



Intellectual Output 7

Identification of policies to improve usage of EU tools in HVET: ECVET, ECTS and ESCO

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Table of abbreviations

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CVET	Continuous Vocational Education and Training
E&T	Education and Training
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
EfVET	European Forum for technical Vocational Education and Training
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance reference framework for Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations multilingual classification
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HVET	Higher Vocational education and Training
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
NA	National Agency
NQF	National Qualification Framework
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-based learning



Introduction – project SHINE

Project SHINE

Higher Vocational Education and Training (HVET) plays a crucial role in the European Union as its key objective being to prepare learners for innovation and excellence. The Erasmus+ project SHINE's main focus is to share European Best Practices via exchange of information, comparing findings, improving pathways and developing piloting tools and policy recommendations. With these goals, it addresses the Erasmus+ priorities which aim at increasing the labour market relevance of VET and to make the knowledge triangle work.

Higher Vocational Education and Training (HVET), especially for qualifications at EQF level 5, has a relevant role, and a tremendous potential to achieve the objectives mentioned above. In fact, its curricula:

- links to high-tech production sectors;
- fulfils the market demand of technicians with new and high-tech competences, able to foster innovation and master and manage advanced organisational and productive processes in an applied academic environment;
- connects upper secondary school and university, by bringing the world of education and training closer to the world of employment;
- is governed, designed and managed jointly by public authorities, schools, training bodies, enterprises;
- is highly interesting to students, as they offer perspectives at different levels such as: steady employment, career advancement, continuous training.

Aware of such challenges and potential, SHINE targets actors governing and managing HVET programmes, as well as students aiming at bridging the gap among individual local economic contexts and goals set by corresponding regional Smart Specialization Strategies. This is achieved by acknowledging the role and innovative potential of high-level technical professional profiles.

The project follows a foreseeing roadmap which foresees the following indicators:

- survey and evidence of excellence in HVET in partner territories, as to crosslinking HVET and business, management practices and governance;
- peer review of excellence and identification of innovations/spill overs for improvement, especially regarding smart specialization and local development strategies, proactive approach to training and skills supply design, business involvement, ability to deliver innovation services;
- definition of an innovative model for design and governance of HVET programmes, in order to encompass the above issues at stake;
- piloting the model in practice, by local action plans in VET institutions;
- assessment of results and subsequent identification of policy mechanisms to improve the use of EU tools (e.g. ESCO, ECVET) by HVET;
- definition of possible improvement processes and related indicators for high level (national/EU) policies;
- review of the model, by involving the “Triple Helix” stakeholders (training/innovation, business, institutions);
- validation and fine tuning.



In compliance with what is mentioned above, the methodology adopted by the consortium includes a constant switch among bottom-up (collection of information, stakeholders involvement, piloting) and top-down (model definition, process definition) phases, flanked by monitoring of progress made.

The main expected results will be:

- improvement of training offer by partners, with subsequent increase in the employment chances for students and in competitiveness for local companies;
- development in competences of company trainers involved in programme delivery, as part of an exchange of information with other EU excellent partners;
- setting-up of a permanent, relevant EU network, gathering public and private excellent HVET actors;
- capacity building of decision makers governing HVET, and subsequent acknowledgement of tools for reviewing innovation policies, with special regard to professional technical issues, as innovation drivers inside business;
- Definition and piloting of a governance system, based on the integration of HVET policy makers with the labour market.

The project is deployed in three phases, corresponding to the three years of its duration.

Phase 1 evidence of best practices in management of training and relations among local productive contexts, aimed at providing clear guidelines for for the development and innovation of existing systems.

Phase 2, building on output of phase 1, designs and identifies actions for improvement and innovation in partner territories regarding governance of HVET programmes, development/ enforcement of services to business, relationships with triple helix stakeholders (policy makers, education and training, business).

Phase 3 aims at:

- 1) ensuring valorisation and impact of outcomes on systems and policies in partner territories,
- 2) mainstreaming of recommended policies at a national and European level, and
- 3) integrating triple helix networks of partners.

This document

In the first half of the project, partners developed a number of tools, conveyed into a set of so-called “Local Action Plans”, namely, activities performed in partner territories in order to innovate, or to improve, the governance and/or the functioning of EQF5 training programmes.

The state of development, usage and implementation of such programmes is varies throughout the EU. Assessing and studying if, how and to what extent European frameworks and tools like the EQF, ECVET, ECTS and ESCO should be applied to each partner territory (or to each partner Local Action Plan) comes therefore at the right moment. For instance, even if the ESCO project is still under test, organisations providing for certified training should offer such classification (as a test case) system for description of profiles and possible job and career opportunities.

This document gathers the results of the investigation process carried out by partners on their own situation, on additional territories, through a European survey among EFVET members and interviews of key stakeholders and policy makers.

It is meant for partners first, to guide their further actions on this way, but also to all providers of EQF Level 5 training programmes, as a support in their search for continuous improvement. In other words,



this document has a specific address, mostly directed to project partners. We are well aware of the development of HVET in Europe through years, and in particular of the development of the Universities of Applied Sciences in German-speaking countries and in Switzerland, of the added value they brought into VET and of the success they achieved as to employers' satisfaction and consequent employment rates of their graduates. We are also very well aware that it was EQF who sought to push VET to the levels of higher education and made HVET so high on the political agenda of many member states. However, describing in detail such processes would be far beyond the scope and the possibility of SHINE. So, we chose on purpose to make this output descriptive rather than analytical. We see its added value in gathering information that can be partly found in other sources (particularly those of the EU) in *one* document.

Similarly, it should be considered that it is not only the EQF Level 5 qualification that has made an impact on HVET but also qualifications at a Bachelor's level, that is EQF Level 6. Many HEIs also have VET programmes at EQF Level 7 and this could also be developed to an EQF Level 8 qualification, that is applied research (which many companies seek through the *Universities of Applied Sciences*). There is therefore added value to employability in EQF levels 6 and 7, in particular across member states which are not partner countries in this project. We hope that this work can be useful for them, too.

After a brief overview on EU frameworks and tools for comparability and transparency in education and training, the document reports the current usage of such instruments in corresponding territories, describes the methodology and findings of the EU survey, and moves to some recommendations for improvement. An essential bibliography and an appendix, including all details about the European survey, complete the document.



EU frameworks and tools for comparability and transparency in education and training: a brief overview

Education and training systems greatly differ from one another in member states of the European Union.

Allowing for comparability among titles and qualifications is clearly a relevant issue, in order to promote mobility of citizens and workers in the Union. To achieve this goal, the EU has been putting huge efforts for many years, achieving important results. Probably the best-known example is the 3-cycle University scheme adopted as a consequence of the so-called Bologna process: across Europe, University students can enrol for a programme of studies at the level of bachelor degree or the first cycle of higher education), followed by a second cycle (master degree), and eventually a third cycle (the PhD level).

Qualifications acquired through University certify that students acquired similar (comparable) levels of education in a given subject, no matter where they started, continued, or completed their studies. In other words, as a result of the Bologna process (1999) there is a mutual recognition of University qualifications in the EU which enables students to move from one University to another to experience the rich diversity that European Universities have to offer .

This implies that the EU decided not to develop a new, overarching system in order to describe education levels. Rather, they decided to set up a number of tools to ensure comparability and transferability among national systems using a three tier system that already existed and provided clear guidelines of how levels of difficulty can be matched with higher qualifications and expertise. This process, started with education, was quickly extended to Vocational Education and Training, and then to the labour world, that is, to other professions.

In order to make one's way among the European jargon on these topics, we provide you with a very brief glossary of most used acronyms. We warmly recommend you to refer to official websites and publications, for more institutional and full descriptions.

EQF – the European Qualifications Framework

<https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/documentation>

This is the common reference for making qualifications more visible and comparable across different countries and systems. The EQF consists of 8 levels, ranging from the end of compulsory education (Levels 1 to 3) to the highest qualifications such as a Doctorate degree (Level 8). It covers all levels and all sub-systems of education and training, focussing on learning outcomes and the person's knowledge, skills and competences. Qualifications in the EQF are outcomes rather than input based.

NQF – the National Qualifications Framework

Following the adoption of the EQF, the EU invited all member states to adopt a National Qualifications Framework, that is, a description by levels of all qualifications of their national education and training system. Some member states already had their NQF, some did not. In the latter case, states were called by the EU to develop their own (like Italy). In both cases, member states were called to reference their levels in the NQF to the levels in the EQF. For example, the French NQF has only 5 levels, ordered the other way round compared to the EQF (level 1 is the highest and level 5 the lowest). National Qualifications Frameworks have acted as main catalysts for innovation and change in many systems of E&T in member states.



ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en

The ECTS is a credit system designed to allow students to move between different countries. It especially applies to university, even if they could be used also in other education levels. Credits are based on the workload students need to achieve the expected learning outcomes (that is, what a learner should know, understand and do after completing successfully a learning process); learning outcomes relate to level descriptors in national and European qualifications frameworks. The workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (lectures, seminars, projects, independent study time, etc.) required to achieve a qualification.. Credits acquired by passing exams/completing learning activities become “currency” students can use to navigate between one system of education and another. All relevant ECTS acquired can be added to contribute to an individual's degree programme. ECTSs normally come in batches of 30 per academic year and one credit is equal to twenty-five hours of learning.

ESG – Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area

<http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The ESG are not standards for quality, nor do they prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented, but they provide guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education. The ESG provide the criteria at European level against which quality assurance agencies and their activities are assessed. This ensures that the quality assurance agencies in the EHEA adhere to the same set of principles and the processes and procedures are modelled to fit the purposes and requirements of their contexts. The ESG should be considered in a broader context which also includes qualifications frameworks, ECTS and other instruments that also contribute to promoting the transparency and mutual trust in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

ECVET - European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training

https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en

The ECVET is somehow the credit system version for Vocational Education and Training (VET), that is, a technical framework to transfer, recognize and accumulate individuals' learning outcomes in order to achieve a qualification. It has some common points with the ECTS: it is a credit accumulation system, it aims at facilitating the recognition of learning outcomes with a view to obtaining a qualification and supporting the mobility of European citizens. At the same time, it shows some relevant differences, compared to the ECTS: it is **not** based on study workload, rather directly on learning outcomes; it encompasses informal and non-formal learning; it is more labour market-oriented. Unlike the ECTS, the ECVET is not used widely among education and training systems and this hinders the mobility of Vet students across Europe.

EQAVET – European Quality Assurance Reference Framework

<https://www.eqavet.eu>

The EQAVET is somehow the counterpart of ESG for Vocational education and Training, that is, a reference instrument designed to help EU countries supervise the continuous improvement of their vocational education and training systems based on the commonly agreed references. The EQAVET is meant, by building mutual trust between the VET systems, make it easier for a country to accept and recognise the skills and competencies acquired by learners in different countries and learning environments. In fact, the EQAVET comprises a quality assurance and improvement cycle (planning, implementation,



evaluation/assessment, review/revision) based on a selection of quality criteria, descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET-system and VET-provider levels.

ESCO – European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations

<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

ESCO is the multilingual classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. Set up in 2017, it is still under development. The Commission developed ESCO as a complementary tool to the EQF.

In fact on the one hand, Member States develop databases, in which they assign a NQF level to each qualification, relate them to the EQF, and describe the expected learning outcomes. ESCO, on the other hand, offers a standardised terminology to make these learning outcome descriptions understandable and comparable across borders.

EUROPASS

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

Europass is a set of five documents to make skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe particularly by employers. The five documents consist of:

1. The Curriculum Vitae helps present individual skills and qualifications effectively and clearly
2. The Language Passport which is a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications
3. The Europass Mobility which records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country
4. The Certificate Supplement describing the knowledge and skills of people holding a VET certificate, and
5. The Diploma Supplement which describes the knowledge and skills of people holding a higher education degree.



Present use of EU tools in partner countries

Partners were called at first to self-assess the knowledge and usage of EU tools in their own organisations, especially for the purposes of managing and continuously improve HVET training programmes covered by SHINE (generally varying from EQF4 to EQF6, depending on the country). Partners had to reflect on their experience and answer the following questions:

- Q1. What is the level of utilization in your country of EU tools such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET and ESCO?
- Q2. What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of EU tools?
- Q3. What are the visible results of the utilization of such tools (if any)?
- Q4. How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU tools?
- Q5. Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU tools?

Questions are somehow aligned along a logical path: current situation → difficulties → achievements → thinking of improvement → implementing actions for improvement.

Full answers by partners are shown in Appendix I. We present here a summary of findings and a few comments.

Q1. What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET and ESCO?

