VET curricula: a comparative analysis of nine European countries*. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5506_en.pdf [cited 10.10.2011]

NQFs and the consistency of national qualifications systems

The emerging frameworks add value by providing an independent reference point not only for comparison of existing qualifications (as is the intention of the EQF) but also as a reference for improving and further developing qualifications. This function of the frameworks was emphasised by representatives of the Finnish higher education community. Highlighting the (quality) differences between institutions in different parts of the country, they saw the new framework and its descriptors as an opportunity – and a neutral reference point – for promoting dialogue on how to close these negative gaps. The same perspectives are frequently presented in other countries, notably Estonia and Poland where multi-levelled descriptor approaches (national, sub-system and economic sector) allow for dialogue on the overall consistency of the qualifications system. The extent to which frameworks will be used to improve consistency is still to be observed. The points made by Estonians, Poles and Finns, however, suggest an important reforming role for frameworks in the coming period.

Challenges ahead

- The future success and impact of the NQF very much depends on the shift to learning outcomes. Despite the positive tendency in most countries, major gaps still exist and need to be addressed. The completion of national level descriptors (in most countries) raises the question of how to promote learning outcomes in depth; e.g. systematically addressing standards, curricula, assessment, and learning methods. Both at European and national levels there is a need for exchange of experience on how best to define and describe learning outcomes.
- This is particularly linked to the success in coordinating and involving stakeholders and in being willing to discuss existing challenges openly. A key challenge is to deepen participation and involvement as frameworks develop and mature. Involvement and participation of educational institutions and progressive alignment of NQF developments and education and training systems and practises is required.
- If comprehensive NQFs are to play bridging or integrating roles in the future, this interaction between different levels and sub-systems needs to be much better understood and conceptualised.
- How can frameworks be sustained financially? Many countries are basing their NQF developments on European Social Fund resources: can this be continued? Can cost-benefit analyses be developed?

- The impact of NQFs, and especially connections between the impact of the NQFs in diverse national contexts and of different types of NQF, need further conceptualisation and research.
- The success of the NQFs, in terms of being able to increase access and promote progression in education and training, depends on their ability to support and promote other instruments: validation of non-formal and informal learning, credit transfer arrangements and renewal of curriculum and assessment methodologies.
- The success of the frameworks depends on their ability to strengthen national systems and arrangements for validating non-formal and informal learning. Validation makes it possible to apply the learning outcomes approach of the frameworks in a way which directly benefits individual learners.
- NQFs must be made visible to end users.
- There needs to be systematic monitoring, research and evaluation of NQF implementation. Indicators need to be developed to permit better understanding of conditions for success and for reaching end-users (individuals and employers).

Annex Short overview of the NQF developments

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Austria	<p>Comprehensive NQF is being implemented</p> <p>It will include qualifications from all parts of education and training and will aid validation of non-formal and informal learning</p> <p>At levels 6-8 two strands in the NQF will coexist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the Dublin descriptors will be used for allocating qualification related to Bologna cycles ● VET and adult learning qualifications, provided outside HE institutions, will be allocated to the NQF based on EQF descriptors and additional criteria <p>A framework with communication and orientation function</p>	<p>Eight levels are adopted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence <p>EQF level descriptors are used as national descriptors</p> <p>Additional table(s) (e.g. criteria and procedures) have been developed</p>	<p>An Act on the NQF is being prepared</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture initiated and is coordinating the developments in cooperation with Federal Ministry of Science and Research</p> <p>All ministries and Länder representatives are involved as well as social partners and other relevant stakeholders from education and training</p>	<p>Referencing report is expected to be prepared in spring 2012</p> <p>OeAD (Österreichischer Austauschdienst) – Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research is designated the national coordination point (NCP)</p>

