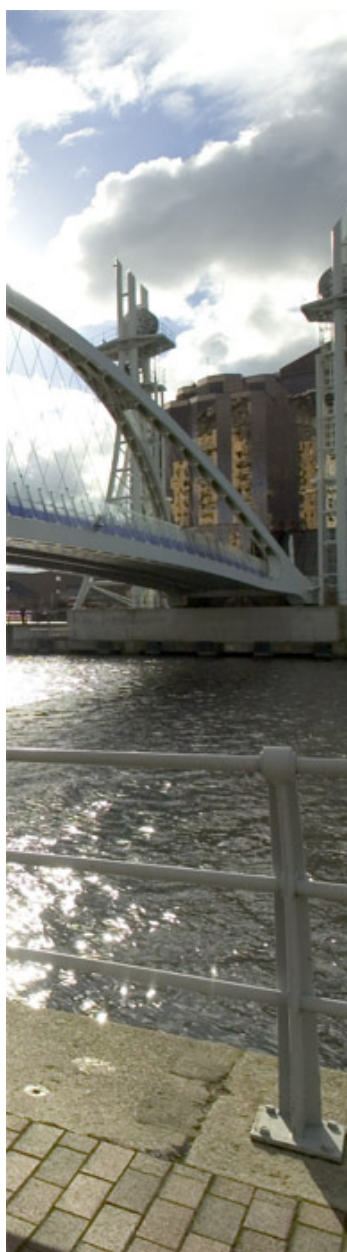


August 2011 EQF NEWSLETTER



European
Qualifications
Framework



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Résumé

Bienvenue dans la quatrième édition du bulletin du CEC, qui fournit des informations sur les derniers développements en matière de référencement des cadres nationaux de certification au CEC. Le bulletin commence par un éditorial de Pierre Mairesse, directeur à la DG Education et Culture. Celui-ci nous explique le rôle du CEC dans le contexte de la stratégie économique et sociale de l'UE pour la prochaine décennie, « Europe 2020 ».

Le bulletin revient sur l'expérience de la France en matière de référencement de son cadre national de certification. Un aperçu de l'approche employée, des principales difficultés rencontrées et de la manière dont celles-ci ont été surmontées est donné à travers un article dédié l'expérience française.

Le bulletin présente, dans l'article suivant, des informations sur le développement d'autres cadres régionaux et transnationaux de certification. Cet article décrit les différents modèles de certification émergents et explore l'impact de ces modèles sur la mobilité des étudiants et la reconnaissance des cer-

tifications. Il décrit également ce qui a bien fonctionné et il identifie les facteurs clés de succès pour leur mise en œuvre.

Le bulletin contient également un article sur la récente note n°2 du CEC, document de référence sur la mise en œuvre du CEC. La note s'appuie sur les enseignements que l'on peut tirer des pays qui ont récemment achevé le processus de référencement et fournit également des conseils pratiques sur la diffusion du rapport de référencement.

Le dernier article présente les résultats d'un atelier récemment organisé par le Cedefop sur les projets pilotes CEC intitulé « Construire des synergies et une vision commune », qui a eu lieu à Thessalonique les 15 et 16 décembre 2010. L'événement constitue le troisième d'une série d'ateliers ayant pour objet de partager les expériences et enseignements tirés des projets pilotes CEC qui ont soutenu la création de cadres sectoriels de certification. Un résumé des principales conclusions de l'atelier est présenté dans l'article.

Zusammenfassung

Willkommen zur vierten Ausgabe des EQR Newsletters, der Sie über die neuesten Entwicklungen im Hinblick auf die Verknüpfung nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen mit dem EQR informiert. Der Newsletter beginnt mit einem Leitartikel von Pierre Mairesse, Direktor, GD Bildung und Kultur, in welchem die Rolle des EQR im Rahmen der Europa 2020 Strategie für wirtschaftliche und soziale Entwicklung im aktuellen Jahrzehnt erläutert wird.

In einem weiteren Artikel wird die französische Erfahrung mit der Referenzierung des nationalen Qualifikationsrahmens zum EQR dargestellt. Der Bericht umfasst sowohl die Herangehensweise, als auch die wichtigsten Probleme beim Referenzierungsprozess – sowie wie die dabei entwickelten Lösungsansätze.

