European Commission

Comparison report of the European Qualifications Framework and the Ukrainian National Qualifications Framework

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE

ETF Working together Learning for life
European Training Foundation

Social Europe

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FOREWORDS

People always have to come first

Education and training play a key role in ensuring equal opportunities and access to the labour market. They are also pivotal ingredients to drive forward growth and prosperity through the ongoing green and digital transitions. In this context, qualifications matter as they can give people access to better development and career opportunities.

The European Qualifications Framework enables learners, training providers and employers to compare qualifications between different countries. This makes it easier for people to continue their studies or work abroad. Already before Russia's unjustified war in Ukraine, thousands of Ukrainians came to the EU in search of jobs or study opportunities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 500,000 Ukrainians were already working from Ukraine as platform workers for the EU market. Ukraine had started to develop its own National Qualifications Framework in 2010 inspired by the EQF and established a national qualifications agency as a tripartite body.

When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, priorities shifted and the work on this report was paused. However, with around 3.7 million people fleeing the war from Ukraine into the EU in the first month finalising the comparison work had become urgent given the need to recognise qualifications of Ukrainians in Europe – both for entry into the labour market and for educational purposes. I thank both teams, notably that in Ukraine, for their commitment in concluding this important work in very difficult circumstances. While needs to provide shelter, humanitarian aid and access to healthcare were most urgent, also action to ensure that people are integrated into the host countries and have access to education, housing and jobs was crucial. Jobs are important to allow people fleeing Ukraine to get back a certain sense of normality into their lives. In some European countries, the share of working-age Ukrainian refugees in employment is already over 40%. Recognition of qualifications benefiting both themselves and the host community.

Now that Ukraine has become a candidate country to the EU and joined the EQF, this report will help to support its integration further. The linkage between qualifications from Ukraine and EU Member States is not only important for Ukrainians in the EU. Ukraine's labour market urgently needs skilled and qualified professionals to support reconstruction. Many displaced Ukrainians that are now working or studying in the EU will return home whenever it is possible and safe. Linking our qualification systems have never been so important as now and this will require further engagement.

Europe will continue to stand with Ukraine, and provide all the support needed, for as long as it is needed.

Slava Ukraini!

Nicolas Schmit

Commissioner, Jobs and Social Rights

Education is key in enabling public good, fair society and a competitive economy. The principles of national education systems have an impact on long-term sustainable development of the whole country.

In 2005 Ukraine joined the Bologna Process aiming to establish a solid European system of higher education. Since then, we have fulfilled key commitments of the European Higher Education Area, such as the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, and the quality assurance system.

Across other levels of education – school, vocational (vocational-technical), and professional pre-higher – Ukraine has likewise introduced new approaches and implemented large-scale reforms with a view of providing students with relevant skills and knowledge.

Our education system has been severely affected by the full-fledged Russian war against Ukraine. Since 24 February 2022 children are being killed on a daily basis, educational institutions are destroyed, damaged and even robbed. More than 3000 educational institutions were damaged by bombings and shelling, over 400 of them were completely destroyed. The aggressor claims that he strikes only at military objects but we keep collecting numerous facts and evidence that proves that Russian troops are destroying and robbing schools and universities, kindergartens and orphanages. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine launched an interactive dashboard in order to update information on the number of damaged and destroyed educational facilities in each region of Ukraine. Unfortunately, we update it on a daily basis.

Over 7 million Ukrainians fled the country; the amount of internally displaced people is enormous. And half of those people are children.

Our priority was and is to ensure continuity of education and to create a safe learning environment in Ukraine - and the education frontier in Ukraine is as motivated as ever before. Our goal is to provide different modes of learning to ensure that everyone – regardless of their place of residence - has access to education, and recognition of Ukrainian qualifications plays a pivotal role in that.