All partner countries have a NQF referenced to the EQF, even if some (e.g. Italy) completed this process quite recently. The ECTS is probably the best known tool, thanks to its broad use at tertiary level. University students are used to consider the “weight” of their exams in terms of ECTS, and –when necessary– to consider it like “currency” to spend in order to change their study programme, or to start a further one, or to take a mobility period abroad. EQF ranks second, at least as a known tool in the education and training sector. ECVET and EQAVET are known and used mostly by a limited number of stakeholders and training providers, and their use is not yet widespread. If on the one hand the nature and relevance of the EQAVET sounds easily meaningful by providers and stakeholders (used to the concept of “quality assurance”), on the other hand the added value (potentially) brought by ECVET is not very well known and understood. ESCO comes very often as a new tool in this scenario, and is scarcely known and not very much used, apart from some training providers at an institutional level.

Q2. What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU tools?

Partners were quite unanimous in answering that the first obstacle is the lack of knowledge and proper information/training amongst teachers, trainers, headmasters and business representatives.

Scarce knowledge implies little understanding and very little commitment to use EU tools. The EU tools often come as something strange, unknown, and therefore sometimes perceived as useless or redundant, or just an excuse devised by some “top-level bureaucratic entity”, to put additional workload on the shoulders of teachers. This first obstacle, mixed with some inertia to accept changes and apply innovation “embedded” in the education and training sectors, is slowing moving down –in the partners’ perception– the full utilization of EU tools is on the increase. Where such instruments have been used for many years (e.g. the ECTS at university), the somewhat different interpretation of their application by individual institutions in member states does not allow a full understanding of the added value of transparency and transferability. One more limit mentioned by partners is the only partial interoperability of EU tools with extra-EU models (e.g. comparing with China, Mexico and others).



Q3. What are the visible results of the utilization of such tools (if any)?

This is probably the answer where partners' experience differ the most. For example, in Sweden the most visible impact is on trainers working on vocational trainers for adults, giving an important tool to communicate the level of training outcomes, but little impact on mobility. Exactly the opposite is claimed to happen in Croatia, Romania and, to some extent in Italy and Germany. In Italy the adoption of some EU tools improved transparency among different regional qualification systems and favoured progress towards quality assurance, but impact is still low on employability. On the other hand it favoured employability in Romania. Everywhere, however, positive outcomes seem to be "scattered" and not systematic. There is more to be done to transform European "tools" into effective instruments of transparency and transferability.

Q4. How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU tools?

Here partners widely agree that proper information, specifically targeted, and a step-by-step approach could be a solution to the still scarce knowledge, understanding and usage of EU tools and qualifications frameworks. Proper information means wide communication, carried out at several levels (national, regional and local), accompanied by training that should include presentation of good practices already in place and shared experiences with different member states. Specifically targeted information means that –for example– practices shown should be different, depending on the target group (e.g. teachers/trainers, rather than headmasters/principals, rather than companies): they should clearly demonstrate advantages (in organisational, financial, visibility, attractiveness, employability terms for example) for each group. A step-by-step approach means that tools should be introduced one by one, and links with one another adequately explained without "overwhelming" target groups with a number of acronyms and documents all at once (what at present makes the overall scenario and role of each EU "tool" not immediately clear to non-experienced users) and stakeholders outside the education and training sector such as employers and other social partners.

Q5. Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU tools?

All project partners are involved in activities targeted to achieve the adoption of the EU "tools". Apart from participating in SHINE (which is itself aiming to the same goal), partners either carry out activities or projects, or adopt strategies in their internal organisation, or hold information sessions for the public, or are involved at a local or national (or –for EfVET–) European level in committees and working groups. Some (e.g. Germany, Italy-Region Veneto) also take part in related working groups with local/national stakeholders belonging to the labour market sector.



The contribution of the European survey

Experience and data show that not all European practitioners working in VET or HVET are aware of the tools or their potential for bringing about a European wide recognition of qualifications and levels. For example the ECVET – was initially launched following the EQF and the drive to map NQF's individual countries to a common EQF. Next stage was originally intended to ensure learning outcomes-/competency-based qualifications for each level could be deemed similar, that is, a level 3 qualification or a level 5 qualification at HVET in one could be recognized as comparable to a similar qualification in another member state, based on defined learning outcomes. Unfortunately, at the moment, ECVET is only/mostly being used within the context of transnational mobility programmes whereby learners can be recognized for their competences gained during mobility. But still a qualification at level 3 or 4 in one country is not necessarily the same as in another, and ECVET –where known– is still considered too complicated to complete a full credit transfer system. From a European perspective it has not gone that far. The route to mobility in VET or HVET is still unclear and students are at a disadvantage compared with those in universities and traditional higher education institutions of the academic research mainstream. The ECTS on the other hand has taken 15 years to fully implement but has proven its effectiveness by the success of the ERASMUS programme. With VET, the task is much more daunting at whichever level one looks at.

In October 2017, EfVET launched a survey questionnaire in order to investigate the extent to which EU tools for transparency in competence recognition are known and used in the VET and HVET environment. Questionnaires were sent to staff and teachers/trainers of HVET programmes run by project partners, students of the same programmes, national networks of partners and other stakeholders at the European level like EuroChambres, EURASHE, SPACE, ENTER.

The survey analysed how teachers/stakeholders/others would like to improve the European policies and tools that have been agreed upon for competence validation and recognition. The survey was closed in December 2017, totalling 350 answers from respondents belonging to 87 organisations in 18 EU countries. Most respondents belong to the VET (52%) and HVET (18%) sector, about one in four from HEI (24%), and the rest (6%) from the labour market. Furthermore, some key stakeholders were interviewed directly, and asked a few questions on the same topics.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the survey is not meant as a scientific statistical tool. Partners did not carry out a true sampling nor any control group was set up for counterfactual checking. Nevertheless, information collected through the survey was considered useful by partners, as it gave a general understanding of the situation and to identify opinions and suggestions for improvement.

A full report on the survey is provided for in Appendix II. We recall here the main findings.

- a share of respondents are familiar with the EQF (34%) and ECTS (29%), but many more are not familiar at all with EQAVET (42%) and ESCO (51%);
- over 70% of respondents know their countries have a NQF, even if only 59% of them know if their NQF is referenced to the EQF;
- only 31% currently include details of the EQF level in their qualification certificates; the percentage is slightly better when it comes to diploma supplements (37%);
- 72% acknowledge some usefulness of having a NQF/the EQF for their school business, even if only 21% declared it is highly important for them;
- mobility is acknowledged as **the** field where EU tools are used the most: some 51% of respondents



have been involved at least once in validating/recognising Learning Outcomes gained through mobility;

- even if 55% stressed that ECVET can improve employability of VET graduates, almost 60% of respondents declared their organisations are not using neither the ECTS nor ECVET;
- ESCO is still an enigma for the majority of respondents: only 15% visited the ESCO website at least once, over 83% declared they do not fully understand its functioning, and 59% do not think the use of ESCO could improve employability;
- perception of policies put in place at single nation-wide level in order to improve the knowledge and usage of EU tools varies greatly from one country to another: while some underline the great job made by National Agencies in updating and keeping VET stakeholders informed, other declared they could not even notice such activities by their NA;
- in order to overcome this issue, many claimed for more communication and more information by the NA in addition to training the teachers and trainers to the use of EU tools, and enforcing the exchange of good practices.

Summing up, the overall feeling is that:

- i. there is still an insufficient level of information about EU tools, especially ECVET, EQAVET and ESCO;
- ii. European tools have the potential to improve transparency of qualifications and occupational profiles, but they still need to be used, understood and evaluated;
- iii. the use of European tools is mostly within schools and training centres: the labour market knows very little about them, and must be informed and convinced of their usefulness and about the advantages they can bring to the workplace, to business and to the individual capacity to grow as a person and as a professional worker.



Possible developments, improvements, actions and recommendations in the implementation of EU tools

In HVET there is not an established tradition in European countries, except for those that have a dual system. Currently European policies point out the need to implement a system parallel to the academic stream one having the following characteristics: on the one hand, having the same parity of esteem and labour market value and on the other hand, being deeply distinguished as it should meet different needs for instance:

- a) flexibility to adjust to changes of the labour market;
- b) the needs of the labour market in order to train the so-called knowledge worker;
- c) guarantee of a good level of immediate employability and openness to a continuous professional development;
- d) enhancement of the attitudes and potentialities of each individual in order to guarantee social inclusion;
- e) a highly specialized profile;
- f) content which clearly defines production, technological and scientific innovations and access to university education;
- g) the guarantee for transnational mobility and work-based learning;
- h) transparency and consistency within and across European tools.

Trends, action pathways and recommendations

In assessing the results of the findings, a number of pathways have been revealed targeting the improvement in the usage of EU tools:

- a type of standard that has to meet the characteristics described above
 - a) being designed in such a way as to allow for partial changes (flexibility) that are in line with the general structure
 - b) using the language of the labour market (process, activity and task) that should be linked to the one typical of education and training using the EQF glossary (learning outcomes and the established paradigm describing qualifications as composed of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC).
 - c) introducing innovative KSC corresponding to particular tasks that take into account the development of the world of work;
- contributing to the principle of increasingly defining/developing the connection perspective between learning outcomes and final competences. This presupposes the design of a standard able to create a match between learning outcomes and final competences and to enhance the concrete possibility/feasibility to achieve the final results by the learning. For this purpose, the model proposed in SHINE (taken from the previous Leonardo da Vinci - *Be-twin project*) is based on the final competences required by the labour market and match them with the learning activities through the learning outcomes approach (to reach such final competences, what learning outcomes shall I achieve?);
- structured dialogue with the business world;
 - a) Ability to establish relationships with companies based on mutual benefits and mutual trust (on the one hand, giving services to the company and on the other hand, the company opens its spaces to the training provider and learners);



- b) Choosing WBL and project work activities that allow, the identification of positive attitudes (intuition, creative spirit) and tools and opportunities that enhance the potentialities;
- c) Developing a holistic approach to all qualifications in order to understand not only formal but also non-formal and informal types of learning;
- the governance
 - a) Having an instrument (assembly, etc.) for a structured dialogue
- the learning pathway
 - a) Defining a training project for internships, visits and contacts with university and production laboratories of excellence; visits to fairs and exhibition;
- a dialogue with the world of research and innovation;
- being in line with EU tools.

Regarding this last point, the report now presents developments, trends and recommendations on the implementation and usage of the main EU tools and qualifications frameworks.

EQF– European Qualification Framework

CEDEFOP¹ stated that the EQF and the National Qualifications Framework have been implemented in all 39 countries at different stages and an increasing number are now becoming operational and make contributions to education and training policies and practices in their respective countries.

Current trends point out towards:

- a) a rapid development in the implementation of EQF and the National Qualifications Framework; before 2005, frameworks were in place in three European countries: Ireland, France and the UK. By 2017 NQFs have been introduced by all 39 EQF participating countries. A total of 35 countries are working towards comprehensive frameworks, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and increasingly opening up to qualifications awarded in non-formal contexts;
- b) the implementation of NQFs entails a conceptual and technical development in all countries. The majority of them have formally adopted their NQFs, most recently in Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Italy and Finland. Of the EU countries, only Spain have yet to finalise developments and/or adoption
- c) Croatia has reached only an early operational stage
- d) within the partnership, Germany, Belgium and Italy have reached a more mature operational status
- e) 34 countries had formally linked ('referenced') their national qualifications frameworks to the EQF; within the partnership, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Croatia and Belgium (Flemish Community) have presented updates;
- f) 29 countries participating in EQF implementation have also self-certified their framework against the Bologna framework; 20 of these have done this together with the EQF referencing process
- g) 29 countries have introduced EQF/NQF levels in national qualifications documents (within the consortium Germany, Italy and Belgium-Flemish Community; 17 have included levels in their national qualifications databases; for example, Germany and Belgium-Flemish Community.

The following common characteristics of European NQFs can be identified:

¹ CEDEFOP, National Qualifications Framework developments in Europe 2017, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018



- a) 35 countries are working towards comprehensive frameworks, addressing all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and, in some cases, opening up to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. In Germany, the agreement was reached in 2017 to include general education qualifications in the framework, including *Abitur*, Baccalaureate as well as the *Fachhochschulreife* to level 4 of the EQF
- b) most countries have introduced eight-level frameworks; a number of countries use sublevels as important to meet the interests of certain stakeholders; all countries have introduced learning-outcomes-based level descriptors but they have also further developed national level descriptors to reflect national traditions and objectives; this is important for transparency purposes
- c) NQFs enable users to be committed and own frameworks as tools that allow change in national education systems; NQFs guarantee sustainability and visibility to end-users, two important conditions for ensuring a positive impact among learners and workers.

