

# **Inclusion of qualifications **awarded outside** **the formal education** in the NQF – conceptual and terminological issues**

Based on the analysis of solutions in 7 EU countries  
carried out within NQF-IN project

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In order to be a policy reform driver, an NQF has to be open to the various types of qualifications awarded in different educational sectors

But being open is not enough

Solutions and procedures within the NQF based system should:

- provide incentives to submit qualifications
- protect coherence of the system
- prevention against excessive proliferation
- be budgetary feasible

## Plan of the presentation

1. Introductory remarks: about NQF-IN project [3 slides]
2. Terminological issues regarding inclusion of qualifications [4 slides]
3. Key characteristics of qualifications system related to inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education system and distinguished variants [18 slides]
4. Concluding remarks [5 slides]

## Part 1. About NQF-IN project



## NQF-IN Partnership:

- Dublin Institute of Technology (Ireland)
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
- French Centre for Research on Qualifications (Cereq)
- Educational Research Institute (Poland)
- National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers (Czech Republic)
- University of Split (Croatia)
- Educational Authority (Hungary)

The main aim of the NQF-IN project:

to provide support to national governments, EU agencies  
and key stakeholders

in developing policies on including qualification  
in NQF

## How did we plan to achieve the aims of the project?

- preparing country reports of 7 European countries
- developing models of including non-formal sector qualifications in the national qualifications frameworks

NQF-IN project was funded within the Erasmus+ Programme, KA2, VET (2015-2018)

## Part 2. Terminological issues regarding inclusion of qualifications in the NQF



## “Inclusion of qualifications in the NQF”

The term “inclusion of a qualification in the NQF” defines a certain relationship between the individual qualification and national qualifications framework of a given country

**Conceptual issue:** can we include qualifications in the NQF (a grid of level descriptors)?

## Terminological issues (1):

“inclusion in/on the NQF” (e.g. Ireland, Scotland)

“inclusion in the qualifications register” (e.g. France, Czech Republik, Hungary)

“inclusion in the Integrated Qualifications System” (Poland)

“referencing to the NQF level descriptors” (Hungary)

## Terminological issues (2):

Within the NQF-IN project we came to conclusion to use the phrase:

*including qualifications in the NQF based qualifications system*

What types of qualifications might be included:

- **Conceptual issue**: based on what criteria should we categorise qualifications included in the system
- **Terminological issue**: how to name different types of qualifications without using adjectives  
*formal* and *non-formal*

## Part 3. Key characteristics of qualifications system related to inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education system and distinguished variants

[9 identified characteristics]

## Characteristic no. 1:

Types of qualifications that may be included in an NQF-based qualifications system

[according to the typology of qualifications proposed by the NQF-in Project]

Taking into account the legal basis criterium, we proposed following types of qualifications:

Type A - **state regulated** qualifications awarded **in the education system** (e.g. matura certificate, Master's degree)

Type B - **state regulated** qualifications awarded **outside the education system** (e.g. diver's licence, tax advisor, tourist guide)

Type C - **non-regulated qualifications** (e.g. certificate of risk management in banking, tennis coach, tour guiding)

Using the proposed typology we might formulate the following observations:

- Some NQFs are populated mostly with Type A and Type C (Ireland, Scotland)
- Some NQFs include some Type A and Type C with a substantial number of Type B qualifications (France, Poland)
- Some NQFs are limited only to Type A qualifications (general, VET) and/or HE qualifications



## How different types of qualifications are included in the NQF?

Type A qualifications, i.e. formal school qualifications are usually included in the NQF by law and/or at the moment of their creation

Type B qualification are usually being included on the request of relevant minister (agriculture, health, defence, etc.)

Inclusion of type C qualifications, is usually organised following application by the provider according to a defined procedure.