Since long, Ukraine has an established National Qualifications Framework, aligned with both Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and the European Qualifications Framework that is key to ensuring fair and transparent recognition of qualifications awarded by Ukrainian educational institutions. Amidst the full-scale war and massive internal and external displacement of educational credential holders from Ukraine, the work on increasing awareness regarding the education system of Ukraine becomes unprecedentedly significant.

This report is a result of joint efforts by Ukrainian and EU colleagues to conduct an in-depth comparative research and thorough examination of the Ukrainian qualifications and the EQF qualifications level. We thank our EU colleagues for their support on the way to making Ukrainian qualifications more visible for many stakeholders, both in the area of education, but also employment.

Light will overcome darkness and together we will stand strong forever.

Let's hold on!

We are strong!

We are Ukraine!

Slava Ukraini! Heroyam slava!

Serhii Shkarlet

Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine

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Executive Summary

Comparing qualifications frameworks to promote mutual understanding

This is an age of profound socio-economic and geopolitical change. While the world is increasingly interconnected it is also threatened by climate change and demographic transformation. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is aggravating the disruption caused by these seismic societal shifts. Meeting the challenges of a changing world requires new skills and qualifications that can cross borders. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) can facilitate the transparency and recognition of qualifications internationally. This is key to mobility, as it allows students, professionals, migrants and refugees to work and study all over the world.

Although a universal system regarding qualifications, education and training does not exist within the European Union, member and non-member states can use the EQF to compare qualifications, promote lifelong learning, foster transparency, and facilitate freedom of movement among nations. The EQF inspires qualifications frameworks across the globe. Over 140 countries are currently developing their own national qualifications frameworks (NQF) and there are an estimated 20 regional qualifications frameworks in place today. However, the EQF is not merely a technical instrument; the EU uses it in its external relations policies. Examples of the political role the EQF plays include association agreements and mobility partnerships signed by the EU with neighbouring countries as well as the benchmarking exercise that took place from 2013 to 2015 comparing the EQF with well-established qualifications frameworks in Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong.

In 2017, the EQF Recommendation was updated, which prompted the Council of the European Union to ask the Commission and the Member States in the EQF AG to explore the possibility of comparing third countries' national and regional qualifications frameworks with the EQF. Work is currently underway to see how EQF-referenced countries can connect their qualification systems with countries outside the EQF AG. The EQF comparison exercise is still in its pilot phase and is being tested against the Ukraine and Cape Verde's NQFs as well as one Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF): the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework.

The purpose of comparing qualifications frameworks is not to persuade other QFs to comply with the EQF, but to thoughtfully evaluate whether various aspects of both frameworks are comparable and whether they could be sufficiently developed and implemented for the exercise to be meaningful. Eleven core topics for comparison and dialogue have also been identified; they are as follows:

- Objectives of qualifications frameworks
- Scope of the frameworks
- Levels and level descriptors
- Learning outcome approach(es)
- Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning/ Recognition of Prior Learning
- Quality assurance
- Recognition
- Governance arrangements
- Communication, visibility, transparency, access to information
- Transparency and quality assurance of the comparison process

Ukraine and the European Union

Ukraine is the first country to participate in this comparative exercise and the country is unique for many reasons, but especially because of its close ties to the EU. For many years, Ukrainians have been working and studying in the EU and EU-based companies have been employing Ukrainians. Ukraine is a full member of the Bologna Process and it has ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. In 2014, Ukraine entered into an Association Agreement with the EU, thereby confirming its European-leaning tendencies, which sparked the Maidan Revolution.

The Russian invasion has not only strengthened Ukraine's resolve to join the European Union (having been granted EU candidate country status on 23 June 2022), it has proved the EQF's relevance: with over six million displaced Ukrainians in the EU, it has never been more important to understand Ukrainian qualifications. That Ukrainians have the right to live and work in their host countries is due in large part to the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive[1] passed on 1 March 2022. However, one of the objectives of instruments like the EQF and comparative exercises with other NQFs is to help displaced people find employment that matches their skills. Given Ukraine's special relationship with Europe, it should not come as a surprise to see the EQF's influence on the Ukrainian NQF.