The areas where the implementation of the EQF and the NQFs has provided benefits:

- a) improved transparency of national qualification systems; EQF level 5 has been used as a platform in developing new qualifications;
- b) a reinforced and more consistent implementation of learning outcomes approaches; this is clear in Croatia and Belgium (where learning outcomes are specified independently from curriculum and provider);
- c) linking qualifications frameworks and validation of non-formal and informal learning; learning outcomes act as a reference point for identifying, documenting, assessing and recognising learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings. There is a link between validation arrangements and formal education qualifications in the NQF in at least 28 countries; validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences and skills is possible in 17 countries;
- d) a greater stakeholder engagement and coordination. Cross-sectoral bodies such as national qualification councils have been established in Croatia; a coordination point for the German qualifications framework was also set up;
- e) NQFs have opened up to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. Germany and Sweden have started working on procedures for including non-formal and private sector qualifications and certificates;
- f) NQFs cover levels 5 to 8 of the EQF. The learning-outcomes-based levels of the NQFs have played a pivotal role in making visible HVET qualifications at levels 5 to 8. In Germany master craftsman qualification has been placed at level 6

Some areas of limited impact can be highlighted and thus the following recommendations can be suggested:

- a) visibility and labour market use. In Germany the NQF can be used to support human resource development;
- b) more articulation between institutions and education and training subsystems for reducing barriers to progression in education, training and learning, and for strengthening overall permeability of education and training systems;
- c) a contribution to institutional reforms. For example, Romania has decided to merge multiple qualification bodies into single entities covering all types and levels of qualification and Croatia will make future institutional reforms;
- d) an early stage in the NQF support to recognition of qualifications across countries and to usage in students and workers' mobility.

Below the implementation process of the NQF in partner countries:



BELGIUM: three NQFs, one for each of the three language Communities: Flemish, French and German-speaking. French community: NQF was introduced in 2010, referenced in December 2013 and implemented in 2015. It is an eight-level framework and only qualifications delivered by public providers are included. The framework supports validation of non-formal and informal learning. The NQF for the German-speaking was adopted in 2013 and it has not been referenced yet. It is an eight-level framework covering primary, secondary education, VET and HE. A system of validation of non-formal and informal learning will be linked to the framework in the future. The NQF for the Flemish community was introduced in 2009, referenced in June 2011. It is an eight-level framework and covers qualifications from primary to HE. It has a system to recognize non formal and informal learning.

CROATIA: the NQF was implemented in 2014 and referenced in March 2012. It is an eight-level framework covering qualifications of general education, VET and HE. It includes a system for validating and recognizing non-formal and informal learning and also a system for registering and integrating occupational standards with qualifications standards through units of competences and units of learning outcomes.

GERMANY: the NQF was implemented in 2013 and referenced to the EQF in December 2012. It is an eight-level framework covering qualifications from VET and HE whereas those from general education were introduced only in 2017. Descriptors differentiate between two categories of competence: professional, subdivided into knowledge and skills; and personal, including social competence and autonomy. Non-formal qualifications were not inserted in the framework.

ITALY: the NQF was legally established in a 2018 decree, with a Decree signed by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and the Regions; in 2008-2012 the qualifications of secondary education, HE and VET have been designed in terms of LO. A national repertory of qualifications was established by Decree 13/2013 and comprises four different sections: higher education, secondary education, vocational education and training, and the national framework of regional qualifications. The framework was referenced to EQF in 2013 (the first referencing report was presented in May 2013). In 2015 the national framework of regional qualifications was adopted by an inter-ministerial decree. Law 92/2012 contains provisions on a national system of certification of competences and services for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

ROMANIA: the NQF was adopted in 2013 and a draft EQF referencing report was presented in 2014. The final one is expected to be submitted in 2018. It is an eight-level system and it is at an early stage, even if it is seen as a tool to support national reforms and modernization of education and training. There is a system to validate non-formal and informal learning.

SWEDEN: the NQF was adopted in 2015 and came into force in January 2016; it was referenced to EQF in June 2016. It is at an early stage. It is an eight-level system and it supports validation of non-formal and informal learning.

ECVET – European Credit System for VET

CEDEFOP has conducted a monitoring on the implementation of ECVET for the period 2010 – 2015.² The monitoring covered the following areas:

- a) the current situation and development direction: 32 countries responded (the EU-28 and 4 extra EU). 17 countries reported that they have a credit system, not necessarily ECVET. Seven countries use credits in some qualifications. In 2013 eight countries didn't have a credit system; 2 countries are

² Research Paper – ECVET in Europe – Monitoring report 2015



ECVET compatible (also Belgium). 12 countries do not have a system that allows accumulating and transferring learning outcomes of individuals; of these, seven (Belgium-Flemish Community, Germany, reported no initiatives on ECVET implementation at system level. 31 countries have national ECVET contact points.

Countries can be divided in 3 groups: 1) countries that have credit systems compatible with ECVET (including Belgium French-community and Sweden) 2) countries that are working towards ECVET-compatible systems (eg. Croatia, Italy and Romania) and 3) countries without credit systems and without system-level ECVET initiatives (Germany and Belgium Flemish-community).

- b) Implementation and application of ECVET principles and components: with regard to the three groups above, in the first group 15 countries have credit systems compatible with ECVET; most are fully operational (Sweden), some need further development (Belgium French-Community). In the second group four countries look at the components that already exist and they can decide to take some of them on board, adapt or discard. Croatia will continue to use units of LO and ECVET points as they already exist but will work on assessment, validation and recognition of LO. 10 countries have started testing ECVET technical components. Romania has its own credit systems that allows accumulating and transferring learning outcomes, and has Memoranda of Understanding, learning agreements etc. Italy use credits in some qualifications and it is still discussing the conceptual framework. Italy is currently testing ECVET technical components. In the third group we can take Belgium as example; it has not engaged with any initiatives at system level; Germany is uncertain about the feasibility of ECVET decision due to scepticism of some stakeholders. Nevertheless Germany has launched networks to promote ECVET.
- c) ECVET implementation: countries report positive feedback indicating multiple benefits: a) learning outcomes make learning easier to compare, make qualification more transparent b) ECVET encourages and supports mobility and contributes to its quality c) ECVET contributes to better recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad d) enhanced possibilities of recognition of learning outcomes support inclusion
- d) Promoting ECVET and informing stakeholders: most countries disseminate information on ECVET to (potential) users, through websites and printed materials (leaflets, etc.). Two-thirds of the countries (24 out of 36) have networks for testing, implementation and promotion of ECVET. These networks involve VET providers, national or regional authorities, national VET agencies. EU-funded projects have so far been a significant driver for development, trial and implementation of ECVET principles and components.
- e) Difficulties in implementing ECVET: even if 23 countries out of 36 already have units of LO in their systems and five others are testing them, some recommendations can be suggested to overcome possible difficulties.
 - a. ECVET complementary documents are well-used and appreciated by stakeholders, but it is needed to more disseminate the framework;
 - b. the key challenge remains with ECVET points and the procedures to allocate them; it is important to focus on the allocation of ECVET credits to LOs since it is a complicated activity which can affect the homogeneity of the learning pathway;
 - c. some countries pointed out that they could start working on and testing ECVET principles after the work on NQFs had been accomplished as a basis; all countries are invited to complete the implementation process in order to go further
 - d. a better dissemination of EVCET initiatives is warranted.



EUROPASS

Below is some information on Europass (managed for the European Commission by CEDEFOP) achievements and prospects³:

- From its launch in February 2005 and the end of April 2018, there have been more than 178 million visits to the Europass website and 106 million Europass curriculum vitae (CV) have been completed on line— an average of nearly 17,000 per day; meanwhile, 68 million CV templates have been downloaded to be completed offline.
- More than 350.000 Europass mobility records documenting work and learning experience in other countries have been issued. More than 1.4 million language passports have either been completed online.
- Diploma Supplements were issued by a growing number of higher education institutions
- In 2017, the top nationalities using the CV were the Italians, Portuguese and Spanish.
- To ensure optimal user-friendliness of the portal, Cedefop has implemented a series of upgrades and improvements:
 - 2018: optimisation for mobile devices and smartphones, CV editor for visually-impaired, access of personal cloud storage directly from the CV editor, dynamic data visualisation for more accurate statistics;
 - 2017: new portal dedicated to interoperability with Europass; interoperability with Monster job portal;
 - 2016: Interoperability with Xing job portal; redesign of the Europass portal;
 - 2015: interoperability with Eures, the European job portal; campaign to promote interoperability with Europass; self-assessment tool for digital skills.
- In 2016, an online survey on the Europass online editor pointed out the user-friendliness of the editor and the good structure of the CV.
- Europass is closely linked to other European tools. The EQF levels are used in the Europass CV and in the Certificate and Diploma supplements to indicate the level of qualifications someone holds. Work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in different situations, validated under the ECVET, are recorded on the Europass Mobility document.

EQAVET - European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET

Since 2011 several surveys were conducted to monitor the implementation of EQAVET.⁴ The reports focus on important trends and challenges relating to the development of the national approaches to the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation. All EU-28 have completed the surveys. In 2016 the survey pointed out that all countries have established a comprehensive quality assurance approach that is compatible with ECVET at system and provider levels. The only exception is Belgium. 25% of countries have used EQAVET as the template for developing a quality assurance approach, using the quality circle; 65% are aligned also to indicators.

EQAVET was mainly applied in IVET and CVET and associated to WBL activities (Riga Conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué).

The majority of countries have in place registration systems in order to allow for the assessment and external review. For example, in Italy the Ministry of Education has decided that each school must draft a

³ Briefing Note – Europass 2005 -2020: achievements and prospects

⁴ Supporting the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework – Draft Results of EQAVET Secretariat Survey 2016 – 2017.



three-year training programme, a self-evaluation report (RAV) and an improvement plan focussed on critical aspects.

With regard to the quality cycle, the approach is solid and systematic in the planning and implementation phases but this is not the case for the evaluation and review phases.

All countries focus on the improvement of the QA system. The NRPs have started collaboration at European level and promoted interesting peer review activities.

EQAVET is an important EU tool that must be linked with ECVET and EQF. Countries have also encouraged the collaboration with STKs.

ESCO – European Skills/Competences, qualifications and occupations

In order to increase the acceptance and use of the common language, ESCO aims to meet the following:

By the end of 2017, establish a system that:

- allows the ESCO classification to be continuously updated;
- supports national developments in order to fill the gap between the classifications of occupations, skills and qualifications;
- supports those Member States that create translation tables (mappings) between ESCO and their national classification, or that implement ESCO on a national level.

By 2018:

- helping to strengthen the interconnectivity of national systems and enable cooperation between Member State authorities;
- provide a common reference point to make it possible to communicate using different classifications and languages.

A few questions to finish

As we said in the introduction, this output has a limited scope. Nevertheless, after carrying out our survey and interviews with stakeholders, a few questions remain. We quote here some of them as food for thought.

- Is the ECVET a practical tool or should it be shelved because of its generalisation (and lack of applied context) and HVET adopts the ECTS?
- Should there be one NQF or an NQF for VET and one for HVET?
- What is the benefit of comprehensive qualifications frameworks?
- If a Higher VET exists, is the rest of VET a Lower VET?
- Can tools on their own solve all HVET issues by transforming HVET into a new applied sciences option?
- There is a deficiency of VET learners when compared to University students in the ERASMUS+ programme. Will the tools be the solution to balance the cohorts? And if so, how?



Essential references

EQF

- Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2017/C 189/03)
<https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/en.pdf>
- Factsheet – 10 years of the European Qualifications Framework (Infographics). Can be downloaded at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9068&furtherNews=yes>
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Text with EEA relevance) (2008/C 111/01)
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/journal_en.pdf
- The EQF leaflet
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/leaflet_en.pdf
- Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks (NQF) or systems to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/criteria_and_procedures_for_referencing_national_qualifications_frameworks_or_systems_to_the_eqf_-_eqf_2017.pdf
- Added value of National Qualifications Frameworks in implementing the EQF, CEDEFOP 2010,
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/note2_en.pdf
- Referencing National Qualifications Levels to the EQF - Update 2013, European Union 2013,
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/EQF%20131119-web_0.pdf

ECVET

- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) (Text with EEA relevance) (2009/C 155/02)
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0708\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0708(02)&from=EN)
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN>
- A general and a detailed description of ECVET
https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en
- The ECVET tool-kit
<http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu/>



EQAVET

- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Text with EEA relevance) (2009/C 155/01)
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0708\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0708(01)&from=EN)
- The DG EAC webpage on EQAVET
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/eqavet_en
- The EQAVET framework homepage
<https://www.eqavet.eu/>
- The CEDEFOP page on Quality Assurance in VET
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/quality-assurance>
- Handbook for VET providers supporting internal quality management and quality culture, CEDEFOP 2016,
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3068_en.pdf
- Report on “Ensuring the quality of certification in vocational education and training”, CEDEFOP 2015,
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5551_en_0.pdf

ECTS

- The DG EAC home page on ECTS
https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en
- The ECTS Users’ guide, European Union 2015,
https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/ects-users-guide_en.pdf
- The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
<http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>

ESCO

- The European Commission portal on the European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations
<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home?resetLanguage=true&newLanguage=en>

Europass

- The Europass portal at CEDEFOP. From this page you can access all Europass documents, tools, information, in all EU languages.
<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

CEDEFOP

- The home page of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

DG EAC

- The homepage of the Direction general for Education and Culture
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/>



EACEA

- The homepage of the European Agency for Education, Culture and Audiovisual
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/homepage_en

ETF

- The homepage of the European Training Foundation
<https://etf.europa.eu>



Appendix I – Partner questionnaires

This appendix collects answers provided by partners to questions regarding the use they make of EU tools, divided by country. The questionnaire filled in by partner EfVET (based in Brussels) of course reflects more the point of view of an association of European VET providers, rather than the Belgian one.

