



Leonardo da Vinci Thematic Conference

*“Competences, Learning outcomes, Qualifications:
Transparency contributing to Employability”*

Workshop 1

*Towards National Qualifications Frameworks:
challenges and perspectives*

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Towards National Qualifications Frameworks



the
needs

The path of qualifications framework development in European countries has accelerated in the last years. It is due to a number of socio-economic forces that are pushing for the lifelong learning approach.

- the increasing importance of knowledge-based economy
- the progressive change of the labour organisation (the end of taylorism and fordism)
- the need and change of competences demanded by the employers is being constantly raised
- the technological change encourages the growth of international qualifications; a development that raises important recognition, benchmarking, evaluation, quality assurance, legal and institutional issues.



Towards National Qualifications Frameworks: challenges and perspectives

the
needs

- The international studies, the OECD surveys (2007), the debate at national and European level, identified these economic pressures as a driver of reforms to national qualifications systems
- In this perspective **countries** reinforce a need of new policies for VET, to strengthen the link between the education, vocational training system, higher education and the labour market.
They point to the gap between job training demands, individual and social needs, and qualifications as a reason for the development of **qualifications frameworks and standards based on competences**.



Towards National Qualifications Frameworks: challenges and perspectives

the
needs

In response to these pressures (according to the Copenhagen declaration - 2002) European countries are moving towards lifelong learning strategies based on:

- Development and renewal of National qualifications framework
- Identification and validation as an important part of realising the vision of lifelong learning
- Recognition of a diversity of learning situations and settings (formal, non formal, informal)
- Improving open access to qualifications, access, transfer and progression in learning
- Looking for credibility and quality of what is learnt within the training situations and outside the formal learning
- Improving transparency and mobility at national and european level



The role of the European Qualifications Framework - EQF

the
role of
Europe

- The EQF recommendation and ECVET proposal gave to this new challenge a strong impulse with the proposal of the European framework (concepts, such as levels, descriptors, learning outcomes and competence, principles and instruments) .
- The EQF, in particular, is envisaged as a meta-framework that will enable qualifications frameworks at national and sectoral level to relate to each other, thus developing the necessary greater transparency at the European level.



The role of the European Qualifications Framework - EQF

the
role of
Europe

**Meta-framework and Translation
device**
for comparing qualifications

Neutral reference point
based on
learning outcomes

EQF terminology (Cedefop- QCA)

The role of the National Qualifications Framework – NQsF



the
role of
Europe

EQF Recommendation proposal

A 'national qualifications framework' is an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved.

It aims at the integration and coordination of national qualifications subsystems and the improvement of transparency, access, progression and quality of qualification in relation to the labour market and civil society.



The role of the National Qualifications Framework - NQsF

what
is
needed

- Promoting a medium and long term reform process and implementing a comprehensive LLL-strategy till 2010
- Structuring all kind of provision on the basis of a learning outcome-based approach to credits, certification and accreditation of learning at all levels
- Ensuring transparency, integration and progression in learning, involving national, regional institution and social partners
- Verify the feasibility and in the end accept commitments to link national qualifications and credit systems to the EQF



The new phase to develop a NQsS in Italy (2006--)

- The development of the national framework in Italy is in a rapid evolution due to the progress of the national reforms in the field of education and training system (VET system). (Laws and agreement signed in this period between State, Regions and Social Partners - 2000-2006)
- During 2006, the institutional and social dialogue strengthened the issue of the national priority to develop and implement a National Qualifications System and initial work has started.



The new phase to develop a NQsS in Italy

- The recent (2006) set up of the “National Table” (National Committee), launched by the Ministry of Labour and aimed at defining a NQsS is going to give a real and concrete impulse to this process.
- The aims of this new political phase is to go forward the practices and experiences still now realized at national and regional level and to build a National System within the European framework approach (principles and instruments).



Managing the “learning outcomes”

1/5

common
issues

In the EQF the concept of learning outcomes represents a new and strategic issue. This concept should be useful and manageable irrespective of the system or context promoting or recognising learning.

- The state of art of the debate in the countries or organisation in order to make it really practical and friendly by all the VET and learning systems is still unclear
- This concept (at cultural, methodological, institutional level) should be part of a real common practical understanding sheared between institutions, stakeholders, professionals and citizens
- This concept lead to a new kind of cooperation with the University and academic world also at an institutional level within the Bologna process
- It is needed a process to be developed, at national and European level, to insure a good governance and an efficient management of the implementation of NQsF coherent with the EQF.



From input approach towards the output approach 2/5

common issues

EQF, is funded on the principle of distinction between the learning process (education, training or on the job, for instance) and the learning outcomes recognition, validation process, certification.

- This distinction is really relevant and crucial in the framework of *lifelong and lifewide learning*.
- This paradigmatic shift is not really implemented in the reforms of the NQsF. There is often confusion between the input approach (based on the training needs) and the output approach (based on the results of learning).
- It is needed to help the VET stakeholders, experts and professionals providers in overtaking the old models and approaches that tend to confuse the quality of training with the quality of recognition/certification (institutional, historical, cultural, methodological dimensions) .

Develop devices for the validation of non formal and informal learning 3/5

common
issues

The development of common European principles for validation of non formal and informal learning is an important element of the strategy aimed to give greater visibility and more balanced valuing of knowledge and competences anywhere acquired

- Validation of learning outcomes supports the policies for lifelong learning, employability and active citizenship
- The principles for validation are aimed at providing formal recognition and /or they may lead to personal and social recognition. The implementation is very different between countries.
- Validation of learning outcomes can be really implemented at national level to make visible the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual and to improve access to qualifications (adults needs for LLL).



Integrating the approach EQF and ECVET in the NQsF

common
issues

EQF and ECVET allow the transparency of learning outcomes and certifications at European and National level.

Many stakeholders observed that there should be an enhanced effort for the integration between all the European transparency tools within the EQF and NQsF.

- This means to create “progressive coherence” between the national and european framework, concept and tools, in terms of :
- language and descriptors
- learning outcomes approach
- structure of NQsF (standard of competences and qualifications)
- concept of units and credits (accumulation and transferibility)
- key competences adopted into the national qualifications systems
- concepts, principles and tools (..Europass) as part of a whole approach to improve education and training
- transparency of qualifications devices at national and european level



In conclusions..... 5/5

During the consultation process on the EQF and ECVET proposal, the responses from countries revealed some commonalities in the perceived preconditions for developing NQFs and linking them with the European framework

The following conditions were regarded as critical to success:

- Learning outcomes should be used as the basis of the NQsF.
- Inclusion of all national stakeholders in the decision to build a NQsF and the shape it should take.
- Systematic coordination between national ministries (Education, Labour, University), regions, social partners, sectors.
- Systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning should be included.
- Flexibility and progression (modularisation, units, credits) of the NQsF
- Robust quality assurance mechanisms should be put in place.
- Peer review and mutual trust should be part of the process of linking NQFs to the EQF.



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION