განათლების ხარისხის
განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

International Analysis of Referencing and Self-Certification Processes of National Qualifications Frameworks: Examples from Armenia, Turkey, Latvia, Croatia, Italy, and Hungary

2025

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Document Description

This document has been prepared within the framework of the project "Strengthening Capacities for the Implementation of Georgian National Qualifications Framework Referencing and Self-Certifications Processes" – GEOREF", carried out with the targeted funding from the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission, and with the financial support of the LEPL – National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

To align with the European Qualifications Framework, the LEPL – National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement has initiated the referencing and self-certification of Georgia's National Qualifications Framework. This initiative fulfills one of the commitments under the Association Agreement with the European Union and addresses a key recommendation of the Bologna Process. The project aims to harmonise and establish the compatibility of the National Qualifications Framework of Georgia with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). This will increase the visibility of the Georgian education system and contribute to the international recognition of the qualifications awarded in Georgia.

- For the effective implementation of the referencing process, it is important to study international experience. Analyzing the referencing and self-certification processes of other countries represents a crucial stage that: Provides an assessment of different approaches and mechanisms;
- Identifies successful practices;
- Helps prevent potential challenges and risks;
- Facilitates planning and implementation by incorporating best models adapted to the local context.

To examine international experience, a number of countries were selected within the framework of the project, and their referencing and self-evaluation reports were thoroughly analyzed. The selection was based on both geographical proximity and the diversity of systemic and institutional contexts, ensuring a comprehensive and in-depth analysis.

Specifically, the experiences of the following countries were studied:

- Neighboring countries - Turkey and Armenia;
- Post-Soviet country - Latvia.
- EU member states - Italy, Hungary and Croatia.

This analysis will serve as a key resource in planning and implementing the referencing and self-certification process of Georgia's National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Taking international practices into account will significantly enhance the effectiveness and quality of the process and support the integration of Georgia's education system into the European Education Area.

Working Group

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I. Armenia – Self-Certification Report of the National Qualifications Framework (2017)

1.1. Information on the Development of Armenia's NQF Referencing Report

The Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was approved by Government Decree No. 332-N in March 2011. An updated version of the framework was later adopted by Government Decree No. 714-N in 2016. The Armenian NQF consists of an eight-level structure and covers general education, vocational education and training (VET), and higher education. The higher education levels are positioned at Levels VI to VIII of the Framework. The National Qualifications Framework of Armenia includes only formal qualifications and no mechanisms have been developed for including informal qualifications in the Framework. The Framework is governed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia.

The objectives of the Armenian Qualifications Framework are:

- To link the various levels of qualifications within the national hierarchy—from the lowest to the highest level;
- To relate Armenian qualifications to those of other countries in order to support international mobility;
- To allow learners to acquire qualifications and use them for various purposes, ensuring portability and enabling progression from one level of the framework to the next. (source: https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/Armenia.pdf)

The self-certification report of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed within the framework of the TEMPUS ARMENQA project, funded by the European Commission. The project aimed to implement both the national qualifications framework and sectoral qualifications frameworks in Armenia. Working on the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, aligned with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), began in 2009 in Armenia. In 2012, the self-certification process of the Armenian NQF was launched at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia. The process of developing the self-certification report involved representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia, various universities, the Academic Recognition and Mobility National Information Center (ARMENIC), the National Center for

Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA), and the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development. Additionally, two international experts were engaged in this process. Following an in-depth review of referencing and self-certification reports from other countries and after extensive consultations with stakeholders, it was decided to prepare a self-certification report to demonstrate the compatibility of qualifications within the Armenian National Qualifications Framework—specifically, higher education qualifications—with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

1.2 Structure of the Self-Certification Report

Abbreviations

Foreword

1. **Self-certification of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education**

    1.1 Purpose of Self-Certification

    1.2 Self-Certification Process

2. Higher Education System in Armenia

    2.1 Structure of Higher Education

    2.2 Governance and Funding of Higher Education

    2.3 Quality Assurance

    2.4 National Qualifications Framework of Armenia

3. Self-Certification Criteria and Procedures

- Criterion 1
- Criterion 2
- Criterion 3
- Criterion 4
- Criterion 5

- Criterion 6
- Criterion 7

4. Self-Certification Procedures

- Procedure 1
- Procedure 2
- Procedure 3
- Procedure 4
- Procedure 5
- Procedure 6

5. Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Annexes

1.3. Description of the Armenian Education System

The duration of general education in Armenia is 12 years. General education consists of primary, basic and higher (secondary) levels. Following general education, students can pursue vocational, higher, or postgraduate education.

Higher education institutions in Armenia may be legal entities of public and/or private law. The types of higher education institutions are universities, educational and/or scientific institutes, academies, and conservatories.

Currently, the ARMENQA website indicates that 70 higher education institutions have been granted institutional accreditation. Higher education providers are institutes, universities, academies and conservatories. Notably, the “My Step” Charity Foundation is also listed as a HEI on the ANQA website as of 2025, alongside the Educational Complex of Police of the Republic of Armenia.

Higher education is placed at three levels of the National Qualifications Framework.

NQFA - Level VI, QF EHEA- Level VI, Bachelor's degree - the volume of the programme is 180-240 credits; duration is 3-4 years. The prerequisite for admission is a document confirming complete general education or a diploma of vocational education and passing the Unified Entrance Examinations.

NQFA - Level VII, QF EHEA- Level VII, Master's degree - at this level, there are master's degree programmes with a duration of 1 or 2 years and a volume of 60-120 credits. Integrated programmes: Medicine - 360 credits (duration not less than 6 years); Dentistry 300 credits (duration not less than 5 years); and Clinical Residency Programmes. Upon successful completion of these programmes, graduates are eligible to pursue doctoral studies.

In the field of continuous medical education, Clinical Residency Programmes at Level VII are also available. These programmes prepare students for medical practice and vary in length depending on the specialization, typically ranging from 1 to 5 years. The graduate is awarded the qualification of a doctor "Doctor in medicine". It is noteworthy that the scheme of the education system, which has been published relatively recently, indicates 2-5 years and the volume of credits is not less than 120.

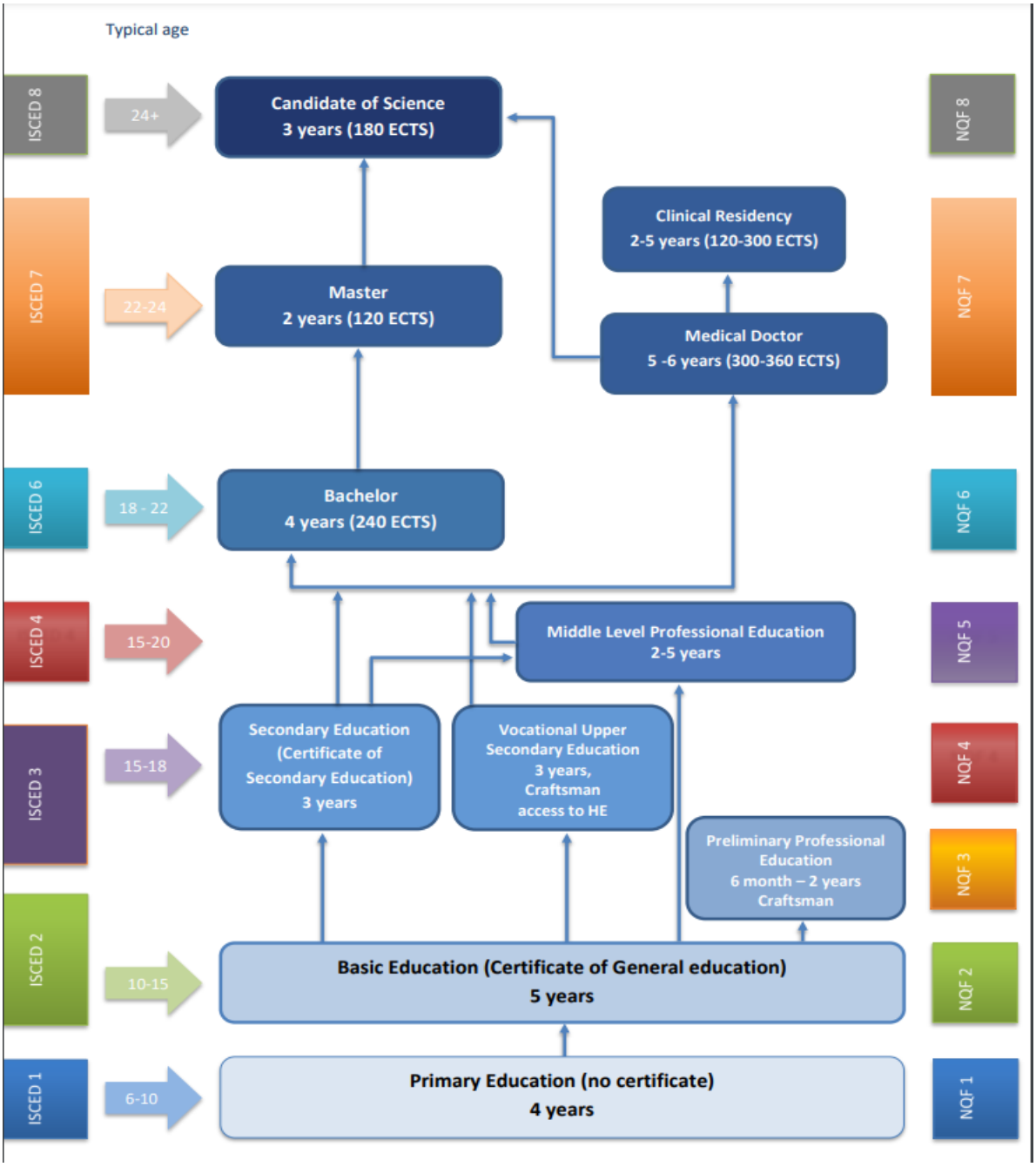
NQFA - Level VIII, QF EHEA- Level VIII, Doctoral studies - is represented at Level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework of Armenia, Level 3 of higher education. Persons with a Master's degree or an equivalent academic degree are admitted to doctoral studies; the estimated volume of doctoral programmes is 180 credits and their duration is 3-4 years. According to the self-certification report, programmes leading to a doctoral qualification are not calculated in credits, although the estimated number of credits is indicated in the scheme. After successfully defending a doctoral thesis, graduates are awarded the academic degree of Candidate of Sciences or Doctor of Sciences. It is worth noting that the report does not indicate the difference between these two qualifications, although the ANQA website provides the following explanation: " Doctoral education in Armenia has traditionally been part of the postgraduate education system and consisted of two successive scientific (research) degrees: Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences. The Candidate of Sciences qualification is typically a three-year full-time programme consisting of coursework and a publicly defended thesis. The Doctor of Sciences qualification has two tracks: doctoral coursework or

independent peer-reviewed research followed in either case by a public dissertation defense. Both doctoral qualifications have by tradition been considered as paths to academic careers."[1].

Admission to programmes awarding the Candidate of Sciences qualification requires a Master's degree or a diploma of a qualified specialist.

[1] Source: https://www.anqa.am/en/internationalization/documents/criteriastandards-and-guideline-for-quality-assurance-of-doctoral-education-in-the-republic-%D6%85f-armenia/

Figure 1.1. The Armenian education system



1.4. Description of Learning Outcomes; Examples of Learning Outcomes

The document presents a comparison of learning outcomes outlined in Armenia's National Qualifications Framework (NQFA) with the descriptors of the corresponding levels in the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). However, it does not provide examples of programme-level learning outcomes or their direct alignment with the NQFA level descriptors. It is noteworthy that colour coding—green, red, and blue—has been applied within the descriptors to indicate full alignment, differences, or additions specific to Armenia's national context.

For example:

	NQFA-HE	QF EHEA
Knowledge	Demonstrates advanced knowledge and understanding of basic and state-of-the-art concepts, theories and methods within the field of professional work or study.	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles
Skills	Can apply acquired knowledge and understanding, basic principles and methods of the field for solving problems during the professional work or study. Can communicate and explain information, arguments, ideas, problems and their solutions that are related to the given field to the specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study

	Can apply ICTs to solve problems and intensify work in the specialty area. Can collect, process, analyze and interpret relevant quantitative and qualitative data within the specialty area to make reasonable judgments. Can analyze and make judgments applying critical thinking, as well as demonstrate creativity to identify and provide different solutions to the problems of the specialty area.	
Competence	Can undertake full-fledged professional activity, manage professional functions and projects, and make autonomous decisions. Can manage working team and take on responsibility for the professional activity of its members. Is able to identify one's educational needs and/or career opportunities to decide on the ways of further study.	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups.

	Is able to take personal responsibility for the nation and the State, follow up the realization of democratic principles and dissemination of national and human values.	

1.5 Cases Where Levels and/or Qualifications Differ from the European Meta-Frameworks

It is noteworthy that the wording of the criteria has been modified to take into account the extent to which the Armenian National Qualifications Framework and education system comply with the aforementioned criteria. For instance, Criterion N3 in English reads: *„ NQFs and their qualifications are based on learning outcomes, linked to validation of non-formal and informal learning, and, where appropriate, credit systems." In the Georgian National Qualifications System Analysis Document, we present criterion N3 with the following wording: "The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and are linked to the recognition of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal education and credit systems." Armenia's self-certification report: "Criterion N3: The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and are linked to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) or an equivalent credit system.* In the description of Criterion 3 in Armenia's self-certification report, the recognition of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal education is not addressed at all.

Moreover, the authors of the document acknowledge that, to fully meet this criterion, several reforms must be implemented or specific actions undertaken. Nevertheless, Armenia's education system is ultimately deemed to be aligned with the self-certification requirements, as indicated under Criterion 3 and Criterion 4.

The postgraduate medical residency programme is classified at Level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and requires an MD (Medical Doctor) degree for admission. The programme prepares candidates to become military doctors or specialists in various

medical fields. Its duration ranges from 2 to 5 years, corresponding to a total of 120 to 300 ECTS credits. Individuals are granted the right to practice medicine independently only upon successful completion of the programme. Notably, completion requires both a qualification thesis and a final examination. Graduates are awarded the qualification of **intern** (for those specializing in military medicine) or **resident** (for those pursuing other medical specializations).

The Self-Certification Committee concluded that Armenia's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for higher education is aligned with the seven self-certification criteria and six procedures established by the Bologna Working Group. The purpose of the verification process was to determine compatibility—rather than full equivalence—between the descriptors of Armenia's NQF for higher education and those of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), commonly referred to as the Dublin Descriptors. This process aimed to ensure that verification was carried out by competent national bodies in collaboration with international experts, and that its outcomes are publicly accessible to all relevant stakeholders.

Criterion N1: The functions and/or competencies of national bodies involved in the development of higher education qualifications within the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are clearly defined and publicly accessible - the criterion is met.

The National Qualifications Framework of Armenia was established by order of the Minister of Education and Science of Armenia. A working group, with participation from HEIs and labour market representatives, developed descriptors for higher education levels, taking into account stakeholder feedback. The framework was finally approved in 2016. Within the framework of the TEMPUS ARMENQA project, a 5-year plan for the implementation of the framework was developed, which defined the deadlines and the parties responsible for the implementation.

Criterion N2: There is a clear and demonstrable link between the levels of the national qualifications framework/system and the descriptors of the levels in the European qualifications frameworks - the criterion is met.

This criterion does not require full compatibility; however, the committee analyzed and compared the descriptors of the European meta-frameworks with those of the Armenian NQF and identified alignment not only with the EHEA framework but also with the EQF for lifelong learning. The Armenian descriptors show a progression in depth of knowledge and awareness, complexity of skills, and degree of competences (responsibility and autonomy). The Armenian NQF is built on the same logic, structure, and hierarchy as the EHEA framework, with the exception that it does not include a short-cycle (associate degree) qualification, and higher education begins at level 6 of the Armenian NQF.

Armenia has been transitioning to a three-cycle higher education system since 1991, and since 2007 it has been transitioning to the ECTS credit transfer and accumulation system. Some descriptors of the Armenian NQF are adapted to the national context and formulated differently compared to the EHEA framework. To illustrate this, the report includes a comparison of Armenian NQF descriptors and EHEA descriptors at the higher education level, where content alignment is marked in green, differences in red, and additional learning outcomes in blue. Despite these national differences and the inclusion of broader value-based competences, the second criterion is considered fulfilled.

Criterion N3: The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principles and objectives of learning outcomes, and qualifications are linked to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) or a compatible system.

Higher education in Armenia is structured in three cycles. Due to its integration policy with the European education system, certain qualifications were restructured. Study programmes are described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, and competences related to potential capabilities and individual characteristics that ensure professional achievement in specific fields of study. According to the strategic plan, HEIs were expected to begin implementing the updated NQF in 2017–2018. For this purpose, field-specific qualifications frameworks (subject benchmark statements) were developed in agriculture, law, education, physics, and civil engineering to serve as reference tools for programme development. There are no legislative mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal education in the higher education system of Armenia. However, the report indicates that higher education institutions can independently make decisions on the recognition of learning outcomes obtained outside the university. It is worth noting that 1 ECTS credit in Armenia is equal to 27 hours. The

volume of a bachelor's programme is 180-240 ECTS credits; a master's programme is 60-120 ECTS credits, and a doctoral programme is 180 ECTS credits. According to the Self-Certification Committee, structured work needs to be carried out to create mechanisms for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired within the framework of non-formal and informal education, although this criterion is met.

Criterion N4: Procedures that provide for the reflection of qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework or describe the place of qualifications in the National Qualifications System are transparent.

The report states that the creation of an electronic registry of qualifications in Armenia is planned. The body responsible for including qualifications in the framework is the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia. A higher education qualification must be described using the following 13 criteria: Qualification title; Field or subfield of study; Qualification level/cycle; Justification for the qualification; Purpose of the qualification; Workload in ECTS credits; Access requirements; International comparability (benchmarks); Preconditions for awarding the qualification (integrated, attestation/assessment); Academic/professional areas; Opportunities for progression to the next level; Related fields of study (inter-/multidisciplinary). According to the report, the register will be coordinated by a special body established within the Ministry.

Criterion 5: The national quality assurance system for higher education is linked to the National Qualifications Framework and is aligned with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqués agreed upon by ministers within the Bologna Process.

In Armenia, formal education at the higher education level is subject to quality assurance mechanisms including programme and institutional accreditation. The authority responsible for quality assurance is the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA), established in 2008 and a full member of ENQA. The agency ensures quality assurance at the general, vocational, and higher education levels. Accreditation standards were developed in 2011, in line with the ESG requirements. Programme accreditation is not

mandatory; however, during institutional accreditation, two programmes are reviewed in details to determine their compliance with programme accreditation standards.

There are 7 standards at the programme level:

1. Development and approval of academic programmes;
2. Academic staff;
3. Teaching and learning practices;
4. Student evaluation;
5. Research and development;
6. Learning environment;
7. Quality Assurance;

According to these standards, alignment of academic programmes with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework is a mandatory requirement for both institutional and programme accreditation.

Criterion 6: The national framework and any alignment with the European framework are indicated in all diploma supplements.

Since the 2007/2008 academic year, all higher education institutions in Armenia are required to issue a Diploma Supplement in Armenian and English, which takes into account the requirements specified in the form approved by the Government of Armenia, however, higher education institutions may have different supplements, taking into account these criteria. The supplement clearly refers to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework and the level of higher education, and the form will be revised after the successful completion of the referencing process to indicate compliance with the EHEA framework.

Criterion 7: The responsibilities of the parties for the management of the National Qualifications Framework are clearly defined and made public.

According to government decrees, the Ministry of Education and Science is the authority responsible for managing the National Qualifications Framework. In addition, the Ministry has established a body responsible for supporting the development of national qualifications, which coordinates the validation of qualifications and their inclusion in the qualifications register. The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) and the Armenian National Information Center for Academic Recognition are also responsible for

managing the framework. Implementation of the framework at the programme level is the responsibility of HEIs, which must base their programme development on a learning outcomes-based approach. In addition, at the time of the report's preparation, there was no legal distribution of rights and responsibilities between the above-mentioned bodies, and this was planned for a period of 5 years.

1.6 Self-Certification Procedures

Procedure 1: The compatibility of the National Qualifications Framework with the European Framework is established through the self-certification process carried out by the competent national authority or authorities.

The referencing process was overseen by a supervisory committee appointed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia. This committee included representatives from the Council of Rectors, a student organization, the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), the Higher Certification Commission, and international experts. During the process, the council developed a report and submitted corresponding recommendations to the Ministry. The draft report was shared with relevant stakeholders, after which the final version was prepared. The final report was subject to broad discussion, including input from other sectoral ministries. Ultimately, the final version of the report was submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval. The self-certification report will be published on the official website of the Ministry.

Procedure 2: The self-certification process requires the explicit agreement of quality assurance bodies recognized under the Bologna Process in the respective country.

The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) is the body responsible for external quality assurance of educational institutions and programmes in Armenia. The self-certification report was developed through active consultations with the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) and members of its affiliated Accreditation Committee. It is the direct outcome of this process, as well as of broader consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. All statements contained in the report were formulated through broad consensus, in close collaboration with ANQA.

The Accreditation Committee confirmed the compatibility of Armenia's National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFA-HE) with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

Procedure 3: Foreign experts are required to participate in the referencing process

. The self-certification working group was established by order of the Minister, and included two international experts from Sweden and Germany. These experts participated in the process through email correspondence, face-to-face meetings, and seminars, during which they provided relevant feedback that was used to enhance the content of the report.