## Characteristic no. 2:

Ownership of a qualification included in an NQF-based qualifications system

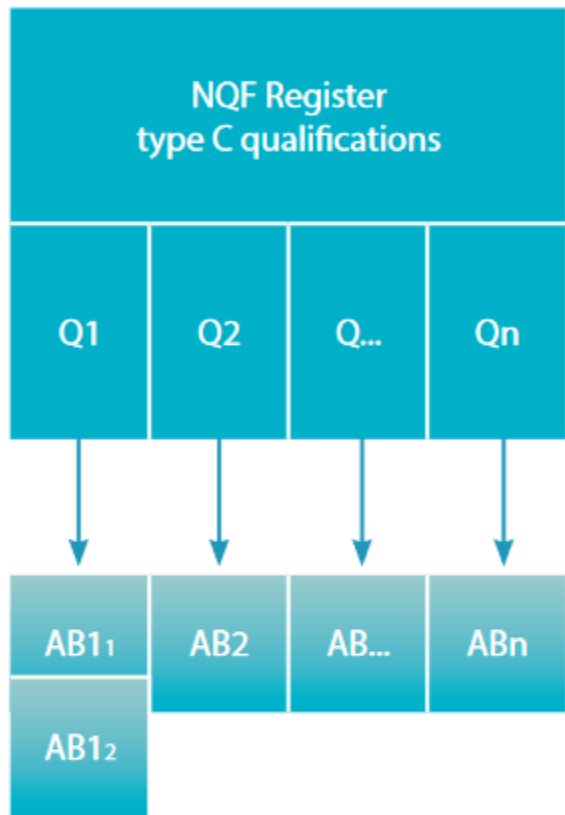
### Variant 2.1:

Qualifications included in the system remain the property of the submitting entity  
(UK countries, France, Ireland)

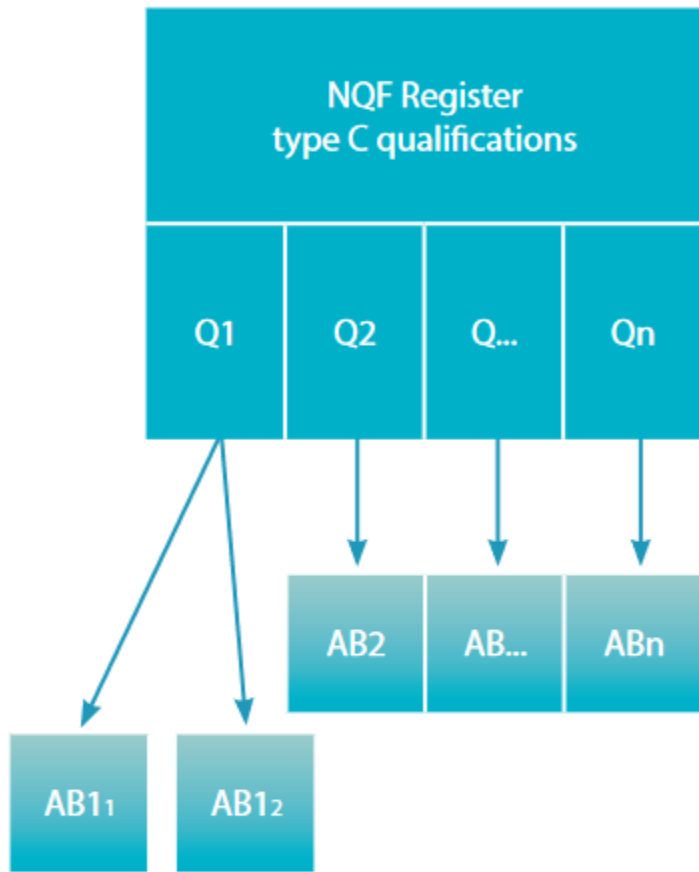
### Variant 2.2:

Qualifications included in the system become a public good  
(e.g. Poland, Croatia, Czech Republic)

Private status of qualifications included in the NQF system



Public status of qualifications included in the NQF system



Q1, Q2,..QN – denotes qualification 1, qualification 2, ..., qualification N in the system

AB1, AB2, ...AN – denotes the awarding body of qualification 1, awarding body of qualification 2,... awarding body of qualification n.