Italy – Region Emilia Romagna

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

Italy came last in developing its NQF in the EU, starting from some 20 different regional and local qualification systems. However, since 2013, the Italian Qualification Systems were referenced to the EQF. The comprehensive NQF was established on 25.01.2018. EQF is widely known among education (school and university) providers, maybe a little less among VET providers. ECTS is very well known and regularly in use at university for planning and describing curricula and programmes, and for the development of international study programs. Similarly, the European CV and the Europass are very well known and used. Less known and less used are ECVET and EQAVET. Especially when it comes to vocational training, reference is usually made to regional qualifications and corresponding competence assessment systems. Different “credit transfer” systems are in use, as well as different quality assurance strategies and methods, which could easily fit in the EQAVET. ESCO is mostly unknown, apart from the Ministries and their Agencies, and from a few providers, e.g. those involved in EU-funded projects.

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

In our opinion there are two main obstacles:

1. lack of proper information to teachers, trainers, business representatives
2. (false, in our opinion, but induced by the above) perception that those tools and frameworks are useless constraints, of no use for the labour market, and bringing unwanted additional paperwork to school and training centres administrative offices.

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

- Transparency among qualifications and towards users (students, trainees, families)
- Quality improvement in the functioning of training providers
- By using these tools, training providers are “forced” (“bound”) to reflect on their actions and methods with a view to continuous improvement and to the EU dimension (which is, by the way, the “natural” dimension of companies trainees will work in)
- Not yet visible, in our opinion, is the impact on trainees’ employability.

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

- By providing regular, patient, targeted information to specific stakeholders (that should be done by many levels, starting from national Agencies, Ministries and their regional and local offices, going down to schools and training providers)
- By providing target groups with examples of best practices and advantages gained by those who already make use of those tools and frameworks. This is especially true for companies.



- By fostering the use of EU mobility as regular part of school and training curricula, in order to make providers and students (and families, and businesses) familiar with these tools.

Question 5

Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

Yes. We take part in Erasmus+ mobility programmes, where of course we make use of Europass and ECVET. We are leading this project, which is dealing with the topic. We always make reference in our certificates to the corresponding EQF level. Our staff always includes in their curricula the EQF level of their education. Our organisation underwent many years ago the process for Quality certification under the ISO 9001 standard (at present in its 9001:2015 version), and in the last reviews we always checked compliance between our procedures and the EQAVET directions.



Italy – Region Veneto

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

In Italy, the EU frameworks are partly considered as, starting from the NQF, they are mostly utilized by: operators and technical professionals dealing with training, in the higher education field, the school offices at a regional level, other stakeholders working at a EU level on continuing training projects, between enterprises only those multinationals having to compare and mobilities human resources at an international level, the application in the SMEs is not so well-known as they are at an initial phase of the implementation. For example, the EQF is considered the basis for defining KSC (knowledge-skills-competences), the ECVET is applied within lifelong learning projects, ECTS within university systems for the uniformity of credits, EQAVET is considered in the VET systems and ESCO is quite unknown.

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

EQF is a system working well for identifying and defining KSC (knowledge-skills-competences) with the aim to recognise specific levels of competences but the lack of institutional validation by a public institution is seen as the main obstacle.

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

Some of the visible results are the utilization of tools such as Europass CV, Europass supplement, when of course workers are able to attend to mobility activities within the EU framework.

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

To improve the EU frameworks and tools, for example EQF system should make possible the certification of competences by a public third party, giving it a legal evidence.

Question 5

Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

In the field of professional profiles connected with innovation, such as R&D managers, IT managers, product managers, the broker of innovation, energy managers etc., SIAV within Leonardo projects produced literature publications declining skills and competences based on the EQF and ECVET frameworks in KSC (knowledge-skills-competences), see:

- SKILL-IN Publication “Competences and roles in Innovation” – see: <https://issuu.com/confindustriaveneto-siav/docs/www.knowledgeandinnovation-siav.net>



- REBASING – Research-based Competence Brokering – LLP LoV - Publication “The Innovation Competence Broker: Bridging firms and R&D institutions” – see: <https://issuu.com/confindustriaveneto-siav/docs/the-innovation-competence-broker>
- GREEN STAR – Green Skills for Enterprises: Sustainable Training for Automotive Suppliers Cluster – 2013-1-IT1-LEO05-03983 – see: <https://issuu.com/confindustriaveneto-siav/docs/book>

In the field of entrepreneurial skills linked with creative industries, see the Erasmus+ KA2 project:

- SMART JUMP – Smart entrepreneurial skills for Creative Industries: an inclusive perspective – Intellectual Output “Upskilling Entrepreneurs EQF and ECVET Framework” – see: <https://bit.ly/2qmlnig>



Germany

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

They are used for

- the planning of integrated models of study
- curricula development
- the development of study portfolios
- the description of study programs, courses and modules
- development of international study programs in cooperation with universities abroad

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

The main issue is the sometimes, somewhat different interpretation of the frameworks by individual institutions in individual countries. This issue raises within Europe, e.g. the Scottish framework using credits that are slightly different to ECTS that are then re-calculated into ECTS, but especially in cooperation with e.g. China, Mexico or South Africa as the transformation of their systems into the EU frameworks can be difficult.

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

- Improvements of quality in the university
- transparency in planning and development phases
- improved clarity related to international cooperation with double degree programs

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

Optimization concerning the issues raised in question 2 could include major improvements, country specific aspects in Europe and also the linkages to education systems in America, Asia, Africa, etc., could be acknowledged, probably using a higher-level meta-model as an overlay for the continent-specific and country-specific approaches.

Question 5

Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

- national and European projects, e.g. SHINE
- dissemination and discussion of insights, issues and project results with stakeholders
- integrated discussions in related international education networks such as EDEN, HDL, GUIDE, IACE, ICDE, etc.



Sweden

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

Parts of the national education system are based on the European framework, but they are rarely mentioned in daily work and few trainers or teachers have ever heard of them. Knowledge is even scarce amongst business representatives, i.e. HR and interest groups representing the industry.

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

Lack of knowledge amongst teachers, headmasters and business representatives.
Tradition/culture in national education system – hard to change!

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

The introduction of EQF/NQF has made a great change to trainers working with vocational training for adults, as it has given us an important tool to communicate the level of training and the training outcome.

As the frameworks are little known amongst trainers and less known amongst industry representatives, they have not yet had a great impact on mobility – graduates and/or professionals who want to go abroad for employment, still refer to specific work experience instead of EQF or ECTS.

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

Focus on implementing/introducing on framework at a time.

Make the frameworks better known – to the relevant target groups.

Which are the relevant target groups? Perhaps one should focus more on headmasters (who lead strategic work) and HR officers (who employ graduates) and less on teachers and trainers (who perhaps do not need to be 100% aware of EU strategies)?

Question 5

Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

Yes. During the years GTC has participated in several activities focusing on implementing tools in the EU framework. The work has been rewarding and has brought a general attention to mobility and international perspectives to GTC. But, to my opinion, none of these projects have had any direct impact on students and/or trainers



Romania

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

Romania decided the design of National Qualifications Framework (NQF), correlated with EQF (European Qualifications Framework), in order to implement it. Our country drew up an NQF which is based on some relevant ideas: Correlation of NQF with EFQ, based on a consensus with the important social partners and stakeholders; Compliance with the terminology of the European Qualifications framework . Drawing up a coherent methodological framework (for the elaboration, validation and certification of qualifications) Clearly defining responsibilities and ensuring full cooperation on the part of the social actors. Romania adopted the European Legislation through the HG 918/2013(privind aprobarea Cadrului national al calificarilor)

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

Inertia of the education system and VET sector decision-makers to apply new approaches to alignment with the European Qualifications system. The actors working in this field (teachers, trainers, directors, specialists, representatives of the Ministry of Education) still does not realize the importance of the EQF

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

Using the EQF makes it possible to compare qualification levels in different countries based on the EQF description grid that is based on learning outcomes.

In practice, all certificates of qualification issued must refer to the EQF so that employers can identify the knowledge and skills of a candidate. This is particularly useful for candidates coming from a other country than the employer (for example, it will allow an Italian employer to hire a Romanian worker because, on the basis of the EQF, he will be able to interpret the qualifications obtained by the candidate in the education system in Romania more easily).

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

If all the members of EU agree that this European frame the EQF will support labour market mobility in Europe both trans-nationally and intra-nationally, by simplifying comparisons of qualifications and better fitting supply and demand. It will be easier for employers to interpret the qualifications of foreign applicants, especially for qualifications that refer to the EQF.

Question 5

Did your organization implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

At the local level, the CTB proposes debates in conferences organized by the County School Inspectorate and the Local Development Committee of the Social Partnership for Professional Development regarding EQF.



Croatia

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

EU frameworks are partially included in Croatian VET systems, mostly regulated by laws and rulebooks. Specifically ECTS is functioning at full level, EQAVET also which is coordinated by Croatian Agency for vocational and adult education, but EQF partially but has a background in Law as the rulebooks for conduction are in developing phase. ECVET and ESCO are left for the individual institutions to utilize them on local level. Except ECTS on tertiary level which is known nationally, the rest of the EU framework are familiar only to the smaller group of experts and teachers working in the field of VET. The new national curricular reform is in development in Croatia and it will try to increase the level of utilization.

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

Lack of knowledge and proper education among teachers, experts, principals and VET working bodies.

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

The visible and tangible results and progress is made in increasing in the mobilities of students and educational staff, networking on national and EU level, increasing the quality of VET through the processes of self-evaluation of VET institutions and through introduction of NQF and curricular-planning and development (learning outcomes oriented programs).

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

Since the Craft college is continuously working with the IVET and HVET institutions and prepare them for the introduction of EQF/NQF, ECVET and ESCO, the conclusion can be summed:

- educate the VET actors and relevant stakeholders
- define concrete target group for each framework
- disseminate the benefits of the frameworks more focused to wider public
- impact on decision makers (bottom-up method through public hearing etc.)

Question 5

Did your organization implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

Absolutely. In the past several years Craft College actively participated in several project with an aim of development of NQF in IVET and HVET, making relevant suggestions for improvements on the ESCO itself and dissemination of ECVET on national level.

ECTS and EQAVET has not been part of our targeted activities because we do not deal with tertiary level and since EQAVET is been managed by the Agency for vocational and adult education.



Belgium/EU

Question 1

What is the level of utilization in your country of EU frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, ESCO ?

In order to make VET a first choice -EQF level of high-quality VET programmes, in particular apprenticeships of varying levels of difficulty at the same level of the framework, the placement of higher education at different levels when it's not clearly merited by differences in their learning outcomes

Question 2

What are the main obstacles for the full utilization of such EU frameworks ?

Promotion of joint qualifications in VET (European-wide recognition – ECVET, exchangeable modules)

Question 3

What are the visible results of the utilization of such frameworks (if any)?

Recognition of learning and training to the labour market and civil society. Also, importance of involving and cooperating with stakeholders in order to enhance trust in the quality and level of qualification with a NQF and EQF level. In some countries this has led to the setting up of coordination bodies involving a board range of stakeholders, including social partners. For qualification to be relevant, it is crucial to ensure a systematic review and renewal processes. For these to work effectively, labour market stakeholders play an important role

Question 4

How - in your opinion - is it possible to improve the use of EU frameworks?

We know that the majority of EU tools are not generally widely used, especially by employers, mostly because of their complexity. In addition, EU tools were mainly recognized for their role in providing greater transparency. However, the function of most of the instruments created at the EU level, which are not designed as recognition tools

Question 5

Did your organisation implement projects/activities targeted at facilitating the adoption/use of EU frameworks?

- European projects (like SHINE and etc) and international (HKQF)
- EfVET Steering committee are involved in working groups of ESCO, EQF and ECVET



Appendix II – The European survey

The questionnaire



In October 2017, EfVET launched a survey questionnaire in order to investigate the extent to which EU tools for transparency in competence recognition are known and used in the VET and HVET environment. The survey was closed in December 2017.

The survey analysed how teachers/stakeholders/others would like to improve the European policies and frameworks that have been agreed upon for competence validation and recognition. Here is a summary of the answers to each question.

Q 1. Which country is your organisation based in?

