



# A survey on the EQF / NQF work in the Nordic- and Baltic countries with special focus on non-formal learning



By Agnethe Nordentoft, Tiina Jääger and Flemming Gjedde

**EAEA / NVL Conference 2010  
'The integration of non-formal adult learning in National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs)'  
25 / 26 November 2010  
Brussels, Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre**

# A survey on the EQF / NQF work in the Nordic- and Baltic countries with special focus on non-formal learning

---

The Nordic network for adult learning (NVL) has asked for a survey on the current status of the NQF work in the Nordic-Baltic countries. We have made this survey in June-October 2010. In our summary the focus will be on the integration of non-formal adult learning in National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs).

Agnethe Nordentoft from the Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA) and member of the Nordic Expert Network on Validation, is the responsible person for the description of the Nordic countries and Tiina Jääger from the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA) is responsible for the description of the Baltic countries.

This report is finished in October - November by Flemming Gjedde from DAEA, as Agneth Nordentoft got sick in the beginning of October 2010.

A common questionnaire was designed and sent in June 2010 to informants from official authorities and to non-formal umbrella organizations in each country.<sup>1</sup> The informants have been chosen by the Validation Network.

The informants have answered the questions in the summer 2010 and we have made a description of each country. The descriptions are based on the questionnaires and may not have all the information about the NQF-work in each country. But they give a picture of the situation and make it possible to compare the countries. We have also been using the working paper no.8 from CEDEFOP to complete the country descriptions.<sup>2</sup>



norden

Nordic Council of Ministers

The report has been produced with the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers strategic funding through NVL.

---

<sup>1</sup> **Denmark:** Chefkonsulent Jan Reitz Jørgensen, Undervisningsministeriet/Danish Ministry of Education and Randi Jensen, DFS/Danish Adult Education Association

**Sweden:** Stefan Skimutis, International Coordinator, National Agency for Higher Vocational Education and Björn Garefelt, Folkbildningsrådet/Swedish National Council of Adult Education

**Norway:** Jan Schreiner Levy, Specialrådgiver, Kunnskapsdepartementet/Ministry of Education and Research and Cathrine Thue, VOFO/The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning

**Finland:** Seija Raku, Ministry of Education and Culture and Eeva-Inkeri Sirelius, Secretary general, VSY/Finnish Adult Education Association

**Iceland:** Björg Pétursdóttir and Ólafur Grétar Kristjánsson, Ministry of Education Science and Culture and Ingibjörg E. Guðmundsdóttir and Gudmunda Kristinsdóttir, FRAE /Education and Training Service Centre

**Estonia:** Külli All, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Katrin Kerem, Estonian Qualifications Authority and Tiina Jääger, Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA).

**Latvia:** Dainas Papas, Ministry of Education and Science / Latvijas Republikas Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija.

**Lithuania:** Valdas Dienys, Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre / [www.kpmc.lt](http://www.kpmc.lt)

<sup>2</sup> Cedefop – Working Paper no. 8 - The Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe (August 2010). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010

## Table of contents

---

Introduction to EQF / NQF .....	4
The Finnish qualification framework .....	6
The Swedish qualification framework .....	9
The Norwegian qualification framework .....	12
The Icelandic qualification framework .....	15
The Danish qualification framework .....	18
Summary for the Nordic countries .....	21
The Estonian qualification framework .....	23
The Latvian qualification framework .....	26
The Lithuanian qualification framework .....	29
Summary for the Baltic countries .....	32
Dilemmas for integration of non-formal learning in NQFs .....	35
References for further reading .....	37

# Introduction to EQF / NQF

By Agnethe Nordentoft

---

## What is the EQF?

The European Qualifications Framework is a comprehensive standard at European level to describe the learning outcomes from basic educational level (level 1) to the highest level in higher education (level 8). Thus the EQF is structured with eight vertical reference levels and comprises the following reference level descriptors: knowledge, skills and competences. These terms are used to categorize and classify all forms of expected learning outcome. The three terms are interrelated and are to reflect the complexity of a qualification at each horizontal level. A qualification level is referring to what the individual learner is expected to know, understand and to do – at a result of a learning process.

EQF is an overarching reference framework including subsystems within the formal educational system: general education, vocational education, higher education and adult learning. EQF is also described as a meta-framework and is intended to be a neutral reference point. The levels must be seen as abstract constructions – a way to simplify and codify complex and diverse qualifications systems. In principle there is a range of different learning pathways leading to the same level of qualification. EQF is to make these different learning pathways compatible and link the various subsystems.

## Background and process

The EQF was recommended in 2008 by the EU parliament and the EU Council. The official title of the act is “Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme – Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning” (Official Journal C111, 6.5.2008).

The background was a process of development initiated by the EU Commission by the open method of coordination with a hearing process and by extensive peer learning activities in projects, seminars and the like. When the process started only a few European countries had developed NQFs.

In 2008 the EQF Advisory group was set up to support the developmental work by initiating documentation, surveys etc.

## Purposes and aims

The explicit purpose of the EQF is to increase transparency, transference and recognition of qualifications between the European countries and thus mobility of the European workers and students/learners. The EQF is to function as a translation device to encourage understanding between the countries – and the sectors. A level 3 qualification from one country equivalents a level 3 qualification from another country.

The higher degree of transparency is intended to promote and support the lifelong learning strategies by enhancing mobility and flexibility. By incorporating qualifications of all learning subsystems (general, vocational, academic) the framework at a structural level breaks down traditional barriers and dead ends from the perspective of the individual learner.

The implicit and fundamental aim is to enhance a shift of paradigm, *from* the traditional approach focusing on input and detailed statements of the curriculum of the educational system *to* a learning outcome based approach opening for new ways of thinking about learning.

The focus on output will provide new ways of organizing learning within - and in principle also outside - the educational institutions. This shift will, when fully implemented, change the way education is described, provided, facilitated, assessed and monitored.

### **What is a NQF?**

A QF is – according to the CEDEFOP Glossary (2008) – “An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes”.

In line with EQF a NQF aims to integrate and coordinate all subsystems and operates with expected learning outcomes as the descriptors. A qualification is not defined by the type of educational provider or by the length of an educational program.

A NQF relates directly to the national context, and its implementation can be a driving force of reform and shift from the traditional educational approach to a competence-based approach.

In the process of reform the levels of the NQF are articulated and negotiated among the national stakeholders and thus a NQF can be seen as a platform for national dialogue and cooperation between all relevant stakeholders.

### **The impact of EQF on NQFs**

The success of EQF depends on national implementation and how it can be fitted in accordance with national legislation and practice. The countries must view the EQF as a relevant device for both national development and for international comparability, transfer and recognition.

The EQF is in principle voluntary to adapt, but the EQF recommendation of 2008 encourages the countries to refer their national qualifications to the EQF by 2010. By 2012 the EQF levels should be introduced as points of reference in all new national certificates and diplomas.

According to the relatively frequent surveys (by CEDEFOP et al.) most of the European countries are now developing NQFs and most of them have favored to adapt the eight levels of the EQF.

The introduction of the EQF has served as a catalyst for development of the educational provision in many countries.

# The Finish qualification framework

## – Tutkintojen ja muun osaamisen viitekehys<sup>3</sup>

---



The Ministry of Education (since May 2010 The Ministry of Education and Culture) is responsible for the national consulting process on EQF.

### Process of consultation on EQF

and comparability of qualifications in Europe were considered to be the main benefits of EQF for Finland. The Commissions proposal aroused interest and generated discussion both about the proposed EQF itself and widely about the comparability of learning outcome, diplomas and qualifications. Increased transparency.

Finnish stakeholders supported the idea of an EQF, but they saw little added value of a NQF in Finland. The Finnish system was already transparent, it was already to a large extent based on a learning outcomes approach and it allowed users to build on and combine qualifications in a flexible way. Finland therefore expressed the opinion that a referencing could be accomplished without a NQF.

After the very first rejecting reaction the preparatory committee was nominated and the consultation process was organized by the ministry. The authorities who work closely with EU issues were in favor (Labour market parties, teacher and student organisations, education providers, rectors and educational administration).

Universities, polytechnics, educational institutes were mostly concerned about the level of their diplomas in the framework. There was very little discussion on the new paradigm of competences and there was very little interest in extending the framework to cover all learning outside the formal qualifications. All stakeholders shared quite the same opinion and same minor reservations.

### Development of a NQF

The NQF work is based on the national Development Plan for Education and Research for the period 2007-2012. The functioning and the clarity of the Finnish NQF will be enhanced by preparing a national framework by 2010.

In August 2008 the Ministry of Education appointed a NQF committee to prepare a NQF describing qualifications and other learning.<sup>4</sup> A public consultation on the proposal for a national framework made by the NQF committee was organized in August-October 2009. About 90 statements from stakeholders were received.

---

<sup>3</sup> The information is based on questionnaires filled out by: Seija Raku, Ministry of Education and Culture and Eeva-Inkeri Sirelius, Secretary general, VSY/Finnish Adult Education Association

<sup>4</sup> The NQF committee consisted of the following representatives: The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Defence Command Finland (Ministry of Defence), Finnish National Board of Education, Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland - AKAVA, Confederation of Finnish Industries - EK, Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions – SAK, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Finnish Confederation of Professionals - STTK, the Association of Vocational Adult Education Centres - AKKL, Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences - ARENE, Vocational Education Providers in Finland - KJY, Finnish Association of Principals, The Finnish Council of University Rectors, Finnish Adult Education Association, The National Union of University Students in Finland and the Union of Finnish upper secondary students.