Additionally, two more experts from the Council of Europe were invited to provide feedback and conduct final consultations with stakeholders prior to the presentation of the final agreed-upon document. All four experts played a significant role in facilitating the development of the report and in preparing its final version.

Procedure 4: The self-certification and its supporting evidence must be made publicly available and must address each of the established criteria individually.

The self-certification report, approved by the Minister of Education and Science, was submitted to the responsible bodies to ensure its subsequent publication and accessibility to various stakeholders. The self-certification report was published on the official websites of the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia, ARMENIC, and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Procedure 5: The ENIC and NARIC networks must make publicly available the list of countries that have officially confirmed the completion of their self-certification process.

Following the completion of the self-certification process, the report was published on the official websites of ARMENIC and other relevant Armenian authorities, and was also officially communicated to the ENIC-NARIC network.

Procedure 6: The completion of the self-certification process should be indicated in the diploma supplements issued afterwards, demonstrating the alignment with both the National Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework.

In Armenia, higher education institutions issue diploma supplements using the format approved by the Ministry. Armenia introduced the diploma supplement form in 2008. There is a clear reference in Section 3 of the diploma supplement: "3. Information about the qualification," which specifies the level of higher education within the relevant framework.

At present, Europe-wide discussions are being held concerning the revision of the diploma supplement. Following the implementation of the new diploma supplement form and the successful completion of the self-certification process, the Armenian government will update the existing form. The diploma supplement will include the information on the correspondence of the higher education qualification level with the levels of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework and the QF-EHEA.

1.7. Recognition of Formal and Non-Formal Education, Including Automatic Recognition

This issue is addressed under Referencing Criterion 3. During the preparation of the referencing report, a number of issues required legal regulation, and efforts were undertaken in parallel to develop the necessary legislative framework.

The conclusion of the description for this criterion emphasizes that Armenia should continue working toward the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. It also affirms that the Armenian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education is compatible with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

1.8. Challenges and Future Development Plans of the National Education System and Framework

The main challenges identified include the need to strengthen the legislative framework in line with the recommendations outlined during the referencing process, as well as the

necessity of introducing mechanisms for the validation and recognition of non-formal learning. Additionally, it is essential to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the entities responsible for the management and development of the National Qualifications Framework, and to address these issues through appropriate legislative measures.

In addition, during public consultations related to the self-certification report, the following issues were identified by interested parties:

The education system must ensure greater flexibility to accommodate diverse learning pathways, as the rigid structure of the NQFA-HE and academic programmes may limit the ability to respond effectively to evolving labour market needs.

Stakeholders also emphasized the need to improve the content of educational programmes. They recommended updating teaching, learning, and assessment methods to better align with modern standards. Achieving the expected learning outcomes defined by academic programmes remains a challenge, as many faculty members in Armenian higher education institutions continue to follow the established practices of the traditional system. The transition to a new educational culture thus remains a significant hurdle.

At the time the document was being developed, close cooperation between the professional labour market and higher education institutions had not yet been established. In particular, employer involvement in the development, implementation, and piloting of educational programmes remained limited. Additionally, the lack of sector-specific benchmarks in higher education was identified as a significant challenge.

The report proposes the following approaches to address these challenges:

– Improving the alignment between qualifications and educational programmes;
– Reviewing the profile and content of programmes in accordance with labour market needs and demands;

– Reviewing the methodology for developing educational programmes to ensure they are based on transparent procedures, aligned with labour market needs, and described through learning outcomes that correspond to the higher education learning outcome descriptors in the Armenian National Qualifications Framework;

– Reviewing the content, descriptors, and admission and graduation requirements of programmes leading to qualifications at all three levels of higher education;

-Establishing mechanisms to ensure employer involvement in the peer-review and reform processes of educational programmes.

– Reviewing and improving the legislative framework for higher education in the areas related to the recognition of qualifications awarded abroad, specifically: Awarding joint and dual qualifications in collaboration with foreign and local higher education institutions, as well as ensuring the provision of cross-border education.

– Raising awareness about the Armenian National Qualifications Framework among stakeholders, especially labour market representatives and students, to ensure they are well informed about the purpose and significance of the National Qualifications Framework.

1.9. Best Practices That Can Be Shared Based on the Document

The Council of Rectors and student organizations were actively involved in the referencing process. The resulting document is concise and easy to follow. When comparing learning outcome descriptions at the corresponding framework levels, different colors are used to distinguish outcomes that demonstrate compliance with the EHEA framework, outcomes that differ, and additional outcomes added to reflect the specific context of Armenia's higher education.

1.10. Summary

It is advisable that the referencing report be concise and include all important documents, orders, etc., be attached to the report in English as a bibliography or appendix. The education system, processes, and procedures should be presented in a clear, concise, and visual (schematic) format.

Upon reviewing the document, one gets the impression that certain components of the self-certification criteria—particularly those highlighting discrepancies with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) framework—are presented in a softened tone, potentially downplaying the significance of these issues. The processes for aligning the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the QF-EHEA should be described more consistently and objectively, following a clear chronological order.

Furthermore, it is advisable that the existing challenges be clearly articulated and thoroughly analyzed, including their root causes and potential solutions, with an indication of appropriate timeframes and identification of the responsible authorities.

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II. Turkey – Referencing and Self-Certification of the National Qualifications Framework (2016)

2.1. Overview of Turkey's Referencing/Self-Certification Report

Turkey prioritizes having a national qualifications system that enhances the quality of education and teaching and strengthens the link between education and employment. Therefore, Turkey has developed the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF), which consists of eight levels and is based on learning outcomes. TQF is designed to meet the lifelong education and teaching needs of all individuals and supports the development of qualifications required by the labor market.

The general objectives of the TQF are to integrate all existing qualifications in Turkey into a single framework, improve the quality of qualifications, support and systematically promote lifelong learning, maximise transparency and recognition at both national and international levels, and enable all individuals in society to fully develop their capabilities.

Since the development of this Qualifications Framework is Turkey's first experience in this regard, the TQF has laid the foundation for significant reforms within Turkey's national qualifications system.

The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) was developed through the joint efforts of the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), in collaboration with various ministries, public institutions, professional organizations, trade unions, employers' associations, the student council, and relevant social stakeholders.

The TQF was officially adopted in accordance with the 'Regulation on the Procedures and Principles for the Implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework' (No. 29537, dated November 19, 2015).

The report on the self-certification of the TQF's alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) is briefly referred to as the "Turkish Referencing Report. The 'Turkish Referencing Report' was submitted to the European Commission following its approval by the TQF Council on November 29, 2016.

The preparation of the "Turkish Referencing Report" was carried out by a working group under the supervision and guidance of the TQF-EQF Referencing Committee and the TQF Council.

In the referencing process, Professor Mile Dzelalija (Croatia) and Dr. Georg Hanf (Germany) served as international experts, while Edwin Mernagh (Ireland) and John Harty (Scotland) participated as technical experts.

2.2. Document Structure

- **Cover page**
- **Authors:**
  (Local working group; international experts; technical experts; supporting experts; ICT editor; translator; designer; the report also acknowledges the co-funding support of the Erasmus+ Programme).
- **Introduction**
- **Definition of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

1. **Education and Qualifications System of Turkey**

1.1. The qualifications managed by the Ministry of National Education of Turkey

1.1.1. Introduction
1.1.1. Legal framework
1.1.2. Administrative structure
1.1.3. Funding
1.1.4. Provision of Education and Training
1.1.5. Access to Higher Education
1.1.6. Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
1.1.7. Ongoing work
1.1.8. Qualifications overseen by the Ministry of National Education of Turkey

1.2. Higher Education System and Qualifications

1.2.1 Introduction
1.2.2 Legal framework
1.2.3 Administrative structure
1.2.4 Funding
1.2.5 Access to Higher Education
1.2.6 Access to Further Education

1.2.7 Recognition and Compatibility
1.2.8 Planned Activities (Events)
1.2.9 Higher Education Qualifications
1.3 National Vocational Qualifications System (NVQS)
1.1.1. Introduction
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1.3.3 Administrative structure
1.3.4 Funding
1.3.5 Functions of the National Vocational Qualifications System
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1.3.7 Planned Activities
1.3.8 Qualifications within the National Vocational Qualifications System
1.4 Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Education
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2.2 Development of the Turkish National Qualifications Framework
2.3 Structure of the Turkish Qualifications Framework
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4. Self-Certification of the Turkish Qualifications Framework with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area
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4.4 Self-Certification of the Turkish Qualifications Framework against the Procedures of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
Procedure 1
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Procedure 4
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4.5 Conclusion
5. Next Steps and Challenges
5.1 Next Steps
5.2 Challenges

6. Findings

7. The list of annexes

It is important to note that the annexes of the document contain a variety of tables, diagrams, and graphical illustrations. For example, the alignment between the Turkish Qualifications Framework and European meta-frameworks is presented in a table, along with information on quality assurance for qualifications overseen by the National Ministry of Education.

Additionally, the annexes include a schematic outline for the development of modular programs, a diagram illustrating the process of preparing learning materials for these programmes, and visual representations of the structures and processes of the bodies responsible for various education subsystems.

The annexes also provide schematic descriptions of several processes, such as the development of the National Qualifications Framework, the validation and recognition of non-formal education, the validation of vocational standards, and the validation of national qualifications, among others. Furthermore, there is a detailed description of the authorization and accreditation procedures, including references to the institutions responsible for the different subsystems of the National Qualifications Framework, as well as descriptive information on the Turkish Qualifications Framework.

Finally, the annexes contain the signatures of the individuals involved in developing the document and a list of organizations consulted for feedback during the referencing process.

2.3. Description of the Education System

The Formal Education System in Turkey

Annex 4: Turkish Qualifications Framework Qualification Types, Provisional Levels and Responsible Bodies[30]

8	Higher Education Institutions	Doctoral Diploma (PhD, Proficiency in Arts and Specialty in Medicine)		Vocational Qualifications Authority	Level 8 Vocational Qualification Certificate
7		Master Degree (with Thesis) Master Degree (without Thesis)			Level 7 Vocational Qualification Certificate
6		Bachelor's Degree			Level 6 Vocational Qualification Certificate
5		Associate Degree (Academic) Associate Degree (Vocational)			Level 5 Vocational Qualification Certificate
4	Ministry of National Education	High School Diploma	Vocational and Technical High School Diploma	Skilled Worker Certificate	Level 4 Vocational Qualification Certificate
3				Semi-Skilled Worker Certificate[31]	Level 3 Vocational Qualification Certificate
		Lower Secondary Education Certificate			
2		Primary Education Certificate			Level 2 Vocational Qualification Certificate
1	Pre-School Participation Certificate				

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE): centrally manages the educational process from preschool through the completion of secondary education. The Ministry develops and implements basic and secondary education programmes on a national scale.

Since 2012, compulsory education has been extended from 8 years to 12 years and has been divided into three four-year stages:

1. Primary Education (Grades 1–4)
2. Lower Secondary Education (Grades 5–8)
3. Upper Secondary Education (Grades 9–12)

Compulsory education covers the age range from 6 to 18 years (excluding pre-school education). Individuals with special educational needs can receive education either through inclusive programs or in specialized educational institutions.

Responsibilities of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE): Higher education in Turkey is centrally planned, but universities have administrative and financial autonomy. Higher education is provided at universities, at higher technological institutes, and higher vocational schools founded by private foundations. Graduate education is offered exclusively by universities and higher technological institutes.

Universities implement new programmes and award Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees with the approval of CoHE. HEIs can also issue diplomas certifying associate degrees. Higher vocational schools are only allowed to offer two-year professional education programmes that award an associate degree, with an emphasis on practical training.

The National System of Vocational Qualifications (VQA) The VQA was established in 2006 and sets the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and the National Qualifications (NQs) in respond market demands. This organization coordinates and oversees external assessment and certification for authorized certifying bodies. These institutions may include ministries, other public bodies, professional organizations, employer associations, trade associations, lifelong learning program providers, higher vocational schools, and private organizations.

The aim of the VQA is to develop vocational qualifications, build a qualified workforce, strengthen the link between education and employment, and ensure alignment with labor market demands. It also aims to promote a culture of quality, strengthen capacities in the fields of education and business, support lifelong learning, and promote the mobility of the workforce.

2.3.1. Education and Qualifications under the Responsibility of MoNE

In Turkey, basic, general secondary, vocational/technical, and non-formal education are centrally administered by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which sets policies, develops curricula, administers schools, and appoints and funds teachers. Regional bodies ensure the implementation of these decisions at the local level. Curricula are developed by the Ministry of Education (MoNE) and approved by the Education Board, after which they are regularly updated. Public schools are funded by the state budget, while teachers have the freedom to choose their teaching methods and materials. The MoNE is also responsible for the

selection and provision of all textbooks. The activities of the MoNE are regulated by various laws and strategic documents. The Ministry's structure includes general directorates in various areas, an inspection board, and regional departments.

2.3.2 Pre-School and General Education

Early childhood education for children aged 0–36 months is provided by nurseries and day care centers under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Pre-school education (36–66 months) aims to support children's development and prepare them for primary education. It is free of charge and non-compulsory in public schools (except for children with special needs).

Primary education (ages 6–9) constitutes the first four years of the 12-year compulsory education. Upon completion, pupils are automatically enrolled in basic schools (ages 10–13), which covers the next four years of compulsory education. Upon completion of basic education, students proceed to secondary education (ages 14-17), which is also compulsory and offers both general and vocational/technical tracks. General secondary education is coordinated by the General Directorate of Secondary Education and is provided in various types of schools. Assessment is based on a 100% evaluation of exams, assignments, and projects; The minimum passing score for a subject is 50%, and the second-semester grade must not be below 70%. Secondary education is also available in the form of open schooling for individuals over the age of 18.

2.3.3 Vocational and Technical Secondary Education

Professional and technical secondary education is a four-year programme that prepares students both for higher education and for the labour market, and is implemented in various types of institutions. Programmes are regularly updated in accordance with the VQA national standards. Graduates receive a vocational and technical secondary school diploma (TQF Level 4) and can request a Europass Certificate Supplement and transcript.

Anatolian Imam-Hatip secondary schools also offer four-year programs that provide general secondary education along religious education, preparing students for both professions and higher education. Graduates receive an Imam-Hatip secondary school diploma (TQF level 4).

Apprenticeship education aims to prepare individuals for employment and to enhance professional practice in various vocational fields. Training lasts from 2 to 4 years, where 40%

is theory and 60% is practice. Graduates receive a 'Craftsman's Certificate' (TQF Level 3), and later it is possible to obtain a 'Master's Certificate' (TQF Level 4) and a 'Qualified Instructor's Certificate'.

In non-apprenticeship professions, vocational qualifications are granted by the Chambers of Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK) based on the relevant law. After meeting certain requirements, the 'TESK Craftsman Certificate' and the 'TESK Master Certificate' are issued. The Ministry of Education and the Chambers of Tradesmen and Craftsmen collaborate in the process of vocational training and certification.

2.3.4. Special Education

Individuals with special needs require high-quality education tailored to them according to their individual development. Their assessment and guidance towards education are carried out through guidance and research centers.

Education environment

- First priority – inclusive education together with peers.
- When necessary – special classes or special schools.
- Due to health conditions – learning at home or in hospital.

Supportive education: Students with exceptional talents receive additional education at science and arts centers, which helps them develop skills and realize their potential.

2.3.5. Non-Formal Education

Non-formal Education and Its Coordination

Non-formal education is coordinated by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), although other organizations are also involved in activities, including the Ministry of Labor, the Employment Agency, and municipalities.

Non-formal education includes:

- Short-term courses and trainings;

- Acquisition and improvement of vocational skills.
- Promotion of cultural, social, and personal development;

Main responsible structure: The General Directorate for Lifelong Learning, which is responsible for policy planning, evaluation, and the provision of non-formal education services.

Public education in Turkey includes continuous learning, adult education, and additional training focused on personal and professional development. Education is provided by the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning and partner organizations. Programmes are divided into general and professional-technical directions. Vocational courses comply with national standards, and upon successful completion of the course, a certificate is issued that corresponds to the level of the Turkish National Qualifications Framework.

2.3.6. Recognition of Non-Formal Informal Education

In Turkey, the recognition of non-formal and informal education is primarily focused on vocational qualifications, and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) plays a significant role in this process. Individuals' learning outcomes are assessed and certified based on the national qualifications defined by the VQA. The recognition process in higher education is in its initial stage, although the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) is working in this direction. The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) facilitates the recognition of non-formal and informal education, while the principles and procedures for this process will be developed by the TQF Board and appropriate instructions will be issued.

2.4. Turkish National Qualifications Framework

Preparatory work for the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) began in 2010, with the participation of the Ministry of Education, the Council of Higher Education, and the Vocational Qualifications Agency. The framework consists of eight levels and defines learning outcomes that ensure the classification, recognition, and international comparability of qualifications. The goal of the TQF is to support lifelong learning, develop new qualifications, recognize skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, facilitate mobility

between qualifications, and develop a system that meets with the demands of the labor market. At the initial stage, it includes qualifications issued by the Ministry of Education, the Vocational Qualifications Agency, and the Higher Education Council, and in the future, it will be expanded to include other organizations.

The administration and development of the TQF is regulated by the "Procedures and Principles Related to the Implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework". This regulation sets out the procedures and principles that guide the preparation, development, implementation, management, and updating of the TQF.

The TQF regulation includes the following:

- The principles and procedures for including all qualifications obtained through educational programs (including higher education) or other types of learning in the TQF;
- The Quality Assurance Mechanisms;
- Institutions and organizations responsible for quality assurance;
- Setting up and functioning of consultative, coordinating, and executive bodies;
- The roles, authorities, and responsibilities of the institutions involved in the administration of the activities outlined in the regulation.

The preparation, development, and updating of the TQF is primarily carried out by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), while its implementation is achieved through collaborative efforts of various responsible agencies. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for qualifications in both formal and non-formal education. The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) oversees qualifications in higher education, while the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) is in charge of vocational qualifications. Other types of qualifications are administered by specialized bodies. The above-mentioned institutions work in coordination to ensure the quality of qualifications and their integration into the TQF. Three key bodies have been formed to ensure the effective administration of the TQF:

1. the TQF Coordination Council – the main decision-making body.
2. the TQF Council – a technical working group involved in the development of the framework.

3. The TQF Permanent Consultative Committee – a platform that facilitates continuous, wide-ranging consultation with all interested parties.

2.5. Description of Learning Outcomes, Examples

The document does not provide specific examples of learning outcomes for educational programmes at different levels. However, it does include descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework and its alignment with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (TQF LLL).

