



General EQF Application Scenario

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Preliminary Remark:

The deliverable at hand was intended to be updated continuously since there was always movement with regard to the development of national qualification frameworks, and the update was considered a tool for referring development work within the project to the most current developments in Europe. On the other hand, the more project work proceeded, the more it followed its own dynamics which reduced the meaning of analysing the processes going on at public level in the partner countries; in other words, there was less need for extensive analysis and description of these processes.

It is therefore not by chance that the “updating remarks” filled into the last column of Table 1 are relatively short at the end of project lifetime. If more elaborated information is required, it can be found at the website of the project *Common Grounds for Referencing NQFs and SQFs to the EQF* (<http://www.project-nqf-sqf.eu>) that deals with a topic which is related to the work of *EQF Predict*; National qualification frameworks are there currently considered in detail with regard to their referenceability to the EQF, and material collected there will be available also for further development of EQF Predict and its services (as the EQF Support Portal).

This document shall describe the *predictable general framework* in which adaptation of educational key elements can take place in terms of probable invariants and possible variants, thereby delivering advice how work of WP 3 – 6 could be carried out sensibly.

The description is based on Deliverable 12 *Synopsis of educational key elements and its various forms* comprising a collection of *educational key elements* considered basically *as such* invariants of education (as legal regulations, curricula, assessment procedures, etc.) but with regard to scope, granularity, participation of stakeholders appearing in different forms in the EU member states, and Deliverable 13 *Typology of expectable EQF application* including a description of *EQF application essentials* which all national/sectoral ways of application have to refer to, and a classification of approaches to link sectoral/national educational systems/frameworks to the EQF.

Within the above mentioned synopsis of educational key elements, the following information could be collected with regard to the project partners' countries:

1. Information about *professional profiles*
2. Information about *curricula and study programmes*
3. Information about *assessment and certification procedures*
4. Information about *quality management approaches*

The collection has been complemented by information about *responsibilities of stakeholders in education and training*.

Information about the current *status of national qualification frameworks* (resp. the status of their implementation) delivers the interface to the *Typology of expectable EQF application* described within Deliverable 13. Within this document, the following crucial issues have been pointed out:

- *Descriptors* play a crucial role for the EQF as well as for national qualification framework. Categories they are described by differ considerably from country to country.
- The number of *levels* defined by these descriptors also varies from country to country (although it can be seen that NQFs which have been set up after the introduction of the EQF mostly use the same number of levels as the EQF).

How the material collected within Deliverable 12 can be considered under the above mentioned aspects, is presented in table 1.

Eight countries have been selected for consideration. Although comparison has only been carried out at a very generic level, differences are considerable: There is not a single description which is totally identical with another one.

But these differences are, with regard to the *objective* of the general scenario to be described within Deliverable 14, only meaningful in a negative sense: There is no easily visible common dominator which would allow for relating to it the strongly differing definitions of national descriptors, thus delivering something like a map of European qualification frameworks showing the *conditions* under which the educational key elements selected for WP 3 – 5 can be assigned to the EQF.

The most “natural” common denominator is, of course, the relationship to the EQF which should be describable for all national and sectoral frameworks. At the moment, however, there are no “translations” available; for all national framework approaches it can only be identified *who* will be responsible for referencing NQFs to the EQF, but not *how* this is planned to be done¹. In order to get information about the *current framework of change* which is more than a well arranged collection of data, but is valuable for identifying the “hard issues” with which work of WP 2 – 6 has to be contrasted in national environments, it has therefore to be analysed what the reasons are which led to the specific framework status in every country.

This means actually that all information collected within Deliverable 12 *Synopsis of educational key elements and its various forms* has to be used in order to get real profiles of national framework environments which should show how the features of a national educational environment determine the specific status of a national qualification framework. But this analytical work would obviously exceed the limitations of a project like EQF Predict. It is therefore suggested, instead of this comprehensive study, to use the collected material for answering *questions which are important for assessing the value of significant features of national (draft) frameworks*; only if these questions are answered, it can be found the right way to contrast EQF assignment solutions found in our workpackages with positions of national stakeholders.

The next step to be gone in order to further develop this deliverable , thus making it more usable for further project work, should therefore be to set up a *catalogue of relevant questions based on the inspection of material collected within this and the other workpackages*.².

¹ There is, of course, a common understanding among stakeholders that referencing NQFs to the EQF is not trivial. This has been considered in a document specifically dealing with this issue, see *Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF* which refers to a list of 10 criteria agreed on by the EQF Advisory Group, available under http://www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingCriteria_000.pdf . The problem of referencing plays a crucial role in the project EQF Ref, see <http://www.eqf-ref.eu> .

The above mentioned list, however, does mainly deal with – necessarily - abstract quality criteria and does not deliver guidelines which exceed this dimension.

² Those questions could be: *What is the reason for extending the EQF descriptors in the German NQF? What is the reason that France simply considers the pre-existing RNCP a national qualification framework? Why is it Austria felt that descriptors should be complemented by specific explanations? What are the reasons for involving specific stakeholders?*, etc.