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The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Belgium (Flanders)</p> <p>A comprehensive NQF has been developed</p> <p>A framework with communication and orientation function</p> <p>A qualifications framework linked to the OF-EHEA has been developed separately (since 2003) but forms an integrated part of the comprehensive NQF</p>	<p>Eight levels have been adopted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge/skills ● context/autonomy/responsibility 	<p>An Act on the qualification structure, providing explicit basis for the NQF, was adopted April 2009</p>	<p>Established in April 2009</p> <p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education is the competent authority</p> <p>Other ministries are involved (labour, finances) as well as social partners and other relevant stakeholders from education and training</p> <p>Broad consultation has been carried out at different stages of the process</p>	<p>Referencing to the EQF was carried out in June 2011</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework		Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Belgium (Wallonia)	<p>NQF is under preparation</p> <p>A framework with communication and orientation function</p> <p>The NQF for the French speaking community of Belgium will build on some of the same basic principles as the Flemish framework</p>	Eight levels are proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge/skills ● context/autonomy/responsibility 	<p>A separate Decree was adopted in 2008 linking levels 6-8 exclusively to Bologna cycles</p> <p>This decree has been reconsidered and distinction between educational and professional qualifications at levels 6-8 to be introduced</p> <p>The NQF will be based on a Parliamentary Act</p>	<p>Late design stage</p> <p>Preparations for adoption taking place</p>	<p>Initiated by the joint government of the French region</p> <p>Followed up through a working group involving relevant education and training stakeholders</p> <p>Broad testing in sectors</p>	<p>Referencing to EQF is seen as an integrated part of the work on NQF</p> <p>Referencing report is expected to be presented to EQF AG in 2012</p>
Belgium (German-speaking community)	<p>NQF is under development</p> <p>NQF developments will be informed by experiences of other two Communities in Belgium, but also experiences from dual-system countries, e.g. Germany will be taken into account</p>	Most likely 8-level structure will be proposed			<p>Conceptualisation /design stage</p> <p>NQF draft is due to be published in 2011</p>	<p>Consultation with all stakeholders on the first draft and the following process was organised in mid- 2011</p>	

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Bulgaria	<p>Draft NQF was prepared in spring 2011</p> <p>Comprehensive NQF will include all levels of formal education and training</p> <p>A framework with communication and orientation function</p>	<p>Eight levels are proposed</p>	<p>All levels are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – knowledge (theoretical and factual) – skills (cognitive and practical) – personal and professional competences (autonomy and responsibility, learning competence, communicative and social competences) 	<p>Embedded in the Government Programme for European Development of Bulgaria (2009-13) and the Programme for Development of Education, Science and Youth Policies (2009-13)</p> <p>Decree on NQF is planned to be adopted after the consultation process by the end of 2011</p>	<p>Consultation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Youth and Science is the competent authority</p> <p>Stakeholders from Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, public and quality assurance agencies, National statistical institute, and representative in Bologna follow-up group are included</p>	<p>Referencing to EQF is seen an integrated part of the work on NQF</p> <p>NQF draft and draft referencing report will be prepared by October 2011</p> <p>The European Integration and International Cooperation Directorate acts as NCP</p>

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The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Croatia</p>	<p>Comprehensive NQF for LLL (CROQF) has been developed It will include all education and training systems and provide for validation of non-formal and learning</p>	<p>Comprehensive set of level descriptors spans all levels of education and training, defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge (theoretical and factual) ● skills (cognitive, practical and social) ● responsibility and autonomy 	<p>Ministry of Science, Education and Sports formed a joint working group of experts from VET and HE in 2006</p> <p>5-year action plan was prepared (2008-12)</p> <p>Croatian Qualifications Framework, Introduction to Qualifications was adopted by the Government in 2009</p> <p>A draft law regulating the implementation of NQF has been prepared</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Science, Education and Sport is the competent authority</p> <p>Other ministries are involved (economy, labour, health, foreign affairs, environmental protection) as well as social partners and other relevant stakeholders from education and training</p>	<p>Referencing to the EQF has started</p> <p>One comprehensive report is being prepared to link to the EQF levels and to self-certify to QF-EHEA Preliminary results were presented to the EQF AG in February 2011</p> <p>Directorate for International Cooperation and European Integration at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports acts as NCP</p>

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	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Cyprus	<p>Draft comprehensive NQF has been presented</p> <p>It will include all types of nationally recognised qualification from formal education and training as well as professional qualifications system under the Human Resource Development Authority</p>	<p>Eight levels are proposed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence <p>EQF level descriptors are used as national level descriptors</p>	<p>Council of Ministers decision to develop a comprehensive NQF was adopted in July 2008</p>	<p>Consultation stage was carried out in spring 2011</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Culture is the competent authority</p> <p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and the Human Resources Development Authority are involved</p>	<p>Referencing report is expected to be prepared in 2012 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which acts as NCP</p>