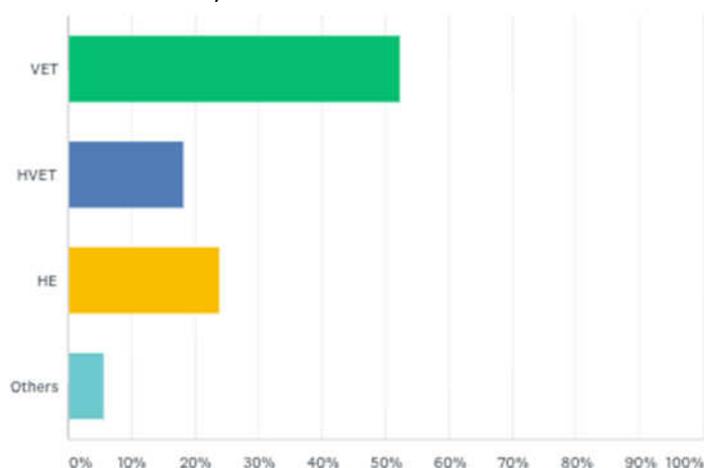


20,45% of respondents are from Germany and Sweden, followed by Italy (13,64%), the Netherlands (7,95%) and other European countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and UK).

No replies have been received from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Q 2. Are you from Vocational Education Training (VET), Higher Education (HE)? High Vocational Education Training (HVET) or Higher Education (HE)?

52,27% of respondents are from VET, 23,86% from HE, 18% from HVET and 5,68% from another (labour market and others).



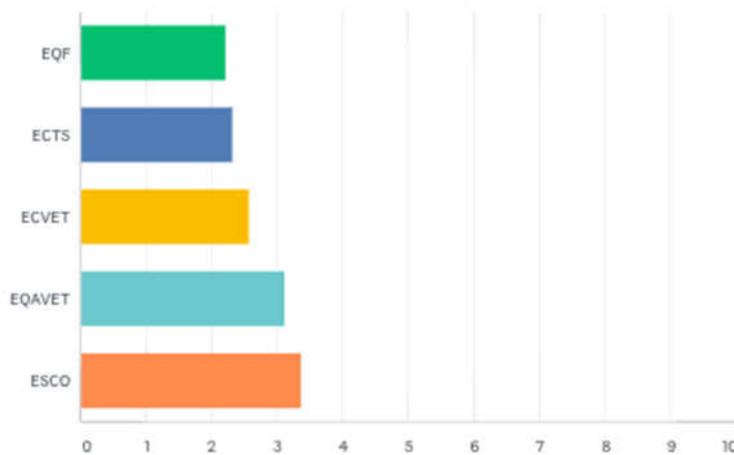
VET aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and competences required in particular occupations or more broadly in the labour market. There is no consensus when it comes to the definition of higher VET. Depending on the country, higher VET can overlap with higher education, post-secondary non tertiary education, continuous vocational education and training or segments of adult education.



HVET is often based on the perception that VET is considered an inferior option to proceeding along a more traditional or academic higher education route. Thus it is sometimes suggested that we should use the term “professional education” rather than HVET. We believe that more needs to be done to develop synergies between EU level and transfer tools for the transparency and recognition of qualifications including HVET or HE pathways.

Q 3. How familiar are you with the instruments described by the following acronyms?

The responses show that more or less a respondents are familiar with the EQF and ECTS, but not at all or not very much with the EQAVET and ESCO.



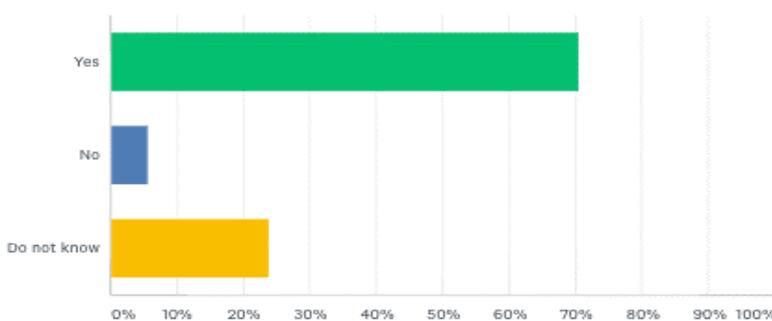
34,48% (30) respondents are familiar with EQF or 28,74% (25). There are many VET or HVET who are aware about EQF, but not at all about EQAVET and ESCO – 50,59% and 42,35% of all respondents. However, figures for the EQAVET, ESCo and ECVET are lower at both systems.

The Bruges Communiqué’s strategy marked progress towards

the implementation of a national quality assurance framework for VET. It establishes that it is necessary for the improvement of national quality assurance systems or, at a minimum, clearly states the intention to strengthen quality assurance in VET. Therefore, we need a better promotion of EQAVET and ESCO.

Q 4. Does your country have a NQF?

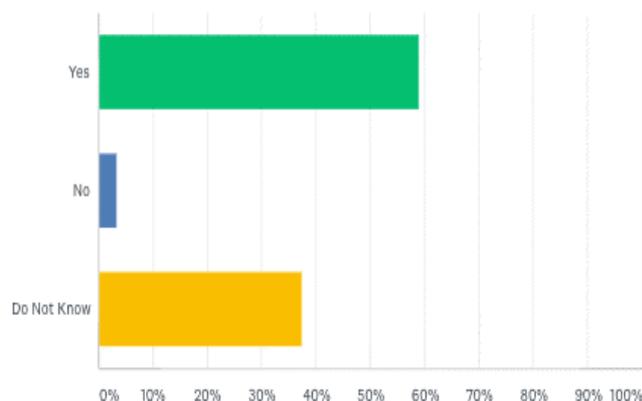
70,45 % of respondents said yes and 23,86% of respondents do not know. In the majority of countries, at the national level, NQF still has different regulations and criteria for including qualifications into their NQF.



We believe that an important aspect is that they are seen relevant by employers as most include some form of work-based learning. The development of comprehensive NQFs, including at all levels and of all types in most European countries, will shed new light on the potential of EQF level 5 qualifications.

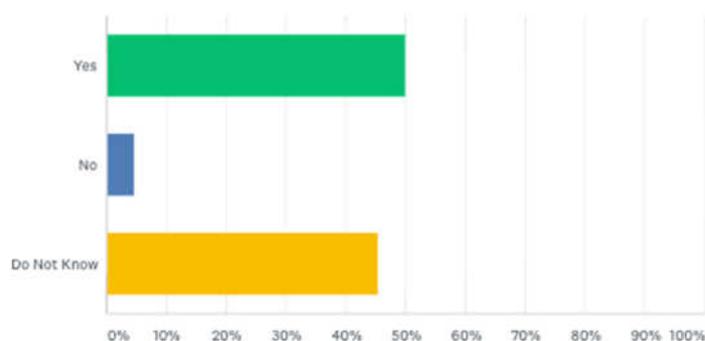


Q 5. Is your NQF referenced to the EQF?



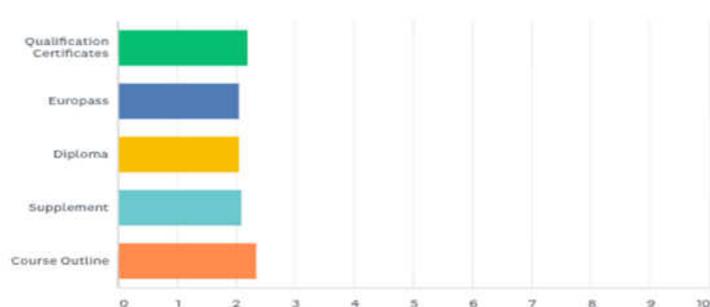
59,09% of respondents said yes and 37,50% said that they do not know. EQF should improve the process of referencing international sector. In addition, the European Commission and EQF Stakeholders/Advisory Group should also provide common guidance to national authorities for including international sectoral qualifications.

Q 6. Are regulated qualifications registered in your NQF, and does your qualifications database include EQF levels?



50% of the respondents said that regulated qualifications are registered in their NQF and that their qualifications database does include EQF levels. On the other hand, 4.55% said no and 45.45% said that they are unaware of this.

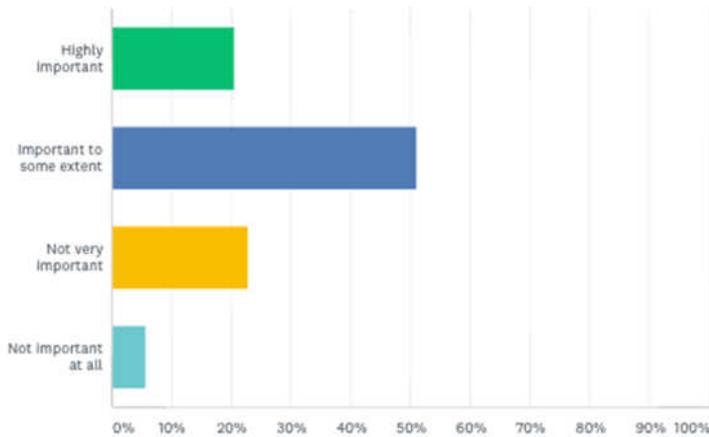
Q 7. Do you currently include details of EFQ level on the following?



30.59% of the respondents said that they currently include details of EFQ level in their qualification certificates. 37.65% of the respondents include them in the Europass, 36.14% in the diploma, 37.21% in their supplement and 18.29% in their online courses.

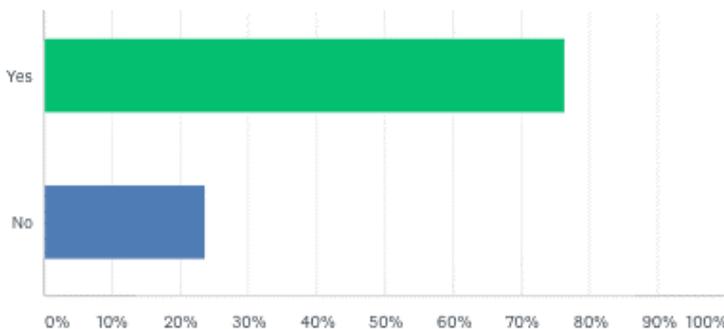


Q 8. How important is the NQF/EQF to your school or business?



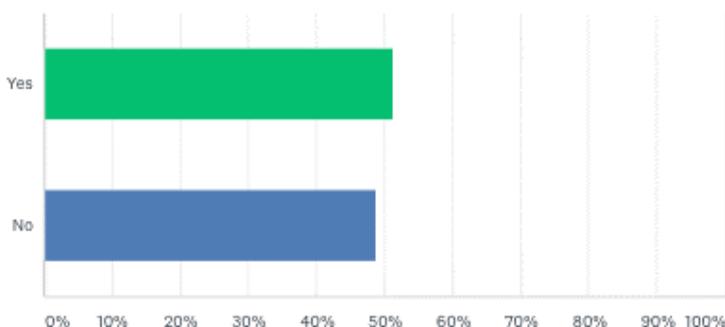
20,45% said that it was highly important, 51.14% said that it was important to some extent, 22,73% said that it was not that important and 5.68% said that it was not at all important.

Q 9. Have you ever heard about Learning Outcomes achieved through mobility/training in other member states being validated/recognised in your home country?



76,32% of respondents confirmed that they heard about Learning outcomes and 23,78% of respondents confirmed not having heard about Learning outcomes.

Q 10. Have you ever been involved in validating/recognising Learning Outcomes achieved through student mobility/training in other Member States?



The responses show a generally high level of satisfaction with how sufficient the been involved in validating Learning Outcomes, with 51,32 % of these have been involved in validating/recognising Learning Outcomes and 48,68% of respondents have not been involved in this task.



