NQF in the context of Bologna Process

Criteria, compatibility and experiences.

Outline

- Introduction
- Criteria to verify compatibility of NQF with QF-EHEA
- QF-EHEA vs EQF
- LQF compliance with QF EHEA
- Practices across Europe
- Conclusions

" The success and the real acceptance of the Bologna Process in a country in Europe depends on trust and confidence amongst stakeholders in the country and internationally, which further depends on transparency of national self-certification process and their results. "

Dzelalija M., Maguire B. Study on self-certificationreports on the compatibility of NQF with the overarhching QF-EHEA.

Latvia has a history of complaince with Bologna reforms with regard to qualifications framework from early 1990s. HEIs offer programmes of the three Bologna cycles, including short-cycle.

Seven critera for the verification of compatibility of NQF with the QF-EHEA

- The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education.

- There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the QF-EHEA.

- The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits.

- The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.

- The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.

- The national framework and its correspondence to EHEA are shown in all diploma supplements.

- The responsibility of stakeholders involved in qualifications framework is clearly defined and public.

LQF compliance with QF-EHEA

- Criteria are fulfilled, which was established in the process of applying six verification procedures, involving various stakeholders.

- Final outcome: self-certification report that constitutes a part of EQF referencing report.

- Generally, LQF is compatible with QF-EHEA with some good practies being applied, however, there are a few things to consider for the future.

QF-EHEA vs EQF

- Criteria 1 and 7 of the QF-EHEA correspond to the criterion 1 of the EQF. They refer to the designated authority involved in the referencing and self-certification processes.

- Criteria 2 of both sets (QF-EHEA and EQF) illustrate the importance of having „clear and demostrable links'' between NQF and the QF-EHEA.

- Criteria 3 of both frameworks focus on implementation of learning outcomes and credit systems.

- Transparency and quality assurance are common elements of both (criteria 4 and 5, respectively).

- Despite the fact that QF-EHEA, unlike EQF, does not refers to establishing arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (c. 3), both frameworks underline the importance of mechanisms to certify any learning process in a standard and easily verified manner (c. 6 QF-EHEA; c. 10 EQF).

- Criteria 8 and 9 of EQF cannot be directly linked to criteria of QF-EHEA (both linked to referencing procedures).

Practices across Europe

Selected aspects

Reporting styles

- For countries with both processes in place there should be a coordinated self-certification process in place.

- Some countries separated the two processes, beginning with self-certification and the completing referencing (e.g. the UK, Ireland, Germany, Romania); over time more countries joined two processes in one report indicating it in the title (e.g. Latvia, Croatia, Norway) or not (e.g. Austria, Iceland).

- Latvia follows the most common type of reporting. As of September 2015, most of the countries issued a common report, where QF-EHEA was included in report's title and as a separate chapter.

Coherence between EQF and QF-EHEA

- Countries involved in both processes should ensure coherence between them on national level that include coordination of self-certification and referencing.

- Some countries may struggle with that due to political background: different agencies/ministeries/levels of govenrment might be responsible for different processes.

- However, self-certification and referencing do not have exactly the same aims or intended audiences. It needs to be ensuresd that stakeholders and experts reflect the specific context of Higher Education while self-certyfing QF-EHEA and the other way rounds – that wider aspects of EQF are consulted with respective cohort.

- Fulfillment of EQF criteria does not guarantee compliance with QF-EHEA and vice-versa.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

- Different terminology (RPL, validation/recognition of non-formal and informal learning, institutional alignment).

- Recognition/validation not directly guided by QF-EHEA, however it is an integral part of the Bologna Process in general.

- Different models:
  - Admission - HEIs responsible for final decision (France, Luxemburg, Norway);
  - Covering part of curriculum - HEIs responsible for final decision (Denmark, France, Scotland);
  - Limits: full completion (France, the Netherlands) vs. pre-defined limits (Poland, Italy, Spain).

- Most of the findings impossible to find within QF-EHEA self-certification reports, but some countries address it (e.g. Norway includes it under criterion 4).

Learning outcomes

- Formally introduced descriptors vs. Systematic implementation across higher education system
  - HEIs' ownership of implementing LOs on programme level coordinated by a national body reflected in criterion 7 (e.g. Norway)
- From Dublin descriptors to EQF descriptors – different approaches
  - Most of countries use EQF as a 'starting point' (e.g. Portugal, Slovenia, Denmark)
  - Sub-domains very detailed in some countries, despite of using EQF (e.g. The Netherlands)
  - 'Layered' structure: universal and cycle-related sets of descriptors (Poland)

LOs in LQF (Criterion 2)

- Three cycles of the Bologna Process (bachelors, masters, doctoral studies) using learning-outcomes-based descriptors. Terminology used derives from Dublin descriptors, Bloom's taxonomy and EQF descriptors, which allows for comparability between LQF and QF-EHEA (see examples below).

	EHEA descriptors[33]	Latvian level descriptors[34]
First cycle	Have **demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study** that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically	Able to demonstrate the **basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete branch of science or profession** and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this

often within a research context Can apply their **knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments** within	Able to **use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills** to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions Able to **provide arguments when explaining or**

Conclusions

Good practices

- **Single reporting mechanism** - the EQF Advisory Board considers it a tool for increased transparency showing close coordination of the referencing and self-certification processes.

- **Updating the QF-EHEA compliance** – self-certification was originally designed as a one-time event.

- Setting **two working groups**: EQF and Bologna. Both involve student representation.

- **Pre-Bologna qualifications** are referenced according to the EC NARIC recommendations.

- Involvement of **international experts** representing various countries and backgrounds.

- Inclusion of **short-cycles**.

Considerations

- QF-EHEA was designed as a one-time event only, whereas there is already a recommendation to periodically update referencing NQF to EQF. Should the same apply to QF-EHEA?

- Relating validation of non-formal and informal learning to QF-EHEA compliance.

- Empirical verification of the correspondence between notional student effort and students' actual use of their time in a/selected/all HEI(s).

- Reflection on how deeply learning outcomes are actually implemented with regard to quality assurance systems analysing intended and achieved learning outcomes.

Thank you!

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