Diesem Bericht folgt ein Artikel mit Informationen über die Entwicklung anderer regionaler und transnationaler Qualifikationsrahmen. Der Artikel beschreibt die dabei entstehenden unterschiedli-

chen Modelle und untersucht den Einfluss dieser Qualifikationsrahmen auf Mobilität und Anerkennung, sowie die daraus ableitbaren Erfolgsfaktoren für die Umsetzung.

Der Newsletter enthält außerdem einen Artikel über die kürzlich veröffentlichte „EQF Note 2“ zum Thema Kopplung der nationalen Qualifikationssysteme an den EQR. Das Dokument basiert auf Praxisbeispielen aus den Ländern, die vor Kurzem den Referenzierungsprozess abgeschlossen haben, und bietet auch praktische Ratschläge für die Verbreitung des Referenzierungsberichts.

Der letzte Artikel beleuchtet die Ergebnisse eines Cedefop Workshops über EQR Pilotprojekte zum Thema « Erreichung von Synergien und einem gemeinsamen Verständnis », der am 15. und 16. Dezember 2010 in Thessaloniki durchgeführt wurde.

Dies war der dritte einer Reihe von Workshops, die die Vermittlung von Erfahrungen und Ergebnissen aus EQR Pilotprojekten bei der Erstellung von sektoralen Qualifikationsrahmen unterstützen.

Editorial

Pierre Mairesse, Director - Lifelong learning: horizontal policy issues and 2020 strategy,
Directorate-General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, European Commission

National qualifications frameworks and the EQF contribute to put in practice Europe's strategic vision of becoming a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy as stated in our common strategy "Europe 2020". By making qualifications systems and qualifications themselves more transparent and comparable, frameworks play a role in the realisation of a European labour market and a European area of lifelong learning, where citizens can move across countries and sectors. Smooth mobility and easier recognition of skills and competences in the home country as well as abroad – whether citizens would like to continue studies or to work – have grown even more important with the economic crisis.

Taking the political and economic context into account, I would like to note that this is a crucial year in the implementation of the EQF. Until now seven countries (three of them in 2011) have presented their report explaining the relationship between their national qualifications levels and the EQF. Eleven further countries are planning to follow them until the end of the year. This process means intense debates among a broad range of national stakeholders, seeking consensus about how national qualifications systems – which include all kinds and levels of qualifications in a life-long learning spectrum – can best be explained to stakeholders in other countries.

The national referencing reports are discussed within the EQF Advisory Group, which is responsible for the overall coherence and transparency of the implementation of the EQF. The

Advisory Group does not approve or reject a national report, but discusses the clarity of the report and provides suggestions on how to improve it. It proves to be a forum for open discussions, where country representatives, social partners and other stakeholders also debate issues and challenges in referencing. All acknowledge that referencing doesn't need not to be perfect, but countries need to be transparent about challenges and respond to comments from other countries. Challenges should not be avoided, but shared. I would like to thank all the members of EQF Advisory Group for making this possible, with their ever constructive attitude and their standing commitment.

Referencing to the EQF is a process in which the preparation and presentation of the national referencing report is a major step, but not the final one. This is clearly shown, in this issue of the Newsletter, by the French colleagues, who write about their experiences so far and their future plans (page 5). Qualifications systems and national qualification frameworks (NQF) are dynamically changing and their transparency needs to be sustained. Therefore, we can expect that the relationship of NQFs and the EQF may also change over time. The Advisory Group have already started to exchange views on how countries need to inform each other about these changes in due time in order to ensure that the mobility of citizens is not hindered. EQF Note 3 on referencing (page 7) points to key ideas in the discussions in the EQF Advisory Group and experiences of the first countries to reference to the EQF.

EQF is a transparency initiative: it is important to make its results available to everybody. For this purpose, the Commission has launched [a dedicated internet portal](#), which allows the quick and easy comparison of national qualifications levels with the EQF levels and gives access to more information about national systems. Currently in English only, it will be made available in all languages and it will grow into a portal connected to national qualifications registers.