The development of an NQF in Ukraine has involved stakeholders since it was created in 2010. With regard to general, vocational, higher education and professional qualifications, its approach is competency-based. In Ukraine, the tradition is to legislate standards and qualifications. Primary legislation such as the law on education and the law on higher education set the direction. The law on vocational education and training (VET) is still in the pipeline. Secondary legislation has defined the NQF descriptors and the statute of the National Qualifications Agency, a tripartite collegial body.

Social partners, line ministries, research institutes, lead companies and NGOs have all have played an important and active role in shaping the Ukrainian NQF. There is also strong institutional support for the NQF's development and implementation through the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, the Ministry of Education, the National Qualifications Agency, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the ENIC NARIC Centre for Recognition, and social partners; all have been involved in the comparison process.

In terms of objectives, the Ukrainian NQF and the EQF are very similar. Both frameworks are coherent in how they provide support for employability, education reforms, the use of learning outcomes, the transparency, portability and comparability of qualifications, and their recognition. Like most NQFs that are part of the EQF, the scope of the Ukrainian NQF is comprehensive; it covers qualifications at all levels and all sub-sectors in education and training. By increasing the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications, the NQF supports the national and international recognition of Ukrainian qualifications.

The Ukrainian NQF's tools are competence-based and follow state education and occupational standards, which are still partially under development as part of an ongoing effort. Both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF support the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings, linking formal, non-formal and informal learning. Within the EQF, validation arrangements are also available in education, training, the labour market and the voluntary sector in most countries, but these arrangements are not used as much in the labour market.

Ukraine has recently accredited the first qualification centres for the validation of non-formal and informal learning or VNFIL. It already has experience with validation processes: the non-formal and informal acquisition of skills by more than 650 Ukrainian cooks has been officially recognised. The use of partial qualifications is regulated but has not yet been used widely. There is an interest in micro-credentials as well. Emergency measures to assess and develop reconstruction skills based on micro-credentials are in the pilot phase.

[1] The EU response to the Ukraine refugee crisis | News | European Parliament (europa.eu)

How do EQF and Ukrainian NQF levels compare?

There are eight EQF levels describing learning outcomes in the following domains: Knowledge, Skills, and Autonomy/Responsibility. The levels are not linked to specific types of qualifications, but because of the Bologna Process some qualification types are associated with specific levels de facto; levels 6, 7 and 8 are associated with Bachelor/License, Master and Doctorate degrees.

The qualifications linked to most levels are very diverse. Different countries have also been incorporating qualifications from outside the formal system into their NQFs and have also started to include partial qualifications. This diversity is very important because it allows lifelong learning to be recognised through VNFIL.

In Ukraine, level descriptors have changed overtime and are now much closer to those of the EQF. In 2011, there were 10 levels. An eleventh level was added in 2017 when the junior bachelors and pre-higher professional education were introduced. In 2020, levels were adapted to the EQF. Although Ukrainian NQF levels are inspired by the EQF, the levels are not exactly the same. The Ukrainian NQF levels are more detailed and, besides the domains of Knowledge, Skills, and Autonomy/Responsibility, special attention has been given to Communication in the Ukrainian level descriptors. The table below compares EQF levels, Ukrainian NQF levels and Ukrainian qualifications:

EQF Level	NQF Level Ukraine	Formal Education Qualifications				Professional qualifications
		General secondary education	Vocational education and training	Pre-higher Professional Education	Higher education	
8	8				Doctor of Philosophy Doctor of the Arts	
7	7				Master	
6	6				Bachelor	
5	5		Diploma of skilled worker Certificate of skilled worker	Professional Junior Bachelor (formerly Junior Specialist)	Junior Bachelor	
4	4	Certificate for complete secondary education[2]	Diploma of skilled worker Certificate of skilled worker			
3	3		Diploma of skilled worker Certificate of skilled worker			
2	2		Certificate of skilled worker			

[2] The alignment of Upper Secondary Education at NQF level 4 is indicative. General secondary education is not part of the NQF at the moment.

1	1					

In Ukraine, there are different types of qualifications according to the Law on Education (2017); they are divided into educational qualifications and professional qualifications. Educational qualifications are subdivided into different types for:

- general education,
- vocational education (including continuing training) and pre-higher professional education, and
- higher education.

For general education, which covers levels 1-4 of the NQF, the following exist:

- the certificate of basic secondary education for special needs students,
- the certificate for basic secondary education, and
- the certificate for complete secondary education.

VET qualifications correspond to NQF levels 2-5. They include Diplomas for skilled workers and Certificates for skilled workers. There is also the diploma for pre-higher education or professional junior bachelor (formerly junior specialist), at level 5. Qualifications for higher education (HE) include:

- level 5: Junior Bachelor,
- level 6: Bachelor,
- level 7: Master,
- level 8: PhD, Doctor of Arts and Doctor of Science.

Different types of professional qualifications have not yet been specified, but partial qualifications are foreseen for professional qualifications.

The names used for the qualifications in Ukraine can also be found in the table above. Some types can be directly linked to a specific level while others cover several levels. The use of levels is well-established in higher education where diploma supplements also exist, but this is not the case for VET or professional qualifications, yet. Individual qualifications are often indirectly based on levels through the description of outcomes in the State Educational Standards that cover a group of qualifications linked to the Ukrainian NQF descriptors. In general education, acquiring key competences is especially emphasised. Levels have been applied indirectly through competency frameworks like DigComp and EntreComp. For the end-of-school diploma, an alignment to level 4 is foreseen. A procedure for levelling professional qualifications (i.e., determining their NQF level) has been developed and is used for new qualifications, but not yet implemented for the large number of existing occupational standards.

The central role of learning outcomes in the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF

The EQF supports the shift towards learning outcomes. Learning outcomes describe what learners know, understand and are able to do at the end of a learning process. Qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes facilitate access, progression, inclusion, lifelong learning and mobility. The EQF links formal, non-formal and informal learning through validated learning outcomes.

In Ukraine, learning outcomes and competences (the terms are sometimes used interchangeably) are a very important part of education and training reforms. Learning outcomes are defined by Law as knowledge, skills, values, attitudes which may be identified, assessed and measured, and which a person is able to demonstrate after completing the educational programme or individual educational components. Competence is understood as a person's proven ability to apply the achieved learning outcomes. Guidelines for the use of learning outcomes in higher education describe competences as open-ended and learning outcomes as measurable and assessable.

Learning outcomes have been introduced gradually since the early 2000s, but the real push came after they had been legislated. The Law on Higher Education (2014) linked higher education standards based

on learning outcomes to the NQF, connecting learning outcomes to quality assurance arrangements and introducing the diploma supplement, which describes the learning outcomes of individual qualifications (programme learning outcomes). The Law on Education (2017) widened the competency-based, outcome-based approach to general and vocational education. It recognised the importance of non-formal and informal learning and introduced a legal right for the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in formal education.

In the vocational education system, the first outcome-based educational and professional programs date back to 2013, when the methodology for developing state VET standards for specific working professions was approved. It should be noted, however, that a system-wide approach only came into force in 2021 with guidelines for the development of VET standards on the competence-based approach. The new model of standards for VET requires that learning outcomes describe key and professional competences derived from labour functions or occupational standards. This relationship to occupational standards is also the bridge to professional qualifications.

Introducing Professional Qualifications

Professional qualifications issued by Qualification Centres are being introduced. Different types of professional qualifications have not been specified, but partial qualifications are foreseen. Professional qualifications are directly linked to occupational standards[3] and awarded according to a regulated procedure setting the different stages of application, assessment and certification[4]. The National Qualifications Agency accredits Qualifications Centres for awarding specific professional qualifications.

Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL)

VNFIL is also an essential part of the qualifications frameworks in the EQF. VNFIL is addressed by a separate 2012 Council Recommendation. Apart from this recommendation, which invites to countries develop systems for validation that are linked to their NQFs, there is the European Inventory on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning; it is published country-by-country and it includes a thematic analysis of ongoing developments through which the implementation of validation systems can be monitored and compared. Most countries have developed and have started implementing validation systems of which there are a variety in terms of access and scope. There are also the European Guidelines on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, which were first published in 2009 and then revised in 2015 to support implementation. These guidelines are currently being reviewed and will be updated with the latest developments.

In Ukraine, VNFIL was legislated in 2012. During 2013-2014 the first pilot study took place and the system became operational through the Ministry of Social Policy's Order N° 256 of 2016. Since 2016, nearly 600 people have received professional qualifications to become cooks in three assessment centres in Kyiv, Odesa and Rivne[5]. The validation of professional competences obtained in the workplace falls under the purview of Qualification Centres. Qualification centres will award professional qualifications through VNFIL that can cover any level of the Ukrainian NQF for which occupational standards are available). In April 2021, the Ministry of Education approved a regulation that defines the main tasks and functions for qualification centres.

The procedure for accrediting centres was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in September 2021. The National Qualifications Agency was tasked with accrediting the centres, but the process was temporarily interrupted by the war. By September 2022, three centres had been accredited. Candidates or their employers are expected to pay for obtaining professional qualifications through VNFIL at Qualification Centres, but vulnerable groups may be eligible for financial aid. The assessment's complexity determines the cost.

The National Qualifications Agency is preparing to train assessors for VNFIL. In VET, an admission control procedure (вхідний контроль) has been developed and introduced. It allows training institutions,

[3] Art. 39 law on education.

[4] Procedure for awarding and confirming professional qualifications by qualification centres Про затвердження Порядку присвоє... | від 15.09.2021 № 956 (rada.gov.ua)

[5] Training centres of the state employment service in Odesa and Rivne, Higher Professional School n.33 Kyiv.

which also provide opportunities for professional upskilling and reskilling, to shorten training periods based on experience. However, there is no central system to monitor its implementation. Since the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education became operational in 2019, it has been monitoring how higher education Institutions propose to validate non-formal and informal learning. A VNFIL regulatory procedure for pre-higher and higher education was approved on 16 March 2022.[6] In sum, Ukraine's system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is not yet fully operational for all types of qualifications, but its development is very much in line with the recommendation.

Quality Assurance of Qualifications

Quality assurance is a fundamental underlying principle of the EQF. It is considered the foundation for mutual trust between countries and systems, which in turn is a decisive factor for the success of the EQF referencing process. EQF referencing criteria require that countries referencing their NQFs to the EQF have their QA arrangements linked to the NQF and are consistent with the EQF's common principles on quality assurance, though approaches may vary according to national circumstances and when sectoral differences are taken into account. The EQF's QA principles are fully compatible with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and the *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training.*

In Ukraine, quality assurance has been a main objective of the NQF. All qualifications define minimal requirements in terms of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are mainly assessed for full qualifications, although the use of partial qualifications has been legislated. Educational qualifications promote competency-based education and include key competences. New education standards and curricula for general education, vocational education and higher education are being prepared. There are guidelines for developing standards. The provision of educational qualifications includes both internal quality assurance and external evaluation. Assessment and certification are part of qualification providers' internal processes and are subject to external evaluation and monitoring by Quality Assurance bodies.

In general education, model curricula are developed by the Ministry of Education based on state standards for secondary education[7]. These have been informed by different international competence frameworks, which are indirectly linked to the EQF. VET programmes are based on state VET standards and are developed for specific occupations, using occupational standards. The accreditation commission of the State Service for Education Quality authorises VET providers for specific programmes.