In spring 2010 the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a government proposal based on the proposal of the national committee. The proposal was presented to the Finnish Parliament in September 2010. New legislation is planned to come into force in the beginning of 2011.

The committee will continue its development work after the parliament's approval of the framework to extend the framework to cover knowledge, skills and competences gained outside formal education. The primary focus will be on the broad courses of various administrative sectors that are not included in the NQF but are often completed and have learning outcomes defined by a competent authority.

Referencing process will start in fall 2010. The referencing has already been discussed in the national committee, which continues its work as a background group to support the NQF developments. The Final referencing report is expected to be presented to the EQF AG late 2010.

## **Result**

A Finnish NQF is seen as having a role to play in increasing national and international transparency and the comparability of qualifications. The NQF is by the non-formal stakeholders seen as something Finland has to do as an EU member country, but they are still sceptic whether it actually will support lifelong learning.

The NQF is also giving a reference for future developments of the national qualifications system and is furthermore seen as a way to facilitate the referencing to the EQF.

NQF in Finland has 8 levels and the definitions of the levels follow the EQF model closely. The dimensions of knowledge, skills and competences are not distinguished from one another and the EQF levels are specified based on a national perspective. The framework is inspired by the EQF but adopted to suit the national context. This is particular the case for competence where additional aspects like entrepreneurship and languages have been added.

## **Implementation**

The NQF will be contained in an Act which will bring together all the qualifications as they have been provided for under different legislation. The Act gives authorization for the description of requirement levels and the placement of qualifications in the national framework levels. The statutes, decrees and instructions concerning qualifications and other certificates will also be revised.

The Ministry of Education and Culture will present the statutes relating to the NQF and is responsible for the drafting and presentation of the legislative amendments and for hearing the opinions of the other ministries and stakeholders in the drafting stage of the legislation.

At the beginning NQF is implemented at levels 3 to 8. NQF focuses on a learning orientation, competence and learning outcomes. Finnish VET has used a competence based approach since the early 1990s. Learning outcomes are increasingly used to define qualifications and in curricula also in other parts of the education and training system.

Educational institutes will in the future add to all their diplomas the level of the diploma with reference to NQF. Only the official diplomas have been put into framework, so the impact is limited.

A long term effect of the NQF may be that it standardizes the wording of the learning outcomes in the descriptions of the diverse training programs.

## **Non-formal learning and NQF**

The use of a learning outcomes approach is not new in the Finnish qualifications system and it is therefore possible to integrate the validation of non-formal and informal learning into the system. According to the Finnish NQF committee it is imperative to move from a qualifications framework towards a competence framework to fully attain the benefits offered by the framework. A mere qualifications framework will not adequately promote the attainment of the principles of lifelong learning.

According to the government proposal the NQF will be extended to cover all knowledge skills and competences. It has been discussed and agreed but not concluded how to open the framework up to 'qualifications' acquired outside the traditional, formal education and training system (for example originating from professional training in occupations or sectors). Applying NQF to non-formal learning is seen as a long term challenge requiring concrete solutions, especially quality assurance arrangements and clear competence requirements. Without clear competence requirements it will be impossible to decide where any given competence area should be placed in the NQF.

The non-formal learning is not yet really included in the Finnish NQF. The route for the non-formal sector is to see that recognition of prior learning is put into practice in different educational institutes. Levels 1 and 2 are empty in the Finnish framework. There may appear a need to place some minor courses into these lower levels.

There is no authority to define or to measure the learning outcomes after completing a course on the non-formal sector. The non-formal sector has a need for tools and methods to approve the knowledge, skills and competences gained in this sector.

## **Summary**

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the national consulting process on EQF. The Finnish stakeholders are overall supportive of the idea of an EQF.

The NQF work is based on the national Development Plan for Education and Research for the period 2007-2012. The functioning and the clarity of the Finnish NQF will be enhanced by preparing a national framework by 2010. An 8-level framework described through knowledge, skills and competence is suggested. The framework is inspired by the EQF but adopted to suit the national context.

The use of a learning outcomes approach is not new in the Finnish qualifications system and it is therefore possible to integrate non-formal and informal learning into the system. According to the Finnish NQF committee it is imperative to move from a qualifications framework towards a competence framework to fully attain the benefits offered by the framework.

But applying the NQF to non-formal learning is seen as a long term challenge. Without clear competence requirements it will be impossible to decide where any given competence area should be placed in the NQF.

## **References**

Cedefop – Working Paper no. 8 - The Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe (August 2010). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010



## The Swedish qualification framework – Ett svenskt ramverk för kvalifikationer <sup>5</sup>



On December 23rd 2009 the Swedish Government formally decided to develop a comprehensive national qualifications framework covering all parts of the public education and training system. The development of the Swedish NQF is based on the opinions of a broad range of stakeholders and experts and will be presented to the Swedish Government in October 2010.

The qualifications framework is primarily seen as a necessary precondition for referencing to the EQF, but it is also going to work as an instrument for further strengthening the transparency and permeability of the Swedish education and training system.

### Process of consultation on EQF

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) is responsible for the development of a Swedish NQF. There have been some reservations from the stakeholders/parties and their approval is depending on the organization of the process, but the concept is seen as interesting.

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education / Folkbildningsrådet (FBR) approved of the EQF-concept in principle. The upgrading of learning outcome and of non-formal and informal learning is seen as a step forward. The reservations from FBR were regarding how to handle the non-formal and informal learning in relation to the EQF. FBR wanted a development of validation taking place to make EQF work in practice outside the formal system.

### Development of a NQF

The NQF process is organized as open as possible and in dialogue with as many stakeholders/parties as possible. A number of working groups have been established to develop the NQF. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (YH-myndigheten) have constituted a national coordination group that consists of representatives of The National Agency for Education, The National Agency for Higher Education, the Employers federation, regional authorities, main trade union associations and the public employment services.

A national reference group consisting of organizations and agencies that is part of the public education and training system or closely related to this, have also been established. Several project groups have been set up to specify and test level descriptors within different sectors and fields of activity (Cedefop).

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education / Folkbildningsrådet (FBR) was invited to take part in the reference group of the process. The NQF proposal was processed at a number of reference group meetings where we took part and at a national conference. FBR has sent their opinions of the proposal to YH-myndigheten.

In June 2010 YH-myndigheten presented a proposal to a Swedish NQF. Answers and comments should be given before September 10<sup>th</sup>. Finally on October 4<sup>th</sup> YH-myndigheten published a proposal to the Swedish Government. <sup>6</sup>

A final referencing report to the EQF is expected to be ready in the end of 2011.

---

<sup>5</sup> The information are based on questionnaires filled out by: Stefan Skimutis, International Coordinator, Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan / National Agency for Higher Vocational Education and Björn Garefelt, Folkbildningsrådet/Swedish National Council of Adult Education

<sup>6</sup> YH – Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan: Återrapportering av regeringsuppdrag 2010. Förslag till ett svenskt kvalifikationsramverk. 2010.

## **Result**

In the final proposal to the government the Swedish NQF is going to be closely linked to the EQF. It shall be open to include qualifications from all types of learning and it shall further the development of competences in education and in the labour market.

The Swedish NQF will have 8 levels like the EQF and it will build upon the categories: knowledge, skills and competences. The focus is on learning outcomes, not where and how the learning takes place. The EQF/NQF is looked upon as a pragmatic tool, not a framework that shall replace the steering documents of the public education system.

The Swedish NQF is going to be developed in such a way that it makes it possible for stakeholders outside the public system to link their qualifications to the reference framework and it should also cover all parts of the public education and training system (Cedefop).

Within parts of the Swedish folkbildning organisations (folk high schools and study associations) NQF is regarded relevant. This is especially the case when it comes to longer vocational courses at folk high schools on the one hand and also general courses at folk high schools that are linked to the formal education system and can provide entry to universities.

For most of the study circle activities in the study associations NQF is hardly regarded as relevant.

## **Implementation**

The NQF is implemented through national conferences and meetings with stakeholders/parties. The NQF should be included in the examination documents by 2012.

For the formal sector the EQF/NQF will be linked to the corresponding education levels. A long term effect of the NQF can be an increased focus on learning outcome rather than the formal system as such. But hopefully the implementation will also stimulate a more comprehensive national policy on validation that will make it possible for more people to use their non-formal and informal learning for further studies in the labour market.

The ongoing Swedish work is also closely linked to the EQF work in the other Nordic countries.

For the non-formal sector no general decision is taken, it is an option, not a must. It is up to each individual folk high school and study association to take part or not. For the general courses at folk high schools the EQF/NQF levels, if adopted, will be linked to the corresponding levels in the formal system.

The implementation of NQF in vocational courses at folk high schools or study associations, that wish to be linked to the system, is a question that will be discussed at both national level and in each school or study association. If the participants want to have the EQF/NQF level in their examination records there will be a pressure on the institutions to handle this issue.