The Hungarian Presidency conference on the EQF, which took place on 25–26 May in Budapest and where I had the pleasure of making the concluding remarks on behalf of the Commission, took stock of the implementation of the EQF, identified challenges and key next steps. Among the main messages drawn from the conference, I would stress the need to maintain trust towards the EQF by transparent referencing and by involving the broadest range of relevant stakeholders, as well as the need to always keep an eye on the benefit

Pierre Mairesse,
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for citizens. The conference also highlighted the strong commitment of national authorities and stakeholders to implementing the EQF and developing national qualification frameworks. Now we need to think about bringing these tools closer to citizens, also by making the relevant EQF level visible on individual qualifications certificates and Europass supplements in the coming period.

In conclusion, I consider that linking national qualification systems all over Europe to the EQF and thus making systems more comparable will be one of the greatest achievements of our European cooperation of the field of education and training. It is our shared responsibility and common goal to make this huge project successful.



Education and Culture DG

Reflections on Referencing the French NQF to the EQF

George Asseraf, IGAENR/ Président de la CNCP

Characteristics of the French National Qualification Framework (NQF)

The French National Qualification Framework is derived from the “Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles” (RNCP) which was first created by the French Law on the 17 January 2002. All qualifications¹ registered in this national framework have a national level value and this allows qualifications to be recognised in the labour market and by the government and social partners. Save for some specific cases of regulated occupations, all the qualifications registered on the RNCP can be obtained through: initial training, ongoing training and the validation of experience acquired.

The RNCP is orientated towards the skills and competencies required for the job market, and the qualifications within the framework provide clearly defined progression routes to employment. General qualifications, such as the “Baccalauréat général”, are obligatory routes to further levels of study, and presently are not part of the RNCP.

Referencing the RNCP to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

France presented its referencing report to the EQF Advisory Group on 10 October 2010. Under the responsibility of the General Secretary for European Affairs², the referencing was carried out by a working group of members of the “Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle” (CNCP). The referencing report describes how the five qualifications levels of the current RNCP relate to the levels of the EQF.

The first step to referencing the RNCP to the EQF was to conduct a series of SPOT³ analyses to test different methods for referencing. Following this analyses it was decided that a general reference should be established between the levels on a “block to block” basis, i.e. by lining up each level of the French framework with a level of the European framework, as far as was possible.

Following consultation with the representatives of the French Ministry of Higher Education, it was decided to reject the “block to block” logic for the “level I certifications” on the RNCP. It was agreed to allocate Masters and Doctorates to level 7 and level 8 of the EQF respectively.

In addition, there was a consensus that the current French NQF did not contain levels that corresponded to levels 1 and 2 of the EQF. The lowest level of the French NQF matched EQF level 3.

The correspondence established between the RNCP and the EQF is thus as follows:

NQF (1969)		EQF
I - Grade de Doctorat	→	8
I - Grade de Master	→	7
II - Grade de Licence	→	6
III	→	5
IV	→	4
V	→	3
Sans objet		2
Sans objet		1

Issues arising

One of the main difficulties encountered by the referencing working group was to establish parallels between the RNCP, which is oriented towards the skills and competencies required for the job market, and the EQF, where there is a referencing category linked to knowledge. The RNCP is based on the combination of knowledge and competences which are defined as vocational competences. Giving a value to knowledge alone introduces difficulties because the registration of a diploma in the RNCP is a registration of attested competences. For example, the diplomas of the French Ministry of Education and the French Ministry of Agriculture are registered on the basis of an analysis of the jobs. It is only one part of the process for developing qualifications and it comes during the second stage of the elaboration of the diploma.

¹ Certifications professionnelles : Diplomas and Titles with vocational outcomes and Qualification Certificates elaborated by Social Partners.

² SGAE is a Prime Minister Service

³ SPOT refers to testing different methods to identify their Strengths, Problems, Opportunities and Threats

Other qualifications also posed difficulties because their positioning is different from that of the levels referenced for similar vocational activities by other Member States. This is the case, for example, with the “Brevet de Maîtrise” (Further Vocational Training Certificate) developed by the chambers of trades and crafts. In France it is classified at level III and referenced at level 5 of the EQF although work done by the Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Trades (APCM) and its European partners within an EQF Leonardo da Vinci project would lead to placing it at level 6 of the EQF.