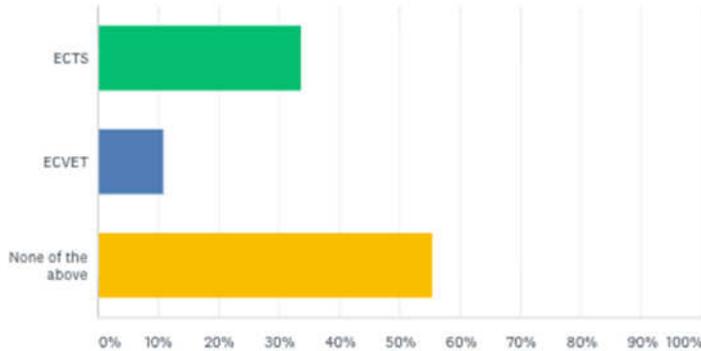
Q 11. Did ECVET (and its Learning Outcomes approach) help to improve employability of VET graduates? (Please explain briefly)

According to the results, only 76 of the respondents stressed that ECVET did improve employability of VET graduates. 63 of respondents say that they do not know or that they are not sure. In addition, 13 of the respondents gave us a brief reply:

- It helped greatly in achieving work-based learning and post-diploma internships abroad for our graduate students.
- In particular it supported their geographical mobility.
- ECVET supports the recognition of the experience gained abroad and gives learners a portfolio that provides evidence of competences obtained. This can improve their employability on a European level.
- All the VET standards across member states. Therefore, employers can recognise the qualification from another country.
- The ECVET in Croatia is experimentally used as tool to validate learning outcomes gained on a Erasmus+ mobilities/apprenticeship period. The learning outcomes gained abroad has to be in accordance with school curriculum. Because of the reason the ECVET is not in use in VET system yet, there is no improvement in employability.
- The ECVET help to improve employability of VET and also since recognised by employers.
- Also, it allows the students to show their outcomes to potential employers.
- In some educational institutions, student mobility is highly encouraged. Typically, students will only take a part of their education in another country and get their diploma from their home institution. Thus, the overall framework made this much easier. For me as a teacher, Learning Outcomes description helps to know, if a course is equivalent to one of my subjects.
- ECVET is an acknowledged form of documentation.
- It fosters cross-border mobility and the establishment of partnerships and workplacements across Europe.
- Our organisation in cooperation with EOPPEP develop the regulatory framework for the certification of qualifications, i.e the learning outcomes of non-formal education and informal learning, in response to labour market needs and priorities and in liaison with the accreditation of inputs, i.e providers, trainers, occupational profiles and curricula standards.
- Giving more international credits at the acquired competences and training experiences. And the contents of the students can be compared more easily in EC countries.
- It needs some development and we could place a students from abroad the right place during an education on the basis of ECVET.

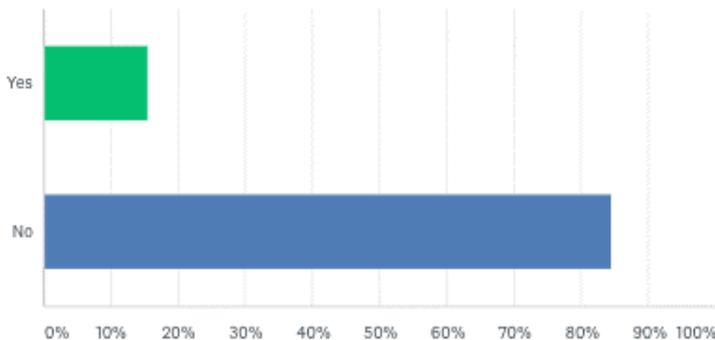


Q 12. If you are in High Vocational Educational Training (HVET), which credit system are you using?



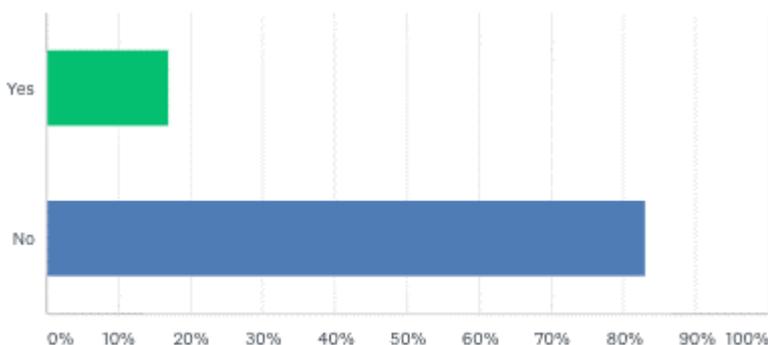
As one can infer from the graphic, the majority of the respondents are using neither ECTS nor ECVET.

Q 13. Have you ever visited the ESCO website <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home?>



ESCO website has been launched in 2017 in 28 languages. As the graphic shows, most people have not visited the ESCO website (84,51%). And only 15,49% of responding visited the ESCO website and attending the first event in Brussels 2017.

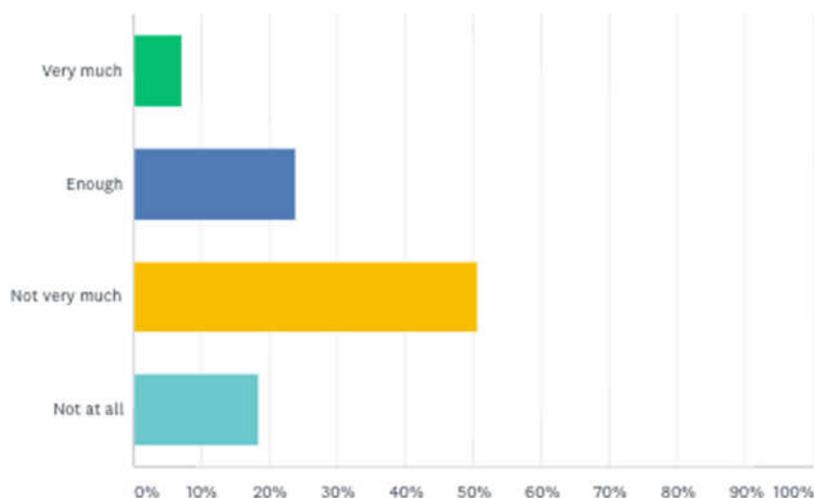
Q 14. Do you understand how ESCO works?



83,10% of participants do not understand the functioning of ESCO, which means that more emphasis should be placed on how to raise awareness about how it works and 16,90% of respondents do understand the functioning of ESCO.



Q 15. Do you think the use of ESCO could increase employability?



As the graphic shows, half of the respondents admit that the use of ESCO will not dramatically increase employability.

A majority of respondents (50,70%) believe that not very much ESCO platform could increase employability, 33,94% of respondents said that they think the use of ESCO could increase employability and 7,04% of – said very much.

Q 16. If you answered “very much” or “enough”, could you briefly explain how?

Following the answers only 9 of the respondents. And the rest said “not for us” or “do not know”

- Using the same language and a quick tool, job vacancies and candidates can be easily matched.
- It could help EU organisations understand work profiles of workers coming from other member countries, making it easier to achieve higher mobility ranges.
- Job demand and offer match-making tools such as ESCO provide also information on qualifications, occupational profiles and skills acquired in other countries. This enables an efficient matching to vacant jobs in Europe.
- ESCO can increase employability due to its international appliance and equalization of occupations, skills and competences. The employability increase is equated with the EU level because of migration and international fluctuation of labour force.
- It will help to employ people from other Member States according to their qualification.
- It will help to reduce mobility barriers and will facilitate cooperation across Europe.
- I am not sure the business occupation will make use of ESCO.
- Showing skills – transparently.
- The goal is to promote productivity and employability.

Q 17. Do you like the approach used at National and European level to keep your updated of all the developments referring to EU transparency tools ?

- At the national level, Erasmus National Agency VET is doing a great job in updating VET stakeholders also through the organization of thematic workshops, peer-learning activities, etc.
- In the UK, very little is know about European tools.
- So far I did not even notice that there is an approach to keep us updated.
- It is very useful.
- I am not directly involved in related activities so I cannot express an opinion on regards.
- It is hard to explain at the labour market actors.



Q 18. How can it be improved?

- I think it can be improved by sending regular newsletters to stakeholders via national governance or boards.
- It is crucial that VET systems and organisations are actually embedded in the practical implementation of existing EU transparency tools aiming to increase the quality, flexibility and relevance of VET qualifications in Europe.
- Clear structure for the target groups.
- The tools like ESCO, ECVET should be applied at the EU level starting from tomorrow – the governances should be pushed to make it so.
- More dissemination via email notification.
- The relevant subjects can be worked with on a national basis.
- More information and good practice exchange at the national level school be provided.
- With the good cooperation of the partners.
- Creating more references between qualifications, titles and etc.
- Shaping it into a job requirement.
- More interactive resources.
- Idea of Europe is now in deep crisis, and so any common tools. We would need deeper integration.

Q 19. Do you have any further comments or suggestions?

- In my opinion, teacher training courses should be organised on the matter of EU transparency tools.
- Look forward to learning more.
- Perhaps show what different EU countries do on this specific field in a newsletter.

EfVET Interviews related to EU Tools in HVET and HE

The following table summarizes three interviews done to VET experts in three different countries (Denmark, Italy and Spain). Each interview discusses the use of ESCO in their country and their familiarity with ESCO.

Questions	Stefano Tirati (Italy), from Learning Digital	VibekeHoltum (Denmark), from Technical Education Copenhagen	Santiago Garcia (Spain), from CECE
Are you familiar with EU Tools?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have you ever visited the ESCO, ECVET, EQF websites?	Yes, but I have not visited the ESCO web yet.	Yes	All of them



Questions	Stefano Tirati (Italy), from Learning Digital	VibekeHoltum (Denmark), from Technical Education Copenhagen	Santiago Garcia (Spain), from CECE
What do you think of ESCO, EQF, ECVET and ECTS?	All EU Tools are a great potential to improve transparency of qualifications and occupational profiles across European Member States.	I think that in the case of ESCO, it needs to be used and evaluated. It is a good tool, it is not really alive yet, it needs to be more used so that it is not just a website.	For example: ESCO is a tool that can improve the issue of comparison and transparency of qualifications that can be very useful for the design of educational programs.
Do you think ESCO could improve employability? Do you know of companies that are using it?	Yes, especially if we manage to make vocational providers and businesses aware about this tool.	I only know of companies who are watching what it can do but I am not sure that they use it for real.	If the tool is well used, it can improve employability, it can give you a perspective of where the workforce is heading to and what will be needed for that in the future. But it will only improve employability if educational programs know how to adjust to these qualification programs. If there is no strategy, nothing will be achieved. I do know enterprises that are using it. But VET schools use it now more than enterprises.





Appendix III – National Qualification Frameworks in partner countries

This appendix is intended to describe the NQF in partner countries. All information is taken from Cedefop (2018). National qualifications framework developments in Europe 2017. Luxembourg: Publications Office. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/029873> (last accessed on 01.06.2018)

Overview

Country	Levels	Scope of the framework	Level descriptors	Stage of development
BE – Fl	8	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge/skills • context/autonomy/responsibility 	Operational
BE – Fr	8	Designed as comprehensive framework; will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge/skills • context/autonomy/responsibility 	Formally adopted
BE – De		Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupational competence (knowledge and skills) • personal competence (social competence and autonomy) 	(Early) operational stage
HR	8 with sublevels at levels 4 and 8	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. It is a qualification and credit framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge • skills • autonomy and responsibility 	(Early) operational stage
DE	8	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning; includes qualifications from general education, VET, higher education and qualifications from regulated further training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional competence (knowledge and skills) • personal competence (social competence and autonomy) 	Operational
IT	8	Comprehensive framework will include all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and regional qualifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge • skills • autonomy and responsibility 	Formally adopted
RO	8	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge • skills • competences 	(Early) operational stage
SE	8	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training; opens up towards qualifications awarded outside the formal education system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge • skills • competence 	Operational



Belgium

Due to its federal structure, Belgium developed three NQFs, one for each of the three language Communities: Flemish, French and German-speaking. Despite adaptation to the needs of each Community, the three frameworks share important common features, supporting interoperability. An amendment to the Belgian Federal Law on General Structure of the Education System was adopted in 2012, stating that the European qualifications framework will be used as a common reference for the three Communities in Belgium; this addresses the challenge of linking the three frameworks, and potentially eases mobility of Belgian citizens within the country. The three frameworks have been/will be referenced separately to the EQF: the Flemish and French Communities have completed this process and the German-speaking Community is expected to do so in the near future.

Flemish Community

The Flemish Community of Belgium introduced a comprehensive NQF, the Flemish qualifications framework (FQF), in 2009, with the adoption of the Act on the Qualification Structure (Government of Flanders, 2009). It is a learning-outcomes-based framework with eight levels, using two main categories of level descriptors: knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. The term 'competence' is understood as an overarching concept, used interchangeably with learning outcomes. The FQF covers qualifications from primary, up to higher education, and an explicit distinction is made between educational and professional qualifications. A professional qualification is based on a set of competences allowing an individual to exercise a profession and can be achieved both inside and outside education. An educational qualification is based on a set of competences an individual needs to participate in society, continue education and/or exercise professional activities. An educational qualification can only be acquired through education and in institutions recognised by the Flemish authorities. Education qualifications in VET are based on one or more professional qualifications standards. In this way, labour market needs are taken up in VET programmes. The qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) aims at making qualifications transparent, so that stakeholders in education (students, teachers and providers) and the labour market can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and associated competences. It acts as a reference for quality assurance, developing and renewing courses, developing and aligning procedures for recognising acquired competences, and for comparison of qualifications (nationally and at European level). The FQF also plays an important role in strengthening the learning-outcomes-based approach and aims to strengthen policies and practices on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The FQF is now operational. A series of implementation decrees were adopted over recent years, covering both professional and educational qualifications, leading to detailed procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the framework. Throughout development and implementation, all main education and training stakeholders and social partners have been involved at all levels, with a high degree of commitment. Clarification of the role of social partners in linking professional qualifications to the framework required substantial effort, but an agreement on how this would be undertaken was reached and proved a success. By December 2017 a total of 306 professional and 236 educational qualifications were formally included in the FQF and published in the Flemish qualifications database. The FQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2011, and an updated report was submitted in March 2014. A qualifications framework for higher education linked to the Bologna process was put in place in 2008 and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2009.



Qualifications framework of the Flemish Community of Belgium (FQF)

EQF levels	Educational qualifications	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (Universiteit – Doctor)		8
7	Academic master degree (Universiteit – Master) Advanced master programmes (master na master – manama)	Professional qualifications	7
6	Academic bachelor degree (Universiteit – Bachelor) Professional bachelor degree (Hogeschool – Bachelor) Advanced bachelor programme (bachelor na bachelor – banaba)	Professional qualifications	6
5	Higher vocational education 5 (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs 5)	Professional qualifications	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs – ASO) Upper secondary technical education school leaving certificate (Technisch Secundair Onderwijs – TSO) Upper secondary artistic education leaving certificate (Kunstsecundair Onderwijs – KSO) Secondary-after-secondary education certificate (Secundair na Secundair – SenSe) in upper secondary technical education (TSO) Certificate of a specialisation year (7th year) in upper secondary vocational education (BSO)	Professional qualifications	4
3	Upper secondary vocational education certificate (Beroepssecundair Onderwijs – BSO)	Professional qualifications	3
2	Adult basic education Lower secondary education – first stage of secondary education Pre-vocational education	Professional qualifications	2
1	Certificate of elementary education (6 years)		1



French Community

The French Community of Belgium has developed a qualifications framework for lifelong learning (Cadre francophone des certifications pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie, CFC). Although initial work started in 2006, the current framework dates back to 2010, when the French Community (Federation Wallonia-Brussels), the Walloon Region (Wallonia) and the French Community Commission (COCOF) agreed on the principles of the framework and on a structure similar to that applied by the Flemish Community of Belgium. The CFC is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework with double entry: one for educational qualifications and one for professional qualifications. Learning descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. In the first stage of implementation, only qualifications delivered by public providers will be included. The CFC is seen as an integral part of the existing education and training system. It seeks to improve overall transparency of qualifications, to ease mobility and support learner progress, and to help bridge the different parts of the education and training system. The framework is an important instrument for strengthening the use of learning outcomes, supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning, and for referencing to the European qualifications framework. It does not have a regulatory role and is not seen as an instrument for reforming existing institutions and structures. Legal adoption of the CFC took place in February 2015. The division of the framework into two main strands – educational and professional – has implications for stakeholder involvement: the French-speaking service for occupations and qualifications (Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications, SFMQ) plays a role in defining and positioning professional qualifications at levels 1 to 4; the academy of research and higher education (Académie de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur, ARES) is responsible for defining and positioning educational qualifications at levels 6 to 8; and both entities share responsibility for qualifications at level 5, reflecting professional and educational qualifications at this level. However, qualifications are yet to be placed in the framework before the CFC can become operational. Delays in appointing an implementing body has slowed down overall progress. The CFC was referenced to the EQF in December 2013. Self-certification to the QF-EHEA is work in progress.

German-speaking Community

The German-speaking Community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (Qualifikationsrahmen der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, QDG) in November 2013. Being the smallest part of Belgium (geographically and in terms of population) the framework reflects the work done in the Flemish and French Communities but is also inspired by the German qualifications framework (DQR). It is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework that includes qualifications from primary and secondary general education, VET and higher education. The distinction between educational and professional qualifications made in the qualifications frameworks of the other two Communities of Belgium is mirrored in the QDG through a distinction between general education and VET qualifications. The framework builds on the concept of Handlungskompetenz (action competence) with qualification levels defined in terms of two categories of descriptors: subject/occupation-specific competences, referring to knowledge and skills; and personal competences, referring to social competence and autonomy. A main objective for the framework is to strengthen the national and international comparability of qualifications. The geographic location of the region means that citizens are likely to cross regional or national borders for living and working; this makes it a priority to clarify the relationship between own qualifications and those awarded in neighbouring countries. The framework also promotes parity of esteem between general education and VET, with the learning outcomes or competence-based approach seen as an important step in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability. The decree on QDG (Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking Community, 2014) envisages that a system of validation of non-formal and informal



learning will be linked to the framework, stating that a central validation point will be set up within the next five years. Although the QDG is not referred to in the 2025 education and training vision for the region, the emphasis given to validation and competences indicates that the learning outcomes orientation underpinning the QDG is taken forward in a systematic manner. The framework has not yet been referenced to the EQF.

Qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (QDG)

QDG levels	General education qualifications	VET qualifications
8	Doctoral or postdoctoral degree/habilitation	-
7	Master degree	Master degree upon successful completion of dual track higher education (long duration)
6	Bachelor degree	Master craftsperson certificate upon successful completion of a three-year master craftsperson programme Professional bachelor degree upon successful completion of dual track higher education
5	-	Master craftsperson certificate upon successful completion of a two-year master craftsperson programme Successful completion of supplementary secondary vocational education
4	Successful completion of upper secondary general education	Successful completion of upper secondary technical and arts programmes Attestation of competence upon successful completion of year 6 in vocational education Successful completion of year 7 (complementary year) in vocational education Journeyman certificate upon successful completion of an apprenticeship
3	Successful completion of lower secondary general education	Successful completion of lower secondary technical, vocational or arts programmes Certified partial qualification acquired in year 2 of an apprenticeship
2	Successful completion of 'common' year 2 in secondary education	Successful completion of year 3 in vocationally oriented education Attestation of competence certifying lower secondary special needs education
1	Successful completion of primary education, four years (Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Grundschule)	Certificate upon successful completion of year 2 in vocationally oriented education



Croatia

The Croatian qualifications framework Act establishes the Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) based on learning outcomes, defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013). It is a comprehensive eight-level framework framework that also incorporates credit systems. It includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training: general education, VET and higher education. Each qualification in the CROQF is defined in terms of profile (field of work or study), reference level (complexity of acquired competences) and volume/workload (credit points). Apart from offering transparency and allowing for international comparability of Croatian qualifications, the CROQF is seen as an important tool for reforming national education and training; this includes setting up a system for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning, creating a well-founded quality assurance system, and implementing the learning outcomes approach in all education and training subsystems. The framework has entered an early operational stage, following adoption of the ordinance on the CROQF register in May 2014. Implementing structures have been set up and responsibilities among stakeholders agreed. The National Council for Development of Human Potential, comprising 24 stakeholders representatives, was appointed in 2014 as the strategic body for developing and implementing the CROQF. On a policy and technical level, the Ministry of Science and Education coordinates the development and implementation of the CROQF, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System. 23 of 25 sectoral councils have been set up as advisory and professional bodies that assess proposals on occupational standards, qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes. The information system of the CROQF register has been established. It is a system for registering and integrating occupational standards with qualifications standards through units of competences and units of learning outcomes. The first occupational standard is now publicly available in the register. An ordinance on validation of prior learning is also foreseen, but it is still to be finalised. Croatia referenced the CROQF to the EQF and self-certified to QF-EHEA in March 2012.

Croatian national qualifications framework (CROQF)

CROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8.2	Doctoral diploma (poslijediplomski (sveučilišni) doktorski studiji; obrana doktorske disertacije izvan studija)	8
8.1	Postgraduate research master of science diploma (poslijediplomski znanstveni magistarski studiji)	
7	Master diploma – graduate university studies (sveučilišni diplomski studiji) Professional master diploma – specialist graduate professional studies (specijalistički diplomski stručni studiji) Post-master specialist university studies (poslijediplomski specijalistički studiji)	7
6	Bachelor diploma – undergraduate university studies (sveučilišni preddiplomski studiji) Professional bachelor diploma – undergraduate professional studies (stručni preddiplomski studiji)	6



CROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
5	Professional higher education diploma – short cycle (kratki stručni studiji) VET post-secondary development and training certificate (strukovno specijalističko usavršavanje i osposobljavanje) Master craftsman diploma (programi za majstore uz najmanje dvije godine vrednovanog radnog iskustva)	5
4.2	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Gimnazijsko srednjoškolsko obrazovanje) Upper secondary VET certificate – four years / Upper secondary VET certificate – five years (Četverogodišnje i petogodišnje strukovno srednjoškolsko obrazovanje)	4
4.1	Upper secondary VET – three years (Trogodišnje strukovno obrazovanje)	
3	Upper secondary VET certificate – two years / Upper secondary VET certificate – one year (Jednogodišnje i dvogodišnje srednjoškolsko strukovno obrazovanje)	3
2	Vocational training certificate (Strukovno osposobljavanje)	2
1	Primary education certificate – eight years (Osnovno obrazovanje) (*)	1

(*) The first eight years of schooling are called primary education. This refers to both ISCED 1 and 2 (primary and lower secondary education). Source: Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2017.



Germany

Germany has created an eight-level NQF for lifelong learning based on learning outcomes (Deutsche Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen (DQR)). DQR level descriptors differentiate between two categories of competence: professional, subdivided into knowledge and skills; and personal, including social competence and autonomy. The comprehensive notion of 'competence' that lies at the heart of the DQR has a strong humanistic dimension. It signals readiness to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and methodological competences in work or study situations and for occupational and personal development. The framework aims to increase transparency and comparability of qualifications, to support learner and worker mobility, to increase the skill and learning outcomes orientation of qualifications and to promote permeability and lifelong learning. One key principle of DQR is that each qualification level should be accessible via various education pathways. Initially, the DQR included most VET and higher education qualifications, but inclusion of qualifications from general education was postponed for a later stage. Following subsequent discussions, general education qualifications and most remaining qualifications from regulated further training were assigned to DQR levels and included in the DQR database in 2017. The upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Allgemeine Hochschulreife) was allocated to DQR/EQF level 4. Qualifications from the non-formal sector have not yet been allocated to the framework, but the possibility of developing appropriate procedures for the non-formal sector is currently being discussed. The DQR is the result of lengthy development work which started in 2006. The framework was formally launched in May 2013 by the joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the conference of Ministers for Economics of the Länder, and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. Development and implementation of the DQR has been a widely supported initiative and a bottom-up process. Social partners and business organisations have played a fundamental role through the German qualifications framework working group (Arbeitskreis DQR). The DQR is a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning, implemented step by step. It is now fully operational; key documents and responsibilities for implementation have been agreed among stakeholders. The main body in charge of implementation is the coordination point for the DQR (Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsstelle DQR), set up in a joint initiative of the federal government and the Länder. The 2013 joint resolution is accompanied by a list of allocated qualifications which is updated annually, as well as the DQR manual describing responsibilities, procedures, standards and methods of qualification allocation. The DQR is a non-regulatory framework and its integration into policies of different education sectors is an evolutionary process. The DQR was referenced to the EQF in December 2012. As of January 2014, EQF and NQF levels are starting to feature on VET certificates, certificate supplements and on higher education diploma supplements. For instance, German master craftsperson certificates show the corresponding NQF and EQF level. Like the bachelor degree, they are related to DQR/EQF level 6.