The creation of a reliable and sustainable system that is possible to adopt within the non-formal learning in folkbildning is a real challenge, that still is not accomplished.

## **Non-formal learning and NQF**

The non-formal learning sector is going to be included in the NQF.

The creation of a reliable and sustainable system, which can be adopted within the non-formal learning in folkbildning is a real challenge, that is still not accomplished. It is necessary to include non-formal learning, if the principle of learning outcome shall be implemented. This is of the interest of citizens/students as well as the society as a whole by creating more mobility and taking into account real competencies.

A problem is to establish functional tools and apply these to include non-formal learning contexts.

Another problem is who will have the power of deciding levels and criteria. There must be a reliable and legitimate system where the expertise of the provider in question e.g. a folk high school is taken into account.

The principle of independent adult education providers is important to folkbildning organisations as well as to ensure the influence of the students in the learning process. It is important that these values are possible to stick within the frame of NQF.

A dilemma is how to get the formal education system to accept non-formal and informal learning. It will be necessary to create a system of quality control.

## **Summary**

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan) is responsible for the development of a Swedish NQF. There have been some reservations from the stakeholders/parties and their approval is depending on the organization of the process, but the concept is seen as interesting. FBR wanted a development of validation taking place to make EQF work in practice outside the formal system.

The NQF process is organized as open as possible and in dialogue with as many stakeholders / parties as possible. A number of working groups have been established to develop the NQF.

The Swedish NQF is going to be developed in such a way that it makes it possible for stakeholders outside the public system to link their qualifications to the reference framework and it should also cover all parts of the public education and training system.

The NQF is implemented through national conferences and meetings with stakeholders/parties.

The NQF should be included in the examination documents by 2012.

The non-formal learning sector is going to be included in the NQF.

But for the non-formal sector no general decision is taken, it is up to each individual folk high school and study association to take part or not. A problem is to establish functional tools and apply these to include non-formal learning contexts.

## **References**

Cedefop – Working Paper no. 8 - The Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe (August 2010). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010

YH – Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan: Återrapportering av regeringsuppdrag 2010. Förslag till ett svenskt kvalifikationsramverk. 2010.



### Process of consultation on EQF

Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the national consultation process. The initial Commission working paper from July 2005 was translated into Norwegian, and sent for consultation to all stakeholders. This was the first time the EQF-concept was presented in Norway, and it was received with caution and some skepticism. Especially within the field of vocational training, there has been a fear that this might lead to harmonization into a kind of “Euro-vocations” – blurring the different country traditions and the specific competencies needed in different countries.

### Development of a NQF

The process is organized by a working group involving Ministry Departments, Directorate for Education and Training, NOKUT<sup>8</sup> and with a reference group put together by a range of stakeholders plus a steering group in the Ministry. The working groups are organized as separate projects for development of level descriptors with ad hoc working groups if needed. The referencing process will be organized in a special sub-group. The stakeholders include social partners, unions for teachers and students, organizations within the different educational structures, organizations within lifelong learning and adult education. The process of consultation is structured as regular consultation meetings with the reference group and formal, written consultations on final documents, regulations etc.

The design and development of the Norwegian NQF is focused on describing the existing national education and training system in a transparent way. This description is seen as a pre-condition for referencing to the EQF – an objective which is widely accepted by everybody involved in the process.

Stakeholders are careful in underlining that the new NQF is not an instrument for reform. The existing Norwegian education and training system, it is stated, is already fairly flexible and transparent. The use of learning outcomes as a basis for defining and describing qualifications, is already a key-feature of the Norwegian system, influencing general and vocational education and training at initial, secondary, upper secondary and higher levels.

(Cedefop)

The process is not completed. Based on already ongoing work in different parts of the education and training sector (notably in higher education, vocational education and training in post-secondary vocational education), a process has been started aiming at producing a consultation proposal by late 2010. A finalized proposal for the government is expected early 2011 – eventually expected to result in a Ministerial decree (‘Forskrift’) thus giving it a clear formal basis. (Cedefop)

A national EQF reference group continues its work and will meet regularly during 2010 and 2011 to discuss principles and progress. All relevant stakeholders are included in this group, including social partners, education unions, representatives of schooling and university systems, students’

---

<sup>7</sup> The information are based on a questionnaire filled out by: Jan Schreiner Levy, Specialrådgiver/Special Advisor, Kunnskapsdepartementet/Ministry of Education and Research, and by Cathrine Thue, VOFO/The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning.

<sup>8</sup> NOKUT – Nasjonalt Organ for Kvalitet i Utdanningen / Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

unions, and public agencies in the education sector. The group meets when needed, minimum 3 to 4 times a year. Representatives from this group will be directly involved in the referencing process.

## **Result**

The NQF is viewed as an important step, but there is not much public interest at the present stage. A reference report will link the NQF levels to the EQF levels. But there is no decision yet as regarding number of levels in NQF.

The Norwegian NQF is using a terminology compatible with EQF/Bologna, using level descriptors for knowledge, skills and general competences.

## **Implementation**

It is not decided yet how the NQF should be implemented. It will have an effect on the day-to-day work in the educational institutions but up to now only within higher education based on the QF for higher education (Bologna framework).

But the use of learning outcomes is already a part of the Norwegian education system and is used as a basis for defining and describing qualifications. This is influencing general and vocational education and training at initial, secondary, upper secondary and higher levels.

## **Non-formal learning and NQF**

Norway has a well developed system for validation of prior learning. The basic principle is to evaluate prior learning against the formal education and training system. Within the NQF-process, they are investigating options for improving tools for such validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is not decided yet, if the non-formal education should be included in the NQF.

The dilemma is that validation of prior learning is seen as an individual right, and must be related to specific learning outcomes, while the NQF is at the system level, and too general for individual validation purposes.

VOFO, representing the non-formal sector, see the EQF/NQF as a system for the formal sector and find it hard to see how the non-formal sector can be a part of NQF.

NQF/EQF relate to qualifications, not to competencies. Qualifications have been defined as “a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard”. When it comes to the study associations, the participants attending their courses are in general, not tested. The individual does not get her/his learning outcomes determined and assessed against specific standards. In this sense non-formal learning cannot be directly included in the NQF unless individual learning is identified and assessed.

When a non-formal learning provider cooperates with a formal institution or offers a learning programme on behalf of a formal institution the learning outcomes are determined as in the formal system and the individual gets formal documentation. This is one way that the non-formal sector gets directly in touch with the NQF/EQF- by getting the level of the relevant education level. Other than that the non-formal sector is left with the option of describing expected learning outcomes on the course documentation.

Other than that, validation of prior learning (in Norwegian 'Realkompetansevurdering' meaning documentation and validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes) is the link between the non-formal and the formal education sector where EQF/NQF applies.

The process: An individual has developed competencies in many ways, validation and recognition of competencies takes place, the individual receives documentation from formal education, formal education is placed on an NQF level.

This means that the system for validation is even more important than before. It is a functioning system, but there is a need for coordination, improvement and information to the public. There is near consensus about this among relevant stakeholders and suggestions for necessary actions and improvement have been communicated to the relevant authorities.

## **Summary**

Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the national consultation process.

Especially within the field of vocational training, there has been a fear that this might lead to harmonization into a kind of “Euro-vocations” – blurring the different country traditions and the specific competencies needed in different countries.

The process is organized by a working party involving ministry departments, Directorate for Education and Training, NOKUT and with a reference group put together by a range of stakeholders plus a steering group in the Ministry. The process is not completed. A comprehensive framework proposal is expected to be finalized in November 2010.

It is not decided yet how the NQF should be implemented or if the non-formal education should be included in the NQF.

## **References**

Cedefop – Working Paper no. 8 - The Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe (August 2010). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010



Iceland has decided to develop and implement a comprehensive national qualifications framework covering all levels and types of qualifications. The main elements of this framework are now gradually being implemented. The work on the Icelandic framework started autumn 2007 and reflected work already done in higher education, linked to the Bologna process. The work on the HE framework started already in 2006 and was implemented in 2007. The Higher education sector supports

the development of the NQF and will use the learning outcomes based approach in the further development of programmes. The Icelandic NQF is seen as an important tool for reforming the national education and training system. While a transparent description of the existing system is considered to be important — for national and European purposes - this is seen as a mere precondition for increasing the flexibility of the qualification system and for increasing participation in learning.

### Process of consultation on EQF

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the national consulting process. Iceland did not participate in the original consultation process 2005-6, but has later been active in introducing the EQF ideology.

A national discussion took place during 2006 on the EQF in a working group composed of a wide selection of stakeholders. The concept was received with enthusiasm and the stakeholders have put emphasis on the development of a NQF based on the EQF ideology. All stakeholders have been in favour, both the formal school system as well as the social partners that have been consulted.

### Development of a NQF

The work is led by specialists in the Ministry, organized through working groups composed of stakeholders, teachers and providers. The working groups are organized according to subjects, both general academic, vocational and arts.

The stakeholders who are invited are the social partners - professional councils, as well as teachers and providers. All stakeholders are consulted on a continuous basis through introductions to stakeholders in meetings, conferences and articles and the feedback is well received and discussed.