	Knowledge'	**Skills**	**Competence**
TQF Level 1	Have a general knowledge of self and environment	Have basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Carry out simple tasks under guidance and supervision
EQF Level 1	Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
TQF Level 1	Have general knowledge about oneself and the environment.	Have the skills necessary to perform simple tasks	Perform simple tasks under supervision and guidance
TQF Level 2	Have an elementary factual knowledge in a field of work or study	Have basic skills required to use necessary information in order to carry out tasks and to solve potential simple problems	Carry out simple tasks under supervision with limited autonomy Have awareness of own learning needs within the scope of lifelong learning approach
EQF Level 2	basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	work or study under supervision with some autonomy
TQF Level 2	Have basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study.	Have basic skills necessary to use essential information for completing tasks and solving potential simple problems	Perform simple tasks with limited autonomy under supervision. Are aware of their own learning needs within the framework of lifelong learning.
TQF Level 3	Have an elementary theoretical knowledge and moderate factual knowledge in a field of work or study	Have skills required to select and apply data, methods, tools and materials in order to carry out tasks and solve problems	Take responsibility in carrying out tasks Complete tasks in consideration of changing situations Identify and meet own learning needs under

			guidance within the scope of lifelong learning approach
EQF Level 3	knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study.	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
TQF Level 3	Have basic (elementary) theoretical knowledge and intermediate-level factual knowledge in the field of study or employment.	Have the skills required to select and apply data, methods, tools and materials in order to carry out tasks and solve problems.	Take responsibility for completion of tasks. Perform tasks with consideration of changing circumstances and identifies and fulfills own learning needs under supervision, within the scope of lifelong learning approach.
TQF Level 4	Have a moderate theoretical and operational knowledge and good factual knowledge in a field of work or study	Have cognitive and practical skills required to perform procedures and generate solutions to problems specific for a field of work or study	Take full responsibility in completing tasks within predictable, but changeable contexts Supervise the ordinary tasks of others, and take limited responsibility in evaluating and improving such tasks Meet own learning needs, and define proactive learning goals under guidance within the scope of lifelong learning approach Have awareness of the relationship of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes in a field of work or study with moral issues and responsibilities
EQF Level 4	factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities

TQF Level 4	Have a moderate theoretical and operational knowledge and good factual knowledge in a field of work or study.	Have cognitive and practical skills required to perform procedures and generate solutions to problems specific for a field of work or study	Take full responsibility in completing tasks within predictable, but changeable contexts. Supervise the ordinary tasks of others, and take limited responsibility in evaluating and improving such tasks as well as for identifying proactive learning goals under guidance within the scope of lifelong learning approach. Have awareness of the relationship of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes in a field of work or study in terms of ethical (moral)? issues and responsibilities.
TQF Level 5	Have comprehensive, theoretical and factual knowledge in a field of work or study in aware of the boundaries of that field	Have comprehensive, cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems, whose limits are defined, and concrete problems	Carry out management and supervision tasks in contexts with unpredictable changes Evaluate and improve own and others' performance level Be in interaction for operations in contexts of work or study including the management of projects Have general awareness of the scope of lifelong learning approach for a field of work or study as well as the relationship of this scope with formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning Have awareness of the relationship of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes in a field of work or study with moral issues and responsibilities
EQF LLL 5	comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical	a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to	exercise management and supervision in contexts of work

	knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	develop creative solutions to abstract problems	or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others
TQF Level 5	Have comprehensive theoretical and factual knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	Have a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems with defined boundaries.	Perform management and supervision tasks in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; Review and enhance the performance of self and others. Engage in interaction within work or learning contexts, including in matters related to project management Have general awareness of lifelong learning approaches within the field of work or study, as well as of the connection between this approach and formal, non-formal, and informal learning tracks. Have awareness of the importance of the relationship of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes in a field of work or study in terms of ethical issues and responsibilities.
TQF Level 6	Have an advanced theoretical, methodological and factual knowledge in a field of work or study, including inquiring thinking	Have advanced skills, including the quality of mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Make decisions by taking responsibility in unpredictable work or study contexts and manage complex technical or professional activities or projects Take responsibility in managing the professional development of individuals and groups. Have experience in the concepts, policies, tools and practices of lifelong learning approach for a field of work or study as well as the relationship of them with formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning Have awareness of social and moral issues in assessing work or study

EQF LLL 6	advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
Level 6	Have advanced/ cutting-edge theoretical, methodological, and factual knowledge of a field of work or study, involving analytical thinking.	Have advanced (developed) skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and predictable problems in a specialised field of work or study.	Make decisions and take responsibility for decision-making in predictable work or study contexts, and manage complex technical or professional activities or projects. Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups. Have experience in the concepts, policies, tools and practices of lifelong learning approach for a field of work or study as well as the relationship of them with formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning have awareness of social and moral/ethical issues in assessing work or study
TQF Level 7	Have advanced specialized knowledge, some of which is at the forefront in a field of work or study, as the basis for original	Have advanced problems solving skills required in research and/or innovation activities that are carried out to develop new	Manage and transform unpredictable and complex work or study contexts that require new strategic

	ideas and/or research Have an inquiring approach for knowledge issues in his/her field and at the interface between different fields related to his/ her field	knowledge and methods in a field of work or study and to integrate knowledge from different fields Have skills required to understand, design, apply and adapt advanced research operations as a team member or partially autonomously	approaches Have experience in managing changes within a complex context. Take responsibility in contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or evaluating the strategic performance level of teams Show leadership in the concept, policy, tools and practices of lifelong learning approach for knowledge in a field of work or study and the interface between different fields as well as the relationship of them with formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning Integrate knowledge and make judgements in a field of work or study in consideration of social and moral issues and responsibilities
EQF LLL 7	highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
Level 7	Have in-depth specialised knowledge, some of which is (cutting-edge) at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original ideas and/or research. Have a cognitive approach to studying issues within their field of work and study, as well as in related fields.	Have advanced problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and methods and integrate knowledge from different fields. Have the skills necessary to understand, plan, apply, and compare advanced research operations, either as a team member or with partial independence.	Manage and transform unpredictable and complex contexts of work or study that require new strategic approaches. Have experience in managing change within complex contexts. Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for evaluating the strategic performance of a team. Demonstrate leadership skills in the context of lifelong learning, policies, instruments,

			and practices within a field of work or study and in relation to other fields, as well as in their interconnection with formal, non-formal, and informal learning tracks. Integrate knowledge and make decisions within a field of work or study, taking into account social and ethical issues and responsibilities.
TQF Level 8	Have the most advanced systematic knowledge and inquiry analysis capacity in the theory, practice, method and techniques of a field of work or study Have the most advanced interface knowledge in different fields of work or study related to a particular field of work or study	Have the most advanced and specialised skills, including synthesis and evaluation, that require the use of knowledge, methods and techniques, required to solve critical problems in the most advanced research and/or innovation within a field of work or study and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice Have skills required to understand, design, apply and adapt advanced research processes autonomously Have problem-solving skills, including the use of methods and approaches from different fields, required to solve new and complex problems in his/her field	Demonstrate competence in the development of new ideas and processes at the forefront of work or study contexts, including strong competence, innovation, autonomy, scientific and professional consistency and research Show leadership in developing new and original approaches to redefine or extend existing knowledge or professional practice in a field of work or study Develop original policies and practices for the promotion of lifelong learning approach for knowledge in a field of work or study as well as the interface between different fields in unpredictable and complex contexts that require innovation, and for the promotion of this approach through formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning Create new knowledge in a field of work or study in consideration of social and moral issues and responsibilities
EQF LL 8	Have the most advanced systematic knowledge and	Have the most advanced and specialised skills, including	demonstrate substantial authority, innovation,

	inquiry analysis capacity in the theory, practice, method and techniques of a field of work or study; have the most advanced interface knowledge in different fields of work or study related to a particular field of work or study	synthesis and evaluation, that require the use of knowledge, methods and techniques, required to solve critical problems in the most advanced research and/or innovation within a field of work or study and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice; have skills required to understand, design, apply and adapt advanced research processes autonomously; have problem-solving skills, including the use of methods and approaches from different fields, required to solve new and complex problems in his/her field	autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research.
Level 8	Have the most advanced systematic knowledge and the capacity for inquiry and analysis regarding the theory, practice, methods, and techniques of a field of work or study. Have the most advanced interface knowledge in different fields related to specific areas of work or study.	Have the most advanced and specialized skills, including synthesis and evaluation, that require the use of knowledge, methods and techniques, required to solve critical problems in the most advanced research and/or innovation within a field of work or study and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice; Have skills required to understand, design, apply and adapt advanced research processes autonomously; have problem-solving skills, including the use of methods and approaches from different fields, required to solve new and complex problems in his/her field	Demonstrate competence in developing new ideas and processes within the context of work or study; shows advanced competences in innovation, autonomy, scientific and professional sustainability, and research. Demonstrate leadership skills in developing new and original approaches to enhance existing knowledge and professional practice within a specific field. Implement new policies and practices to promote lifelong learning approaches within their field of work and study, as well as to foster interconnections between different fields, in unpredictable and complex contexts that require innovation, and promotes this approach through formal and non-formal learning tracks. Create new knowledge in a field of work or study in consideration of social and

			moral issues and responsibilities.

2.6 Quality Assurance

2.6.1 Quality Assurance in the Context of Criterion 5

1. Before the implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF), the quality assurance of qualifications in Turkey was managed independently by individual institutions, without national coordination. The introduction of the TQF established a transparent, structured, and internationally compatible quality assurance system at the national level. Through TQF councils, an integrated approach to monitoring and harmonization has been developed.
   Quality assurance is one of the core components of the TQF, and the requirements related to it are defined in a dedicated legal act. This legislation requires responsible institutions to establish and implement their own quality assurance (QA) systems. Definition of clear and measurable goals and learning outcomes for qualifications;
2. Planning of both internal and external quality assurance processes;
3. Engagement of relevant stakeholders in the QA process;
4. Provision of appropriate resources;
5. Specification of self-assessment and external assessment methods;
6. Development of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement;
7. Ensuring accessibility of assessment results.

According to the Turkish authorities, these principles are fully aligned with those outlined in Annex 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Recommendation. According to the Turkish authorities, these principles are fully aligned with those set out in Annex 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Recommendation.

Different institutions are assigned the following responsibilities in the context of Quality Assurance:

- The Ministry of National Education of Turkey (MoNE) is responsible for education and training qualifications within its jurisdiction;

- The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are responsible for higher education qualifications.
- The Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) is responsible for vocational qualifications.
- Other qualifications are quality assured by the competent bodies designated in the relevant legislation.

The quality assurance criteria for TQF qualifications are defined in coordination with the relevant bodies, particularly the VQA, while the overarching QA principles and procedures are established by the TQF Council.

The TQF Coordination Council monitors the continuous improvement of the QA processes.

Education in Turkey is highly centralized and operates within a vertically structured hierarchy — an important factor contributing to the effective implementation of the QA processes. The MoNE and the CoHE approach quality assurance within the framework of QA systems aligned with the EQF principles. However, at the time of this document development, the expectations related to monitoring and evaluation had not yet been fully met.The QA systems vary in character: the qualifications developed by the MoNE tend to be academically oriented, whereas those developed by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) place greater emphasis on practical skills relevant to employment.

2.6.2 Quality Assurance of the Qualifications Under Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education

The quality assurance of the qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) covers the following areas:

- Development and validation of educational programmes;
- Design and validation of educational materials and tools;
- Appointment of educational personnel;
- Assessment and monitoring processes;
- Self-assessment and external evaluation;
- Information management systems;
- Standards for education and training quality.

2.6.3 Development and Validation of Educational Programmes

The development process for educational programmes begins within the relevant general directorates of the MoNE and private educational institutions. The departments responsible for this process are the Department of Programmes and Educational Materials and the Department of Monitoring and Assessment. The programmes must be based on clearly defined learning outcomes, and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders is required throughout the development process.

Once developed, the programmes are submitted to the Board of Education (BoE) for validation. The BoE reviews their alignment with national priorities, educational policies, legal and institutional frameworks, and teaching methodologies. Following validation, the programmes are forwarded to the Minister of Education for final approval. Implementation begins only after ministerial approval is granted.

During the implementation phase, programmes are systematically monitored and evaluated. Based on the results of these evaluations, programmes are updated, improved, and assessed for their overall effectiveness.

2.6.4 Development and Validation of Educational Materials and Tools

Educational materials and tools are developed by the relevant general directorates and submitted to the Board of Education (BoE) for validation. In addition, private educational institutions may also develop books and educational materials. The BoE evaluates all materials intended for use in the learning process to ensure their alignment with curriculum requirements. Following the validation process, the materials and tools are submitted to the Minister of Education for final approval. The BoE is also responsible for ensuring the effective use of these materials by teachers and trainers.

2.6.5 Self-Assessment and External Assessment

These functions are carried out based on the analysis of data and reports related to schools, which are produced both by school administrations and by the relevant units of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) at the national level. Self-assessment is conducted within the framework of the Education Quality Management System Directive. According to this directive, self-assessment has become mandatory for all general education institutions.

Self-assessment is carried out annually across all types of educational institutions, following the guidelines of the education quality management system. Institutions conduct regular and systematic self- assessments based on established criteria. Reporting procedures may vary depending on the type of school.

Since 2009, schools offering vocational and technical education programmes have adopted a total quality management approach. These institutions conduct self- assessment based on the Excellence Model developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), which supports the continuous improvement of identified areas requiring attention.

External assessment involves the inspection and evaluation of schools by the MoNE. Both its central and regional administrative units are responsible for monitoring and supervising educational institutions. External assessments are conducted at three-year intervals.

The primary objective of external assessments is to evaluate schools' compliance with current legislation and to provide developmental recommendations. Inspectors conduct these assessments based on the School Management and Control Guideline, which is prepared by the Department of Education Inspection and tailored to the specific types and levels of schools.

2.6.6 Educational and Training Standards

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) developed the National Framework for Education Quality, which came into effect in May 2015. This framework aims to define education and training standards under the supervision of the MoNE.

This framework encompasses all aspects of education and training across 14 thematic areas. The Strategic Development Department is responsible for monitoring its implementation

across all sectors of education. The development and implementation of this framework is regarded as a mechanism for applying EQAVET (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) principles.

2.6.7 Higher Education Quality Assurance

At the time of developing the referencing report, traditional approaches to quality control in Turkish higher education were deemed inadequate for ensuring sustainability, primarily due to the absence of corporate governance structures and strategic planning. Prior to Turkey's accession to the Bologna Process, the establishment of a national quality assurance system was not considered a priority. Following 2005, efforts to establish a national quality assurance system aligned with international standards gained momentum. As part of this initiative, the Higher Education Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Commission (YÖDEK) was established. In 2015, YÖDEK was abolished and replaced by the Higher Education Quality Board (HEQB), operating under the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). The HEQB is responsible for: Internal and external quality assurance of higher education institutions; Quality assurance of teaching, research, and administrative services; Accreditation and authorization of independent external evaluation bodies.

Quality assurance of higher education qualifications cover the following components:

- Establishment of academic institutions and academic units,
- Development and approval of academic programmes,
- Design and approval of educational materials and tools,
- Appointment of academic personnel,
- Assessment and monitoring processes,
- Self-assessment and external evaluation,
- Information management systems,
- Quality standards for higher education.

Creation of Academic Institutions and Units

In Turkey, higher education institutions are established by the decision of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), based on the recommendation of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). An exception is made for two-year public vocational schools and other

specific academic units, which are established by the decision of the CoHE's General Assembly. The CoHE evaluates the institutional resources and assesses whether higher education institutions meet the principles and standards of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Development and Approval of Academic Programmes

The CoHE is responsible for the approval of all educational programmes offered by higher education institutions, a process that simultaneously grants programme accreditation. This process ensures that the programmes meet minimum requirements and function properly. Since 2013, new programmes must be submitted using a standardized form aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) Guide. Within this format, course-level learning outcomes must be explicitly linked to the programme-level learning outcomes, both of which must align with the national qualification standards.

Definition and Validation of Educational Materials and Tools

Educational materials must align with the defined learning outcomes and corresponding assessment methods. All higher education institutions are required to prepare ECTS course packages. Academic staff have the autonomy to select teaching and learning materials, provided that their use supports the achievement of the specified learning outcomes.

Appointment of Academic Personnel

The criteria for the appointment of academic personnel are defined by individual universities and are subject to approval by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), after which they are formally published. The CoHE is responsible for regulating the staffing positions - professors, associate professors, and assistant professors - at public universities. These decisions are based on institutional needs, disciplinary characteristics, available infrastructure, and student enrollment figures.

Assessment and Corresponding Mechanisms

Within the framework of the quality assurance system, universities conduct both self-assessment and external assessment. The universities are required to prepare annual self-assessment reports, aligned with institutional performance programmes and activity reports, and are submitted to the Higher Education Quality Board (HEQB). These self- assessment

reports serve as a foundation for the external evaluations carried out by the HEQB. Self-assessment involves the analysis of the mission, vision, strategic goals of a university, objectives of academic units, programme structures, and activities aimed at continuous improvement. Reports include information related to the institution's quality assurance system, educational activities, research, and administrative governance.

The universities undergo external assessment every five years, conducted by the HEQB-appointed evaluators or independent organizations recognized by the HEQB. For programme-level accreditation, external assessments are carried out by national or international accreditation bodies. The results of both self- assessment and external assessment are publicly available and published on the websites of the respective universities and the HEQB.

The assessment process may vary depending on the educational programme and learning outcomes. The general principles of assessment are established by the law. However, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are granted the authority to develop their own institution-specific assessment regulations. These institutional regulations define the framework for continuous and final assessments. Nevertheless, the specific assessment method for each course or module is determined by the course instructor, who prepares the course syllabus. The syllabus must include clearly defined learning outcomes, assessment methods, and evaluation criteria.

Higher Education Quality Standards

Higher education quality assurance is governed by the regulations based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, published by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The revisions to the ESG were taken into account during the development of higher education quality assurance regulations.

According to the Turkish authorities' assessment, national higher education quality standards are aligned with the ESG. The Higher Education Quality Board (HEQB) publishes the external assessment standards for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Quality Assurance of Qualifications in the National Vocational Qualifications System

Within the National Vocational Qualifications System (NVQS), quality assurance is managed by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), in accordance with European Union principles and recommendations (EQF, EQAVET, ECVET). The NVQS quality assurance model includes the following components: Development and validation of national vocational standards and qualifications, Accreditation and authorization of certification bodies, Internal and external verification processes, Self- assessment and external assessment of authorized certification bodies.

The Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) maintains ongoing consultation with stakeholders involved in the National Vocational Qualifications System (NVQS). Authorized Certification Bodies (ACBs) are accredited by TURKAK (the Turkish Accreditation Agency) in accordance with the ISO/IEC 17024 standard. ACBs are required to conduct self-assessments and submit annual reports to VQA, also undergo external evaluations by both TURKAK and VQA.

The NVQS is designed as a flexible system, capable of adapting to changes in education, vocational training, and labor market demands. This adaptability is reflected in periodic legislative updates and the addition of new quality assurance elements, including verification procedures, self-assessment reporting, and consultation support mechanisms. The system also takes into account qualification levels that may differ from those in European meta-frameworks, and variations in educational programme profiles and national contexts.

2.7 Recognition of Formal and Non-formal Education, Including Automatic Recognition

In Turkey, the validation of non-formal education primarily focuses on vocational qualifications, with the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) playing a central role in this process. Learning outcomes acquired through non-formal education are assessed and certified based on national qualifications, regardless of the method or location of learning. The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) began supporting non-formal education recognition processes and pilot initiatives in 2013. At the time of referencing, recognition of prior learning within higher education was still in its early stages, although the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) was actively engaged in developing the necessary regulations.

The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) facilitates the recognition of non-formal education through various mechanisms, including: access to educational programmes and examinations, credit accumulation and qualification acquisition pathways.

2.8 Challenges of the National Education System and Frameworks

The effective implementation of the TQF requires strong coordination among the MoNE, CoHE, and VQA. However, this process faces several significant challenges. These include integrating a wide range of qualifications into a unified framework, harmonizing diverse education and training systems, the necessity of legislative amendments and the complex structure of the framework itself.

Additional persistent challenges involve inconsistent awareness and understanding of the TQF among stakeholders, limited public awareness, risks of delays in implementation over time, the diversity of qualifications, due to Turkey's large population and the high number of educational institutions, the creation of similarly structured qualifications with different names by autonomous universities and difficulties in meeting deadlines imposed by national and EU authorities.

Furthermore, the absence of financial and administrative sanctions continues to represent a major long-term obstacle to the full implementation of the TQF.

2.9 Future Development Plans

The development and implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) is progressing in phases, requiring effective collaboration among the responsible institutions and the adoption of appropriate subordinate legal acts. A governance structure has been established, a three-year action plan has been prepared, and information resources have been updated. At the time of preparing the referencing report, the integration of the TQF into the national qualifications system had already begun. Quality assurance measures were being implemented, and a database containing descriptions of approximately 1,400 qualifications had been developed.

To support further development, additional research and the preparation of implementation guidelines are planned, with approximately €1 million allocated for this purpose.

2.10 Best Practices that can be shared based on this document

This document provides a comprehensive, in-depth, and systematically organized overview of Turkey's education system and its distinctive features. It is worth noting that the document includes detailed information about the authors and the development process, as well as the list of organizations and public stakeholders involved in reviewing the report and providing feedback. The document is logically structured, clearly highlighting both the correspondences and differences between the Turkish Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. In addition, it features schematic illustrations, tables, and graphs that enhance understanding and support data interpretation. The report clearly outlines the challenges faced by the system at the time of writing and presents a well-defined action plan, including specific measures and corresponding implementation timelines aimed at addressing those challenges.

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III. Latvia's National Qualifications Framework Self-Certification and Referencing Report (2018)

3.1 Information on the Development of Latvia's National Qualifications Framework Referencing Report

Latvia/Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF)

General information: Latvia developed its first referencing report aligning the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) in 2011. Two years earlier, in 2009, the country successfully completed the self-certification report for its higher education system, confirming its compatibility with the Bologna Framework for Higher Education. In subsequent years, following the reform of the Latvian Qualifications Framework, several substantial changes were introduced to the system. To reflect these changes, Latvia prepared a working draft of an updated referencing and self-certification report in 2017, preceded by thematic research involving broad stakeholder participation.

At the initial stage, a draft version of the updated self-assessment report was developed and evaluated by three international experts. After public discussions and incorporating the received feedback, the report was finalized and adopted in 2018.

Phase I (2009– 2011): Development of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and referencing and self-certification of the formal education system to the European qualifications meta-frameworks (EQF- LLL and QF-EHEA).

Phase II (2013– 2018): Preparation of the LQF self-assessment report, reflecting the provisions of the new Law on Vocational Education concerning higher education institutions, as well as the outcomes of several pilot projects.

3.2 Structure of the Referencing Report

The updated self-assessment report consists of an introduction and two main parts. The first part describes the key changes introduced to Latvia's National Qualifications Framework

(LQF) since 2011. In particular, it outlines major developments in the education system, including the implementation of a learning outcomes-based approach, reforms in education quality assurance, and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, among other advancements. The second part presents the alignment of the LQF with the European qualifications meta-frameworks, based on referencing and self-certification criteria. The report comprises 107 pages and is structured as follows:

Abbreviations
Introduction
Self-assessment Process since 2011
1. Part one: Development of Latvia's Education System since 2011
1.1 Legal Framework of the LQF;
1.2 Review of LQF Levels;
1.3 Indication of LQF Levels in Education Documents;
1.4 Referencing of Pre-Bologna Qualifications to Bologna Framework Qualifications;
1.5 Development of Terminology;
1.6 Development of the Credit System in Latvia;
1.7 Development of Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks;
1.8 Development of the Latvian National Qualifications Database.
2. The Importance of Learning Outcomes in Latvia's Education System
2.1 General Education;
2.2 Vocational Education;
2.3 Higher Education.
3. Education Quality Assurance
3.1 General and Vocational Education;
3.2 Higher Education.
4. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Education
4.1 Vocational Education;
4.2 Higher Education.
Part Two: Comparison of Latvia's Qualifications with European Qualifications Meta-frameworks (EQF-LLL and QF-EHEA)
Annexes: (Examples)

3.3 Description of the Education System

Latvia's National Qualifications Framework (LQF) consists of eight levels. As a result of the reforms, several changes were introduced to the qualifications system — most notably, the creation of a vocational qualification at the doctoral level. Amendments to the Education Law concerning the LQF were approved in 2015, establishing the following framework:

(1) The LQF comprises eight levels and encompasses general, vocational, and higher education. It is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL).