Next steps

Although it was often very difficult to draw a line between the work linked to referencing and that to be carried out to create a new list in the RNCP, the analyses made concerning the national descriptors and their comparison with the EQF descriptors led to reflections and critical analyses at a national level that are not mentioned in the referencing report, but will be taken into account to ensure that the

descriptors of the future French national list in the RNCP are as coherent and transparent as possible and can be compared with the descriptors in the EQF.

Whatever the results of the project we have launched on the RNCP, and which we cannot foresee because there is still a long way to go, we have now developed a procedure aimed at enhancing the transparency of the French national system for other countries.

In addition, in order to draw up a new nomenclature for the RNCP, studies will be carried out to examine whether a new lower qualifications level is necessary, which would correspond to EQF levels 1 or 2. This is in the light of two elements that seem contradictory: the increasing demand for people to be qualified to take up jobs and the need to enable people who have left the educational system without any diploma to nonetheless obtain recognition through qualification for their work which would be accepted by the government and social partners.

Commission Nationale de la Certification du Professionnelle website: <http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/>



Referencing National Qualification Levels to the EQF

Mike Coles, GHK Expert

After creating the eight levels of the EQF and the level descriptors, arguably the most important process for countries is developing the link between their national qualification system and the EQF. Without robust and credible referencing, there can be no role for the EQF in facilitating mobility within the EU, nor will there be trust in the EQF as a means of translating qualification levels from one country to another. The referencing process therefore holds the key to the future success of the EQF project.

The various groups that support the implementation of the EQF believe that there is a need for exchange between countries carrying out the ref-

erencing process. With this in mind the EQF Advisory Group has steered the production of EQF Note 3¹ on Referencing National Qualifications Frameworks to the EQF, which offers a synopsis of the experiences gained by the first countries to complete the referencing process – France, Ireland, Malta and the UK.

The referencing criteria

At the heart of the referencing process is a set of 10 criteria and procedures. All countries have agreed to meet the requirements of these criteria².

Referencing Criteria

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the EQF.
3. The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer (s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines.
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.
8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.
9. The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

¹ Available at http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/documentation_en.htm

² The referencing criteria parallel the criteria and processes embodied in the self-certification of countries higher education systems to the Framework of Qualifications of the European Area of Higher Education (FQEAHE). This has led to a more coherent approach to the referencing process in that some countries are now referencing to both European frameworks at the same time.

EQF Note 3 draws out the issues encountered by the countries that have completed the process and those who are close to finalising it to show how the criteria can be met and offers advice on the interpretation of requirements. EQF Note 3 also lists the key ingredients of the process in order to ensure that all countries have confidence that once an initial referencing process is complete, they can trust that national qualifications levels have accurately been related to the levels of the EQF.

Referencing is the end of the beginning

The first countries to reference their frameworks to the EQF have explained that NQFs and qualifications evolve with time and it will be necessary to return to the referencing process from time to time. EQF Note 3 provides some practical advice about managing the publication of a referencing report and disseminating it via stakeholders in the country. With this in mind and as further experience in national referencing processes becomes available, the EQF Advisory Group envisage the need for revising the Note to reflect on the different national approaches to referencing and pointing to solutions that can further increase the credibility and transparency of the referencing process.

Third Cedefop workshop on EQF pilot projects: building synergies and common understanding

Loukas Zahilas, Cedefop, Senior Expert on qualifications and learning outcomes

Background and context

The ongoing development and implementation of qualifications frameworks at European, national and sectoral level provides an opportunity to improve the function and relevance of qualifications, particularly their transparency and transferability. Because qualifications frameworks are being established for the first time in most countries and sectors, the Lifelong Learning Programme provided funding for partners developing frameworks to test and chart the challenges involved in the creation of frameworks.

Following two workshops in 2008¹ and 2009², Cedefop organised a third workshop to present the findings from a series of pilot projects in order to disseminate best practice and share experiences among stakeholders. The workshop “Building synergies and common understanding” was organised in Thessaloniki on 15–16 December 2010.

The third workshop³ was aimed at learning from projects that had taken place between 2007 and 2010 and earlier which had developed sectoral qualifications, frameworks and methodologies to define qualifications. The workshop explored how they had been used to:

- Inform the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and their referencing;
- Show the added value of the synergies created by the groups working together for the development of NQFs.