AB1<sub>1</sub> – denotes awarding body no.1 of qualification 1

AB1<sub>2</sub> – denotes awarding body no. 2 of qualification 1

## Characteristic no. 3:

Allowable level of similarity of the qualifications included in an NQF-based qualifications system

Variant 3.1 Similarity to qualifications included earlier in the qualifications system precludes the ability to include the submitted qualification in the system

Variant 3.2 Similarity to qualifications included earlier in the qualifications system does not preclude the ability to include the new qualification

## Note:

Implementation of variant 2.1 and 3.2 might lead to proliferation of the NQF based system.

Implementation of variant 3.1 and 2.1 might lead to monopolisation of the NQF based system.

## Characteristics no. 4:

character of the legal regulations on including qualifications in an NQF-based qualifications system



Variant 4.1: Specific regulations on inclusion have the character of required legal norms

Variant 4.2: Specific regulations on inclusion do not have the character of required legal norm

## Characteristics no. 5:

Scope of the regulations on including qualifications in an NQF-based qualifications system  
*(Tight vs Loose frameworks)*

## Variant 5.1

Specific regulations govern all significant elements in the process of including qualifications

(e.g. Ireland, France, Poland)

## Variant 5.2

Only general guidelines are provided, leaving a wide margin of discretion for specific stakeholder

(e.g. Scotland)

## Characteristics no. 6:

Degree of centralization of the decisions taken on including qualifications in an NQF-based qualifications system,

Variant 6.1 One institution decides on including qualifications

Variant 6.2. Many institutions can decide on including qualifications

## Characteristics no. 7:

Role of different stakeholder groups in activities relating to the inclusion of qualifications in an NQF-based qualifications system

Variant 7.1. The roles of public authorities and social partners are balanced in the process of including non-formal sector qualifications in NQF-based qualifications systems. Social partners have a strong role

Variant 7.2. Social partners have a weak role in the process of including non-formal sector qualifications in NQF-based qualifications systems

Variant 7.3 Social partners play no role in the process of including qualification

## Characteristics no. 8:

Fees for including qualifications in an NQF-based qualifications system

Variant 8.1 Fees are incurred when including a qualification in the system

Variant 8.2 No fees are incurred when including a qualification in the system

Two major roles of fees:

- to finance maintenance and development of a system
- enhancing efficiency by providing price signals

but high fees might exclude valuable  
institutions/qualifications from the qualifications system



Fees may be charged for submitting a qualification to the system

Examples of other possible funding mechanisms include:

- Fees imposed on each issued certificate/qualification.
- Fees imposed on the income earned by the awarding body resulting from the profits gained from the qualification
- Fees for quality assurance checks – audits by external bodies or institution

<b>Croatia</b>	It is envisaged that there will be no fees. Including non-formal sector qualifications will be financed from the state budget.
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<p>In the Czech Republic, the development of NSK and including qualifications in its register was accomplished with ESF Funds.</p> <p>However, the approved government document stipulates that the Ministry of Education will cover roughly 70% of total annual costs to maintain and further develop the NSK. Within multi-source financing, 30% of the set annual costs will be covered by employers to finance the operation of sector councils.</p>
<b>France</b>	No fees in the system.
<b>Hungary</b>	<p>Costs of the inclusion process for type B vocational training: a basic fee of EUR 322 + EUR 219 per training programme.</p> <p>Official external inspection every two years is performed by a regional government office, which is paid for by the state budget.</p>
<b>Ireland</b>	<p>5 000–10 000 EUR for the submission of quality assurance procedures to be approved for new providers.</p> <p>1 000–10 000 EUR for an application for the validation of a programme (qualification).</p>
<b>Poland</b>	<p>Any entity applying to include a market qualification to the NQF is charged a fee of 2 000 PLN (approx. 500 EUR).</p> <p>Any entity applying to become an awarding body is charged a fee of 10 000 PLN (approx. 2 500 EUR).</p>
<b>Scotland</b>	<p>Costs of becoming a CRB: 4 600–8 000 EUR.</p> <p>Each credit rating body sets its own fee rate scheme.</p>