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The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Czech Republic</p> <p>The national framework for vocational qualifications is in place</p> <p>The core of the framework is publicly accessible national register of vocational qualifications (full and partial qualifications)</p> <p>It has regulatory function and provides the basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning</p> <p>Qualifications framework for tertiary qualifications is under development within the Q-RAM project</p> <p>Level descriptors have been prepared for primary and secondary education</p> <p>Discussions on developing a comprehensive NQF continuing</p>	<p>Eight levels are adopted</p>	<p>Qualifications levels are differentiated by level of competence</p> <p>Each competence has a knowledge and skills component</p> <p>Each competence is classified according to activity dimension (considered primary) and knowledge dimension (field or discipline)</p>	<p>Work on the national framework for vocational qualifications started in 2005</p> <p>The Act on the verification and recognition of further education results, adopted in 2006, is the legal basis for NQF development</p> <p>Embedded in the national LLL strategy</p>	<p>Implementation stage of the national framework for vocational qualifications</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is the competent authority</p> <p>Other ministries act as authorising bodies</p> <p>Education and training providers, universities are authorised bodies</p> <p>Social partners participate in the qualifications development</p> <p>National qualification Council is an advisory body</p> <p>National VET Institute (NUOV) manages and administers the NQF for vocational qualifications</p>	<p>Draft referencing report has been prepared and is expected to be presented to the EOF AG in December 2011</p> <p>National VET Institute (NUOV) was designated as NCP</p> <p>In July NUOV was merged with two other agencies to form the National Institute for Education</p>

Denmark	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
	<p>A comprehensive NQF includes all officially validated and recognised public qualifications from all subsystems of education and training. The qualifications framework for HE was approved in 2007-08 and forms part of the comprehensive framework Communication and transparency function, but regulating function in HE. The level descriptors for levels 6-8 in the NQF are identical with the level descriptors in the NQF-HE. Descriptor at level 5 is broader than for the corresponding descriptor in the NQF_HE for short cycles. This makes it possible to include VET qualifications at level 5. Evaluation is planned in 2012.</p>	<p>Eight levels have been agreed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge (different types of knowledge, complexity and understanding) ● skills (different types of skills, complexity of tasks, communication) ● competence (context, cooperation and responsibility, learning to learn) <p>Levels 6-8 have clear reference to Dublin descriptors</p> <p>Level descriptors reflect EQF descriptors, Dublin descriptors, existing descriptors of learning outcomes of curricula and programmes, research related outcomes in HE</p>	<p>Work started in 2006 following an initiative of the Ministry of Education and referring to the 2006 government strategy on Denmark in the global economy. The NQF was approved by the Minister of Education, the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Minister for Culture and the Minister for Economic and Business Affairs in 2009</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p> <p>All state recognised qualifications are included in the framework. A next stage is envisaged in 2012 and 2013 seeking to integrate qualifications from the private sector and the labour market</p>	<p>Ministry of Education is coordinating the work but the proposal and its implementation is based on broad involvement of other ministries, social partners, representatives of education and training subsystems, etc.</p>	<p>The final referencing report was agreed by the coordinating committee including representatives from Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Economic and Business affairs. It was presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2011. NCP is hosted by the Danish Agency for International Education.</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Estonia</p> <p>Estonia is implementing the comprehensive NQF for LLL, which includes all state qualifications. It brings together four sub-frameworks for HE qualifications, VET qualifications, general education and professional qualifications with more detailed and specific descriptors and rules for designing and awarding qualifications.</p>	<p>Eight levels are adopted</p>	<p>NQF level descriptors are identical to EQF level descriptors and defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● responsibility and autonomy 	<p>The amended Professional Act (September 2008) is the legal basis for NQF development and implementation</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Research is the competent authority Other ministries are involved (social affairs, economic affairs) as well as social partners and other relevant stakeholders from education and training and public agencies (National Examination and Qualifications Centre, Estonian Qualifications Authority) Estonian Qualification Authority (QA) manages and administers the NQF</p>	<p>Estonian Qualification Authority is the NCP A single comprehensive referencing report to link national qualifications levels to EQF and QF - EHEA was presented to the EQF AG in October 2011</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Finland</p> <p>Comprehensive NQF will include all publicly recognised qualifications (by Ministry of education and other branches of the public administration) Framework will have a communication and orientation function, but is also seen as a way to strengthen validation of non-formal and informal learning</p>	<p>Eight levels have been agreed</p>	<p>The descriptors have been inspired by EQF descriptors, but adopted to suit the national context; the following categories are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● work method and application (skill) ● responsibility, management and entrepreneurship ● evaluation ● key skills for lifelong learning <p>Descriptors 6-8 have been adjusted to Dublin descriptors</p>	<p>Work started in August 2008 following an initiative of the Ministry of Education</p> <p>An NQF outline was finalised in June 2009</p> <p>A specific Law on the NQF has been presented to the Parliament for adoption and will present the framework, the descriptors and other features contained by it</p> <p>Adoption is expected November 2011</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education is the competent authority, but other ministries, social partners and representatives of the subsystems of education are closely involved in the process</p> <p>A consultation was carried out on the basis of the June 2009 proposal (90 responses received, all supportive of the NQF idea)</p>	<p>The referencing to EQF will take place as soon as Parliamentary adoption has been completed in late 2011</p> <p>The National Board of Education has been appointed the NCP</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EOF
<p>France</p> <p>The current NQF covers all levels and types of vocationally or professionally oriented qualifications</p> <p>The framework has a regulatory function, in particular through the role played by CNCP (national committee on professional certificates)</p> <p>The CNCP can be seen as the 'gatekeeper', regulating which qualifications are to be officially accredited</p> <p>Validation of non-formal and informal learning is an important part of the framework</p> <p>The general baccalaureate (which gives access to higher education) is not part of the jurisdiction of the CNCP</p>	<p>Five levels exist for the moment; an eight-level structure is being considered, possibly towards the end of 2012</p>	<p>The French levels are distinguished on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● skills ● knowledge ● competence 	<p>A note on possible revisions to be made to the existing framework was presented to the Prime Minister in autumn 2009</p> <p>The note is based on the conclusions of a representative working group currently looking into these questions</p> <p>The discussion on a change to a new, eight-level structure is continuing</p>	<p>Implemented, currently revision stage</p>	<p>The CNCP coordinates the register of qualifications</p> <p>All relevant ministries, social partners, chambers and representatives of education and training subsystems are represented in the Committee</p>	<p>The referencing was finalised in October 2010</p> <p>The national committee on professional qualifications (CNCP) is the NCP</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NOF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Germany</p> <p>A final proposal for a comprehensive NOF for LLL (Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen – DQR) was adopted in March 2011 by working group Arbeitskreis DQR</p> <p>Adoption by the Ministry and Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder is pending</p> <p>DQR will include qualifications from all subsystems and aid validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences</p> <p>A framework with communication and orientation functions</p> <p>NOF for HE was established in 2005 and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in January 2010</p>	<p>Eight levels are proposed</p>	<p>The level descriptors are defined in two categories of competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● professional competence is subdivided into: knowledge (breadth and depth) and skills (instrumental and systemic skills); ● personal competence is subdivided into social competence (teamwork, leadership, communication skills) and autonomy (autonomous responsibility, reflectiveness and learning competence) 	<p>A process started in 2006, when a national steering group was jointly established by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Länder</p> <p>In February 2009, first proposal of the German NOF was published</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Federal Ministry of Education and Research and Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of Länder have jointly initiated the work</p> <p>Broad range of stakeholders is included from HE, school education, VET, social partners, public institutions from education and labour market, researchers and practitioners</p>	<p>National steering group acts as NCP and will be in charge of referencing</p> <p>Referencing report is expected to be submitted by 2012</p>