The presentations and discussions in the workshop covered the ongoing developments of qualifications and qualification frameworks. It brought together researchers, experts and those responsible for promoting the frameworks, as well as experts from the European Training Foundation and Cedefop.

Findings from the workshop

A number of key messages emerged from the workshop. These were:

1. Sectoral qualifications and qualifications frameworks are developing

Within sectors such as construction, automotive, aviation and agriculture, many projects have been working on developing a comprehensive range of sectoral qualifications. Starting from the identification of sectoral needs and moving to qualification mapping for the occupations within the sector, the projects have drafted occupational standards, qualifications and curricula for the sector. Using learning outcomes helps employers and individuals to better understand the purpose and content of qualifications.

2. Development of methodologies to define qualifications

The development of sectoral qualifications requires effective processes and methods to be in place for the analysis of occupational profiles and competences. An example where this has worked well is the **Sustainable Professionalisation (Professionalisation Durable)** project, which has applied a common methodology to develop two common European vocational diplomas (receptionist and logistics technician). The methodology was based on dividing tasks between national bodies and industry stakeholders: national bodies were responsible for organising training and content, the certification process and the award of the diploma; and industry stakeholders were responsible for establishing job descriptions, an inventory of competences and certification objectives. As well as providing a methodology to develop robust qualifications, this approach also established and strengthened networks of cooperation between training providers. In some instances the methodology was also used to create common European profiles that were implemented at a national level.

¹ Testing the European Qualifications Framework (EQF): Relating international, national and sectoral qualifications to the EQF

² Testing the EQF

³ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/events/17341.aspx>

3. Cooperation is important to build trust

The development of sectoral qualifications is embedded in a competitive environment where qualifications and human resource management are parts of internal business practices. Frameworks on the other hand require the development of zones of mutual trust based upon cooperation and transparency. Examples from the **automotive sector** show that a balance between competition and coopera-

tion can be reached by a continuous building-up of a comprehensive sectoral approach. The diversity of sectoral qualifications represents a challenge not only for the sectors themselves but also for education and training providers and individuals.

4. Success builds upon involvement and legitimacy

Pilot projects vary a lot in duration and consequently in the applicability of their results. Many efforts have been made to facilitate dissemination and exploitation of the outcomes in order to strengthen their impact at national and European levels. Among the elements that enable them to do this is the role of project promoters, especially the social partners, and their substantial contribution in influencing decisions and policies at national, sectoral and European level. There is evidence that projects with strong social partners' involvement lead to results that are applied at both European and national level. This is evident in work undertaken by pilot projects in **hairstressing**, where social partners were involved in the development of a sector qualifications and then played an important role in ensuring information was disseminated and that the qualifications were used at a national level. Another critical factor is the active cooperation of national authorities which can follow up the project results with practical implementation measures.

The EQF pilot project workshop held in Thessalonika on the 15 and 16 December 2010



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Beyond the EQF - Other Regional and Transnational Frameworks

Arjen Deij, European Training Foundation

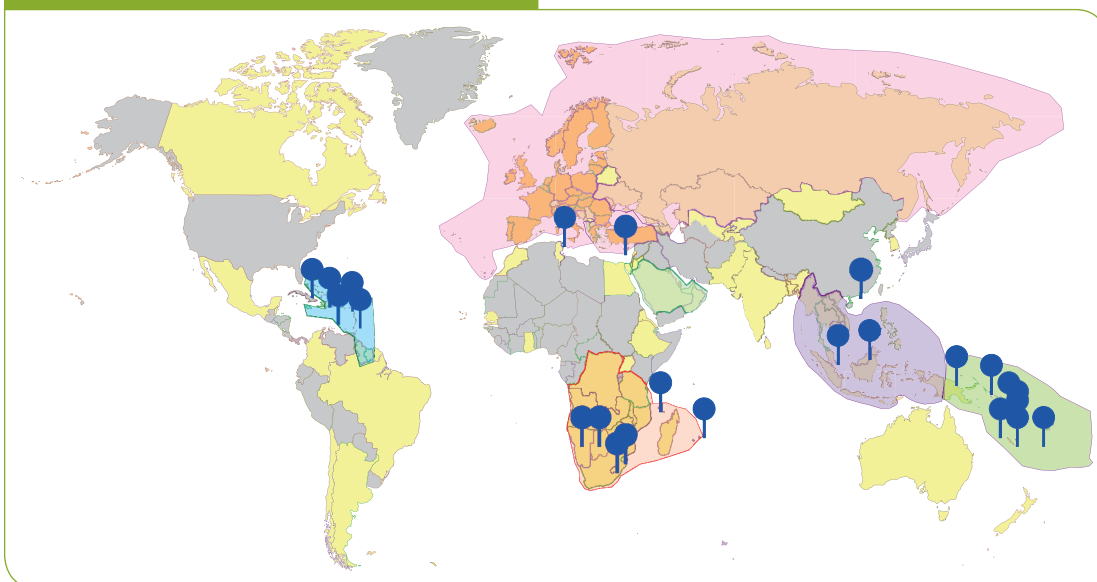
The European Training Foundation (ETF), which works with 30 countries in Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, undertook a study in 2010 to compare the development of regional and transnational qualifications frameworks around the globe. The study was carried out in co-operation with James Keevy of the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA).

The study compared the European Qualifications Framework, the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework, the Caribbean Qualifications Framework and mutual recognition arrangements in the ASEAN countries of South-East Asia. It also included the Transna-

tional Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), which covers English-speaking small countries across the globe and includes vocational education and training as well as higher education. The qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area and the Pacific Regional Qualifications Framework were not part of the study.

The ETF estimates that 137 countries worldwide are planning, developing or implementing qualifications frameworks, of which most are linked to one or more transnational initiatives. These are shown in the map below.

The EQF and Qualifications Frameworks Worldwide



Country colour: **Yellow** – Planning, developing or implementing a NQF; **Orange** – the 31 countries that are part of the EQF process; **Grey** – countries that are not developing an NQF

Cloud colour: **Pink** - countries that are part of the Bologna process; **Red** - countries that are part of the Southern African Development Community; **Light blue** - countries that are part of the Caribbean Qualifications Framework; **Purple** - countries that are part of ASEAN

Blue balloons: 32 countries that are part of the Transnational Qualifications Framework of the Commonwealth.

Study objectives

The study had three main objectives: (i) to compare different models of transnational frameworks; (ii) to consider how these frameworks would facilitate labour mobility and the mutual recognition of qualifications between participating countries; and (iii) to assess how these transnational initiatives have influenced the development of national qualifications frameworks.

Different models emerging

Although the study found that there are a wide range of different models and arrangements, two main models for transnational frameworks emerged: firstly, transnational frameworks based on a common set of qualifications that complement or replace national qualifications frameworks and, secondly, meta frameworks, which provide an overarching framework for existing national qualifications frameworks.

Transnational framework based on common qualifications	Meta Framework
Integration of national qualifications frameworks and systems	Framework of frameworks
A common set of qualifications	Qualifications linked to national systems
Common quality assurance policy	Common principles for quality assurance but different approaches

Impact

At present, there is no evidence that mobility has increased or changed in nature as a consequence of transnational frameworks. Nor is there currently data about how regional or transnational qualifications frameworks support the recognition of qualifications across borders.

Nonetheless, the study found that qualifications frameworks are influencing existing recognition practices by promoting outcomes-based approaches as opposed to more traditional approaches. Credential agencies internationally therefore need to work more closely with the bodies that are implementing and coordinating qualifications frameworks.

The study has also demonstrated that transnational qualifications frameworks and national qualifications frameworks can reinforce each other. Within Europe, countries with well established NQFs have already referenced to the EQF, while many countries are developing their NQF in parallel to referencing their national qualifications levels to the EQF. In the Southern African Development Community, it was decided that the regional framework should follow the establishment of NQFs; however, this has delayed the development of the regional framework. For VUSSC countries the benefits of the parallel development of NQFs and the VUSSC QF are widely recognised. The Caribbean Qualifications Framework has outpaced the level of development of NQFs in the region, while for the ASEAN Framework Arrangements no specific relationship between regional arrangements and NQFs are established at the time of the study.

Success factors for implementation

By comparing the different models, the study concluded that in order to have an impact the governance structure of frameworks must include a broad range of stakeholders to establish shared ownership of frameworks. For example, in the case of the EQF, the EQF Advisory Group comprises representatives of national governments of 31 countries, European social partners and key stakeholders involved in education and training policy in Europe. The Advisory Group is responsible for the overall coherence and transparency of the implementation of the EQF. At national level, EQF National Coordination Points have a coordinating role and are the main point of contact for external stakeholders. There is evidence that this governance structure works well and that the absence of similar structures coupled with limited resources and capability to implement frameworks have delayed developments in other parts of the world.

Further evidence about the extent to which regional and transnational frameworks have supported increased mobility should emerge over time and with this, further evidence about key success factors.

The study can be downloaded from the ETF website: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Transnational_qualifications_frameworks

What's New

Peer Learning Activity on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (NFIL)

A Peer Learning Activity¹ (PLA) on the theme of validation of non-formal and informal learning took place on the 15–16 November 2010 in Västerås, Sweden. The PLA was organised as an activity under the Learning Outcomes Group, and was hosted jointly by the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. It brought together 47 governmental and non-governmental representatives from 18 countries as well as representatives from DG Education and Culture, the European Training Foundation and Cedefop.

This PLA focused on the practical as well as political challenges involved in developing high quality and cost-efficient validation arrangements at national level and looked at the impact of policy developments. The discussions were intended to feed into the revision of the **European Guidelines for NFIL** and to reflect on a possible Council recommendation on the promotion and validation of NFIL.

The full report summarising the findings from the PLA can be found at: <http://kslll.net/PeerLearningActivities/PlaDetails.cfm?id=115&year=2020>

- 1 The Peer learning Activities are exchanges of information on different policy options, which can help advance reforms in national education and training systems. PLAs form, together with other mutual learning activities, a key part of the Education and Training 2010 work programme.

Peer Learning Activity on the role of quality assurance in defining, describing and assessing learning outcomes

A Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on the 'role of quality assurance in defining, describing and assessing learning outcomes' took place in Helsinki, Finland on the 29–30 November 2010. The PLA was hosted by the Finnish Ministry for Education and Culture and was attended by 46 delegates from 21 countries as well as representatives from DG Education and Culture, the European Training Foundation and Cedefop.

The PLA focused on stimulating discussion among delegates on the quality issues and challenges that countries face in moving towards a learning outcomes based approach, particularly in defining and describing qualifi-

cations and assessing learning. In addition the PLA explored the extent to which quality assurance arrangements and institutions at a national and international level address learning outcomes and how these processes can be strengthened or improved.

The full report from the PLA can be found at: <http://kslll.net/PeerLearningActivities/PlaDetails.cfm?id=113&year=2020>

Hungarian Presidency Conference on the EQF

The Hungarian Presidency Conference on the EQF took place on the 25–26 May 2011 in Budapest. The aim of the conference was to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the EQF and draw lessons from the experiences of countries in the implementation of national qualification frameworks and referencing national qualifications' levels to the EQF.

The conference was structured as a plenary session followed by workshops which explored in more depth:

- How trust in the EQF and national referencing processes can be strengthened
- The impact of national qualification frameworks and the learning outcomes approach on teaching and learning
- The role of qualification frameworks as a policy instrument for Lifelong Learning
- How qualification frameworks can promote dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders from different education and training subsectors
- The external dimension of the EQF

Information on the conference, including presentations and workshop discussion papers can be found at: <http://tempus.tpf.hu/eqf/index.php?page=8>

EQF project: Good practices in referencing

Six case studies have recently been produced on the different approaches taken by countries to reference national qualifications frameworks to the EQF, exploring in depth the methods employed to meet the 10 referencing criteria.

The case studies were undertaken as part of an EQF referencing project which aimed to facilitate communication between partner countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands) in order to enhance learning from each other and to develop 'mutual trust' in referencing qualifications levels to the EQF. In particular, the project identifies procedures of 'good practice' for referencing qualifications levels to the EQF and to propose a structure for the EQF referencing reports.

A **summary report** has been produced which summarises the different approaches and makes recommendations on good practice.

More details on the project and the country case studies are available at: <http://www.eqf-ref.eu>

The EQF Newsletter presents news and articles on developments related to the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework. This newsletter is produced by GHK Consulting on behalf of the European Commission.

The next issue of the EQF Newsletter will be published in Autumn 2011. If you would like to subscribe to the EQF Newsletter, please register in the **EQF Newsletter page of EQF portal**.