German national qualifications framework (DQR)

DQR levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctorate (Doktor)	8
7	Master degree (Master) Strategic IT professional (certified) (Strategischer IT Professional (Geprüfter)) Other further vocational training qualifications according to Vocational Training Act and Handicraft Code (level 7)	7
6	Bachelor degree (Bachelor) Commercial specialist (certified) (Fachkaufmann (Geprüfter)) Business management specialist (certified) (Fachwirt (Geprüfter)) Master craftsman (certified) (Meister (Geprüfter)) Operative IT professional (certified) (Operativer IT Professional (Geprüfter)) Trade and technical school (State-certified) (Fachschule (Staatlich Geprüfter)) Other further vocational training qualifications according to Vocational Training Act and Handicraft Code (level 6)	6
5	IT specialist (certified) (IT-Spezialist (Zertifizierter)) Service technician (certified) (Service-techniker (Geprüfter)) Other further vocational training qualifications according to Vocational Training Act and Handicraft Code (level 5)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Allgemeine Hochschulreife (AHR)) Qualification entitling holder to study particular subjects at a higher education institution (Fachgebundene Hochschulreife (FgbHR)) Qualification entitling holder to study at a university of applied sciences (Fachhochschulreife (FHR)) Dual VET (three-year and three-and-a-half-year training courses) Full-time vocational school (regulated under Länder law) (Berufsfachschule) Full vocational qualification (full-time vocational school) (Berufsfachschule)	4
3	General education school leaving certificate after 10 years at Realschule (Mittlerer Schulabschluss) Dual VET (two-year training courses) Full-time vocational school (general education school leaving certificate obtained on completion of grade 10 at Realschule or, under certain circumstances, at other lower secondary school types) (Mittlerer Schulabschluss (Berufsfachschule))	3



DQR levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
2	Lower secondary school leaving certificate after nine years (Hauptschulabschluss) Vocational training preparation (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung) Employment agency measures (Maßnahmen der Arbeitsagentur) Year of pre-vocational training (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr) Introductory training for young people (Einstiegsqualifizierung) Basic vocational training (Berufliche Grundbildung)	2
1	Vocational training preparation (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung) Employment agency measures (vocational preparation schemes) (Maßnahmen der Arbeitsagentur) (Berufsvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahmen) Year of pre-vocational training (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr)	1



Italy

The Italian NQF was legally established in January 2018, via an NQF decree, signed by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and the Regions and published in the Official Journal. It was the result of a lengthy process, involving a broad range of stakeholders; technical work and reforms have been carried out over the past decade. Since 2003, reforms have been implemented in upper secondary general education, VET and higher education, anticipating the principles of a learning-outcomes-based NQF. The Italian qualifications framework for higher education (Quadro dei Titoli Italiani dell'Istruzione Superiore, QTI) was published in 2010 and self-certification to the QF-EHEA was completed in 2012. Given the fragmentation of the education and training system and the complex model of governance in the country, with both regional and national authorities involved in designing and awarding qualifications at different levels and abiding by different legislation, the challenge has been to achieve effective inter-regional coordination and to integrate different education and training subsystems into a coherent national qualification system for lifelong learning. A comprehensive NQF, based on explicit levels of learning outcomes, will help with transparency and comparison between different qualification types awarded by different authorities, facilitate validation of non-formal and informal learning, and support adult participation in lifelong learning. Law 92/2012 on labour market reform was an important milestone in this work. It contains provisions on lifelong learning, and approaches to a national system of certification of competences and services for validation of non-formal and informal learning. In 2015, stakeholders reached agreement on an operational common framework for national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills – the national framework of regional qualifications – followed by an inter-ministerial decree. A national repertory of qualifications was established by Decree 13/2013 and comprises four different sections: higher education, secondary education, vocational education and training, and the national framework of regional qualifications. The latter two sections have been populated with qualifications and are available to consult online. Italy has referenced its formal national qualifications (general education, VET and higher education qualifications), which are awarded by the Ministry of Education and University, and those awarded by the regions in the framework of the state-regions agreement, directly to the eight EQF levels, using the EQF level descriptors. The first referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013. Other qualifications awarded by the regions, licences for regulated professions and private qualifications, are not included and will be dealt with in the second stage of referencing.

Referencing of Italian formal qualifications to the EQF

EQF levels	Italian formal qualifications
8	Research doctorate (Dottorato di ricerca) Academic diploma for research training (Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca) Specialisation diploma (Diploma di specializzazione) Second level university master (Master universitario di secondo livello) Academic specialisation diploma (II) (Diploma accademico di specializzazione (II)) Higher specialisation diploma or master (II) (Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (II))



EQF levels	Italian formal qualifications
7	Master degree (Laurea magistrale) Second level academic diploma (Diploma accademico di secondo livello) First level university master (Master universitario di primo livello) Academic specialisation diploma (I) (Diploma accademico di specializzazione) Higher specialisation diploma or master (I) (Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (I))
6	Bachelor degree (Laurea) First level academic diploma (Diploma accademico di primo livello)
5	Higher technical education diploma (Diploma di tecnico superiore – percorsi ITS)
4	Professional technician diploma (Diploma professionale di tecnico (*)) Upper secondary education diploma (Licei diploma liceale) Upper secondary education diploma – technical schools (Diploma di istruzione tecnica) Upper secondary education diploma – vocational schools (Diploma di istruzione professionale) Higher technical specialisation certificate (Certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore –percorsi IFTS)
3	Professional operator certificate (Attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale (*))
2	Compulsory education certificate (Certificato delle competenze di base acquisite in esito all’assolvimento dell’obbligo di istruzione (**))
1	Lower secondary school-leaving diploma (Diploma di licenza conclusiva del primo ciclo di istruzione)

(*) Competent authority: regions.

(**) Competent authority: Ministry of Education, University and Research (Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca) or regions, according to type of education pathway. Source: Adapted from Italian Ministry of Labour; ISFOL (2012)



Romania

Romania adopted a learning-outcomes-based NQF for lifelong learning, the Romanian NQF (ROQF), in 2013. This aims to bring together nationally recognised qualifications from both initial and continuing VET, apprenticeship, general and higher education, and help integrate the validation of non-formal learning into the national qualification system. The framework has eight levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Apart from its transparency function, the ROQF is seen as a tool to support national reforms and modernisation of education and training, opening up the possibility to address issues such as coherence and progression in the education system, the use of validation, adult participation, and transitions between work and education. The framework builds on reform in VET and the development of competence-based qualifications since the mid-1990s. Parallel work was carried out in higher education, and a qualifications framework for higher education was established in line with the Bologna process and the EQF. One of the main challenges was to link the development processes, structures and stakeholders from VET and higher education and to improve links with the labour market. An important step was taken in June 2011 through the set-up of a single National Qualifications Authority – NQA (Autoritatea Națională pentru Calificări, ANC), responsible for developing and implementing the comprehensive NQF. The ROQF is firmly based on national legislation and underpinned by a clear governance structure. The strong role of the NQA as initiator of legislation and its human resource capacity are positive aspects. The framework is at an early operational stage; related legislation has been amended and supplemented regularly, and a new amendment is pending. Criteria and procedures for inclusion of qualifications into the ROQF and the methodologies for assigning qualifications to levels need to be clarified. Establishing good cooperation between different stakeholders and structures is essential for the ROQF to achieve its aims. A draft EQF referencing report was presented in 2014 and the final referencing report is expected to be submitted to the EQF advisory group in 2018. The qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against the QFEHEA in 2011.

Romanian national qualifications framework (ROQF)

ROQF levels	Qualifications	Envisaged EQF levels
8	<p>Doctoral degree (Diploma de doctor) (third cycle of higher education)</p> <p>Certificate for postdoctoral studies (Atestat de studii postdoctorale) (postdoctoral studies)</p>	8
7	<p>Master degree (Diploma de master) and Diploma supplement (second cycle of higher education)</p> <p>Bachelor degree / Architect diploma (Diploma de licenta / Diploma de architect) and Diploma supplement (first and second cycle combined higher education study programmes)</p>	7
6	<p>Bachelor degree / Engineering diploma / Urbanism diploma (Diploma de licenta / Diploma de inginer / Diploma de urbanist) and Diploma supplement (first cycle of higher education)</p> <p>Certificate of professional* competence (Certificat de atestare a competentelor profesionale) (postgraduate studies)</p> <p>Graduation certificate (Certificat de absolvire) (postgraduate studies)</p>	6
5	<p>Short cycle higher education certificate (Diploma de absolvire/calificare) and Certificate supplement (short cycle higher</p>	5



ROQF levels	Qualifications	Envisaged EQF levels
	<p>education) Post-secondary certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (post-secondary non-higher tertiary education)</p>	
4	<p>Upper secondary school leaving certificate (Diploma de Bacalaureat) (general, technological or vocational education, four years of study) VET certificate level 4 (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (technological / vocational high-school) VET certificate level 4 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (Certificat de calificare/absolvire) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace)</p>	4
3	<p>VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional* competence (Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale) and Descriptive supplement (accredited training centre) VET certificate level 3 / Certificate of professional* competence (Certificat de competente profesionale) (authorised assessment centre) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (Certificat de calificare/absolvire) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (education unit / technological/vocational high school) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (education unit / vocational training programme organised in dual system) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (education unit / professional* education lasting at least 3 years)</p>	3
2	<p>VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace) VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional* competence (Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale) and Descriptive supplement (accredited training centre) VET certificate level 2 / Certificate of professional* competence (Certificat de competente profesionale) (authorised assessment centre)</p>	2



ROQF levels	Qualifications	Envisaged EQF levels
	VET certificate level 2 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (Certificat de calificare/absolvire) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme)	
1	Certificate of professional* competence (Certificat de competente profesionale) (authorised assessment centre) Graduation certificate (Certificat de absolvire) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) Graduation Diploma (Diploma de absolvire) (basic education unit), 8 years	1

NB: The term VET generically includes both the vocational and technological education and training (TVET) routes available in the national education system, offering qualifications at levels 2-5 EQF, and the education and training offered by training providers in contexts other than the formal education system, for adult learning, also for qualification levels 2-5 EQF, preparing learners for occupations and the labour market.

(*) The term 'professional' denotes vocational and technological training aimed at the labour market. Source: National Qualifications Authority, 2017.



Sweden

Sweden has developed a comprehensive, learning-outcomes-based NQF for lifelong learning (SeQF) with eight levels, following the basic structure of the EQF. Each level is described in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. The broad and inclusive nature of level descriptors makes it possible to open up all levels to different types of qualifications. The formal adoption of the framework took place in October 2015 (Regulation on a qualifications framework for lifelong learning 2015:545), and the parts concerned with the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the SeQF came into force in January 2016. As the starting point for the development of the SeQF was to establish a comprehensive framework that could include qualifications from the formal education system as well as from other providers, emphasis was put on the importance of an inclusive and open process with continuous dialogue with different stakeholders. Preparatory work for the legal basis proved time-consuming, but was deemed essential for the future success of the SeQF. While the framework was initially designed to aid transparency and international comparison of Swedish qualifications, the SeQF is now increasingly seen as playing a role in supporting better cooperation between the education and training system and the labour market. A particular feature of Swedish education and training is its strong adult and popular education, combined with an extensive and diverse system of labour market-based education and training. The added value of the framework lies in its openness to qualifications awarded by private companies and branch/sector organisations and bodies; criteria and procedures for the inclusion of those qualifications have been introduced and published, and the first qualifications have been included. The openness of the SeQF will also support validation of non-formal and informal learning. Levels 6 to 8 include higher education qualifications, but are also open to other types of non-academic qualifications. The SeQF is in an early operational stage. To strengthen its comprehensive nature as NQF for lifelong learning, continuous dialogue and implementation activities are required. The National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is responsible for implementing the SeQF. An advisory group consisting of a range of stakeholders, including representatives of higher education, advises the agency on the applications, inclusion and levelling of qualifications. The SeQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2016. Separate self-certification of the Swedish higher education framework to the QF-EHEA was carried out in 2012.

Swedish national qualifications framework (SeQF)

SeQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Degrees, third cycle, Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100) Degrees, third cycle, Annex to the Regulation 1993: 221 (Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet Förordning (2017:276))	8
7	Degrees, second cycle, Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100) Degrees, second cycle, Annex to the Regulation 1993: 221 (Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet) Degrees, second cycle, in the Annex to Regulation 2007: 1164 (Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan)	7



SeQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
6	<p>Degrees, first cycle, Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (Examina på grundnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100)</p> <p>Degrees, first cycle, Annex to the Regulation 2007:1164 (Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan)</p> <p>Degrees, first cycle, Annex to the Regulation 1993: 221 (Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet)</p> <p>Advanced diploma in higher vocational education (Kvalificerad yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan)</p>	6
5	<p>Qualified graduate from upper secondary engineering courses (Gymnasieingenjörsexamen från gymnasieskolan)</p> <p>Diploma in higher vocational education (Yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan)</p>	5
4	<p>Degree from a national programme in upper secondary education – qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards (Gymnasieexamen från gymnasieskolan)</p> <p>Final grades from a complete national or specially designed programme (Slutbetyg från ett fullständigt nationellt eller specialutformat program i gymnasieskolan)</p> <p>Degree from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level – qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards (Gymnasieexamen från kommunal vuxenutbildning)</p> <p>Final grades from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level (Slutbetyg från gymnasial vuxenutbildning)</p> <p>Certificate from the general course at upper secondary level from folk high school (Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på gymnasial nivå från folkhögskola)</p>	4
3	-	3
2	<p>Final grades from compulsory school (Slutbetyg från grundskolan)</p> <p>Final grades from special school at compulsory level (Slutbetyg från specialskolan)</p> <p>Final grades from municipal adult education and training at compulsory level (Slutbetyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning på grundläggande nivå)</p> <p>Certificate from upper secondary education for individuals with learning disabilities (Gymnasiesärskolebevis från gymnasiesärskolan)</p> <p>Certificate from special education for adults at upper secondary level (Gymnasiesärskolebevis från särskild utbildning för vuxna på gymnasial nivå)</p> <p>Grade from Swedish for immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (Betyg från utbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola)</p> <p>Grade from municipal adult education in Swedish for Immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (Betyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola)</p>	2



SeQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
	Certificate from the general course at compulsory school level from folk high school (Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på grundskolenivå från folkhögskola)	
1	Final grades from compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities (Slutbetyg från grundsärskolan) Final grades from special education for adults at compulsory level (Slutbetyg från särskild utbildning för vuxna på grundläggande nivå)	1



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