The process is not finished; it is in a mid-term phase. Some of the qualifications from the formal educational system have been linked to the NQF. A draft of definitions of knowledge, skills and competencies for each level has been made.

### Result

The NQF is viewed as an important step both for formal, non-formal and informal education. The NQF will probably have 7 levels and will make use of the terms knowledge, skills and competences to describe learning outcomes.

It will be linked to the EQF. A referencing of the Icelandic qualifications system to the EQF is seen as bringing added value and allowing for comparability.

---

<sup>9</sup> The information is based on questionnaires filled out by: Björg Pétursdóttir and Ólafur Grétar Kristjánsson, Ministry of Education Science and Culture and Ingibjörg E. Guðmundsdóttir and Gudmunda Kristinsdóttir, FRAE /Education and Training Service Centre

Iceland is discussing a 10-level framework. This proposal builds on the previous 7-level approach but introduces in addition 3 entry levels. Only the 7 'original' levels will be referenced to the EQF (the Icelandic level 1 will cover levels 1 and 2 of the EQF). The introduction of entry levels signals a wish to develop not only a transparent but also an inclusive framework — able to address the (diverse) education, training and learning needs of the entire population. The entry levels will make it possible to articulate the key competences needed and how different levels are connected and can be used for progression.

## **Implementation**

The NQF has not been implemented yet. But it will be implemented through the national curriculum by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, levels 1-4 corresponding to education at Upper Secondary Level.

In the day-to-day work in the educational institutions it will affect the construction of study programs.

The NQF will make education more transparent, open up routes for people without formal education at Upper Secondary Level – and will provide institutions with a tool to rethink their work.

It can be a basis for the design of curricula and accreditation of prior learning in all sectors. It will make transfer of non-formal and informal learning into the formal system easier and the education system will be more holistic and cost effective.

## **Non-formal learning and NQF**

The non-formal sector is not included yet. The non-formal sector and the Ministry have started informal discussions.

The non-formal sector states that it is important to preserve the distinctive features of non-formal adult education i.e. a “competent body” that acknowledges its distinctive features.

Within the non-formal sector there has been an interest to include NQF. It will hopefully increase the value of non-formal education both within the formal education system and on the labor market domestically and abroad.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture states that non-formal education should and will be included in the NQF. They don't see any dilemmas, only challenges.

## **Cases**

Only some pilot cases in their initial phases. A few experiments and projects have been done:

- European project VOW and REVOW concerning description of competences attained by non-formal and informal learning – classified according to EQF levels. In development.
- Benchmarking two new curricula in tourism into the EQF/NQF levels.

## **Summary**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the national consulting process. Iceland did not participate in the original consultation process, but has later been active in introducing the EQF ideology.

The stakeholders who are invited are the social partners through professional councils, as well as teachers and providers. All stakeholders are consulted on a continuous basis through introductions to stakeholders in meetings, conferences and articles and the feedback is well received and discussed.

The NQF is viewed as an important step both for formal, non-formal and informal education.



The NQF will have seven levels and will make use of the terms knowledge, skills and competences to describe learning outcomes and it will be linked to the EQF.

The NQF will be implemented through the national curriculum by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, levels 1-4 corresponding to education at Upper Secondary Level.

The non-formal sector is not included yet. The non-formal sector and the Ministry have started informal discussions.

## **References**

Cedefop – Working Paper no. 8 - The Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe (August 2010). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010



The idea of a comprehensive qualifications framework was first raised in the context of the 2005-2006 work on a national strategy on globalization ('A Government strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy') where a coherent qualifications system aiming at permeability and transparency was emphasized. European developments also played a significant role and the setting up of the inter-ministerial group in 2006 was triggered by the preparatory work on the EQF launched by the European Commission and the Council in 2004/2005. The main purpose of the Danish NQF is to provide a better overview over all officially recognized public qualifications in the Danish system and to support mutual recognition of Danish and foreign qualifications.

### **Process of consultation on EQF**

The Ministry of Education has been responsible for the national consultation process on EQF. A national conference was held on November 3rd 2005 with all relevant partners.

The work on the framework was initiated in 2006 when an inter-ministerial group consisting of representatives from the ministries of Education, Research, Technology and Development, Culture as well as Economy was set up. In general the concept of EQF was received positively and seen as a possibility to strengthen the mobility on the labour market, seen from the perspective of Life Long Learning. Secondly a possibility for better comparison between national education- and qualification systems. The social partners were in favour, but the stakeholders representing higher education had reservations.

### **Development of a NQF**

The Ministry of education in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economic affairs are responsible for the development of the NQF. A national coordination point (Danish Agency for International Education) has been established with the responsibility to make information on the NQF and EQF available at a national level and to inform and exchange information with international stakeholders and authorities.

Working groups within the field of vocational education and training has been established in order to provide procedures for placing VET-qualifications in the NQF.

As stakeholders were invited social partners from training councils and committees. The non-formal sector was not invited. Consultation on the Danish NQF has included:

1. Consultation on principles and structure for DK-NQF including all relevant education and training councils.
2. Consultation seminar with all relevant stakeholders
3. Consultation on final NQF proposal in 2008 before political decision in 2009.

The Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA) has been consulted in connection with the final purpose about establishing NQF. DAEA finds the use of the terms - knowledge, skills and competences – useful in describing the learning in the non-formal sector. In the recognition of prior learning it will be a tool in the validation.

The NQF is now established and in an implementation stage. All educations are graded in the NQF. The referencing to EQF will take place 2. half 2010 also including relevant stakeholders

---

<sup>10</sup> The information is based on questionnaires filled out by: Chefkonsulent Jan Reitz Jørgensen, Undervisningsministeriet/Danish Ministry of Education and Randi Jensen, DFS/Danish Adult Education Association

## **Result**

NQF is from a political point of view seen as an important step promoting transparency of national qualification systems and promoting mutual recognition across borders.

From the point of view of the non-formal learning sector, the EQF/NQF is a good idea in order to promote mobility and flexible admittance to formal educations on national and European basis.

Following lengthy discussions (mostly between the ministries involved) a solution was reached on an 8-level structure covering all existing levels and types of officially recognized public qualifications. The levels of the Danish NQF will be referenced to the levels of EQF.

Levels descriptors are stating the learning outcome at each level in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.

Knowledge descriptors emphasize the different types of 'knowledge' involved, their complexity and the extent of understanding/comprehension required at a particular level. Skills descriptors focus on the types of 'skills' involved, the complexity of tasks to be solved and the communicative challenges involved. Competences are described by emphasizing the context, the aspects of cooperation and responsibility and the aspect of learning to learn.

## **Implementation**

The national coordination committee is responsible for the overall implementation. The participating ministries are responsible for the implementation within their field of education. NQF will step by step be implemented at all levels of the formal education system by legislation.

The NQF will be a part of the day-to-day work in the educational institutions. By 2012 all diplomas and certificates have to include NQF and EQF levels. Beside that they may use the NQF in guidance of students and when they compare and recognize foreign student qualifications.

One of the long term goals of the NQF is that the NQF should promote a more coherent and transparent education and training system

A national coordination point has been established with the responsibility to make information on the NQF and EQF available at national level and to inform and exchange information with international stakeholders and authorities.

It is too early to say which long-termed effect the NQF will have on the national educational policy and practice, but one of the long term goals is that the NQF should promote a more coherent and transparent education and training system.

The understanding of learning, which is defined by EQF/NQF put the focus on learning outcome and competences rather than formal education and syllabus. This is a very important change, which might in the long term mean, that non-formal and informal learning will be recognised to a higher degree. At the same time the framework can help to translate non-formal and informal learning into the formal education system by recognition of prior learning.

## **Non-formal learning and NQF**

Non-formal learning is not at this stage of development included in the NQF. The issue of non-formal learning will be closer analyzed as a basis for deciding on how non-formal learning could be referred to NQF.

There is no legal obligation for non-formal learning to apply to NQF, but the implementation of NQF in the formal education system might help to integrate non-formal with formal education to a higher extend.

It's relevant to look at the possibilities of supporting the non-formal learning sector to relate to the NQF in order to make validation of non-formal learning output against a given formal education easier.

It might be useful if the NQF clearly pointed out, that there are several ways to obtain a certain level of knowledge, skills and competences. It must be clearer, that the NQF can support the individual's possibilities due to recognition of her or his competences, which are gained in work life or the non-formal learning sector.

It is a rather complex matter in terms of standards, quality assurance and procedures for including or referring non-formal learning to the NQF's. Non-formal learning is very diverse and include a very big number of various private providers including companies.

It will be good thing if you can relate non-formal learning to the NQF. On the other hand you can't apply the NQF to non-formal learning as an obligation without reducing the diversity and flexibility, which are one of the strengths of non-formal learning.

## Conclusions

Denmark has made rapid progress in developing their qualifications framework for lifelong learning. Based on the roadmap presented in June 2009 Denmark will have a fully developed NOF by the end of 2010 and will also have completed the referencing to the EQF by early 2011. This success has largely been achieved by accepting that not all problems can be solved immediately and a NOF will need to develop also beyond 2012. An important lesson to be drawn from the Danish case is the need for a pragmatic, step-by-step approach.

## Cases

The Danish Adult Education Association has for several years worked inventively with clarification and documentation of non-formal and informal learning. The EQF/NQF process is relevant to this work and on reverse.