(2) Each level of the LQF is defined by learning outcomes corresponding to that level. These outcomes are described in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences.

(3) The levels of the Latvian Qualifications Framework are as follows:

1) Level 1 – Demonstrates basic knowledge and the ability to apply it; capable of performing simple practical tasks under professional supervision.

2) Level 2 – Demonstrates and applies basic skills; capable of performing simple tasks in a specific field either independently or under the supervision of a specialist.

3) Level 3 – Demonstrates more complex knowledge and the ability to perform a variety of tasks in a stable and predictable environment; assumes responsibility for work outcomes;

4) Level 4 – Demonstrates complex knowledge and the ability to independently plan and perform tasks in the relevant field; capable of working individually, in a team, or under supervision.

5) Level 5 – Demonstrates complex and specialized knowledge in a particular field; applies analytical thinking to solve problems in dynamic environments; understands professional activity in a broader social context, contributes to field development, and evaluates personal and others' performance.

6) Level 6 – Demonstrates both general and specialized knowledge in the field; applies knowledge to professional, creative, innovative, or research- related tasks; solves problems using a scientific approach; takes initiative, responsibility, and makes informed decisions in changing contexts.

7) Level 7 – Demonstrates advanced or broad knowledge in a specific field of work or study; independently applies theories, methods, and problem-solving skills to research, creative, or highly specialized professional tasks in evolving contexts; identifies, analyzes, and critiques complex problems, integrates interdisciplinary knowledge, and contributes to new knowledge creation.

8) Level 8 – Demonstrates comprehensive scientific knowledge and understanding of advanced theories in a field; applies scientific methodologies and contemporary research methods; independently advances scientific knowledge and leads large-scale scientific projects; exercises critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation to undertake significant research or innovative work.

Table N1. Latvian Qualifications Framework

Qualification	level
Basic general education certificate (programs for students with special educational needs, including those with complex disorders, severe intellectual disabilities, or other significant developmental disorders)	1
Basic general education certificate **Basic vocational education certificate** Vocational qualification certificate (at basic education level)	2
Vocational education certificate (arodizglītība) **Vocational qualification certificate (at the arodizglītība level)**	3
General secondary education certificate **Secondary vocational education diploma**	4

Vocational qualification certificate (at the secondary education level)	
First- level vocational higher education diploma (college education, full- time duration: 2 to 3 years)	5
Bachelor's diploma **Vocational bachelor's diploma** Higher vocational education diploma, Higher vocational qualification diploma (full- time study duration: minimum 4 years)	6
Master's diploma **Vocational master's diploma** **Higher vocational education diploma, Higher vocational qualification diploma (total full- time study duration: minimum 5 years)**	7
Doctor's diploma **Vocational doctor's diploma**	8

3.4 Description of Learning Outcomes

Article 81 of Latvia's Education Law on the National Qualifications Framework defines the learning outcomes required for each level of the framework. Each level is described in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences that must be achieved to complete the corresponding qualification level. The content of general education is determined by general education level standards, subject standards, and general education programmes developed by individual general education institutions.

According to the Vocational Education Law, the content of vocational education is regulated by the following documents: Educational vocational standards, Occupation (profession) standards and Vocational education programmes.

The content of higher education is regulated by the following documents: The State Academic Education Standard, the State Standard on Vocational Higher Education and The Standard for the Award of a Doctoral Degree.

3.5 Quality Assurance

The State Education Quality Service (SEQS) is responsible for the external quality assurance of general and vocational education. Since 2013, the standards of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) framework have been implemented in the vocational education sector. The mechanisms for external quality assurance in vocational education include both institutional and programme accreditation. During the institutional accreditation of vocational education institutions, the following quality assurance indicators are used:

1. Educational programmes;
2. Teaching and learning system;
3. Educational outcomes;
4. Student support services;
5. Institutional environment;
6. Institutional resources;
7. Work culture, management, and quality assurance.

In higher education, the external quality assurance system is based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The following external quality assurance mechanisms are established in the system: Programme accreditation (licensing), Accreditation of higher education institutions and Accreditation of study fields. Responsibility for quality assurance in higher education is distributed among the following institutions:

1. The Academic Information Centre – Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (AIKA). The Centre is responsible for the licensing of higher education programmes, accreditation of higher education institutions, and accreditation of study fields.
2. The Higher Education Quality Assurance Council oversees the strategic management and planning of study programme licensing, institutional accreditation, and study field accreditation. The Academic Information Centre (AIC) serves as the secretariat of the Council.

3. The Ministry of Education and Science provides the AIC with information about higher education institutions registered in state and ministry databases during the accreditation process. After a programme or study field receives accreditation, and based on the decision of the study accreditation or licensing commission, the AIC issues a license or accreditation certificate, which is signed by the Minister of Education and Science.
4. The Council of Higher Education evaluates applications submitted by higher education institutions, makes decisions on accreditation or refusal thereof, and forwards these decisions to the ministry for approval. The Council is also responsible for approving the assessment methodology, which is published by the AIC on its official website.
5. The Latvian Council of Science, upon request from the AIC, provides evaluative reports on doctoral study programmes submitted for licensing.

3.6 Recognition of Formal and Non-formal Education, Including Automatic Recognition

Latvia has a well-structured system for the recognition of non-formal education in vocational education (at Levels 2–4). The system was initially described in Latvia's 2012 referencing report. The updated report outlines the activities carried out to inform stakeholders, provides statistical data on the most in- demand professions, and highlights the main motivations behind individuals' efforts to have their non-formal education recognized—primarily driven by labor market needs.

At the higher education level, the recognition of non-formal education is based on a legislative framework adopted in 2012. Recognition is possible at Levels 5–7, where higher education institutions play a central role in the process.

Following the established procedures, a non-formal education recognition commission is set up within the institution. This commission is authorized to review applications submitted by individuals and to make formal decisions regarding the recognition of their non-formal education.

3.7 Challenges of the National Education System and Frameworks

The reviewed report does not outline specific plans for future development. However, several best practices can be identified and shared based on the document: (1). The structure of the report is clear and effectively conveys information about the National Qualifications Framework to the reader. (2). The comparison of Latvia's framework with European meta-frameworks (EQF-LLL and QF-EHEA) is presented in accessible and understandable way, while fully complying with the referencing and self-certification criteria. (3). Latvia's experience in recognizing non-formal education within the higher education system represents a valuable example that may be of interest.

IV. Croatian National Qualifications Framework Self- Certification and Referencing Report (2024)

4.1 Information about the Croatian National Qualifications Framework Referencing Report (CROQF)

The development of the Croatian National Qualifications Framework (CROQF) began in 2007. In 2011, a legislative package for the framework was prepared by an expert group with broad stakeholder involvement, and in 2013, the framework was officially approved by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. In addition to the legislative framework, an institutional structure was established to support the further development and implementation of CROQF, including the processes of self-certification and referencing to European meta-frameworks (QF-EHEA and EQF-LLL). According to the CROQF Act, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES) serves as the national coordinating body responsible for the development and implementation of the framework. The National Coordination Point (NCP) is specifically responsible for the referencing and self-certification of CROQF.

The CROQF is Croatia's national qualifications framework, encompassing all qualifications awarded through formal education. It comprises 10 levels, each described by a level descriptor. This framework aims to enhance comparability, transparency, and the continuous development of the qualifications system across all stages of lifelong learning in Croatia.

Development Process: the Croatian National Qualifications Framework referencing and self-certification report was prepared as a unified document by a national expert working group, with the participation of five international experts. Notably, the international experts were involved from the very beginning of the report development process. Multiple working meetings were organized to facilitate public discussion

of the draft report, and substantial revisions were made based on the feedback received. Additionally, an international conference was held in 2012, during which key stakeholders reviewed the report within thematic groups (general, vocational, and higher education). In the same year, the report was approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, as well as by the relevant structural units responsible for quality assurance in higher education and science. In March 2012, the report was submitted to the Qualifications Framework Advisory Group of the European Commission.

4.2 Structure of the Referencing Report

The CROQF self - certification and referencing report is a well - structured document that includes an introduction and six main parts. Following the introduction, the 2nd part of the report provides the national context for framework referencing, and the Croatian education system is thoroughly described to make it comprehensible for international and national readers. The 3rd part of the report covers the objective and role of the CROQF development, basic concepts, learning outcomes, framework levels and level descriptors, quality assurance system, and recognition of prior education. The 4th part describes the referencing and self - certification of the Qualifications Framework of Croatia to the European qualifications meta - frameworks EQF and QF - EHEA with regard to the criteria. During the benchmarking, suitable examples of learning outcomes from existing programmes are included. The methodology for reflecting the qualifications within the Qualifications Framework is also provided, and the structures involved in the self-certification and referencing process of the Framework, as well as in the overall Framework development and implementation are described. The 5th part of the framework provides responses to each criterion and procedure

from a benchmarking standpoint. The last, 6th chapter outlines the prospects for continued development of the CROQF.

4.3 Croatian system of education and training

The Croatian education and training system includes the following subsystems:

- Preschool education;
- Primary education;
- Secondary education;
    - General education (gymnasium);
    - Arts school education;
    - Vocational education (1 - year, 2 - year, 3 - year, 4 - year programmes, 5 - year regulated programmes in healthcare);
- Post - secondary vocational education;
- Higher education. Higher education has two main directions: academic and vocational. Academic programmes are implemented by universities, while higher education programmes in the vocational direction are carried out by polytechnic institutions together with universities. The duration of bachelor's programmes is 3 to 4 years, encompassing 180 - 240 ECTS credits. As for the master's degree level, the study programmes consist of 60 - 120 ECTS credits, and the study duration is 1 to 2 years. Some integrated master's programmes encompass a minimum of 300 ECTS credits (for example - law) and 360 ECTS credits (for example - medicine). The 7th level of the framework also includes the higher education specialist qualification. Professionals from particular disciplines who want to receive specialized higher education in the field continue studies for this qualification. The volume of such programmes consists of 60-120 ECTS credits.

(1) Academic direction in higher education:

- Bachelor's programmes;
- Master's programmes;
- Master's programme - specialist;
- Post-graduate university education.

(2) Vocational direction in higher education

- Short - cycle vocational programmes;
- Bachelor's vocational programmes;
- Specialized vocational master's programmes.

Table N2. Benchmarking of the National Qualifications Framework of Croatia with the European Qualifications Framework.

Table 4.6: An overall referencing

EQF level	CROQF level	CROQF sublevel	QF-EHEA cycles
8	8	8.2	Third cycle
		8.1	
7	7	-	Second cycle
6	6	-	First cycle[23]
5	5	-	Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle)
4	4	4.2	
		4.1	
3	3	-	
2	2	-	
1	1	-	

4.4 Quality Assurance in Education

The following organizations are responsible for quality assurance in education: (1). Sectoral councils (25 sectoral councils and 1 inter - sectoral council) are responsible for fostering human capital development, considering the labour market demands. The authority

of the councils includes validating occupational standards and developing recommendations. (2). The National Council for Human Potential Development is the central strategic institution responsible for developing CROQF. The responsibilities and objectives of the National Council include: framework development and monitoring, review and validation of councils and decisions related to qualifications, and developing recommendations for the Ministry.

External quality assurance in education is mainly carried out through the accreditation/re - accreditation mechanism of educational institutions. The accreditation/re - accreditation of institutions as providers of educational programmes also includes the assessment of educational programmes.

4.5 Recognition of Non - Formal Education

The report emphasizes that recognition of non-formal and informal education is a significant mechanism, and it is evolving together with the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework. The report provides only a vision about the development of this system and information that the elaboration of specific mechanisms is planned alongside the development of the framework.

4.6 Issues Related to Further Development of the National Qualifications Framework of Croatia

The future development of the Framework includes, first of all, further refinement of the institutional framework for the full implementation of the Framework. After the ratification of the Framework, the subordinate legal acts must specify the Framework development procedure, and the rights and obligations of responsible institutions and stakeholders. Also, further refinement of the quality assurance system and electronic register

of qualifications is specified as a priority direction. It is also highlighted in the report that the development and implementation of non - formal education mechanisms are planned. Also, disseminating information about the framework and reinforcing its significance among main stakeholders, and planning its further development considering important EU initiatives such as EQF/Ploteus portal, ESCO and others.

As for the best practices that can be shared based on the document, the structure of the document very clearly provides information about the framework to the reader. In particular, each qualification is thoroughly described: admission prerequisites, opportunities for further education, etc.

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V. Referencing report of the National Qualifications Framework of Italy (2022)

5.1 Overview of the National Qualifications Framework of Italy and its referencing process

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (hereinafter – EQF) represents a unified qualifications framework, which aims to improve the transparency and correspondence of qualifications in EU member countries and other partner countries. EQF encompasses qualifications of various levels and categories existing in all national educational and training systems and thoroughly reflects the qualifications systems of countries involved in its implementation.

Italy joined EQF from the initial stage of its implementation and in 2013 adopted the "First National Report on Referencing Qualifications of Italy to EQF" (ISFOL, 2014).

Following completion of the first stage of implementing the EQF recommendation, which ended in 2013 with the adoption of the "Report on the Correspondence of Qualifications of Italy with EQF", Italy gradually moved to the second phase of EQF implementation.

Within this process, compared to the first correspondence stage, two main innovative approaches emerged, which became the basis for developing this report:

1. Implementation of the National System for Competence Certification (NSCC), which integrates new services in various systems of national and vocational education. This encompasses identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in formal and non-formal environments. Moreover, establishing alignment with EQF was defined as a mandatory criterion for inclusion in the National Register of Qualifications.
2. Development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which, similar to other countries, ensures better organization, modernization and description of public education and vocational training systems. This creates conditions for establishing consistent alignment of all qualifications issued at national and regional levels – encompassing qualifications already mapped to EQF and those not yet included in the first report of 2013.

Italy adopted the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in 2018, on the basis of which its updated referencing report is presented (which replaces the previous one) and aims to update the correspondence of Italian qualifications with EQF.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) adopted in January 2018 was developed in close alignment with the structure of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It consists of eight qualification levels, which are defined by level descriptors and includes three dimensions: Knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy. To ensure the inclusion of every Italian qualification, additional sub - descriptors were developed that complement the EQF level descriptors. The National Qualifications Framework of Italy includes qualifications from school education (general, technical and vocational), higher education and vocational and technical education (VET) administered at regional level.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for managing qualifications awarded in schools (general, technical and vocational), the Ministry of Universities and Research manages the higher education direction, while responsibility for regional vocational and technical education (VET) qualifications belongs to regions and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano.

The "Report on referencing the Italian Qualifications Framework to EQF" aims to implement the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in practice, developed by the inter - ministerial decree of 2018. This is implemented by ensuring the alignment of national and regional educational and training systems and their related qualifications with the framework and EQF.

Based on the aforementioned report and in accordance with the provisions of the decree approving the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as according to EQF recommendations, "the procedure for establishing correspondence of individual qualifications issued at national and regional levels to NQF/EQF" will be implemented. To accomplish this goal, the EQF National Coordination Point (EQF NCP), which belongs to the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL), will adopt and periodically update "operational guide" for the process of preliminary analysis, description and establishment of correspondence of qualifications to NQF. This manual provides information, training and operational support elements for all stakeholders in order to facilitate the establishment of correspondence of qualifications.

This procedure will be carried out through specially developed IT application, which ensures:

- Collection and management of correspondence requests for qualifications presented by competent public bodies;
- Filling the Italian register of qualifications brought into correspondence with the National Qualifications Framework.

The electronic register will be compatible with national databases, as well as with the European Europass Portal, as envisaged by the Europass Decree, and with the EURES Network, as specified by the EURES regulation, through connection with ESCO classifications.

The "Report on referencing of the Italian Qualifications Framework to EQF" is the result of an extensive institutional consultation process, which includes the involvement of the following institutions:

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, as the national institution responsible for implementing provisions related to the NQF;
- The Ministry of Education and Merit and the Ministry of Universities and Research, as national coordinating institutions that ensure the implementation of provisions of the NQF;
- Institutional partnership, which is composed of representatives from competent national, regional and autonomous provinces within the framework of the NSCC;
- The European Commission, CEDEFOP, the Council of Europe, countries participating in the EQF Advisory Group and international experts who were specifically assigned to participate in this process;
- Economic and social partnership;
- The National Institute for Analysis of Public Policies (INAPP), which is defined as an independent evaluator that reviews correspondence requests.

The report is approved by agreement at the permanent conference on relations between the State, Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano (State - Regions Conference) and adopted by a decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, which is coordinated with the Minister of Education and Merit and the Minister of Universities and Research.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Italy has not only the function of linking and benchmarking national qualification levels with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and facilitating the integration of qualifications system of Italy with the education and vocational training systems of other participating countries within EU cooperation, but it also represents a national governance system aimed at promoting the transparency, applicability and transferability of qualifications and competences within the national competence certification system.

NQF has two main functions: Description and classification of Italian qualifications, which encompasses education, training and professional qualifications, and linking the given

qualifications to EQF, in order to create referencing between Italian qualifications and qualifications of other European countries.

Based on EQF principles, the goals of the Italian NQF include:

- Enhancing the accessibility, transparency and permeability of the qualifications system;
- Enhancing the relevance of qualifications at national and European levels, including in terms of geographical and professional mobility;
- Facilitating the centrality of the person and the importance of individual experience, including through validation and certification of competences acquired in non - formal contexts, as well as in the case of competences acquired through work-based learning;
- Contributing to the quality of education and competences obtained by individuals for personal, civic, social and professional development.

5.2 Structure of the Document

- Reading manual;
- Preface;
- Introduction;
- What is EQF?
- EQF goals and objectives;
- Report objectives, implementation process and structure.
- Chapter 1 - Regulatory context related to the update of referencing report of Italy to EQF qualifications. 1.1 - Lifelong learning strategy and national system for competence certification of Italy; 1.2 - Other policy interventions that develop lifelong learning strategy of Italy; 1.3 - National Qualifications Framework in lifelong learning strategy of Italy; 1.4 - Tools for recognition and application of competences and qualifications in Italy.
- Chapter 2 - National Qualification Framework: Objectives, structure, procedures, management and compliance with 10 criteria of EQF. 2.1 - Initial referencing of the National Qualifications Framework to EQF; 2.2 - National Qualifications Framework; 2.2.1 - Goals and objectives of NQF; 2.2.2 - Defining framework of NQF; 2.2.3 - Structure and technical specifications of NQF; 2.2.4 - Legal outcomes and stages of the qualification referencing process to NQF; 2.2.5 - Referencing various qualification

types to NQF; 2.2.6 - Criteria for referencing Italian qualifications to NQF 2.2.7 - Criteria for defining Internal division of each NQF level;
2.2.8 - Clear criteria for referencing qualifications to NQF;
2.2.9 - Information systems that support implementation of NQF and referencing of Italian qualifications; 2.2.10 - Management of NQF;
2.2.11 - Quality assurance of the referencing process and national quality assurance systems in education and training; 2.2.12 - Revision process of NQF; 2.3 - Fulfillment of 10 criteria for referencing to EQF.

- Chapter 3 - Qualification systems of Italy and their referencing to NQF. 3.1 - Primary education and training system; 3.1.1 - Integrated system 0 - 6 Years (pre - school); 3.1.2 - First cycle of education; 3.1.3 - Second cycle of education and training system; 3.1.4 - Post - secondary higher technical education and training; 3.1.5 - higher Education and training system;
  3.2 - Adult education system; 3.3 - Regional vocational training system; 3.4 - Continuous training of workers; 3.5 - Professions system; 3.5.1 - Regulated professions; 3.5.2 - Non - regulated professions; 3.6 - Provision of non - formal learning; 3.7 - Qualification systems of Italy: Schematic diagrams, Visual identity of NQF and synoptic referencing table.
- Chapter 4 - Summary of institutional debates and outcomes of national and international consultations. 4.1 - Main findings of debates conducted with national and regional public competent bodies; 4.2 - Key outcomes of international consultation; 4.3 - Public online consultation.

5.3 Description of the Education System in Italy

The system of education and vocational training in Italy is organized according to a complex structure, whose key characteristics of governance, objectives and target groups can be summarized as follows:

1. The education and learning system – is structured in 4 levels, which are distributed according to age groups and includes the complete educational process from pre - school education to higher education. Its management is distributed between the Ministry of Education and Merit, regions, autonomous provinces, and the Ministry of Universities and Research.

2. The adult education system – is carried out by Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA) and is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Merit.
3. The vocational education system – is the responsibility of regions and autonomous provinces and is focused on developing vocational skills for young people and adults. Continuous vocational training of workers also falls under the responsibility of regions and autonomous provinces.
4. Continuous vocational education, which is funded by joint interprofessional funds and falls under the social partners. This education aims to promote the development of companies, sectors, territorial units and individual training in order to develop innovation and increase enterprise competitiveness.
5. Regulated education – is a field of joint responsibility between the state and regions/autonomous provinces, which aims to acquire qualifications necessary for specific professions or activities and to ensure the possibility of conducting professional activities.