Table 1

| Country | Features of Descriptors | Number of Levels | Updating Remarks |
|---------|--|------------------|---|
| Austria | <p><i>Levels</i></p> <p>_using an eight-level structure (the number of levels is sufficiently distinctive and corresponds well to the main characteristics of the Austrian qualifications system);</p> <p>_levels 1-5: qualifications from all sectors of education and training will be referenced according to the same set of level descriptors;</p> <p>_levels 6-8: two sets of level descriptors will be used allowing academically and vocationally oriented qualifications to co-exist;</p> <p><i>Descriptors</i></p> <p>_Qualifications related to Bologna cycles (BA, MA, Doctorate) and awarded by HE institutions (universities, universities of applied sciences [Fachhochschulen] and university colleges for teacher education [Pädagogische Hochschulen]: using Dublin descriptors for allocating qualifications;</p> <p>_‘explanatory’ table(s) including criteria and procedures are currently being developed to ease referencing of national qualifications to the NQF levels;</p> <p>_VET qualifications and qualifications from adult learning: using EQF descriptors (and additional criteria) for allocating qualifications</p> | 8 | Draft referencing report is expected to be prepared in the near future. |
| France | <p>4 learning domains, declined in 100 specialities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disciplinary fields - Technico-professional fields of production - Technico-professional fields of services - Personal development fields <p>Descriptor categories are not explicitly determined, but are to a certain extent identical with EQF descriptors</p> | 5 | The French NQF was not established as such, but the existing <i>Repertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles</i> was identified to be a NQF. |
| Germany | <p>2 main competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional competence (sub-competences <i>knowledge</i> and <i>skills</i>) • Personal competence (sub-competences <i>social competence</i> and <i>self-competence</i>) | 8 | The draft of the German Qualification Framework (DQR) has been finalised by the experts’ group responsible for this work. |
| Italy | <p>The National Qualification Framework represents an important step for the evolution of the Italian system toward the definition of national criteria and methodologies able to give transparency and visibility of skills and competences achieved by trainees and workers in any context (formal, non formal and informal).</p> <p>As to the compliance with the learning outcomes approach it should be stressed that not only the “national standards” focused on competencies, now being developed, comply with this approach, but also the work that is being done in the various educational areas aims to ensure the utmost compliance with the EQF. The reorganisation currently under way in the context of the IFTS system (non academic higher technical education) (Decree 25 January 2008) and the related process will, for example, favour the development of basic competencies in line with the European</p> | 8 | It is expected that the Italian National Qualification Framework will be finalised at the end of 2012. |

| Country | Features of Descriptors | Number of Levels | Updating Remarks |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | strategy. With regards to the competencies common to all the paths, in fact, basic and transversal competencies already shared will be reformulated according to the EQF format, adopting the structure by learning outcomes. | | |
| England, Wales and Northern Ireland | 3 categories of descriptors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding • Application and action • Autonomy and accountability | Entry level (encompassing three sub-levels) + 8 levels | No fundamental changes since these frameworks had existed before the EQF came up. |
| Romania | 2 main categories, only used for Higher Education: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional Competences with sub-competences <i>Knowledge</i> (further subdivided into <i>knowledge, understanding, use of specific language</i> and <i>explanation and interpretation</i>) and <i>Skills</i> (further subdivided into <i>critical and constructive reflection</i> and <i>creativity and innovation</i>) 2. Transversal competences with sub-competences <i>Role competences</i> (further subdivided into <i>autonomy and responsibility</i> and <i>social interaction</i>) and <i>Personal and professional development competences</i> | 3 levels of Higher Education, oriented to the degrees Bachelor, Master, and Doctor. 5 levels referring to regulations of International Labour Office (ILO) – ISCO 88 COM, at EU level (Decision of European Council 85/368/EEC) | Actually there has not yet been taken a final decision about the number of levels since the new education law mentions the need to implement a NQF in Romania, but it does not specify the number of levels this qualification framework would include; this will remain one of the tasks of the recently founded National Authority for Qualifications (ANC), responsible for the <i>whole range</i> of qualifications. |
| Greece | Descriptors are more or less identical with the EQF descriptors: <i>Knowledge:</i> theoretical and/or objective <i>Skills:</i> cognitive (use of logical, intuitive, and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, material, tools, and instruments) <i>Competence:</i> Described in terms of responsibility and autonomy | 8 | The consultation process on the NQF is finalised. |
| Spain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity, context and work relationships • Responsibility and self sufficiency • Scientific and technical knowledge required to do work activities. • Capacity to apply, design and assess | 5 | The official publication of the Spanish NQF is foreseen by early 2012. At this moment the final document is ready and it is under final review by different public body levels. This document will be sent to the Spanish parliament body for final approval soon. The official Spanish NQF will embrace VET qualifications (managed by INCUAL – Spanish National Qualifications Institute) and University qualifications. It will have its own descriptors and levels covering now the entire Spanish Educational System. |

See <http://www.project-predict.eu/index.php?id=132> for more specific updates on the partner countries.