A development project, aiming better descriptions of non-formal adult learning programmes, related to the EQF/NQF in order to make relevant pathways from the non-formal to the formal learning system visible. The project, involving several DAEA-members, resulted in a guide for better descriptions of non-formal learning programmes. You will find the guide at the web-site of the DAEA. <http://www.dfs.dk/realkompetence/guidetilkursusbeskrivelser.aspx>

Two study associations have developed an e-tool standard for evening school certificates, regarding a thinking, very similar to the EQF/NQF, concerning levels, knowledge, skills and competence goals of the actual evening school class. The e-tool is developed 2004-2005 before the EQF and NQF were published – otherwise it would have been obvious to use the NQF as reference for the tool. <http://www.kompetenceprofilen.dk/>

## References

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) – Dansk Kommentar til EU-Kommissionens arbejdsdokument "På vej mod en europæisk referenceramme for kvalifikationer for livslang læring" af 8.juli 2005. Undervisningsministeriet, 13.januar 2006, sags nr.124.761.121

Undervisningsministeriet, Introduktion til den danske kvalifikationsramme for livslang læring <http://www.uvm.dk/service/Publikationer/Publikationer/Uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/2010/kvalifikationsramme%20-%20stor.aspx?fullpub=1>

Cedefop – Working Paper no. 8 - The Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe (August 2010). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010

## Summary for the Nordic countries

By Flemming Gjedde

---

### Development of a NQF

In all the Nordic countries it is the Ministry of Education that is responsible for the development of a NQF. In Sweden it is delegated to The National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, but the Ministry carries the overall responsibility. In Denmark 4 Ministries are behind the NQF (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Economic Affairs).

In all countries stakeholders have been invited to a consultation process and working groups have been established.

In Finland a broad range of stakeholders are included in the process (universities, polytechnics, student associations of higher education, trade unions and the non-formal education sector).

In Sweden as many stakeholders as possible are invited to participate in the process and they are participating in working groups, project groups and expert groups.

In Iceland the social partners, the teachers and the providers are participating and consulted on a regular basis.

In Norway the Ministry has consultation meetings with the national reference group (social partners, unions for teachers and students, organizations from the different educational structures and organizations within lifelong learning and adult education).

In Denmark the stakeholders are social partners from training councils and committees and the workgroups consist of persons from vocational education and training.

### Who are in favour and who have reservations?

In Finland the authorities who work closely with EU-issues are in favour. But stakeholders see little added value of a NQF and there is only little interest in extending the existent frameworks to cover all learning outside the formal qualifications.

In Sweden a broad range of stakeholders and experts are in favour. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education/Folkbildningsrådet (FBR) approved of the EQF-concept in principle, but they want a development of validation to take place to make EQF/NQF work in practise outside the formal system.

In Iceland all the stakeholders are in favour and none have reservations to the EQF/NQF.

In Norway the EQF was received with some skepticism, especially within the field of vocational training, where they have a fear that this might lead to harmonization into a kind of "Euro-vocations". VOFO also finds it hard to see how the non-formal sector can be a part of NQF.

In Denmark the social partners are in favour. Here the stakeholders representing universities and higher education have reservations.

### Implementation

Denmark was the first Nordic country to have a final proposal in 2008. The proposal was approved by the 4 involved ministries in June 2009. No independent NQF legislation is expected.

Sweden had a final proposal ready 4 October 2010 and the Swedish government is now expecting to decide on the proposal late 2010 or early 2011.

Finland had a final proposal ready in May 2010 and it was presented to the Finnish Parliament in September 2010. New legislation (act and decree) is planned to come into force in the beginning of 2011.

Iceland expect to have a final proposal ready in 2011. No independent legislation is expected.

Norway is working on a final proposal and it is expected to be ready in the end of 2010.

In Denmark the implementation stage should be finalised in 2010. Denmark operates with 8 levels but with a clear distinction between levels 1-5 and levels 6-8. Levels 6-8 are identical with the levels descriptions in the Danish QF for higher education (Bologna).

In Finland the implementation is ongoing. The expected Act on NQF will give authorization for the description of requirement levels and the placement of qualifications in the national framework levels. Finland operates with 8 levels.

In Sweden the implementation is ongoing. The Swedish NQF will have 8 levels like the EQF.

In Iceland a decision has been made to introduce a 10-level framework. This proposal builds on the previous 7-level approach but introduces in addition 3 entry levels. Only the 7 'original' levels will be referenced to the EQF.

Norway has given no answers on implementation and expected number of levels.

### **Referencing to the EQF**

In Finland the referencing process (linking the NQF to the EQF) started in the autumn 2010 and the final report is expected to be presented to the EQF Advisory Group<sup>11</sup> late 2010.

In Iceland a draft referencing report is expected by the end of 2010 and a final report in 2011.

In Denmark the referencing to the EQF is expected to be ready in the beginning of 2011.

In Sweden it is also expected to be ready in 2011.

Norway will make a reference report to link the NQF levels to the EQF but we have no information on the expected date.

### **Will non-formal learning be integrated in the National Qualifications Frameworks?**

The status of non-formal adult education is not addressed explicitly in the EQF, but as the approach is based on learning outcomes and one of the purposes is to enhance recognition of prior learning, it is relevant to assume a relation.

At national level in developing the NQFs the providers of non-formal adult education have been involved as stakeholders to a varying degree on equal terms. The organizations of the employers and employees as representatives of the interests of the enterprises have been given voice in all cases thus giving work-based non-formal learning a position, while the non-formal adult education of the third sector to a lesser degree is involved directly in the process of developing the NQFs. This reflects a general dilemma at societal level: What is the status of the sector? Is it considered to be important in the lifelong learning strategies? Are learning outcomes from the sector valued in the formal educational system, are they valued by the labor market? The answers will vary from country to country.

In Finland, Sweden and Iceland the non-formal sector has been consulted in the developing process of the NQF. In Norway the non-formal sector has had a representative in the national reference group.

In Denmark the non-formal sector has not been consulted but the Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA) was consulted in connection with the final purpose about establishing the NQF.

---

<sup>11</sup> The EQF Advisory Group: Representatives of EUR-32 countries, Council of Europe (EHEA), social partners, stakeholders (Eurochambres, EUCIS-LLL, EUA)



The goal of the eight-level NQF in Estonia is to improve the comparability between formal school-leaving certificates/diplomas and work-based (professional) competences and qualifications, which open the entrance to the labour market (Cedefop 2010). The professional qualifications system in Estonia forms part of the qualifications system which links the educational system and the labour market and endorses lifelong learning and the development of professional competence, assessment, recognition and comparison. The main concept of the professional qualifications system is competence that means the system is based on competence both conceptually and in reality. All stakeholders of the labour market are involved in the system – employers, employees, the state, educators (The Professional qualifications system, 2010). The benefit for the employers is better staff policy development and training planning; the employees get with the help of the professional qualification system clear overview of needed competences and training options.

The new Estonian NQF is based on the amended Professions Act (September 2008). According to this the present competence-based 5 level qualification system is transferring to the 8 level frameworks. These developments are supported by a number of European Social Fund (ESF) projects.

### **Process of consultation on EQF**

During the years 2006 – 2008 the Ministry of Education and Research was responsible of the process of drafting new Professions Act. Since 2008 the Estonian Qualifications Authority (EQA) is coordinating the development of the NQF and assures the quality of referencing the NQF levels to the EQF levels. EQA is also responsible for ensuring the participation of all important stakeholders in the referencing process.

Generally the concept of EQF was received positively, in spite of the situation that it was not clear how it will be implemented. This made some professional associations have hesitations but there were no big reservations. There was a notice about the big amount of the work and the resources like time and finances. The tight links between educational and occupational standards also raised the hesitations. In summary it could be said that basically all stakeholders (public authorities, employers and employees organisations students associations etc.) responded favourably.

### **Development of a NQF**

As for the consultation process the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Qualification Authority are responsible for the development of NQF. The Qualification Authority is nominated to act as National Coordination Point.

The first step was that NQF was adopted in Professions Act. The process itself is organized by sectors: higher education, vocational education and training, general education, work based vocational and professional qualifications.

The Ministry of Education and Research organized working groups and consultations with stakeholders. There was a working group, consisting of representatives from relevant organizations and institutions – NGOs and public authorities. The working groups for higher

---

<sup>12</sup> The information are based on questionnaires filled out by: Külli All, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Katrin Kerem, Estonian Qualifications Authority and Tiina Jääger, Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA).

education, vocational education and training (include work based), general education and professional qualifications are also established.

The draft of the NQF was discussed under the ordinary consultation process among stakeholders as any legal act. Included in the development process was the representatives of employers, employees organizations (include trade unions), Chamber of Commerce, students and pupils organizations, state authorities, Qualification Authority, ENIC-NARIC, professional associations, adult education organisations etc. The representatives of relevant organizations were responsible for organizing discussions inside their organizations. The NQF is adopted legally by Professions Act since September 2008; the implementation process is ongoing and will be entirely implemented by 2013. At the moment working groups are preparing their chapters of the discussion document. At the moment no general education or professional qualifications have been included into the NQF. Four types of qualifications in higher education and three types of qualifications in VET have been assigned the NQF level. Assignment of the NQF levels to 5 levels professional qualifications framework levels has not been formalised yet.