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EOF
Greece	<p>Proposal for a comprehensive Hellenic QF was subject of consultation in spring 2011</p> <p>A new institution – National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP) – is responsible for HQF implementation</p> <p>A qualifications register is being put in place</p> <p>A methodological guide for referencing learning outcomes to the HQF levels has been prepared</p>	Eight levels are adopted	<p>Level descriptors are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence <p>EOF level descriptors were used as starting point</p>	<p>The Law on lifelong learning was adopted in September 2010, providing the legal framework for NQF implementation</p>	Implementation stage	<p>Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is the competent authority</p> <p>Stakeholders from public institutions, social partners, representatives of universities and external experts are included</p> <p>Consultation was organised from March to September 2010</p>	<p>Referencing report is expected to be prepared by 2012</p> <p>National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP) is designated the NCP</p>

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	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Hungary	Comprehensive NQF is under development It will include qualifications from all subsystems of education and training	Eight-level structure is proposed	It is proposed to describe levels in terms of knowledge, abilities attitudes, autonomy and responsibility	Work started in 2007 in the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan (2007-13) NQF development is based on the Government Decision No 2069/2008 and (No 1004/2011) adopted in January 2011	Design stage First NQF draft is available	The overall responsibility for the development of the NQF is shared between the Ministry of National Resources and the Ministry of National Economy Stakeholders from all other ministries, The National Council for Public Education, the National Institute of Vocational and Adult education, the Hungarian Rectors' conference, the Higher Education and Research Council and representatives of social partners are included	Referencing process will start second quarter of 2011 Referencing report is expected to be prepared by 2013 Department for EU Relations of the Ministry of National Resources acts as the NCP