Each of the aforementioned systems ensures provision of different learning opportunities, after completion of which various types of qualifications are awarded (certificates, diplomas, qualification documents and others). The learning outcomes established for these qualifications correspond to a specific level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

5.3.1 Initial Education and Vocational Training System

The initial education and vocational training system of Italy is structured as follows:

1.1. 0 - 6 years integrated educational system (pre-school); 1.2. The first cycle of education; 1.3. The second cycle of education and vocational training system; 1.4. Post - secondary education and vocational technical training; 1.5. Tertiary education and vocational training.

Compulsory education in Italy lasts 10 years (from age 6 to 16) and comprises eight years of the first cycle (five years of primary school and three years of lower secondary school) and the first two years of the second cycle of education and training (which can be completed in upper secondary school or in regional vocational education and training). The final year of compulsory education can be completed under an apprenticeship agreement. In addition, the right and obligation to education and training encompasses, at least, 12 years (or, in any case, until the age of 18 before obtaining a three - year vocational qualification), after which students can choose to continue studies: 1) In the upper secondary education system, which is under state responsibility, 2) or in the education and vocational training system, which falls under regional responsibility.

In all education and training systems, in the final three years of the second cycle, a compulsory school - work learning period or educational apprenticeship is included, considering the specific conditions and requirements of each system and educational direction.

Students who have completed compulsory education can also pursue their studies in the adult education system.

As for governance issues:

- The state has exclusive legislative authority to determine the general rules of education and "minimum levels of services related to civil and social rights" that must be guaranteed across the entire country;
- The state, regions and autonomous provinces participate in the legislative process in the field of education, with the state determining the necessary principles and autonomous regions and provinces issuing detailed norms;
- Regions and autonomous provinces have only legislative authority in governance of vocational training issues, including in initial education and vocational training courses;
- Local authorities take part in organizing education and training services in the region.

When carrying out common activities, the state, regions and local bodies jointly coordinate processes and actively participate in state-regional joint conferences.

Education and training system of Italy recognizes educational, organizational, research, experimental and development autonomy in schools and universities.

5.3.2 Integrated system 0 - 6 years (pre - school education)

The integrated system from birth to six years (Early Childhood Education and Care - ECEC) is divided into:

1) Educational services for children aged 0 - 3 years, which include: Nurseries and micro - nurseries, which accept children from 3 to 36 months of age; "Spring sections", which accept children from 24 to 36 months of age; Additional services;

2) Kindergarten, which accepts children from 3 to 6 years of age.

The Ministry of Education and Merit, regions and autonomous provinces jointly carry out the authorities established by legislation in managing the integrated system from birth to six years,

and local authorities and together with them other public or private entities also participate in its functioning.

Pre - school education is an integral part of the education and training system; however, it is not mandatory and does not award qualifications related to the NQF.

5.3.4 First Cycle of Education

The first cycle of education, whose management and coordination are handled by the Ministry of Education and Merit lasts 8 years, which is mandatory and free. It is divided into two stages:

- Primary school – a five - year period (from age 6 - 11), which aims to provide pupils with basic knowledge and tools so that they are prepared for active citizenship and grasping their own experience. After completing primary school, a certificate of competences is issued, which reflects achieved progress and supports the continuation of the subsequent educational process. The learning outcomes achieved at this stage correspond to the first subcategory of NQF/EQF level 1 (Table 3.1).
- Lower secondary school – a three - year period (from age 11 - 14), which is focused at strengthening independent learning skills, social interaction and systematization of pupils' knowledge and skills. At the end of three years, pupils take the state examination of the first cycle of education, and upon successful passing, first cycle of education diploma is issued. The learning outcomes achieved at this stage correspond to the second subcategory of the NQF/EQF level 1 (Table 3.1).

The first cycle of education is conducted in state schools and independent parity schools (paritarie), which constitute part of the national education system. It can also be conducted in non - parity (non paritarie) independent schools or through home-schooling. In the last two instances, certain conditions must be fulfilled, such as successfully passing special examinations to progress to the next grades.

3.1 Referencing of the first cycle of education qualifications system to the NQF

Table 3.1 - Referencing of the qualifications system of the first cycle of education to NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Certification of competences at the end of primary school	-	IT 1.1	1
Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Final diploma of the first cycle of education	-	IT 1.2	1

5.3.5 Second Cycle of the Education and Vocational Training System

The second cycle of the education and vocational training system, whose education is compulsory and free for two years, encompasses various types of educational directions, which aim to acquire key competences that are essential for citizenship and future employment.

The objectives of compulsory education represent the common educational foundation of all second cycle courses, regardless of the fact that they have different study programmes. Even though compulsory education does not represent a final qualification in the second cycle, students can obtain a compulsory education certificate, whose learning outcomes are placed at NQF/EQF level 2, subsection 2, as shown in Table 3.2.

The second cycle of the education and vocational training system is divided into two parallel systems:

- The upper secondary education system, which is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Merit;
- The vocational education and training system, which is subordinated to the regions and autonomous provinces.

The upper secondary education system encompasses five - year courses or four - year pilot programmes, which are divided into three educational directions:

- Lyceum – aims to provide students with cultural and methodological tools that foster deep understanding of reality and the development of rational, creative, critical and planning skills. It is mainly directed toward higher education, integration into social life and entry into the labor market through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, competences and skills.

- Vocational institutes – provide students with a solid foundation of general education and technical - professional competences, which allows them to rapidly integrate into various production sectors of the labor market (primary, secondary, tertiary sectors).
- Technical institutes – provide students with a solid cultural, scientific and technological foundation, which is necessary for practicing technical professions in relevant professional sectors (economics, technology).

After completing the upper secondary education stage, a state examination is considered, which aims to verify the awarding of 5 - year diploma (lyceum, technical or vocational), which provides access to higher education and training, both academic (university and higher education in arts and music) and non - academic (higher technological education system - ITS Academy) and whose learning outcomes will be placed at level 4 NQF/EQF, with additional subcategory 2, as defined in Table 3.2.

Methodologically, like first cycle courses, upper secondary educational study courses are carried out in state schools and independent schools with parity (paritarie), as well as in independent schools that have not obtained parity, and also at home, as home - schooling. In the last two instances, certain conditions are determined, such as passing specific state examinations to transition to the next grades.

The Initial education and vocational training system (IeFP), which is distinguished by significant work - based learning, aims to develop and acquire fundamental and professional competences according to work - related profiles. It is divided into two educational directions with different durations:

- Three - year courses, which aim to receive an initial education and vocational training certificate, which demonstrates learning outcomes at NQF/EQF level 3, as indicated in Table 3.2. After receiving the vocational certificate, it is possible to continue for an additional one year on the IeFP course to obtain a diploma or in vocational education, through the vocational education and training system, by transitioning between the vocational education system and the vocational education and training system, in order to receive a complete general education diploma.
- Four - year courses for receiving an initial education and vocational training (IeFP) diploma, which recognizes learning outcomes at NQF/EQF level 4, with subcategory 4, as shown in Table 3.2. After four years and receiving the vocational diploma, you transfer to vocational education courses to obtain a secondary education diploma, or you transfer to the technical higher education and vocational training (IFTS) direction, in order to enter higher technological institutes (ITS Academy). Additionally, there are two other courses that allow you to obtain a secondary education diploma: Additional

one year, which is conducted in agreement with universities and higher education in the field of arts and music, or additional one year, which is organized by regions and autonomous provinces.

Courses are conducted in educational institutions accredited by the regions or in vocational institutes that are part of additional educational provisions organized by the region (in agreement with regional educational offices). The initial education and vocational training (IeFP) certificate and initial education and vocational training (IeFP) diploma are included within the framework of the national register of vocational education and training, have national validity, relate to professional profiles of various economic - professional sectors and are described in terms of learning outcomes.

3.2 Referencing of the second cycle of education and training qualifications system to the NQF

Table 3.2 - Referencing of the qualifications system of the second cycle of the education and training system to NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	State and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate	IT 1.2	IT 2.2	2
		Upper secondary education diploma (lycée, technical, vocational)	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.2	4
Regions and Autonomous Province	State and independent with parity educational institutions Accredited training institutions	Compulsory education certificate (IeFP)	IT 1.2	IT 2.2	2
		Initial education and vocational training certificate (IeFP)	IT 1.2 IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 3.4	3
		Initial education and vocational training diploma (IeFP)	IT 1.2 IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.4	4

5.3.6 Post - Secondary Higher Technical Education and Training

The higher technical education and training system (IFTS) offers post - secondary courses, whose organization belongs to regions and autonomous provinces and which aims to develop technical vocational specializations in order to meet the training needs of economic production sectors in the context of regional planning.

Higher technical education and training are annual courses (usually 800 - 1000 hours), which are intended for young people and adults who hold a complete general education diploma or an initial education and vocational training diploma, also, admission is allowed for all those who are enrolled in fifth-year lyceum courses and also for those who do not have a full general education diploma, but have recognized prior education, training and competences acquired in work contexts. Usually, course attendance is free or only registration fees and learning materials are required.

Courses are conducted within a partnership that includes, at least one educational institution accredited by the regions, a university and one enterprise. The qualifications granted through courses have national validity, since they are included in the national database of higher technical education and training courses, which correspond to professional profiles in various economic - professional sectors and are described in terms of learning outcomes.

After completing higher technical education and training courses, post - secondary higher technical specialization certificate is awarded, which allows access to non - academic higher education and training (higher technological education system - ITS Academy) for those who have an initial education and vocational training diploma, and whose learning outcomes are defined at level 4 NQF/EQF, with subcategory 4, as indicated in Table 3.3.

3.3 Referencing of the higher technical education and training qualifications system to the NQF

Table 3.3 - Referencing of the qualification system for higher technical education and training to NQF[155]

Public Competent Authority	Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited educational institutions, in partnership with universities and enterprises	Higher technical specialization certificate (IFTS)	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	IT 4.4	4

5.3.7 Higher Education (Tertiary) and Training System

The Higher Education (Tertiary) and Training System encompasses various educational directions, which are divided into different and parallel systems:

1. High technology training courses, which are facilitated by High Technology Institutes (ITS Academy);
2. Higher education and training courses;
3. Higher education in the field of arts and music (AFAM);
4. Other courses, which are organized by specialized institutes.

5.3.8 Higher Technical Vocational Education Courses Initiated by Higher Technological Institutes (ITS Academy)

High Technology Institutes (ITS Academy) are subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Merit; the regions and autonomous provinces are responsible for programming educational directions. ITS Academy ensures high technical and technological specialization: two - year courses (1800/2000 hours) - in some cases three years - with a strong work - based learning component (at least 30% of total hours). ITS Academies are distributed across technological fields, which are defined at national level and identified in regional plans and are aimed at young people and adults who hold full secondary education diploma and at those individuals who hold an initial education and vocational training diploma (IeFP, four years), and have a high technical specialization certificate (IFTS). Admission to the courses depends on passing an entrance examination. Usually, course attendance is free. However, it is possible to request a certain contribution for registration and educational materials.

After completing higher technical education courses offered by ITS Academy, the following qualifications are awarded: Applied technologies specialization diploma, whose learning outcomes are associated with level 5 NQF/EQF, subcategory 4, and applied technologies specialization diploma (three years), whose learning outcomes are associated with level 6 NQF/EQF, subcategory 4, as indicated in Table 3.4.

The applied technologies specialization diploma awarded by ITS Academy after completing a three - year course, as well as regional vocational training qualifications, which are issued in educational institutions accredited or authorized by regions and autonomous provinces, despite the fact that they refer to EQF level 6 (6.4 NQF), do not allow enrollment in those two - year courses that result in obtaining a master's degree and whose learning outcomes correspond to NQF/EQF level 7.

3.4 Referencing of the higher technical training qualification system with the NQF

Table 3.4 - Referencing of the qualification system for higher technical training to NQF[161]

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes - ITS Academy	Applied technologies specialization Diploma (two-year course)	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 (IFTS) IT 4.2 IDA	IT 5.4	5
Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes - ITS Academy	Applied technologies Higher specialization Diploma (three-year course)	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 (IFTS) IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4	6

5.3.9 Higher Education and Professional Training

The higher education provision, for which the Ministry of University and Research is responsible, is structured according to the Italian Qualifications Framework (QTI), established in 2010.

In line with the QTI, higher education is divided into three cycles, as defined by the Bologna Process, and includes all qualifications awarded within each cycle, described both in terms of learning outcomes and the number of credits under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

The first cycle, which requires a full general education diploma or its equivalent as a minimum admission requirement, consists of:

- Three-year programmes, divided into various types of educational programmes, leading to the award of a Laurea (Bachelor's degree) upon the acquisition of 180 credits (CFU/ECTS). The learning outcomes of the Laurea correspond to Level 6 of the NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2, as presented in Table 3.5.

The second cycle, for which the minimum admission requirement is a Laurea (Bachelor's degree) or its equivalent qualification, includes:

- Two- year programmes, divided into various types of educational programmes, leading to the award of a Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica (Master's degree) upon the acquisition of 120 CFU (educational credits). The learning outcomes at the Master's level (Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica) correspond to Level 7 of the NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2, as presented in Table 3.5. In accordance with national regulations or EU directives, there also exist certain "a ciclo unico" (single-cycle/integrated master's) programmes lasting five or six years (corresponding to 300 or 360 credits), which lead to the award of a Laurea Magistrale a Ciclo Unico (Single-cycle Master's degree), whose learning outcomes correspond to Level 7 of the NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2, as presented in Table 3.5.
- First- level continuous and periodic graduate courses include scientific courses or study programmes lasting for at least one year (equivalent to 60 CFU), admission which is possible with a Laurea (Bachelor's degree) or an equivalent qualification. Upon completion, they lead to the award of a Master universitario di primo livello - First-level university degree, whose learning outcomes correspond to Level 7 of the NQF/EQF, as presented in Table 3.5. Unlike the Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica, the Master universitario di primo livello does not grant access to PhD (Dottorato di Ricerca) programmes, as it does not meet the national requirements and falls under the independent responsibility of the universities.

Third-cycle programmes include:

1) Courses of at least three years in duration, which require a Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica (Master's degree) or an equivalent qualification, as well as successful completion of an entrance examination. Upon completion, they lead to the award of a Dottorato di Ricerca (Doctoral degree), the learning outcomes of which correspond to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 1, as indicated in Table 3.5.
2) Second-level continuous and periodic postgraduate courses include scientific courses or advanced continuous education programmes, admissions on which is possible with a Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica (Master's degree) or an equivalent qualification. The minimum duration of these programmes is one year (equivalent to 60 CFU), upon completion of which the Master universitario di secondo livello (Second-level university master's degree) is awarded. Its learning outcomes correspond to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 3, as shown in Table 3.5.
   Similar to the Master universitario di primo livello, the Master universitario di secondo livello does not provide access to the Dottorato di Ricerca (PhD), as these programmes

are not part of the nationally defined general requirements and are implemented under the independent responsibility of the universities.

3) Specialization courses, whose duration varies depending on the disciplinary sector, range from a minimum of two years to a maximum of six years (between 120 and 360 CFU). Admission requires a Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica (Master's degree) or an equivalent qualification and successful completion of a selection examination. Upon completion of the course, a Diploma di Specializzazione (Specialisation Diploma) is awarded, whose learning outcomes correspond to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 3, as shown in Table 3.5.

At the organisational level, public and private academic institutions such as universities, equivalent institutes, and legally-recognised online universities (including their decentralised offices and individual study programmes) are accredited by the Ministry of University and Research based on national accreditation criteria. They operate with constitutionally granted autonomy, which allows them to adopt autonomous systems within the limits established by law.

The universities define their higher education provision annually, based on current regulations.

The National University Council (CUN), which serves as a consultative body for the academic system, provides annually updated guidelines to the Ministry of University and Research to support the definition of standards for academic systems.

3.5 Referencing of the Higher Education Qualifications System to the NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of University and Research	Universities	Laurea (Bachelor Degree)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.2	6
		Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica a ciclo unico (Single-cycle Master Degree)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 7.2	7
		Laurea Magistrale (Master Degree)	IT 6.2	IT 7.2	7
		Master universitario di primo livello (First Level University Post Degree)	IT 7.2	IT 8.1	8
		Diploma di corso perfezionamento (Higher specialization Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Master universitario di secondo livello (Second level University Post Degree)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Diploma di Specializzazione (Specialization Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8
		Dottorato di Ricerca (PhD)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8

5.3.10 Higher Education for Art and Music

The Higher Education System for Art and Music – AFAM – falls under the authority of the Ministry of University and Research and includes both public and non-public authorized institutions, specifically: State Academies of Fine Arts; the National Academy of Dramatic Arts; the National Dance Academy; State Conservatories of Music; State-recognized Music Institutes; Higher Institutes of Fine Arts; and legally recognized Academies of Fine Arts, including historic institutions located in Genoa, Verona, Perugia, Bergamo, and Ravenna. It also includes other institutes that confer legally-recognized qualifications. Similar to academic higher education provision, the AFAM system is structured in three cycles, which correspond to the Dublin Descriptors adopted within the framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The first cycle, for which the minimum entry requirement is general education diploma or equivalent qualification, includes:

1) Three-year programmes leading to the award of a First Level Academic Diploma (Diploma accademico di primo livello) upon the completion of 180 academic credits (CFA/ECTS). The learning outcomes correspond to Level 6 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 2, as shown in Table 3.6.

2) The second cycle programmes, for which the minimum entry requirement is a First Level Academic Diploma (Diploma accademico di primo livello) or an equivalent qualification, include:

a) Two-year programmes, which are divided into various categories and, upon completion, award a Second Level Academic Diploma (Diploma accademico di secondo livello) upon earning 120 CFA/ECTS credits. The learning outcomes correspond to Level 7 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 2, as shown in Table 3.6.

b) Advanced-level courses or first level postgraduate programmes, that meet cultural needs in specific educational fields or for professional development and continuing education needs, are accessible to those holding a Diploma accademico di primo livello (First Level Academic Diploma) or an equivalent qualification and last a minimum of one year (60 CFA credits or equivalent). Upon completion, they lead to the Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (I) (Advanced Specialization Diploma or First- Level Master's Diploma), with learning outcomes aligned with Level 7 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 3, as identified in Table 3.6.
Unlike the Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second Level Academic Diploma), these diplomas do not grant access to third-cycle programmes, such as the Diploma Accademico di Formazione e Ricerca (Academic Research Education Diploma), because the educational process is not regulated at the national level and the qualification is awarded independently by each academic institution.
c) First-level specialization courses that provide high-level professional competencies in specific fields. These courses are accessible to individuals holding a Diploma accademico di primo livello (First Level Academic Diploma) or an equivalent qualification, and last a minimum of two years (120 CFA/ECTS credits or equivalent). Upon completion, they award a Diploma accademico di specializzazione (First Level

Academic Specialization Diploma), with learning outcomes aligned to Level 7 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 3, as identified in Table 3.6.

Third-cycle programmes include:

a) Programmes lasting a minimum of three years, admission to which is possible for the holders of a Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second Level Academic Diploma) or an equivalent qualification, and the successful completion of an exam. Upon completion, they award the Diploma accademico di formazione alla Ricerca (Academic Diploma of Research Training), whose learning outcomes correspond to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 1, as presented in Table 3.6.

b) Advanced courses or post-second-cycle diploma programmes that address cultural needs in specific fields of study or respond to professional retraining and continuing education demands. These programmes are accessible to holders of a Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second Level Academic Diploma) or an equivalent qualification. They last a minimum of one year (equivalent to 60 CFA/ECTS), and upon completion, award the Diploma di perfezionamento or Diploma di Master (II) (Advanced Specialization Diploma or Second- Level Diploma). The learning outcomes correspond to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 3, as shown in Table 3.6. Similar to the Diploma di perfezionamento or Master (I), the Diploma di perfezionamento or Master (II) does not provide access to the Diploma accademico di formazione alla Ricerca (Academic Diploma of Research Training), since the educational process is not regulated at the national level and the academic institution issuing the diploma defines it independently.

c) Second-level specialization courses that provide high-level professional competencies in specific fields. Access is granted to individuals holding a Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second Level Academic Diploma) or an equivalent qualification. These programmes last a minimum of two years (equivalent to 120 CFA), and upon completion, award the Diploma accademico di specializzazione di secondo livello (Second-Level Academic Specialization Diploma). The learning outcomes correspond to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 3, as indicated in Table 3.6.

Higher education in the fields of art and music is defined annually and is authorized by the Ministry of University and Research based on the current standards.

Additionally, the National Council for Higher Education in Art and Music (CNAM), which serves as the representative body of the AFAM system, performs an advisory role to the Ministry of University and Research in this field.

3.6 Referencing of the Qualification System of Higher Education for Art and Music to the NQF

Table 3.6 - Referencing of the qualifications system for Higher Education in Arts and Music to the NQF[178]

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Diploma accademico di primo livello (First level Academic Diploma)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.2	6
		Diploma accademico di secondo livello a ciclo unico (Sigle Cycle Second level Academic Diploma)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 7.2	7
		Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second level Academic Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.2	7
		Diploma accademico di formazione alla Ricerca (Research Training Academic Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.1	8
		Diploma accademico di Specializzazione di primo livello (First level Academic specialisation Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (I) (Higher specialization or First level post degree Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Diploma di perfezionamento or Diploma di Master (II) (Higher specialization Diploma or Second level post degree Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8
		Diploma di specializzazione di secondo livello (Second level Academic specialisation Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8

5.3.11 Other Courses Organized by Special-Purpose Institutions

In Italy, certain special-purpose institutions are involved in non-higher academic education and training, offering professional specialization in various fields. Access to these programmes requires a secondary school diploma or an equivalent qualification and the successful completion of an entrance examination.