## **Result**

The NQF is viewed as an important step in linking labour market demands and educational programmes, and the NQF is serving for the transparency and quality management. Estonian NQF has adopted EQF – it means the NQF as the same levels and descriptors (with annex descriptors for higher education and VET). Descriptions of NQF levels are identical to EQF. The Higher Education Standard and Professional Education Standard are drawing links between educational programmes and NQF levels.

The NQF in Estonia is based on eight levels, which reflect EQF levels and descriptions (knowledge, skills and competence).

There are 8 levels in the new NQF:

6. – 8. levels correspond to the QF for EHEA (6. – applied higher education programmes, bachelor programmes; 7. – Master programmes; 8. – Doctoral programmes)

2. – 5. levels are filled with different VET programmes. The exact contents and explanation will be explained in the EQF – NQF linking report, which will be represented to the European Commission in the middle of 2011.

## **Implementation**

The NQF is adopted legally by law and decrees; the occupational standards and educational programs should be brought together with legal acts, among them and the new NQF until 2013. The appropriate institutions are responsible for the implementation. The Estonian Qualification Authority is responsible for the renewing of occupational standards, the Examination and Qualification Centre is responsible for renewing national VET curricula and assessment principles, the same about general education; the higher education institutions are responsible for renewing their curricula and assessment principles. The adult education is not limited to any level of NQF, the adult education programmes will not be obligatory linked to the NQF.

The NQF will have an impact on the work of educational institutions – they have to ensure the relevance of the learning outcomes of their programmes to the appropriate NQF level descriptors, ensure that the quality assurance work and students assessment criteria provide for the appropriate knowledge, competence and skills. Learning outcomes approach is introduced in all sectors, as part of the process. The NQF acts as a common reference point for education and the labour market and thus support mutual trust between education and labour market. This is also the case with the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in different settings and this has increased focus on recognition of prior learning.



The NQF will hopefully help to connect the labour market demands and educational programmes, and it serves for better transparency of the students and workers evaluated knowledge and skills. Thus the NQF will also foster the LLL – through better and wider recognizing of prior learning in different settings including non-formal and working place. The development and implementation of NQF will promote better integration of the different education sectors into the life-long learning context and the development of a holistic quality assurance system

### **Non-formal learning and NQF**

The non-formal learning is included in the NQF through the possible recognizing of prior learning and working experience in further studies in VET education, higher education or professional awarding process. Legislation for APEL (Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning) is functioning in higher education and vocational education and training. Similar principles and methods are under development in adult education, and work based professional and vocational qualifications. The non-formal education should be an inseparable part of NQF, although it could be invisible in the level descriptors as non-formal education could be assessed as APEL. Also there is a possibility to link some non-formal programmes directly to NQF or use the non-formal education indirectly in NQF (through RPL for formal programs or professional awarding). The crucial problem is the credibility of APEL.

### **Summary**

The new Estonian NQF is based on the amended Professions Act adopted in September 2008. According to this the present competence-based 5 level qualification system is transferring into the 8 levels framework which corresponds to the eight levels and descriptions of EQF. All interested parties have been involved in the consultation process.

There is strong will to implement the learning outcomes approach and to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The NQF is viewed as an important step in linking labour market demands and educational programmes; also the NQF is serving for the transparency and quality management.

### **References**

*The Professional qualifications system* (2010).

<http://www.kutsekoda.ee/et/kutsesysteem/tutvustus> (cited 30.08.2010)

Cedefop (2010) *The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe*: Working paper No 8. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108_en.pdf) (cited 1.11.2010)



Latvia can observe a growing emphasis on learning outcomes (and competences) in recent years, partly in relation to the development of a framework for higher education, partly related to the development of occupational standards (Coles, M., 2007).

Latvia will develop a NQF based on learning outcomes and it will develop the NQF by building on the existing 5 level structure in VET and the 3 level structures existing for higher education.

### Process of consultation on EQF

In Latvia The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the national consultation process on EQF.

For the higher education level also higher education institutions, social partners, the Rectors' Council and the Higher Education Council are involved; in VET social partners are involved.

A consultation is planned in the end of 2010.

### Development of a NQF

Ministry of Education and Science is also responsible for the development of NQF. On 23<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia approved the basic policy planning document for development of lifelong learning – the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning policy 2007-2013.

In 2009 amendments to the Lifelong Learning Strategy and implementation programme 2007-2013 were developed and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers (December 9, 2009). Amendments to the Programme reinforce labour market oriented priorities in education and training according to the national action plan for economic stabilisation and development. Revised programme highlights are also following priorities, which are aimed to increase the mobility opportunities for learners:

- Introduce revised national qualifications framework based on learning outcomes with link to the European Qualifications Framework
- Implement validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Ministry of Education and Science established a working group for implementation above mentioned tasks. Also the Higher Education Law project (accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers and waiting for approval in the Parliament) reflects Bologna process developments, e.g. qualification structure for higher education and introducing a flexible module system. Structural funds are put in place to support redesign of study programmes according to the learning outcomes principle in the modular framework.

The project of the new Vocational Education Law is being designed through December 2010.

The purpose is to provide a more flexible model, adequate to the labour market needs.

Different organisations and institutions have been involved in the development process - Ministry of Welfare, Rectors Council, Higher Education Council, Academic Information Centre, Education Quality State Administration, State Education Content Centre, Employers Confederation, Trade Union, Students Union etc. but a wider consultation process will be planned in October 2010.

The NQF development process is not completed yet. The working groups took a decision to revise the national qualifications framework and link it to the European Qualifications framework through a national-level regulatory act on education classification. The draft document was

---

<sup>13</sup> The information are based on questionnaires filled out by: Dainas Papas, Ministry of Education and Science / [www.izm.gov.lv](http://www.izm.gov.lv) .

developed and adopted on the ministry level. After the consultation process the government (Cabinet of Ministers) will adopt the document in December 2010.

A project co-financed by European Social Fund is planned to support further development of NQF.

## Results

NQF is an important part of the lifelong learning policy. The development and implementation of an overarching NQF should address the following issues:

- To increase transparency and consistency of qualifications;
- To develop an overarching NQF in line with the needs of lifelong learning and higher education sector;
- To strengthen the link between labour market and education
- To strengthen the cooperation of all stakeholders involved in the design and award of qualifications
- To increase understanding of national qualifications and ease linking them to the EQF (Cedefop, 2010)

All of the eight levels of the NQF - from basic education (1 level) till doctor's degree (8 level) will refer to the EQF. In accordance with the project of the legal Act the eight levels structure is expressed as learning outcomes.

## Implementation

A project of the legal Act on adjusting the NQF to the EQF will be adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers. By 2012 all new qualification certificates and diplomas issued by the competent authorities will contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level.

NQF will facilitate more flexible learning pathways for individuals across general education, vocational education and training and higher education.

The eight education levels of the NQF will be defined through descriptors of knowledge, skills and competences. It will cover all levels of qualifications and promote the validation of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning settings and support the mobility of learners and employees.

## Non-formal learning and NQF

The question if non-formal education shall be included into the NQF will be discussed on national level in the foreseeable future after the implementation of the non-formal education validation process. The system of validation of knowledge obtained in non-formal education settings is in the formation process. However the criteria, methodology of maintenance of standards and identification of levels have already been agreed on. The priority is validation of non-formal and informal learning in the frame of VET system for adults with working experience and skills to receive professional qualification. Until now there are examples of evaluation and validation of work based learning in the professional and vocational qualifications awarding process.

## Summary

In Latvia the new NQF will be developed on the bases of an existing five level qualification framework. The Ministry of Education and Science is the responsible authority for the development of NQF and the consultation process. Until now the working groups have been involved into the development process; the wider consultation will take place in the autumn of 2010. One of the important parts in the development of the NQF is the implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

## References

Coles, M. (2007) *Qualifications frameworks in Europe: platforms for collaboration, integration and reform*. A paper for the conference: Making the European Learning Area a Reality, München 3.-5.June 2007.  
[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/glacier/qual/eqf/mike\\_coles\\_eqf.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/glacier/qual/eqf/mike_coles_eqf.pdf) (17.02.2009)

Cedefop (2010). *The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108_en.pdf)



A main reason for developing an NQF in Lithuania is to ensure a better correspondence between labour market needs and provision of qualifications. The Lithuanian NQF has eight levels, reflecting both the realities of the Lithuanian qualifications system and the requirements posed by the introduction of the EQF (Cedefop, 2010).

### Process of consultation on EQF

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL) is responsible for the national consultation process on EQF in Lithuania. But in practice main activities are implemented by the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority (LLMTA) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. There is no information/evidence available about the EQF consultation process. With some concession we can transfer the statements of social partners about the NQF development process to the EQF consultation process as these two processes are tightly bound.

Different social partners have reservations towards the NQF process. Does current legal, political and financial conditions in Lithuania encourage the mutual trust between stakeholders, providers of qualifications and the public that is essential for the implementation of the NQF. It seems that vocational higher education will be more supportive to NQF implementation than the universities and that support will vary across different fields of studies (Tütlys, 2010).