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Iceland	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EOF
	<p>Comprehensive NQF will include qualifications from all subsystems of education and training and non-formal and informal learning</p> <p>QF for HE was implemented in 2007 and will form part of the new NQF</p>	<p>Seven levels are proposed</p>	<p>Level descriptors are more detailed and specific than EOF level descriptors but use similar concepts as starting points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence 	<p>Work started in autumn 2007 following an initiative of the Ministry of Education</p> <p>An NQF draft will be ready autumn 2011</p>	<p>Adoption stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education (competent authority) is coordinating the work but bases its decisions on close involvement of other ministries, social partners and representatives of the education and training system (for example teachers)</p>	<p>Referencing is expected early 2012</p>

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The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Ireland</p> <p>Comprehensive and integrating NQF (national framework of qualifications) has been implemented since 2003 It includes all learning from initial stages to the most advanced; from schools, to further education and HE Referencing report to link national qualifications levels to EQF was adopted in May 2009 by NOA and presented in September 2009 to the EQF advisory group</p>	<p>Ten levels are adopted Four award types are included: major, minor, special-purpose and supplemental</p>	<p>Each level is based on nationally agreed standards of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge (breadth, kind) ● skills (range, selectivity) ● competence (context, role, learning to learn, insight) 	<p>NQF is legally based on the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 Bologna process has been an important part of the NQF on a voluntary basis Policies and criteria on inclusion of awards of certain international and professional bodies were published by NOAI in July 2006 and amended in 2010</p>	<p>Implementation Framework implementation and impact study was published in September 2009 Nineteen recommendations for further implementation were proposed</p>	<p>NQF work was initiated by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NOAI) was established (2001) It has developed, maintained and monitored the NQF Amalgamation between FETAC, HETAC, IUOB and NOAI into a new institution – Qualifications and Quality Assurance Agency is under way</p>	<p>The final referencing report was adopted in May 2009 and presented to the EQF advisory group in September 2009</p>

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	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Italy	<p>Steps towards establishment of an NQF have been taken</p> <p>QF for HE has been prepared</p> <p>Levels defined by learning outcomes for upper secondary education</p>	<p>The number of levels has not been defined yet</p>	<p>Level descriptors are being developed</p>	<p>Since 2003, various laws and agreements between ministries, social partners and regions have been adopted (e.g. Guidelines for Training in 2010)</p>	<p>Conceptual, design and partly testing phase</p> <p>Learning outcomes based methodology was tested in different sectors</p>	<p>The responsibility for NQF development is shared between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Education, University and Research</p> <p>The key player in the NQF development has been National Committee (Tavolo Nazionale)</p> <p>It consists of representatives of both ministries, regions, autonomous provinces and social partners</p> <p>ISFOL prepares and implements national methodologies and coordinates expert groups</p>	<p>Draft referencing report has been prepared for consultation</p> <p>ISFOL is designated the NCP</p>

Latvia	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EOF
	<p>Comprehensive 8-level structure was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers 'Regulations on the classification of the Latvian education', in 2010 All nationally recognised education programmes from primary, secondary and higher education are referred to national qualifications levels</p>	<p>Eight-level structure was introduced</p>	<p>Level descriptors are defined as: – knowledge and (knowledge and comprehension), – skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication and general skills) and competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment) When developing the level descriptors, relevant state education standards, the EOF and Dublin level descriptors and Bloom's taxonomy were used</p>	<p>The Cabinet of Ministers 'Regulations on the classification of the Latvian education' is the legal basis for introducing 8-level structure</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Science is the competent authority</p>	<p>Academic Information Centre has been appointed as the NCP The referencing process started in 2009 It is organised in two stages: – phase I (2009-11) – the referencing of the existing Latvian formal education system to the EOF and the QF -EHEA – phase II (2013-15) – review of the national Self-assessment Report on the basis of the VET and HE laws and projects results One comprehensive referencing report was presented to the EOF AG in October 2011</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework		Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Liechtenstein	National qualifications framework is being developed Proposal for QF for HE was prepared in December 2010	Not decided yet	Not decided yet	Government decision (February 2011)	Design Stage	National Agency for International Affairs (AIBA) coordinates the work	
Lithuania	A comprehensive NQF covering all levels and types of qualifications (including Matura exam but excluding secondary education) has been adopted through Government Decree	Eight levels are adopted	Level descriptors reflect two parameters, characteristics of activities (complexity, autonomy, changeability) and types of competence (functional, cognitive and general)	A Decree on the NQF was adopted in 2010; it provides the legal and political basis for the NQF implementation	Implementation stage	The Ministry of Education and Science holds the main responsibility of developments	Referencing to take place autumn 2011

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The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Luxembourg</p> <p>Comprehensive NQF will cover all levels and types of education and training</p> <p>NQF draft proposal was presented to Council of Ministers in early 2009</p> <p>A set of level descriptors was prepared in 2010 and are currently being discussed and finalised</p>	<p>Eight levels have been agreed</p>	<p>Level descriptors are differentiated according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● attitude 	<p>Work started in 2006 following an initiative of the Ministry of Education</p> <p>The new law on vocational education and training adopted in autumn 2008 is key to the NQF developments</p>	<p>Advanced design and early adoption stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education (competent authority) coordinates the work in cooperation with other ministries, representatives of all subsystems of education and training and social partners</p>	<p>Referencing report is expected to be submitted by mid 2012</p>

Malta	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
	<p>Single comprehensive NQF for LLL (MQF) was launched in June 2007. It encompasses all levels of formal, non-formal and informal education and training</p>	<p>Eight levels are adopted</p>	<p>Each level descriptor is defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competence and learning outcomes</p> <p>Learning outcomes summarise knowledge, skills and competence and highlight specific skills such as communication skills, judgment skills and learning skills</p> <p>They give a broad profile of what an individual should know and do with varying degrees of autonomy and responsibility</p>	<p>NQF development started in 2005</p> <p>It is based on the Legal Notice 347 (2005)</p>	<p>Implementation since 2007</p>	<p>The work was initiated by the Ministry of Education (competent body) in cooperation with stakeholders from education and training, labour market, social partners and others: parent associations; student councils, and non-governmental organisations</p> <p>Malta Qualifications Council was set up in 2005: it coordinates and administers the NQF</p> <p>Amendments to Education Act (September 2011) have introduced a new body – the National Commission for Further and Higher Education</p>	<p>A single comprehensive referencing report to link national qualifications levels to EQF and QF-EHEA was presented in November 2009</p> <p>An updated report was prepared in February 2011</p>

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The scope and the purpose of the framework		Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Montenegro	A comprehensive NQF has been developed	Eight levels are adopted with sublevels at levels 1, 4 and 7	Level descriptors are defined as knowledge, skills and competence	National Qualifications Framework Law was adopted in 2010	Implementation	Ministry of Education and Sport has the overall responsibility	Referencing to the EQF is planned
The Netherlands	A comprehensive NQF including all nationally recognised qualifications has been adopted by the Government; it will mainly have a communication and orientation function The NQF builds on and integrates the QF for higher education already developed (since 2005)	Eight levels and one entry level has been adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - context - knowledge - skills - responsibility - independence 	Work started in January 2009 following an initiative of the Ministry of Education The final proposal adopted mid-2011	Adoption and early implementation	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (competent authority) will organise a process including all relevant stakeholders in education and training as well as in the labour market	Referencing report was presented to the EQF AG in October 2011

The scope and the purpose of the framework		Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Norway	Proposal for a comprehensive NQF have been through a final consultation stage and adoption by Government is (end 2011) prepared	Seven levels	Knowledge Skills General competence	The NQF will be based on a Ministerial Decree (Forskrift)	Adoption stage	Ministry of Education coordinates the work The involvement of social partners and other key-stakeholders has been important for the rapid progress made	Referencing to the EQF spring 2012
Poland	A proposal for a comprehensive NQF covering all levels and types of Polish qualifications has been suggested The framework will have an orientation and communication function but also emphasises a clear reform role A final proposal was ready by autumn 2011 The work builds on and integrates the work on a QF for HE started in 2006/07	An eight-level Polish NQF is proposed	Descriptors are defined by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge (scope, depth of understanding); ● skills (communication, problem solving, using knowledge in practice) ● Social competences (identity, autonomy, cooperation, responsibility) 	Work started in August 2008, following an initiative of the Ministry of Education A proposal for a comprehensive NQF was presented in December 2009 The final proposal was developed on this basis and concluded 2011	Adoption stage	Ministry of National Education is coordinating the work but with involvement of other ministries and the full range of subsystems of education and training	Referencing report is expected to be submitted in 2011

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	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Portugal	<p>Comprehensive NQF is in force since October 2010 as a single reference framework for classifying all school, VET and HE qualifications</p> <p>It integrates the system for the recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC)</p> <p>The national qualification catalogue, created in 2007, is the backbone of the NQF</p> <p>Framework for HE (FHEQ – Portugal), constituting an integral part of comprehensive national framework</p>	<p>Eight levels are adopted</p>	<p>Level descriptors are defined in broad categories of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● attitude <p>An interpretative guide (NQF –users’ guide) with more detailed level descriptors was prepared</p>	<p>NQF is legally based on the Decree No 782/2009 on the implementation of the NQF</p> <p>Work started in 2007, when the agreement between Government and social partners was signed and the Decree Law No 396/2007 on the establishment of the NQF was adopted</p>	<p>Implementation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity initiated the work in cooperation with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education</p> <p>National Agency for Qualifications was set up in 2007; it works closely with General Directorate of Higher Education</p> <p>The NQF implementation is supervised by the National Council for Vocational Education</p>	<p>National Agency for Qualifications is the NCP</p> <p>The final referencing report to link national levels to the EQF and QF-EHEA was presented to the EQF advisory group in June 2011</p>