The qualifications awarded by special- purpose institutions correspond to Levels 6, 7, or 8 of

the NQF/EQF, with the appropriate sub-articulation, depending on the entry requirements to the programme and the learning outcomes.

As examples, special-purpose institutions include:

- Higher Schools for Language Mediators provide high-level language courses over a three-year period in at least two foreign languages (excluding Italian). These programmes are open to individuals who hold a secondary education diploma and have the appropriate level of initial language preparation. Upon completion of the course, the Diploma di mediatore linguistico (Language Mediator Diploma) is awarded, which is equivalent to a first-cycle qualification (Directed to Level 6 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 2).
- Specialization Institutes in Psychotherapy, that offer four-year professional training programmes to prepare individuals for the practice of psychotherapy, including both individual and group therapy. Admission to these programmes is granted upon presentation of a Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica (Master's degree) in Psychology, Medicine, or Surgery, along with registration in the relevant professional organizations. Upon completion, a Diploma of Specialization in Psychotherapy is awarded, which is equivalent to a university- issued specialization diploma and corresponds to Level 8 of the NQF/EQF, sublevel 3.

5.3.12. Adult Education System

Public Provision of Adult Education (IDA) in Italy is organized under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit and is delivered through Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs). These are independent educational institutions equipped with their own staff and special didactic and organizational structures.

Each CPIA operates as a territorial service network, structured around a central office and delivery sites (including associate and operational units, which may also function within prisons and detention centers).

CPIAs are responsible for the following activities: Formal adult education pathways, aimed at adults and individuals aged 16 and over who meet specific criteria, initiatives to expand

educational offerings, as well as research, experimentation, and developmental activities in the field of adult education.

CPIAs provide the following formal education programmes completely free of charge:

- Health and language education courses in Italian for adult foreign nationals in Italy, with the duration of 200-hours aimed at achieving certification that confirms Italian language proficiency at a minimum of A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The learning outcomes of these courses correspond to Level I of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 1, as indicated in Table 3.7.

- Similarly, knowledge and Italian language instruction courses for foreign adults, also 200 hours in duration, aim to grant a certificate of Italian proficiency at a level not below A2 (CEFR), with learning outcomes referenced at Level I of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 1, as shown in Table 3.7.

- First-level educational courses are structured into two learning periods: The first learning period, lasting 400–600 hours, is designed to lead to the final diploma of the first educational cycle. The learning outcomes for this diploma are referenced at Level I of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 2, as specified in Table 3.7. The second learning period, lasting 825 hours, is designed to lead to a certificate that attests to the acquisition of basic competences equivalent to those required for compulsory education. The learning outcomes of this stage are referenced at Level 2 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 1, as indicated in Table 3.7.
- Second-level educational courses are organised across three learning periods, each following a general framework aligned with the regulations applied in technical or vocational schools: First learning period (lasting 1,518 hours), aims to lead to a certificate granting access to the second learning period. The learning outcomes correspond to Level 2 of the NQF/EQF, sub- articulation 2, as shown in Table 3.7.Second learning period (1,518 hours), aims to obtain a certificate granting access to the third learning period, with learning outcomes referenced at Level 4 of the NQF/EQF, sub- articulation 1, as indicated in Table 3.7. Third learning period (759 hours), leads to the awarding of a high level education diploma in technical, vocational, or creative fields. The learning outcomes are referenced at Level 4 of the NQF/EQF, sub-articulation 2, as shown in Table 3.7.

CPIA is authorized to expand its educational offerings in agreement with local authorities and other public and private organizations, with particular attention given to regionally accredited training institutions. These initiatives aim to simplify citizenship acquisition and enhance employability skills within the population.

To foster adults' cultural and professional development, CPIA enables the personalization of learning pathways through individual learning agreements, using the following methods:

- Recognition of credits acquired during the prior learning;
- Recognition of learning activities for up to 10% of the total hours of each individual course;
- Recognition of distance learning, generally not exceeding 20% of the total hours of each course.

Table 3.7 – Referencing the adult education qualifications system to the NQF.

Table 3.7 - Referencing of the qualifications system of adult education to NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certificate attesting the achievement of a level of knowledge of the Italian language at level A2 of the CEFR	-	IT 1.1	1
		Final Diploma of the first cycle of education	IT 1.1 IT 1.1 IDA	IT 1.2	1
		Certification attesting the acquisition of basic competences corresponding to the compulsory education	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.1	2
		Certification for admission to the second teaching period of second level	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.2	2
		Certification for admission to the third teaching period of second level	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 IeFP IT 2.2 IDA	IT 4.1	4
		Technical, vocational or artistic upper secondary education Diploma	IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.4 IeFP	IT 4.2	4

5.3.13 Regional Profession Training System

Regions and autonomous provinces are responsible for organizing vocational education and training, which includes qualification-based programmes within one or more regional systems. These programmes are designed for young people and adults who have completed compulsory education and/or are fulfilling the right-duty of education and training simultaneously.

Within the framework of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), regional vocational training offerings can be grouped into three main areas:

- Operational area: This is characterized by regional vocational training courses targeted at learners who already hold a qualification at least at NQF/EQF level 1.2, or those who have the required level of competence for admission, as verified through identification or retraining procedures. Upon completion of these courses, a regional vocational qualification for the operational area is awarded, the learning outcomes of which

correspond to level 2 or level 3 of the NQF/EQF, both with sub-articulation 4, as presented in Table 3.8.

- Technical area, characterized by regional vocational training courses designed for learners who possess a qualification at least at NQF/EQF level 3.4, or for those with an appropriate admission level competence, confirmed through specific identification or retraining procedures. Upon completion of these courses, a regional vocational training qualification for the technical area is awarded, whose learning outcomes correspond to NQF/EQF level 4 or 5, both with sub-articulation 4 of both levels, as specified in Table 3.8.

- Higher vocational training, the courses of which are aimed at learners who hold a qualification at a minimum of NQF/EQF level 4.2 or 4.4, or those who have a relevant admission-level competence, certified through identification or retraining mechanisms. After completing these courses, a regional higher vocational qualification is awarded, with learning outcomes corresponding to NQF/EQF level 6, sub-articulation 4. Regional vocational qualifications at level 6.4 of the NQF/EQF grant access to further training pathways that lead to qualifications at level 7.3 of the NQF/EQF within the framework of regional vocational training.

The accreditation and authorization procedure represents the main quality assurance mechanism for regional vocational training provision. In order to receive public funding or to offer self-financed courses, training institutions must be pre-accredited or authorized by the respective region. This confirms their compliance with defined requirements as well as with the criteria of the EQAVET framework, as outlined in the National Quality Assurance Plan.

Traditionally, vocational qualification courses are planned by regions and territories in response to local training and professional needs. Their duration varies depending on the learning objectives, the types of participants, the learning methods, and the contexts.

Table 3.8 – Referencing of regional vocational training qualifications to the NQF.

Table 3.8 - Referencing of the qualification system for regional vocational training to the NQF[192]

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Autonomous Regions and Provinces	Accredited/ Authorized educational institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for operating area	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.4	2
			IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 3.4	3
		Regional vocational training qualification for technical area	IT 4.2 IT4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA IT 3.4 FP IT 3.4 IeFP	IT 4.4	4
			IT 4.2 IT4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA IT 3.4 FP IT 3.4 IeFP	IT 5.4	5
		Regional higher vocational training qualification	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 FP IT4.4 IeFP IT 4.4 IFTS	IT 6.4	6
			IT 6.2 IT 6.4 FP IT 6.4 ITS Academy	IT 7.3	7

5.3.14 Regulated Professions

Regulated professions include those activities or sets of activities whose practice, whether directly or indirectly, even with a professional certificate, is subject to requirements established by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions. These requirements involve holding a qualification issued by a central or regional public authority.

The regulated professions include:

- The professions organized into associations, including healthcare professions. Entry into these professions depends on meeting specific educational and professional requirements (e.g., possession of the relevant qualification or completion of a regulated education) and, in most cases, passing a state examination.
- The professions listed in registers or lists, including support professions in the arts related to health, and other professions linked to the healthcare sector. Entry into these professions also requires meeting certain educational and professional criteria established by law, and in some cases, passing a relevant examination.

In Italy, the regulated professions are listed on the portal of the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, and are classified according to the following criteria:

- Italian legislation;
- Competent Italian authority;
- Information on the recognition procedure, based on European regulations and related forms.

The main governing institutions of the regulated professions include:

- Central government administrations, which are responsible for regulating each profession; defining mandatory activities and access requirements; Acting as competent public authorities that publish qualifications in the NSCC, used for the NQF procedures.
- The EU Policies Department under the council of prime minister, which acts as the National Coordination and Assistance Centre for implementing the directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, and also includes the drafting the National Reform Plan for Professions.
- The Regions and Autonomous Provinces are responsible for organizing and delivering trainings for certain professions intended for enrolled individuals. They also conduct theoretical and practical examinations required for access to professional qualifications and contribute to the development and updating of professional training courses. Regarding the referencing of these qualifications to the NQF, the regional administrations act as public competent authorities, having been delegated powers by the relevant central administrations, in accordance with specific sectoral legislation.
- Other national, local (e.g., municipalities), or territorial public bodies (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicrafts and Agriculture – CCIAA), which carry out

territorial regulatory functions, provide services to citizens, or oversee registration or authorization in specific professional, artisanal, or entrepreneurial activities. These bodies may also act as public competent authorities for the purpose of NQF referencing, under the delegated authority from the relevant administrations in line with specific sectoral legislation.

According to national legislation governing regulated professional activities, the referencing of the corresponding qualification within the NQF may be carried out through a unified application, in accordance with the established procedures.

By entering into a regulated profession, one ultimately obtains a qualification associated with a regulated profession, the learning outcomes of which, as indicated in Table 3.9, correspond to NQF levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8.

Table 3.9 – Referencing the system of regulated profession qualifications to the NQF.

Table 3.9 - Referencing of the qualifications system of regulated professions to the NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Competent authority	entitled Body by the competent authority	Qualification of regulated profession	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	IT 3.4 IT 4.2 e IT 4.4 IT 5.4 IT 6.2 e IT 6.4 IT 7.2 e IT 7.3 IT 8.1 e IT 8.3	3 4 5 6 7 8

5.3.15 Non-Regulated Professions

Non-regulated professions are those whose activities are not governed by legislative or administrative norms, allowing free access to these professions for interested individuals.

In 2013, Italy adopted a law containing provisions on non-regulated professions, defining an non-regulated profession as one that is not organized into associations as an economic activity and aims to provide services or products to third parties, carried out on a continuous basis and primarily through intellectual work, or in any case through personal contribution,

excluding activities that are legally restricted, e.g., health professions and related services, commercial and public activities regulated by specific legislation.

At present, non-regulated professions are not included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

5.3.16 Non-Formal Learning Provision

Italy's lifelong learning strategy integrates both formal and non-formal teaching in order to expand learning opportunities and enhance the applicability of competences.

Main Types of Non-Formal Teaching:

1. Activity-oriented contract (Contratto di apprendistato): Aims at obtaining contractual qualifications classified within the Atlas of Labour and Qualifications.
2. Extracurricular internship: Supports career orientation, acquisition of competences, and integration into the labour market; it is based on the standards set out in the Atlas.
3. Universal Civil Service (SCU): An 8–12-month programme for young people aged 18–28, combining training and volunteering in social, environmental, cultural and other areas.
4. Volunteering: A voluntary activity regulated by law and carried out within third sector organizations, aimed at producing public benefit.

Recognition of Competences: Skills acquired through participation in the SCU and volunteering are subject to identification and documentation, so that they can be utilized in both education and labour.

Organizers: Third sector organizations (voluntary, social, cultural, etc.), public bodies (schools, municipalities, museums), private entities (businesses, professional associations).

Public Policy: Supports non-formal learning in areas such as educational failure, poverty reduction, labour market, and innovation support.

Private sector: Provides trainings (e-learning, foreign languages, digital skills), professional upskilling, and certification, including through UNI standards or third-parties.

5.3.17 Italian Qualifications Systems: Schematic Diagrams, NQF Visual Identity, and the Synoptic Table of Reference

To facilitate a better understanding of the NQF, all qualification systems described in this chapter are presented graphically and identified using four distinct colors:

- Blue for the national systems of primary, secondary, and higher education;
- Green for the vocational education systems of regions and autonomous provinces;
- Yellow for Adult Education System;
- Red for Regulated qualifications and professional systems.

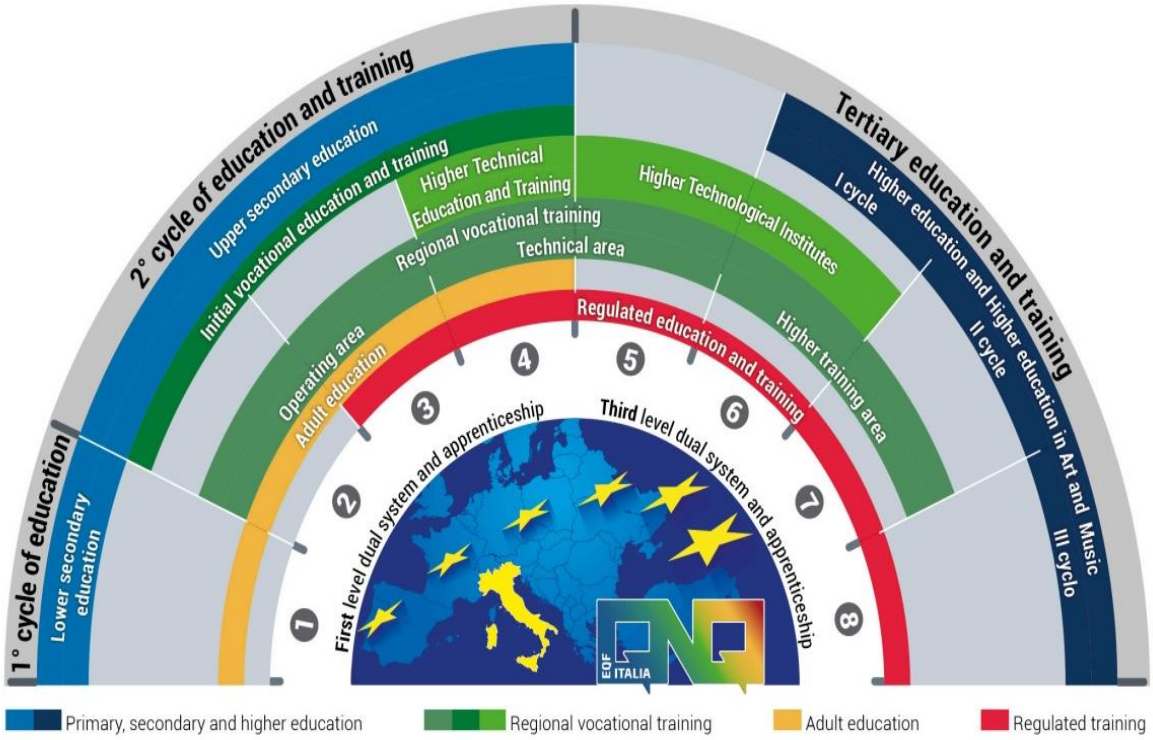

Tabella 3.10 - Referenziazione dei sistemi italiani delle qualificazioni al QNQ - Tavola sinottica

EQF Level 2022	Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualification	Mapping ITALY ISCED 2013		EQF level 2012	NQF level and sub-arti-culation	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level of possible continuation
				ISCED P 2011	**ISCED A 2011**				
-	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Pre-primary education	020	020	-	-	-	-
1	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Certification of competences at the end of primary school	100	100	-	**IT 1.1**	-	IT.1.2 IT 1.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Final diploma of the first cycle of education	244	244	1	**IT 1.2**	IT 1.1	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 IeFP IT 2.4 FP IT 3.4 FP IT 2.1 IDA IT 2.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certificate attesting the achievement of a level of knowledge of the Italian language at level A2 of the CEFR	100	030	-	**IT 1.1**	-	IT 1.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Final diploma of the first cycle of education (IDA)	244	244	-	**IT 1.2**	IT 1.1 IT 1.1 IDA	IT 2.4 FP IT 3.4 FP IT 2.1 IDA IT 2.2 IDA
2	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate	-	-	2	**IT 2.2**	IT 1.2	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 IeFP IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.1 IDA
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate (IeFP)	-	-	2	**IT 2.2**	IT 1.2	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 IeFP IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.1 IDA
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for operating area	-	-	-	**IT 2.4**	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 3.4
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certification attesting the acquisition of basic competences corresponding to the compulsory education (IDA)	-	-	-	**IT 2.1**	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certification for admission to the sec-ond teaching period of second level	-	-	-	**IT 2.2**	IT 1.2	IT 4.1 IDA

3	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Initial education and vocational train-ing certificate (IeFP)	353	353	3	**IT 3.4**	IT 1.2 IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training in-stitutions	Regional vocational training qualifica-tion for operating area	-	-	-	**IT 3.4**	IT 1.2	IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	**IT 3.4**	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-
4	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Upper secondary education diploma (techni-cal, vocational)	354	354	4	**IT 4.2**	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 6.2 IT 4.4 FP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 5.4 FP IT 5.4 ITS *Academy* IT 6.4 ITS *Academy*
	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Upper secondary education diploma (lycée)	344	344	4	**IT 4.2**	IT 2.2	IT 6.2 IT 4.4 FP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 5.4 FP IT 5.4 ITS *Academy* IT 6.4 ITS *Academy*
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Initial education and vocational training diplo-ma (IeFP)	353	353	4	**IT 4.4**	IT 1.2 IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IFTS IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP IT 4.2 IDA
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Higher technical specialization certificate (IFTS)	453	453	4	**IT 4.4**	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	IT 5.4 ITS *Academy* IT 6.4 ITS *Academy*
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training in-stitutions	Regional vocational training qualification for technical area	-	-	-	**IT 4.4**	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 IeFP IT 3.4 FP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	IT 5.4 FP

4	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certification for admission to the third teaching period of second level (IDA)	-	-	-	**IT 4.1**	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 IeFP IT 2.2 IDA	IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP IT 4.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Technical, vocational or artistic upper secondary level diploma (IDA)	354	354	-	**IT 4.2**	IT 4.4 IeFP	IT 6.2 IT 4.4 FP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 5.4 FP IT 5.4 ITS *Academy* IT 6.4 ITS *Academy*
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	**IT 4.2** **IT 4.4**	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-
5	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for technical area * * *Level 5.3 vocational training courses for technical area can also be accessed with a 4.1 level of vocational education and training or adult education.*	-	-	-	**IT 5.4**	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 IeFP IT 3.4 FP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	-
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes – ITS Academy	Applied technologies specialization Diploma (two-year course)	554	550	5	**IT 5.4**	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IFTS IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4 FP IT 6.4 ITS *Academy*
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	**IT 5.4**	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-

6	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Bachelor Degree (Laurea)	665	660	6	**IT 6.2**	IT 4.2	IT 7.2 IT 7.3 MASTER
								IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4 FP IT 7.3 FP
	Ministry of University and Research	Istituzioni AFAM	First level Academic diploma (Diploma accademico di primo livello)	665	660	6	**IT 6.2**	IT 4.2	IT 7.2 IT 7.3 MASTER
								IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4 FP IT 7.3 FP
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes – ITS Academy	Applied technologies higher specialization Diploma (three-year course)	554	550	5	**IT 6.4**	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IFTS IT 4.2 IDA	IT 7.3 FP
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Istituzioni formative accreditate/ autorizzate	Regional higher vocational training qualification	-	-	-	**IT 6.4**	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 4.4 FP	-
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	**IT 6.2** **IT 6.4**	Livelli minimi delle relative qualificazioni	-
7	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Single-cycle Master Degree (Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica a ciclo unico)	766	760	7	**IT 7.2**	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 8.1 IT 8.3
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Single-cycle Second level Academic diploma (Diploma accademico di secondo livello)	766	760	7	**IT 7.2**	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 8.1 IT 8.3
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Master Degree (Laurea Magistrale/ Specialistica)	767	760	7	**IT 7.2**	IT 6.2	IT 8.1 IT 8.3
	Ministry of University and Research	Istituzioni AFAM	Second level Academic diploma (Diploma accademico di secondo livello)	767	760	7	**IT 7.2**	IT 6.2	IT 8.1 IT 8.3
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	First level University post degree (Master universitario di primo livello)	667	660	7	**IT 7.3**	IT 6.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Higher specialization Diploma (Diploma di corso di perfezionamento)	667	660	7	**IT 7.3**	IT 6.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	First level Academic specialisation diploma (Diploma accademico di specializzazione di primo livello) Higher specialization diploma or First level post degree (Diploma di perfezionamento o Master di primo livello)	667	660	7	**IT 7.3**	IT 6.2	-
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Istituzioni formative accreditate/ autorizzate	Regional higher vocational training qualification	-	-	-	**IT 7.3**	IT 6.2 IT 6.4 FP IT 6.4 ITS *Academy*	-
	Qualification of regulated profession	Ente titolato dall'Autorità competente	Qualificazione di professione regolamentata	-	-	-	**IT 7.2** **IT 7.3**	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-

8	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Research Doctorate - PhD (Dottorato di ricerca)	864	860	8	**IT 8.1**	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Research Training Academic Diploma (Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca)	864	860	8	**IT 8.1**	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Second level University post degree (Master universitario di secondo livel-lo)	768	760	8	**IT 8.3**	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Higher specialization diploma or Sec-ond level post degree	767	760	8	**IT 8.3**	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	(Diploma di corso di perfezionamento o Master di secondo livello)	767	760	8	**IT 8.3**	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Specialization Diploma (Diploma di specializzazione)	768	760	8	**IT 8.3**	IT 7.2	-
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Second level Academic specialisation diploma (Diploma accademico di spe-cializzazione di secondo livello)	-	-	-	**IT 8.1** **IT 8.3**	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-

5.3.18 Tools for Recognition of Competencies and Qualifications in Italy

In Italy, the legal significance of qualifications is not regulated by a specific normative provision; rather, it refers to the legal effects of obtaining a qualification issued within the public education and vocational training system, which allows for progression or serves as a requirement for participation in regulated professions.