### Development of a NQF

The development of the draft of the Lithuanian NQF was implemented under the supervision of MSSL in 2006-2008. The activities of the development process were coordinated and carried out by the LLMTA. The development of NQF was carried out within the national project “Development of the Lithuanian Qualifications system”, co-financed by the European Social Fund. A working group was set up for the development of NQF, including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, national education and training policy implementation structures, higher education institutions and employers.

Some have criticized that the consultation process was not enough active and wide; the stakeholders in general are poorly informed about the NQF, its aims, objectives and potential. A successful implementation of the framework will require more systematic dissemination of information addressing all stakeholders, particularly social partners (Cedefop, 2010).

The process was completed in 2008 and a draft of NQF was published. After some additional discussions at the national authority level a slightly changed version of NQF was approved by the Government in May 2010.

### Results

The NQF is seen as an important process in three respects - the approach of learning outcomes will be introduced in all education and training sectors, including universities; the NQF should improve learning mobility and thirdly the NQF should promote the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Qualification levels in NQF and EQF are described in a rather different way. In EQF level descriptors the categories: knowledge, skills and competences are used to describe learning outcomes. In

---

<sup>14</sup> The information is based on a questionnaire filled out by: Valdas Dienys, Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre / [www.kpmc.lt](http://www.kpmc.lt)

Lithuanian QF learning outcomes are described in terms of complexity, autonomy and variability of activities, which a learner should be able to undertake after graduation.

Lithuania Qualification Frameworks (LTQF) has 8 qualifications levels. Below as an example is given description of level 4:

*The qualification provides for activity which consists of actions and operations in rather broad fields of technologies and work organization. The activity is based on several or numerous specialized action tasks, the appropriate solutions of which have not always been tested or are known. In exercising the activity, the factual and theoretical professional knowledge can be applied in a broad context related to the field of activity.*

*The activity is autonomous; in order to ensure the quality of procedures and output, the employee follows performance instructions. The qualification provides for supervision and transfer of professional skills to employees with lower qualifications.*

*The activity environment requires the ability of adapting to the changes in the work place which are conditioned by the progress in technologies and work organization.*

## **Implementation**

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the implementation of the LTQF at the policy level. The responsibility for coordination of implementation of LTQF at the practical level is delegated to the Qualifications and VET Development Centre, an institution subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science. Implementation is foreseen in parallel in general education, vocational education and training and higher education, i.e. at all LTQF levels.

Today the LTQF does not have any impact on the daily work on the educational institutions. The process of referencing the LTQF to the EQF should help to put implementation of LTQF on the agenda of the educational institutions. Referring the above mentioned social partners' reservations about current legal, political and financial conditions in Lithuania the opinion is that the present situation is unfavourable for making long-term predictions concerning the LTQFs place in national educational policy and practice.

## **Non-formal learning and NQF**

Non-formal learning is included into the NQF through recognition of prior learning. It is stated in the LTQF that qualifications of every level can be acquired not only according to formal education and training programmes but also through recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. It means that qualifications are based on learning outcomes which are the same for all ways of learning.

In Lithuania learning in non-formal settings, except very limited cases, is not supported by the State. Therefore non-formal learning programmes are usually very limited in their scope, the content rather specific oriented and therefore it is very difficult to achieve learning outcomes that could allow accumulating knowledge, skills and competence wide enough to form a specific qualification. To use non-formal learning outcomes effectively in formalisation of learning achievements of individuals, radical changes are needed in the way of thinking by the majority of policy makers and teachers.

For applying the ideas of EQF into the non-formal learning sector the adequate information should be widely disseminated among educators working in the field of non-formal learning. The importance of validation of non-formal and informal learning shall also be developed for promotion among the population.

## Summary

The Lithuanian qualification framework has eight levels, reflecting both the realities of the Lithuanian qualifications system and the requirements posed by the introduction of the EQF. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL) is responsible for the national consultation process on EQF and for the development process of NQF. The implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. There have been some doubts expressed that the consultation process was not active and wide enough; the stakeholders in general are poorly informed about the NQF, its aims, objectives and potential.

Qualification levels in NQF and EQF are described in Lithuania in a rather different way: in the EQF level descriptors categories (knowledge, skills and competences) are used to describe learning outcomes; in Lithuanian QF learning outcomes are described in terms of complexity, autonomy and variability of activities, which a learner should be able to undertake after graduation.

Non-formal learning is included into the NQF through recognition of prior learning but it needs a lot of promotion among both actors and learners in the non-formal education field.

## References

Cedefop (2010) *The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe*: Working paper No 8. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108_en.pdf) (cited 1.11.2010)

Tütlys, V.(2010). *Background case study on Lithuania*. Skills and Employability Department:

ILO. [http://www.ilo.org/skills/what/projects/lang--en/WCMS\\_126588/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/skills/what/projects/lang--en/WCMS_126588/index.htm)

[cited 28.09.2010].

## Summary for the Baltic countries

By Tiina Jääger

---

### Process of consultation on EQF

In Estonia and Latvia the Ministries of Education and Science are responsible for the national consultation process on EQF. In Lithuania the responsible authority is the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

In Estonia the concept of EQF was received generally positively. There was a notice about the big amount of work and resources needed and the tight links between educational and occupational standards raised the hesitations among main stakeholders. In Latvia the consultation is planned in autumn 2010.

There is not much information available about the EQF consultation process in Lithuania. With some concession we can transfer the statements of social partners about the NQF development process to the EQF consultation process as these two processes are tightly bound.

Different social partners have reservations towards the NQF process. Does current legal, political and financial conditions in Lithuania encourage the mutual trust between stakeholders, providers of qualifications and the public? This is essential for the implementation of the NQF.

### Development of a NQF

The Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the Estonian Qualification Authority is responsible for the development of NQF in Estonia. In Latvia it is also the Ministry of Education and Science who is responsible for the NQF development process. In Lithuania the responsibility belongs to the Labour Market Training Authority.

The development process itself has been different in the 3 Baltic countries. The Ministry of Education and Research in Estonia organized working groups and consultations with stakeholders in four sectors – higher education, vocational education, general education and professional qualifications.

Included in the development process were the representatives of employers, employees organizations (include trade unions), Chamber of Commerce, students and pupils organizations, state authorities, Qualification Authority, ENIC-NARIC, professional associations, adult education organisations etc. The NQF is adopted legally by Professions Act since September 2008; the implementation process is ongoing and the NQF will be entirely implemented by 2013.

The NQF development process in Latvia is not completed yet. The working groups took a decision to revise the national qualifications framework and link it to the European qualifications framework through a national-level regulatory act on education classification. The draft document was developed and adopted on the ministry level. Different organisations and institutions have been involved into the development process – the Ministry of Welfare, Rectors Council, Higher Education Council, Academic Information Centre, Education Quality State Administration, State Education Content Centre, Employers Confederation, Trade Union, Students Union etc., but a wider consultation process will be planned in October 2010. According to the planning the government (Cabinet of Ministers) will adopt the document in December 2010 after the consultation process.

The development of the draft of the Lithuanian QF (LTQF) was implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in 2006-2008. The activities of the development process were coordinated and carried out by the Labour Market Training Authority. The



development of the NQF was carried out within the national project “Development of the Lithuanian Qualifications system”, co-financed by the European Social Fund. A working group was set-up for the development of NQF including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, national education and training policy implementation structures, higher education institutions and employers. The process was completed in 2008 and a draft of NQF was published. After some additional discussions at the national authority level a slightly changed version of the NQF was approved by the Government in May 2010.

All countries have run a consultation process during the development of the NQF. In Estonia the representatives of employers, employees organizations (include trade unions), Chamber of Commerce, students and pupils organizations, state authorities, Qualification Authority, ENIC-NARIC, professional associations, adult education organisations etc. were brought into the development process. Representatives of relevant organizations were responsible for organizing discussions inside their organizations. Further consultation is planned in the end of 2010 when the discussion paper made by working groups will be finished.

In Latvia the consultation has been run inside the working groups, the wider consultation is planned in the autumn 2010.

In Lithuania critics were raised towards the consultation process. The stakeholders in general are poorly informed about the NQF, its aims, objectives and potential.

## **Results**

The NQF is viewed as an important part of the lifelong learning policy. It is seen as a link between labour market demands and educational programmes and also the NQF will be serving for the transparency and quality management. The NQF is seen as an important process in three more respects - the approach of learning outcomes will be introduced in all education and training sectors, including non-formal; the NQF improves learning mobility and promotes a process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Estonian and Latvian NQF have adopted the EQF – it means the NQF have the same levels and descriptors. The NQF is based on eight levels, which reflect EQF levels and descriptions (knowledge, skills and competence). Qualification levels in NQF and EQF in Lithuania are described in a rather different way: in the EQF level descriptors the categories knowledge, skills and competence are used to describe learning outcomes; in Lithuanian QF learning outcomes are described in terms of complexity, autonomy and variability of activities which a learner should be able to undertake after graduation.

## **Implementation**

The NQF is adopted legally by law and decrees. The occupational standards and educational programs should be brought together with legal acts and connected to the new NQF. In all countries the Ministries of Education and Science are responsible for this process.