The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
<p>Romania</p> <p>NQF will bring together all nationally recognised qualifications from IVET, CVET, apprenticeship at work, general education and HE</p> <p>NQF developments build on the five-level structure in VET</p> <p>QF for HE is being set up in parallel</p> <p>Methodology on the use of the NQF for HE was approved in June 2009</p>	<p>Eight levels have been proposed</p>	<p>Level descriptors are being developed, defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence <p>In QF for HE two categories of competence are defined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● professional competences (knowledge, skills) ● transversal competences (autonomy and responsibility, social interaction and professional development) 	<p>Development started in 2005 and builds on the five-level structure for VET and on the Tripartite Agreement signed by the Prime Minister, the Employers' National Confederation and the Trade Unions' National Confederation</p> <p>Development is continuing to incorporate the QF for HE into the comprehensive NQF</p>	<p>Design and early implementation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation initiated the work in cooperation with Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection</p> <p>Other ministries are involved (regional development, finance, etc.) as well as social partners and other relevant stakeholders from education and training</p> <p>In June 2011, National Council for Adult Training and Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership between Universities and Representatives of the Social and Economic Environment were merged into the single body – National Qualifications Authority</p>	<p>Preparations for referencing have started</p>

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Slovakia	<p>A proposal for a comprehensive NQF including all national qualifications from all subsystems of education and training was prepared in March 2011</p> <p>Main pillars of the NQF development are the national register of qualifications and the national register of occupations</p>	<p>Eight levels were proposed</p>	<p>EQF level descriptors were taken as a starting point</p> <p>National level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence</p> <p>Links with formal education and training system are established for every level</p>	<p>NQF development started in 2009 and is based on the Government Decision on EQF implementation (February 2009)</p> <p>Memorandum of Cooperation between Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family has been prepared</p>	<p>Design stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education has initiated and is coordinating the developments</p> <p>Other ministries (labour, interior, health, economy, regional development, transport, agriculture and culture) are involved</p>	<p>Referencing group was established in 2009</p> <p>The referencing report is expected to be prepared by end 2012</p> <p>Ministry of Education, Science, research and Sports – Adult Education and Youth Division is the EQF NCP</p>

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Slovenia	<p>Proposal for a comprehensive NQF has developed It will include all nationally recognised qualifications and support validation of non-formal and informal learning Main pillars are the register of occupational standards, assessment qualifications catalogues for NQOs and register of national VET framework curricula which includes assessment standards and VET titles</p>	<p>Ten levels are proposed</p>	<p>The level descriptors are defined in terms of outcome criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competences <p>For qualifications acquired after nationally accredited programmes additionally input criteria are used (access requirements, volume of learning expressed in credit points in HE and VET, typical length of programmes)</p>	<p>In 2006, Government Decree (No 46/2006) on the Introduction and use of the classification system of education and training (Klasius) was adopted</p>	<p>Consultation was carried out in spring 2011</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Sport in cooperation with Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology and the Statistical office initiated the development Ministry of Labour is involved as well as social partners and the National Institute for VET</p>	<p>A national steering committee was established in January 2010 Referencing report is expected to be prepared by 2012 National Institute for VET acts as NCP</p>

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Spain	<p>NQF for LLL (MECU) is being developed It will include and coordinate qualifications from different subsystems of education and training OF for HE (MECES) is being put in place in parallel NQF for LLL will have an orientation and communication function</p>	<p>Eight levels are proposed The four highest levels will be compatible with the OF for HE (MECES)</p>	<p>EQF level descriptors are being used as starting points They are defined in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence 	<p>NQF developments are based on various acts A royal Decree on the introduction of MECU will be adopted by the Spanish Government in 2011</p>	<p>Design and consultation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education is coordinating the NQF development in cooperation with other ministries (e.g. labour and immigration, science, industry, tourism and commerce, etc.)</p>	<p>The IFIIE (Institute for Teacher Training, Research and Education Innovation) within the Directorate General for Vocational Training has been designated as NCP Draft referencing report is expected to be prepared by 2012</p>

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	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
Sweden	<p>A comprehensive NQF covering all existing public education and training qualifications is currently being developed on the basis of a mandate given by the government</p> <p>A proposal was presented to the Government October 2010</p> <p>The Swedish NQF builds on and integrates the QF for higher education presented in 2007</p>	<p>Eight level structure was proposed</p>	<p>Level descriptors are defined as knowledge skills and competence</p>	<p>The Swedish Government decided on the 23 December 2009 to develop a comprehensive NQF</p>	<p>Design and consultation stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education (competent authority) coordinates the process</p> <p>An inter-ministerial group consisting of representatives of different ministries (education, labour, business and finance) has been set up</p>	<p>Referencing report is expected to be presented to the Government in mid 2011</p> <p>The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational education is designated as NCP</p>
FYROM	<p>A NQF is being developed</p> <p>Qualifications framework for higher education was adopted in 2010 by a decree on Higher Education Qualifications</p>	<p>Eight levels with a number of sub-levels are proposed</p>	<p>Level descriptors are defined as knowledge, skills and competence</p>		<p>Design stage</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Science is the competent body</p>	

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The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EOF
<p>Turkey</p> <p>Comprehensive NQF is under development It will bring together national vocational qualification system, led by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (NVQ system), QF for HE, developed in the Bologna process, and integrate them with the qualifications, awarded by Ministry of National Education</p>	<p>Eight levels are proposed</p>	<p>EQF descriptors have been taken as a starting point They are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge ● skills ● competence <p>In HE competence is further divided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● autonomy and responsibility ● learning to learn ● field specific competences ● social and communication skills (with emphasis on foreign languages and ICT) 	<p>Work started in 2005 The work of the NVQ system is legally embedded in the Vocational Qualification Authority Law (No 5544/2006) Development of a comprehensive framework is embedded in the Government programme documents, including the Action plan for the strengthening of relationship between education and employment</p>	<p>Design stage</p>	<p>Ministry of National Education (competent authority) initiated the work Since 2007, the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VOA) has been coordinating the process Council of Higher Education is in charge of developing QF for HE Broad range of stakeholders is included via Board of the VOA; employees' and employers' organisations and professional organisations and representatives from government (Ministries of Labour and Education, Higher Education Council</p>	<p>Draft referencing report is expected to be prepared by 2012 Vocational Authority (VOA) acts as the NCP</p>

	The scope and the purpose of the framework	Number of levels	Level descriptors	Political and legal basis for the NQF	Stage of work	Involvement of stakeholders and consultation	Referencing to the EQF
United Kingdom	<p>England and Northern Ireland formally introduced a qualifications and credit framework (QCF) in 2008. This framework has regulatory functions.</p> <p>A separate framework for higher education, FHEQ, exists for England, Northern Ireland and Wales.</p>	<p>A nine-level structure (including entry levels) has been adopted.</p>	<p>For England and Northern Ireland, each level is divided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge and understanding ● application and action ● autonomy and accountability 	<p>In England the qualifications regulator is the office of the qualifications and examinations regulator (OfQual). In Northern Ireland the regulator is the Council for Curriculum, examinations and assessment (CCEA).</p>	<p>Implemented and reflects development of frameworks starting late 1980s.</p>		<p>The QCF has been referenced to the EQF (February 2010).</p> <p>The Framework for higher education has not been referenced to the EQF, only to QF-EHEA.</p>

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	<p>Scotland has implemented a comprehensive framework, the SCQF, with orientation and communication functions</p>	<p>A 12-level structure (including entry levels) has been adopted</p>	<p>For Scotland, each level is defined in terms of five broad categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge and understanding ● practice (applied knowledge and understanding) ● generic cognitive skills (e.g. evaluation, critical analysis) ● communication, numeracy and IT skills ● autonomy, accountability and working with others 			<p>Framework is maintained by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership made up of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Universities of Scotland, Quality Assurance Agency, Association of Scotland Colleagues and Scottish Ministers</p>	<p>The Scottish framework was referenced to the EQF in February 2010</p>
	<p>Wales has implemented an overarching framework, the CQFW, with orientation and communication functions A separate framework for HE exists, the FHEQ</p>	<p>A nine-level structure (including entry levels) has been adopted</p>	<p>For Wales, each level is divided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge and understanding ● application and action ● autonomy and accountability 		<p>Implemented, reflects a long tradition in framework developments</p>		<p>Referenced to the EQF in February 2010 The Framework for higher education has not been referenced to the EQF, only to OF-EHEA</p>

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