The responsibility for the recognition of qualifications is shared among different bodies, and the procedures vary depending on the type and purpose of the qualification, organized into six typologies for the implementation of the NQF.
Instruments for Transparency: It includes the provisions of the EQF and Europass, the implementation of which is overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies through ANPAL. Objective: Accessibility and transferability of qualifications.
Validation Services: It aims to identify, validate, and certify the outcomes of non-formal learning outcomes within the framework of the NSCC, organized by public authorities.
Documentation of the qualifications acquired abroad: It is not recognized automatically. The value declaration, diploma supplement, and the comparability and verification documents issued by the CIMEA, facilitating the recognition.
Procedures for overseas recognition: It depends on the laws of the country, recognition is not automatic. The Centers of ENIC-NARIC network, including the CIMEA, provides the information.
Comparison Procedure: This includes the comparison of qualifications, including partially, across different systems. Upon the Individual application: a) Qualification recognition; b) Recognition for purpose.
The recognition of foreign qualifications was implemented following the Lisbon Convention, after which CIMEA published a synoptic table outlining the recognition procedures.

5.3.19 NQF Structure and Technical Specifications

The structure of the NQF is aligned with the EQF, encompassing eight levels, each defined through learning outcomes. The eight levels of the NQF correspond to the eight levels of the EQF. Similar to the EQF, learning outcomes serve as the key reference point for describing competence across three dimensions (knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibility) and through descriptors that articulate what a person is expected to know and be capable of doing,

with an appropriate level of autonomy and responsibility, upon attainment of a given qualification.

Compared to the EQF, the NQF expands the set of descriptors by explaining, adapting, and complementing those found in the EQF recommendation. This is achieved through the specific subdomains, which are defined based on the following criteria:

a) the adoption of the descriptors explicitly defined in the EQF Recommendation;
b) the adaptation of descriptors in connection with Italian qualification systems;
c) the interpretation of indirect descriptors found in the EQF Recommendation;
d) the insertion of additional descriptive elements, where necessary, to make a descriptor more inclusive towards various types of national qualifications.

The purpose of the subdomains is to enhance the taxonomy and features of each EQF level so that the NQF becomes more inclusive and ensures transparency, comparability, and applicability of qualifications, because:

- They express the expected learning outcomes concerning what an individual should know and be able to do at a given qualification level;
- They serve as guiding references that support the development and positioning of qualifications at each level;
- They are broad in scope, allowing application in both work and learning contexts and responding to the needs of various actors within the education, training, and employment system.

In accordance with the criteria described above and the summary provided in Table 2.2, the three domains of the EQF (knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibility) are enriched in the NQF through specific subdomains.

Table 2.2 NQF sub-domains and respective methodological criteria

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility/Autonomy
Theoretical and/or factual dimension of knowledge The EQF explicit dimensions are fully adopted **CRITERION 1**	Procedural and practical skills The EQF explicit dimensions are fully adopted **CRITERION 1** Technical, professional and context specific skills Further descriptive elements to make NQF descriptors more inclusive **CRITERION 4**	Context The EQF implicit dimensions **CRITERION 2**
Extent and depth of knowledge The EQF implicit dimensions are made explicit are made explicit **CRITERION 2**	Cognitive skills The EQF explicit dimensions are fully adopted **CRITERION 1** Social-interaction and activation skills Further descriptive elements to make NQF descriptors more inclusive **CRITERION 4**	Responsibility The EQF explicit dimensions adjusted to the national qualifications systems **CRITERION 3**
Understanding and awareness of knowledge The EQF implicit dimensions are made explicit **CRITERION 2**		Autonomy The EQF explicit dimensions adjusted to the national qualifications systems **CRITERION 4**

National Qualifications Framework of Italy

Table 2.3 - The Italian National Qualifications Framework (2018)

Level	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESPONSIBILITY and AUTONOMY
Sub-domains	*Theoretical and/or factual dimension* *Extent and depth* *Understanding and awareness*	*Procedural, practical, technical, professional and context specific skills* *Cognitive, social-interaction and activation skills*	*Responsibility* *Autonomy* *Context*
Level 1	General and basic knowledge, with a limited extent, aimed at performing simple tasks in well-known and structured contexts.	Using know-how, materials and tools to perform simple tasks by involving basic cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. Typically: FOCUS and INTERACTION	Performing given task in accordance with required parameters, under direct supervision of the activities, in a structured context.
Level 2	General and basic knowledge, with a moderate extent, aimed at performing simple tasks in different sequences.	Using know-how, materials and tools to perform simple tasks in different sequences, by involving cognitive, interpersonal and social skills, in a detailed range of context variables. Typically: MEMORY and PARTICIPATION	Performing assigned tasks in compliance with established criteria, under supervision for the achievement of results, in a structured context characterized by a limited range of diversified circumstances.
Level 3	A range of mainly general knowledge with conceptual elements, aimed at producing logical connections. Capability of understanding.	Applying a range of know-how, methods, materials and tools to achieve expected results by involving a set of cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills which facilitate the adaptability in changeable contexts. Typically: UNDERSTANDING, CO-OPERATION and GOAL ORIENTATION	Achieving expected results by ensuring their compliance and by identifying the most appropriate implementation methods, in a structured context characterized by mutable circumstances requiring own activity change.
Level 4	A wide range of specialized knowledge in different fields, integrated by the factual and/or conceptual dimension. Capability of understanding.	Applying a range of know-how, methods, routines, procedures, materials and tools to solve problems, by involving a set of cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to overcome increasing difficulties. Typically: PROBLEM SOLVING, CO-OPERATION and MULTITASKING	Achieving goals by coordinating and integrating own and others results and activities, and by participating in both decision-making and implementation process, in a foreseeable context subject to unpredictable changes.
Level 5	Integrated, comprehensive, in-depth and specialized knowledge. Awareness of fields of knowledge.	Applying a wide range of methods, routines, procedures and tools, in a conscious and selective manner also to modify them, by involving an extensive set of cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to find unconventiona technical solutions. Typically: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, SPECIALIZED AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN A TECHNICAL FIELD and MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL PROBLEMS	Ensuring compliance of goals, achieved autonomously and by others, by identifying and planning corrective and development measures, and by taking part in the implementation process, in a specific and complex context subject to frequent and unpredictable changes.

Level 6	Integrated and advanced knowledge in a specific field, transferable from one context to another. Critical awareness of theories and principles in a specific field.	Transferring, in different contexts, methods, routines and procedures needed to solve complex and unexpected problems, by involving advanced cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to synthesize review and address demands through innovative and creative solutions. Typically: SYNTHESIS VISION, NEGOTIATION AND MOTIVATION and PLANNING	Overseeing objectives and processes of individuals and teams, by facilitating the day-to-day management and conditions stability, by autonomously making decisions and negotiating both goals and implementation methods, in an undefined context subject to unpredictable changes.
Level 7	Integrated and highly specialized knowledge, some of which is cutting – edge in a given field. Critical awareness of theories and principles in multiple extent of knowledge.	Integrating and turning know-how, methods, practices and procedures, by involving specialized cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to address development scenarios and to plan and implement new activities and procedures. Typically: SYSTEMIC VISION, PLANNING, LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL INTERACTION and COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	Leading integration and turning processes, by implementing strategies and directing objectives and resources development, by autonomously making decisions on goals and implementation methods, in an undefined context subject to continuous changes and comparable to well-known variables.
Level 8	Integrated, proficient and cutting-edge knowledge in a specific field and in common extent of different fields. Critical awareness of theories and principles in multiple extent of knowledge.	Creating new knowledge, methods, routines and procedures, by involving accomplished cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills, needed to detect and react to the demand for innovation. Typically: STRATEGIC VISION, CREATIVITY and INNOVATION	Promoting innovation and strategic development processes, by foreshadowing scenarios and solutions, and by assessing their possible effects, in an advanced context not comparable to known situations and settings

5.3.20 Quality Assurance of Referencing Processes and National Quality Assurance Systems in Education and Learning

The National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) is responsible for the national assessment system, which implements quality assurance processes in school education at the primary and secondary levels.

The assessment process comprises four stages: school self-assessment (documented in the Self-Assessment Report – RAV), external evaluation of schools, implementation of improvement measures, and public reporting of school performance. External evaluation also includes the assessment of students' academic achievements. These assessment procedures are conducted on a three- year cycle.

Quality assurance in higher education is ensured through both internal and external evaluation processes, in alignment with the fundamental principles of the European Higher Education Area. Internal evaluations are carried out by "Assessment Centers" and other designated bodies within each university. Since 2012, the government has regulated the accreditation and evaluation of university courses and conditions through the following measures: Implementation of initial and periodic evaluations of university courses and conditions; Establishment of an evaluation system that ensures the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of teaching and research; Strengthening of self- assessment mechanisms based on the quality and effectiveness of educational and research activities.
External assessment is the responsibility of the autonomous National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR), which serves as the national quality assurance agency as defined within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). ANVUR operates in accordance with international evaluation practices and adheres to the principles of autonomy, equality, transparency, and public accessibility of documentation. In 2012, ANVUR introduced the quality assurance model for universities and research institutions through the document "Self- Evaluation, Periodic Evaluation and Accreditation of the Italian University System" (AVA). The AVA system is grounded in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Currently, a quality assurance system is being developed in the higher education sector for visual arts, music, and dance (AFAM).

In the field of regional vocational education and training, the primary quality assurance instrument is the accreditation of training institutions. This accreditation is contingent upon institutions meeting a range of requirements defined at the regional and autonomous provincial levels. These requirements align with both nationally established quality assurance standards and the European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

NQF Management: the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Education and Merit.

Multi- actor and Multi- level Governance

Strategic Implementation

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
- The Ministry of Education and Science;
- The Ministry of Universities and Research;
- The Regions and the Autonomous Provinces.

Operational Implementation

- ANPAL: Initiation of national coordination testing for the EQF;
- Integration, monitoring, evaluation, and management of Italian qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); Periodic updating of the NQF referencing report.

Independent Evaluation of the Referencing Application

- INAPP (National Institute for Public Policy Analysis)

Adaptation by Competent Public Authorities

- Involvement of National Competent Authorities under the National System for the Certification of Competences (NSCC);
  Adaptation of qualification systems and participation of economic and social partners in the referencing process.

Authorized Bodies and Stakeholders

- Authorized entities, educational institutions, agencies, organizations, enterprises, and citizens.

Quality Assurance Bodies

- Initiation of the National EQAVET Reference – the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis
- INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System); ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research); CIMEA (Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence); CRRS (National Network of Regional Research, Experimentation, and Development Centres of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education).

Governance Structures:

- National Technical Committee;
- EQF Advisory Group;
- Technical Group (TG);
- Regional Conference;
- State–Regional Conference.

5.4 Conclusion

Italy's national qualifications referencing document is notable for its structural coherence and detailed content, which makes it transparent and informative. The document is rich in legal references and statistical data, enhancing its official character and evidence-based foundation.

An additional strength is the active involvement of stakeholders from the education sector, the labor market, and the broader economy, which ensures that qualifications are meaningful and relevant.

The document's structured, data- supported approach enhances both the credibility of the referencing process and its accessibility to readers. Institutional responsibilities and their relationship to the referencing process are clearly delineated, facilitating a better understanding among policymakers and stakeholders. Another key strength is the document's strong emphasis on quality assurance, which helps align Italy's qualifications system with European standards.

However, the implementation of the document also presents certain challenges. Italy's decentralized education system makes the application of uniform standards across regions more complex. Regional variations in accreditation procedures may hinder the national recognition of qualifications. Moreover, the connection between vocational education and higher education remains insufficiently flexible, although the ITS model represents a significant advancement in this area.

The document also presents challenges in terms of comprehension. Its highly technical style may be difficult for readers who are less familiar with referencing procedures or qualifications frameworks. The frequent use of legal and administrative terminology further complicates understanding. In addition, the document's length and occasional repetition may result in reader fatigue.

When developing a referencing document for our country, several key lessons can be drawn from the Italian experience. Most importantly, the structure should ensure a clear and logical flow that guides the reader step by step through the referencing process. The language used should be as accessible as possible, avoiding unnecessary bureaucratic terminology, so that a wide range of stakeholders (including policymakers, the academic community, and employers) can engage with the document effectively. Incorporating visual aids such as tables, diagrams, and charts is also recommended to support clarity and enhance the reader's understanding of the process.

განათლების ხარისხის
განვითარების ეროვნული ცენტრი

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VI. Hungary – Referencing and Self-Certification Report of the Qualifications Framework (2015)

6.1. Information on the Development of Hungary's NQF Referencing Report

In 2015, Hungary initiated the process of analyzing and referencing its National Qualifications Framework (HuQF) to ensure alignment with international standards of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This process involved active engagement from experts, academic institutions, and representatives of the labor market. In 2018, the final HuQF document was officially submitted to the European Commission, marking a significant milestone in its international recognition.

6.1 Stages of Framework Development at the National Level

2005 – the National consultations on the EQF: preparation of a position paper outlining Hungary's response;

2006 – the EU- level conference to discuss the outcomes of European consultations on the EQF;

2007 – the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on EQF development held in Budapest;

2008 – the First official government decision on the development of the HuQF;

2011 – the EQF- focused conference held under the Hungarian Presidency;

- A new law on vocational education.
- A new law on higher education.

2012 – the amendments to the existing law;

- Government decision related to HuQF.

2013 – the higher education seminars; level descriptors for higher education fields of study.

- First international consultation

2014 – the second and third rounds of international consultation.

- 150– 650 VET qualifications linked to EQF levels.

2015 – the submission of the HuQF Referencing Report to the EQF

- the EQF levels officially displayed on certificates issued in Hungary

2015– 2018 – the linking of other types of qualifications;

2018 the Review of the HuQF and updating its report.

6.2 Structure of the Self- Certification and Referencing Report

6.2.1 Sections

- Introduction: Objectives of the process, involved stakeholders, and methodology;
- Overview of Hungary's education system;
- Comparison of HuQF and EQF levels;
- Description of learning outcomes and the methodologies used;
- Overview of the quality assurance system;
- Identified challenges and future development plans;
- Conclusions and Recommendations.

6.2.2 Full Document Structure

I. Introduction
II. Hungary's Education and Qualifications System:
II.1. Education system;
II.2. Second-chance programs and adult education programs;
II.3. Education of children and students with special educational needs.
III. Hungarian Qualifications Framework (HuQF):
III.1. History of HuQF development;
III.2. Policy vision, main objectives, and functions;
III.3. Governance structure and legal basis;
III.4. Types of qualifications;

III.5. Learning outcomes-based approach;
III.6. Matrix and correspondence:
- *III.6.1. HuQF design;*
- *III.6.2. Correspondence between HuQF and EQF levels.*

III.7. Linking qualifications:
- *III.7.1. Ensuring consistency across subsectors;*
- *III.7.2. Linking educational qualifications in general education;*
- *III.7.3. Linking vocational education qualifications;*
- *III.7.4. Linking higher education qualifications;*

III.8. Involvement of social stakeholders;
III.9. Quality assurance:
- *III.9.1. Quality assurance in general and vocational education;*
- *III.9.2. Quality assurance in adult education;*
- *III.9.3. Quality assurance in higher education;*

III.10. Validation of prior learning (VPL);
III.11. Sustainability and governance;
IV. Satisfaction of Relevant Criteria;
V. Higher Education Qualifications Framework:
- *V.1. Confirmation of criteria;*
- *V.2. Confirmation of procedures.*

VI. Annexes:
- *VI.1. Illustration 12. NVQR levels;*
- *VI.2. Illustration 13. Fields of vocational education;*
- *VI.3. Illustration 14. NVQR modification process;*
- *VI.4. Illustration 15. Vocational examination process;*
- *VI.5. Illustration 16. Adult training processes;*
- *VI.6. Illustration 17. Licensing process for adult training programs;*
- *VI.7. Higher Education Quality Assurance:*
  - *VI.7.1. Illustration 18. Quality assurance in higher education (vocational higher education, bachelor's, and master's levels);*
  - *VI.7.2. Illustration 19. Stakeholders involved in the higher education quality assurance process;*

VI.8. Membership of Hungary's Higher Education Accreditation Committee in ENQA;
VI.9. Examples of Qualification Linkages:
- *VI.9.1. Results of linking vocational education qualifications*

- *VI.9.2. Results of linking general education qualifications*
- *VI.9.3. Results of linking selected higher education qualifications*

VI.10. Additional explanation of descriptor categories
VI.11. Views of Quality Assurance Organizations:

- *VI.11.1. Extract from the views of Hungary's National Employment Office (November 2014)*
- *VI.11.2. Extract from the views of Hungary's Accreditation Committee (November 2014)*
- *VI.11.3. Extract from the views of Hungary's Institute for Educational Research and Development (November 2014)*
- *VI.11.4. Extract from the views of Hungary's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (November 2014)*
- *VI.11.5. Extract from the views of the educational authority (November 2014)*

VI.12. Views of international experts
- *VI.12.1. Views of Eva Chmielecka*
- *VI.12.2. Views of Ildikó Patoová*
- *VI.12.3. Views of Patrick Werkens*

VI.13. Inter-agency working group: list of members
VI.14. Definitions of the terms
VI.15. Hungarian Qualifications Framework matrix
VI.16. Qualifications by HuQF level
VI.17. List of illustrations
VI.18. List of abbreviations

6.3. Hungarian Education System

Hungary's education system is multi-level and comprises the following stages:

- **Pre-school Education:** Compulsory from the age of 3, it focuses on developing children's social, cognitive, and motor skills.
- **Compulsory School / General Education:** Includes primary (ages 6– 10) and secondary education (ages 10– 16), providing foundational knowledge and skills.
- **Vocational Education:** Encompasses both secondary and post-secondary levels, focusing on specialized education tailored to labor market demands.
- **Higher Education:** Universities and colleges offer bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and short-cycle programs.

6.3.1 Age Distribution and Specifications

1. **Kindergarten and Its Role:**
    - Kindergarten education begins at age 3 and continues until school entry.
    - According to legislation, kindergartens may admit children who will turn 3 within six months of admission, provided there are available places.
    - From age 5, attendance at kindergarten is compulsory for at least four hours per day.
    - Since 2014, kindergarten has been mandatory from age 3; however, parents may apply for exemptions.

2. **Compulsory School Age:**
    - Compulsory education begins at age 6 and continues until age 16.
    - Children who turn 6 by August 31 begin school in September of that year.
    - School entry can be postponed by one year if kindergarten staff determine that the child is not ready.
    - Early admission is also possible if the child demonstrates appropriate developmental readiness.
3. **School Structure:**
    - **Primary Education:** Grades 1–4.
    - **Lower Secondary Education:** Grades 5–8.
    - Some schools offer combined programmes that cover Grades 5–12 or 7–12.
    - Successful completion of Grade 8 results in a primary education qualification.
4. **Secondary Education and Career Pathways:**
    - Students may pursue further studies in General secondary schools, Vocational secondary schools or Vocational training institutions.
    - Entrance examinations for secondary education are held in a centralized manner.
    - For students who fail to enroll in or complete Grade 8, there is one-year "Bridge Programme", which lasts for one year and prepares them for vocational education.
    - As a rule, general secondary school lasts 4 years and prepared students for university.
    - Graduates of secondary schools may continue their studies in either higher education institutions or vocational programmes.

6.3.2 System Features and Critical Aspects

- **Flexible Structure:** The system allows children to start school either earlier or later than the standard age, accommodating individual developmental needs.
- **Compulsory Education:** Guarantees a minimum level of education up to the age of 16.
- **Alternative Pathways:** Students who are unable to succeed in the standard education system can enroll in one-year "Bridge Programmes".
- **Centralized Examinations:** They may increase competition and pressure on students.
- **Compulsory Kindergarten:** Although kindergarten is mandatory from age 3, some parents may resist this policy; however, the system allows for exemptions under certain conditions.

6.3.3 Vocational Secondary Schools

- Vocational secondary education spans grades 9 to 12.
- Students receive general, theoretical, and practical training in specific professional fields;
- They take secondary school leaving exams, which include four general subjects and one vocational subject;
- Upon successful completion of these exams, students are eligible to pursue higher education; however, the certificate does not in itself confer a vocational qualification;
- After completing Grade 12, students may continue in non-tertiary vocational education (beginning with Grade 13), which prepares them to earn vocational qualifications listed in the National Vocational Qualifications Register (NVQR);
- Some vocational programmes require a secondary school graduation certificate, while others only require completion of vocational secondary education.

6.3.4 Vocational Schools

- Provide general and pre-vocational education in Grades 9 and 10;
- In Grades 11 and 12, students receive vocational training;
- However, following a reform in 2012, this model was abolished and since 2013, vocational schools have been reorganized into three-year programmes beginning in Grade 9;

- All vocational qualifications are regulated by the National Vocational Qualifications Register (NVQR).

6.3.5 Flexibility in Changing Educational Profile/Direction

- Legislation allows students to change their educational pathway;
- Graduates of vocational schools can continue their studies in vocational secondary schools to take secondary school leaving exams;
- Graduates of general education programmes can obtain vocational qualifications through an additional one-year vocational programme.

6.3.6 Higher Education

- Universities and colleges offer the following:
  - Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes;
  - One- cycle/integrated programs in disciplines such as medicine, architecture, law, veterinary science, arts, music, and certain teacher education programs;
- Vocational higher education programs do not award higher education degrees but 30 to 120 ECTS credits may be recognized by bachelor's programmes; Study formats include full- time, part-time, and distance learning;
- After completing a master's program, students may pursue specialized postgraduate programmes or doctoral studies (Ph.D., DLA – ISCED level 864).

6.3.7. Special Programmes

This section includes Second Chance and Adult Education programmes, which are designed to support individuals who have dropped out of the education system due to certain reasons or who wish to improve their qualifications.

6.3.8 Second Chance Programmes

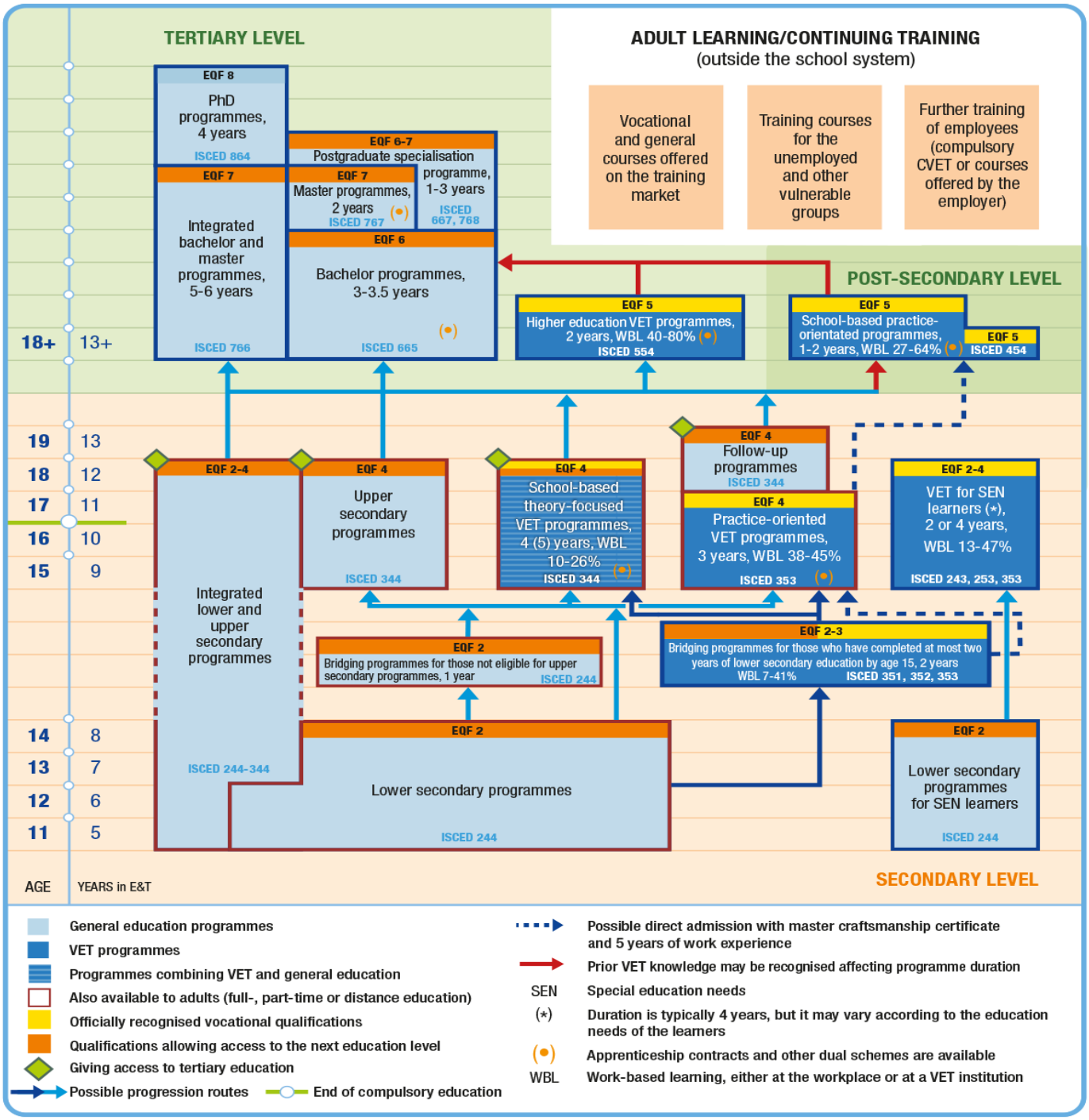
- Second Chance Programmes are designed for students who were unable to complete basic education or who did not achieve sufficient results to continue into secondary education.
- One such initiative is the Bridge Programme, which:
    - Prepares students lacking basic education for entry into secondary education.
    - Offers targeted developmental support to help participants re-integrate into the education system.

6.3.9 Adult Education Programmes

- Adult Education Programmes provide part- time learning opportunities for individuals who:
    - Have not completed basic education;
    - Wish to attain higher qualifications, such as secondary education diplomas or vocational certifications.

- These programs typically include:
    - Literacy programmes – aimed at completing basic (lower secondary) education;
    - Secondary education preparatory programmes – for entry into general secondary schools, vocational secondary schools, or vocational training institutions;
    - Preparatory courses for secondary school leaving and vocational examinations – participants study under the same conditions as regular students.

Diagram: Hungary's Formal Education



NB: ISCED-P 2011.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Hungary, 2019.

6.4 Description of Learning Outcomes

6.4.1 Main Guidelines

Description of Learning Outcomes: In the Hungarian Qualifications Framework (HuQF), learning outcomes are defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences.

- **General Education:** Students acquire broad theoretical and practical knowledge, which serves as a foundation for further learning and future career development.
- **Vocational Education:** Students gain practical skills that are directly aligned with labour market needs.
- **Higher Education:** Students develop research skills, critical thinking, and competencies for independent work.

Key Characteristics of the General Education System Include: Definition of curriculum content, clear articulation of educational goals and tasks, emphasis on learning outcomes.

1. **Competency Orientation:**
    - Reforms to the National Curriculum, particularly in 2003 and 2006, highlight a shift in education policy toward competence development. This reflects an understanding that effective education must go beyond the transmission of knowledge to include the development of skills and competences essential for the 21st century.
    - Assessment of learning outcomes in the teaching-learning process and consideration of learning objectives contributes to forming a more results-oriented education system.

2. **Vocational Education:**
    - In Hungary's vocational education system, the assessment of learning outcomes is based not only on formal education but also on non-formal and informal learning. This is a significant advancement, as many individuals in the labor market who have not completed formal education still possess essential competencies that contribute to their employability.

- Vocational and experiential requirements include both the recognition of learning outcomes and the provision of multiple pathways through which students can demonstrate their competencies. This flexibility is crucial for making vocational education more accessible and better aligned with labor market needs.

3. **Educational Reforms:**
   - The adoption of the Dublin Descriptors and the implementation of learning outcomes- oriented approaches have substantially influenced the regulatory framework. However, research indicates that, despite these reforms, the outcomes- based model is currently applied only by a limited group of academic staff, primarily those involved in program management.
   - One of the key challenges remains the incomplete implementation of learning outcomes across all educational levels.

4. **Teacher Qualification Regulation:**
   - Teacher qualifications are evaluated not only on the basis of foundational knowledge but also in terms of teaching effectiveness and professional development. This reflects a broader understanding that teachers must continuously update their skills and be prepared to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches.

6.5. Quality Assurance

The quality assurance system encompasses the monitoring, assessment, and reporting of educational processes.

- **Higher Education:** The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) is responsible for ensuring that programs comply with both national and international standards.
- **Vocational Education:** Quality management is overseen by a central agency that conducts regular evaluations.

6.5.1. Key Points

- **Quality Assurance Principles:** The HuQF quality assurance system is grounded in the principles of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

- **Institutional Framework:** The document outlines the roles of key institutions, such as the Hungarian Accreditation Committee and other educational bodies, in overseeing quality assurance processes.
- **Processes and Mechanisms:** The quality assurance system includes accreditation, evaluation, and monitoring procedures designed to ensure that qualifications align with HuQF levels.
- **Compliance with the EQF:** The HuQF quality assurance system is aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) criteria and recommendations, which facilitates international recognition and mobility of qualifications.

6.5.2. Principles of Quality Assurance

- **Transparency:** The processes and procedures for awarding qualifications must be clear, accessible, and understandable.
- **Accountability:** All actors (educational institutions, employers, and relevant stakeholders) are responsible for fulfilling their designated roles.
- **Continuous Improvement:** The assurance of quality should be oriented toward ongoing development.

6.5.3. Institutional Framework

The HuQF quality assurance system operates within a unified institutional framework including the following key bodies:

  - **Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC):** Responsible for accrediting educational institutions.

- Ministry of Education - Develops and oversees policies, regulations, and standards related to quality assurance.

The accreditation process guarantees that educational programmes align with national standards.

Assessment focuses on evaluating courses and programmes to ensure that they describe the learning outcomes and support the achievement of the qualification.

Monitoring: Involves continuous oversight and evaluation to prevent a decline in quality and to ensure that programs consistently meet established requirements.

The HuQF quality assurance system is fully aligned with the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), facilitating the international comparability and recognition of qualifications.

6.5.4 Quality Assurance System in General and Vocational Education

This section outlines the quality assurance processes applied in general and vocational education.

- General Education: The quality assurance system is designed to ensure that education acquired for future generations meet both national and international standards.

- Vocational Education: Encompasses thorough assessment and regulation processes that verify program compliance at both the national and international levels.
- Various stakeholders, such as program accreditation bodies and employer committees, are involved in this system.

6.5.5 Quality Assurance in Adult Education

- Adult education constitutes a distinct area in which the quality assurance system considers both individual and professional development needs:
- Programmes and educational standards are regularly updated to ensure the quality of acquired knowledge is effectively assessed;
- Partnership models are often established, involving cooperation between public and private sector stakeholders.

6.5.6 Quality Assurance System in Higher Education

- At the higher education level, quality assurance mechanisms are more advanced and comprehensive.

- Here too, accreditation is actively carried out, and emphasis is placed on collaboration with international universities through student and staff exchanges, joint course development, and shared assessment practices.

- Key elements include teamwork, transparent evaluation procedures, and the continuous integration of educational innovations.

6.6 Correspondence of Qualification Levels with Meta-Frameworks

6.6.1 Comparative Analysis of HuQF and EQF

The comparative analysis between the Hungarian Qualifications Framework (HuQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) reveals that, despite overall alignment, there are certain conceptual and structural differences. Key findings are outlined below:

Both frameworks adopt a hierarchical and cumulative structure, meaning each level builds upon and incorporates the competencies of the preceding level, but with increased depth and complexity.

In the case of the HuQF:

- Lower-level descriptors are embedded within higher- level competencies without unnecessary repetition.
- The development pathways of knowledge, skills, and competencies are clearly articulated.

Compared to the EQF, the HuQF employs a more detailed and complex approach. While this allows for greater precision, it also introduces some inconsistencies in terminology.

When describing competencies, the HuQF considers the following parameters:

- **Knowledge:** Depth, organization, scope, flexibility, and adaptability.
- **Skills:** Encompass motor skills, general cognitive skills related to the field, and domain-specific cognitive abilities.
- **Attitudes:** The HuQF gives this component more emphasis than the EQF, enabling a more comprehensive description of learning outcomes.
- **Autonomy and Responsibilities** Focuses on the individual's degree of independence and level of social engagement.

Unlike the EQF, the HuQF includes an additional component— attitudes — which is typically not addressed in other international qualifications frameworks.

As an example, Level 6 of the Hungarian Qualifications Framework is described:

Knowledge

- Demonstrates knowledge of the essential, comprehensive facts, trends, and limitations within their field of work or study.
- Understands the main interconnections, theories, and terminology relevant to their discipline.
- Is familiar with fundamental methods for acquiring knowledge and solving problems within their area of specialization.

Skills

- Is capable of performing basic analyses of the concepts underlying knowledge in their field and identifying relationships in order to make appropriate judgments.
- Possesses the skills necessary for autonomous learning.
- Can identify frequently occurring problems in their domain, explore the theoretical and practical foundations for solving them, and apply standard procedures effectively.

- Is able to use and interpret professional literature, library resources, and information technology tools relevant to their discipline.

- Works effectively in collaboration with others.
- Can manage a variety of resources.
- Applies professional knowledge in alignment with diverse workplace expectations.

Attitudes:

- Understands, accepts, and actively supports the social role of their profession and its relationship to broader societal contexts.
- Is committed to promoting the general mindset and core functional principles of their field.

- Demonstrates a strong motivation for continuous self- development.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Independently understands and addresses complex, fundamental issues in their profession, making decisions based on available resources.
- Communicates the core principles of their discipline in a responsible manner.
- Cooperates effectively and acts responsibly when working with peers and other professionals in the field.
- Consciously adheres to the ethical standards of their profession.

Compared to the EQF, the HuQF requires the following at lower levels:

- Autonomy, creativity, and innovative abilities, which are typically associated with higher EQF levels.
- Understanding of abstract concepts and the ability to apply abstraction at earlier stages.
- Equal collaboration and independent task performance more clearly at high levels.

Conversely, the EQF provides more precise articulation of management and decision- making skills, particularly at higher levels.

The first three levels of HuQF have higher level requirements compared to corresponding EQF levels.

- **Level 1:** HuQF does not issue state- recognized qualifications at this level, although its descriptors roughly correspond to EQF Level 2.
- **Levels 2–3:** These levels in the HuQF require more competencies than the corresponding EQF levels. However, this distinction is not clearly reflected in regulatory documents.
- **Level 4:** The two frameworks are practically identical at this level.
- **Levels 5–6:** HuQF descriptors lack some of the competencies found in EQF descriptors at these levels; however, the overall correspondence between the two frameworks is maintained.

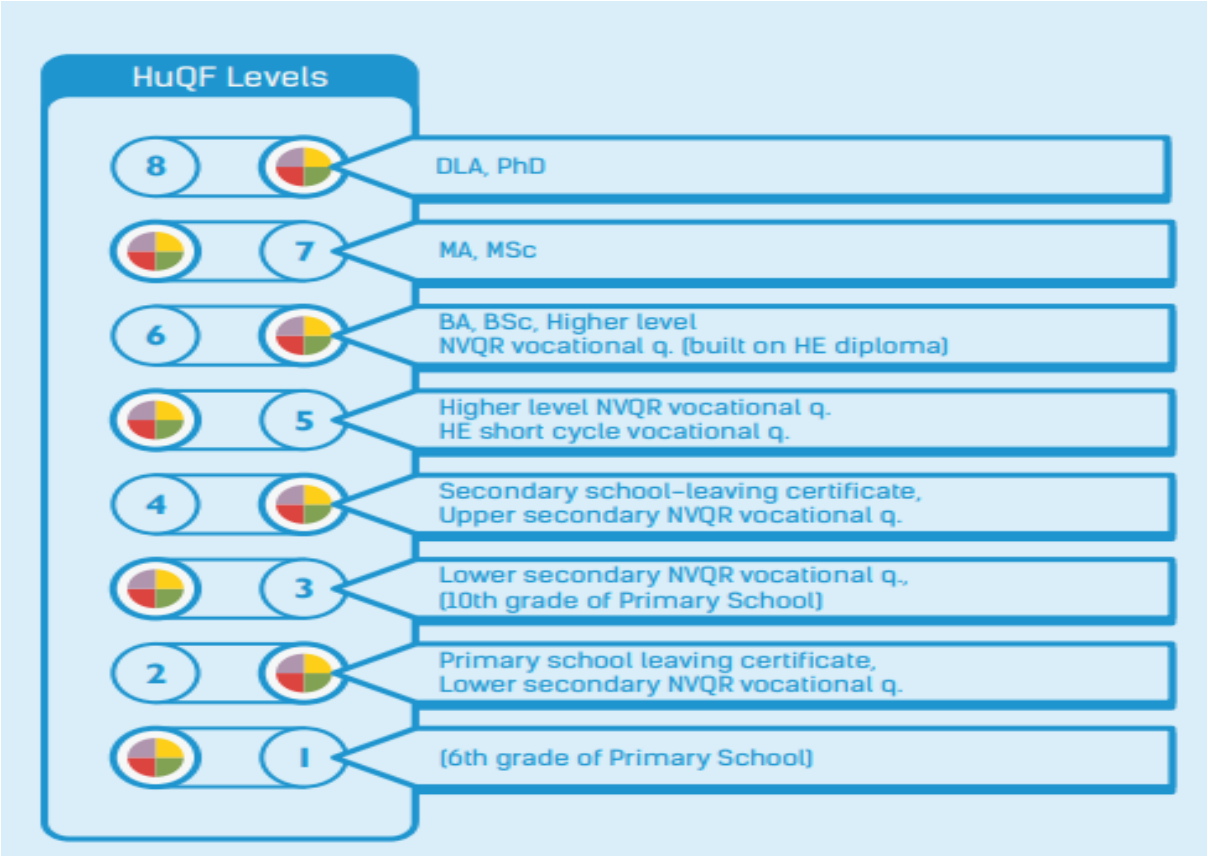
- **Levels 7–8:** HuQF and EQF are fully aligned at these levels.

It should be noted that HuQF level descriptions do not always align with actual learning outcomes.

- For example, at Levels 2– 3, the competencies defined in regulatory documents are often overestimated and do not accurately reflect students' achievements, as evidenced by international assessments such as PISA, PIRLS, and TIMSS.
- As a result, a future revision of the learning outcome descriptors is planned to bring the documented expectations more in line with the realities observed in practice.

Diagram:

6.6.2 Qualifications at HuQF Levels



General Education and Qualifications:

- Basic education (completion of 8 grades);
- Secondary education (school certificate, 12 grades);
- Secondary school leaving/final examination (Matura) – required for higher education.

Vocational Education and Qualifications (VET, NVQR):

- NVQR (National Vocational Qualifications Register) – regulated vocational qualifications.

- Vocational qualifications differ by their scale of application:
    - Specific (e.g., mechanic, cashier, park maintenance);
    - Complex (e.g., forestry and wildlife management).

- Qualifications are divided into:
    - Partial qualification (in school and non-formal education);
    - Full qualification (after completion of all required modules);
    - Additional qualification (expanding direction on existing qualification).

Higher Education and Qualifications

- Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral (PhD, DLA – ISCED 864)
- One-cycle programmes (e.g., medicine, law, architecture)

- Master's and certification programmes
- HuQF already includes higher education qualifications, while sectoral and specialized training will be integrated at a later stage.

Second Chance Programmes/Bridge Programmes

- Bridge Programme I – for school dropouts who need additional preparation for secondary education
- Bridge Programme II – for those who do not have basic education but have completed at least 6th grade

Different Levels and Programmes

The HuQF includes special levels and programs that differ from standard EQF:

- Pre-school Education: Corresponds to EQF's first level and represents a significant stage for skills development.

- Post-diploma Programmes: Short- cycle courses focused on professional development and comprising 60 credits.

- Integrated Programmes: For example, one- cycle courses in medicine and law that combine bachelor's and master's degrees.
- Vocational Training: Short-cycle programmes that respond to labour market demands and employer needs.

6.7. Recognition of Non-Formal Education

- At the time of the document's development, only state- regulated qualifications are linked to the Hungarian Qualifications Framework (HuQF);
- However, future plans include the recognition of non- formal education and in-company training;
- The long-term vision is to promote lifelong learning;

- Currently, the recognition of non- formal and informal learning is not yet fully implemented.

6.8. Challenges and Future Plans for Hungary's NQF

The referencing process of Hungary's National Qualifications Framework has revealed several key challenges:

- Refinement of Learning Outcomes: There is a need to develop clearer and more detailed definitions that accurately reflect the intended levels.
- Alignment with EQF Levels: Further improvement is needed in the structure of the HuQF to ensure full compliance with the EQF.

- Integration of New Technologies: Implementation of digital skills development programmes across all levels.

Future plans include:

- Better integration of learning outcomes: across all educational levels.
- Modernization of the National Framework: Introduction of new programmes and enhancement of the existing structure;
- Strengthening international cooperation: Sharing best practices and expanding exchange programmes.

6.9. Best Practices Identified During the Review of the Report

The structure of the HuQF report includes all aspects necessary for the referencing process. The document is comprehensible, as it contains numerous process diagrams.

The document clearly identifies areas for improvement, which indicates their readiness for the process to contribute to further development.

The collaboration with stakeholders is appropriately presented, with their roles and opinions clearly outlined.