The educational institutions have to ensure the relevance of the learning outcomes of their programmes to the appropriate NQF level descriptors, ensure that the quality assurance work and that students assessment criteria provide for the appropriate knowledge, competence and skills. Learning outcomes approach is introduced in all sectors, as part of the process. The NQF acts as a common reference point for education and the labour market and thus support mutual trust between education and labour market. That is also the case with the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in different settings which has increased focus on recognition of prior learning. NQF will facilitate more flexible learning pathways for individuals across general education, vocational education and training and higher education.

In the moment the Lithuanian QF does not have any impact on the daily work of the educational institutions. The process of referencing of LTQF to EQF should help to put implementation of LTQF on the agenda of the educational institutions.

All countries mention the NQFs role in linking the labour market demands and educational programmes, it serves for the better transparency of students and workers anticipated and evaluated knowledge and skills. Thus the NQF will also foster the Life Long Learning (LLL) – through the better and wider recognizing of prior learning in different settings including non-formal and working place learning. Development and implementation of NQF will promote better integration of the different education sectors into the life-long learning context and the development of a holistic quality assurance system. The NQF positively supports the mobility of learners and employees. There are reservations about current legal, political and financial conditions in Lithuania. The opinion is that the present situation is unfavourable for making long-term predictions concerning the LTQFs place in national educational policy and practice.

### **Non-formal learning and NQF**

The non-formal learning is included in the NQF through the possible recognizing of prior learning and through working experience in further studies in VET education, higher education or professional awarding process.

In Estonia legislation for APEL is functioning in higher education and vocational education and training.

In Latvia the system of validation of knowledge obtained in non-formal education settings is in the formation process; the criteria, methodology of maintenance of standards and identification of levels have already been agreed.

The non-formal education should be an inseparable part of NQF, although it could be invisible in the levels descriptors as non-formal education could be assessed as APEL. The priority is validation of non-formal and informal learning in the frame of VET system for adults with working experience and skills to receive professional qualification. Up till now there are examples in Latvia and Estonia of validation of non-formal learning in work places and non-formal education settings in the professional and vocational qualifications awarding process. All countries stress the importance of high quality descriptions of learning outcomes.

For applying the ideas of EQF into the non-formal learning sector the adequate information should be widely disseminated among educators working in the field of non-formal learning. Additionally the knowledge about the importance of validation of non-formal and informal learning should be developed for promotion among the population.

### **Summary**

The legislation concerning national qualification frameworks has been or soon will be adopted in all Baltic countries. The consultation processes has supported the NQF development activities and still continues in the autumn 2010. NQF development process in Latvia and Estonia has been similar and differ a bit from Lithuania where stakeholders have doubts in the process.

All countries see the NQFs role in linking the labour market demands and the educational programmes; the value for the validation of non-formal and informal learning processes and stress the importance of applying NQF to the non-formal learning through APEL.

## Dilemmas for integration of non-formal learning in NQFs

---

Within the organizations of the non-formal adult education there might be a dilemma: Do we want to relate the activities of the sector to a system which in its nature aims at standardizing?

Some will say it is a question if it is relevant at all for the non-formal adult education to try to be compatible with the formal educational system? Some will question if relating to the EQF gives any added value to the sector?

If the answer to these questions is that the non-formal adult education *has* to meet the challenge a resource demanding process is ahead.

The non-formal sector will involve itself in the efforts because it wants to support the possibilities of flexible learning pathways for the participants, and because the sector wants to be a part of the general development and innovation of the educational sector reinforced by the EQF/NQF processes.

### **Is the non-formal sector included in the NQF and should it be?**

In Sweden the non-formal sector is going to be included in the NQF. The sector wants to have the option. It is up to each individual folk high school and study association to take part or not.

But it is a dilemma how to implement the non-formal system and taking into account the real competencies. Who will have the power of deciding levels and criteria?

It is important to ensure that the values of the independent adult education providers are possible to stick within the frame of the NQF.

In Denmark it is not clear if the non-formal sector will be included but it is an option.

Non-formal learning is very diverse and difficult to refer to the NQF levels. If included it will reduce diversity and flexibility which are one of the strengths of non-formal learning.

In Finland the non-formal sector is hardly included at this point. But it is an option in level 1 and 2. It is a long term challenge requiring concrete solutions, especially quality assurance arrangements and clear competence requirements. There is no authority to define or to measure the learning outcomes after completing a course in the non-formal sector. There is a need for tools and methods to approve the knowledge, skills and competences gained in the non-formal sector.

In Iceland the non-formal sector is not included yet. The Ministry and the non-formal sector have started informal discussions. Within the non-formal sector there has been an interest to include NQF. It hopefully will increase the value of non-formal education both within the formal education system and on the labour market domestically and abroad.

It is important to preserve the distinctive features of non-formal adult education i.e. a “competent body” that acknowledges its distinctive features.

In Norway it is not yet decided if the non-formal sector shall be included in the NQF. Norway has a well developed system for validation of prior learning. The basic principle is to evaluate prior learning against the formal education and training system. Within the NQF-process, the Ministry is investigating options for improving tools for such validation of non-formal and informal learning. Validation of prior learning is an individual right and must be related to specific learning outcomes, while the NQF is at system level and too general for individual validation purposes.

In Estonia the non-formal learning is included in the NQF through the possible recognizing of prior learning. Legislation for APEL (Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning) is functioning in higher education and vocational education and training. Similar principles and methods are under development in adult education. Also there is a possibility to link some non-formal programmes directly to NQF or use the non-formal education indirectly in NQF (through RPL for formal programs or professional awarding). The crucial problem is the credibility of APEL.

In Latvia the question if non-formal education shall be included into the NQF will be discussed on national level in the foreseeable future after the implementation of the non-formal education validation process. The system of validation of knowledge obtained in non-formal education settings is in the formation process. However the criteria, methodology of maintenance of standards and identification of levels have already been agreed on. The priority is validation of non-formal and informal learning in the frame of VET system for adults with working experience and skills to receive professional qualification.

In Lithuania non-formal learning is included into the NQF through recognition of prior learning. It is stated in the LTQF that qualifications of every level can be acquired not only according to formal education and training programmes but also through recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

For applying the ideas of EQF into the non-formal learning sector the adequate information should be widely disseminated among educators working in the field of non-formal learning. The importance of validation of non-formal and informal learning shall also be developed for promotion among the population.

### **Validation and recognition of prior learning – an important issue**

The EQF/NQF is based on learning outcomes. If the non-formal sector shall be included, validation and recognition of prior learning becomes very important. Who will have the power of validating prior learning? And who would decide the level a non-formal course would have in the NQF? To place long courses/education is one thing. A huge number of courses of shorter duration is another.

If non-formal providers will have to test all learning to determine learning outcomes this is a problem.

There is a need for tools and methods to approve the knowledge, skills and competences gained in the non-formal sector.

### **Is NQF relevant to the non-formal sector?**

Do we want to relate the activities of the sector to a system which in its nature aims at standardizing? Some will say it is a question if it is relevant at all for the non-formal adult education to try to be compatible with the formal educational system?

If the non-formal sector shall be included in the NQF it can only be with a part of their activity. It can be an option for the relevant courses.

Some will question if relating to the EQF gives any added value to the sector?

If the answer to these questions is that the non-formal adult education *has* to meet the challenge, a resource demanding process is ahead.

The non-formal sector will have to involve itself in the efforts because it wants to support the possibilities of flexible learning pathways for the participants, and because the sector wants to be a part of the general development and innovation of the educational sector reinforced by the EQF/NQF processes.

## References for further reading:

---

Cedefop et.al: EQF Newsletters ( April 2010):

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/news1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/news1_en.pdf)

Cedefop et.al: EQF Newsletters (July 2010):

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/news2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/news2_en.pdf)

Cedefop (2010) The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe: Working paper No 8. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6108_en.pdf)

Note by Mike Coles and Jens Bjönnavold (Febr. 2010) on EQF:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/note2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/note2_en.pdf)

Brochure/note by the Commission (2008) comprising key Q/A on EQF:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/brochexp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/brochexp_en.pdf)

Cedefop dictionary:

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064_en.pdf)

Nordic Leonardo da Vinci project on European Qualification Framework, EQF (2007):

<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/9650/nocache/true/a/89413/dictionary/false>

Report on the ISCED standard developed by UNESCO in the 1970's and further on (1997):

[http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/isced/ISCED\\_A.pdf](http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/isced/ISCED_A.pdf):

Guide on classification ECVET /ECTS by the TWIN project (June 2010):

[http://communities.cedefop.europa.eu/ViewServlet?content\\_id=2402941&community\\_content\\_id=2349032&folder\\_id=1141710&cid=161268&str\\_extension=pdf&filename=Be-TWIN\\_Methodological\\_Guide\\_July2010.pdf](http://communities.cedefop.europa.eu/ViewServlet?content_id=2402941&community_content_id=2349032&folder_id=1141710&cid=161268&str_extension=pdf&filename=Be-TWIN_Methodological_Guide_July2010.pdf)

Education at a Glance 2010, report by OECD:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/39/45926093.pdf>

*By Agnethe Nordentoft, DAEA, NVL Expert Network on Validation*