## Characteristics no. 9:

The formal, legal and financial benefits of having a qualification included in an NQF-based qualifications system

Variant 9.2 Including qualifications in the system provides various types of formal and financial benefits to learners, training institutions and awarding bodies (scholarships, discounts, the right to seek financing or refunds)

Variant 9.3 Including qualifications in the system provides no benefits for various stakeholder group

For the needs of other analyses,  
it is also possible to distinguish additional characteristics of  
qualifications systems, e.g.

- the scope of the functioning of qualifications registers,
- the significance of occupational standards,
- the role of credit systems

## Part 4. Concluding remarks:

Analysis of the impact on the defined properties of a qualifications system

The following properties of qualifications system were chosen for analysis:

- the coherence of the qualifications system
- incentives for stakeholders to include qualifications
- absorption capacity of the national qualifications system
- dominance of resourceful institutions
- proliferation in the qualifications system

Each given variant (or configuration of variants) distinguished for the characteristics of the qualifications system can influence its properties

**Variants can influence the properties of the system in various ways.**



For example:

- variants strengthening the coherence of a qualifications system may weaken incentives to submit qualifications for inclusion in the system.
- variants providing incentives to submit qualifications can lead to excessive proliferation in the qualifications system.
- variants assumed to have the greatest impact on strengthening the coherence of the system and to limit proliferation are assumed to strengthen the dominance of resourceful institutions.

In the Table 13 of the Report: *Models of inclusion...* we presented our hypotheses regarding the impact of each variant on the properties of a qualifications system

See: [http://www.nqf-in.eu/downloads/NQF-IN\\_Report\\_Models\\_final.pdf](http://www.nqf-in.eu/downloads/NQF-IN_Report_Models_final.pdf)

	Coherence of an NQF-based qualifications system	Incentives for the inclusion of qualifications	Proliferation of qualifications in the system	Absorption capacities – including a large number of qualifications in the system in a short period of time	Domination of “large” and resourceful awarding bodies in the qualifications system
<p>Variant 2.2</p> <p>Qualifications included in the system become a public good</p>	<p><b>N / +</b></p> <p>This variant moderately contributes to the coherence of the qualifications system.</p> <p>Introducing solutions using this variant contributes to limiting the number of similar qualifications in the system, which may positively affect the coherence of the system.</p>	<p><b>-</b></p> <p>This variant negatively affects incentives for submitting qualifications to the system as some institutions may not be willing to share their know-how and ideas with other institutions and the public.</p> <p>This variant may block international awarding bodies from submitting their qualifications to the system.</p>	<p><b>-</b></p> <p>This variant contributes to limiting the proliferation of qualifications in the system.</p> <p>Awarding bodies do not need to create new qualifications in order to enter the system, as they can apply to become awarding bodies for qualifications already included in the system.</p> <p>This variant is in strong synergy with variants 3.1 and 3.2 with respect to proliferation in the system.</p>	<p><b>N</b></p> <p>This variant is neutral regarding absorption capacities.</p>	<p><b>N / -</b></p> <p>This variant can moderately contribute to limiting the domination of large and affluent awarding bodies, as these institutions will not be allowed to block “their” qualifications from other awarding bodies. Therefore, the risk of monopolisation and the concentration of qualifications in the system are lower.</p>



## How to include non-formal sector qualifications in NQFs?

The main goal of the NQF-IN project is to provide evidence based support to national governments, EU agencies and key stakeholders in developing policies on including non-formal sector qualifications into national qualifications frameworks.

For more information about the NQF-IN project visit our website

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