Occupational standards are used increasingly to guarantee the relevance of qualifications. They are used in the development of professional qualifications, VET qualifications and HE. Procedures for the development of qualifications include involving relevant stakeholders and an external review by quality assurance bodies.

In HE, quality assurance processes are directly related to European Standards and Guidelines. The independent National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education[8] has launched an ambitious accreditation programme. New processes for programme accreditation, new higher education standards and new curricula have been developed and introduced. All programmes and their components are now expressed in terms of learning outcomes and must be related to the outcomes of specialties that have been defined nationally. In 2020, the agency joined the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education and became an affiliated member of ENQA, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Ukraine also recognises certificates for the accreditation of educational programs issued by foreign accreditation agencies or quality assurance agencies of higher education qualifications are quality assured in line with the European Standards and Guidelines and linked to the NQF.

Good Governance

[6] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0328-22#Text
[7] Державні стандарти | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[8] National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (naqa.gov.ua)

Since 2010, many stakeholders have been involved in developing and implementing the NQF in Ukraine. The policy lead for the NQF is with the Cabinet of Ministers and, in particular, with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Economy as well. The interdepartmental working group was operational until 2019 and included all the main stakeholders. It was responsible for preparing the NQF and supporting its implementation, including ensuring interaction and coordination between stakeholders and institutions, preparing recommendations for mechanisms designed to implement the NQF, and engaging in developing legislation.

The National Qualifications Agency[9] established in 2019 as a tripartite collegial body, is co-founded by government and social partners to strengthen coordination in the field of qualifications. Its tasks include coordinating stakeholders, developing and maintaining the registry of qualifications, coordinating occupational standards development, supporting educational standards development, accrediting qualification centres, overseeing the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and establishing the criteria for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

When we compare the governmental structures of the EQF with the Ukrainian NQF we see that both include representatives from different stakeholders and both cooperate with other stakeholders. Ukraine's National Qualifications Agency is a relatively young institution and its effectiveness has not been reviewed yet, while at the EU level, the EQF Advisory Group and the National Coordination Points network have been positively evaluated. Even though each framework has a different scope, their governance structures are largely comparable. Both structures are inclusive and participative.

Communication

Comparison as a process helps improve the transparency of qualifications for individuals, employers and education providers. It also supports international mobility, migration and the international use of the EQF beyond Europe. These outcomes are directly tied to effective communication on the EQF's role and the comparison of qualifications frameworks for end users and stakeholders. The nature of information and communication is changing due to digital technologies, with new systems providing more personalised and accurate information on the holder's achievements.

According to Ukrainian legislation, the National Qualifications Agency is primarily responsible for communicating about the NQF. The NQA website includes sections with information about the national qualification system, resources, links to useful sources, related legislation, key documents and publications. The agency maintains the register of qualifications which provides information about[10] the following:

- professional and educational qualifications, and qualification centres;
- occupational standards; and
- awarded professional qualifications to individuals (credentials).

The register has not been fully populated yet and currently includes occupational standards, professional qualifications and accreditation experts.

Conclusions

Comparing the EQF and the NQF in Ukraine has helped create a better understanding of the Ukrainian qualifications framework, the processes behind it and its comparability with the EQF. The Ukrainian example shows how dynamic NQFs are as instruments. Many Ukrainian stakeholders have been deeply involved in and dedicated to the comparison process; they include representatives from:

- the Ministry of Education,
- the National Qualifications Agency,

[9] Про нас (nqa.gov.ua)

[10] Cabinet of Ministers decree on 16 June 2021 No.620

- the ENIC-NARIC Centre,
- the National Agency of Quality Assurance in Higher Education,
- the State Service for Educational Quality
- social partners,
- NGOs,
- universities,
- regional methodological centres,
- vocational education and training, and
- general education and higher education

Ukraine would like to link its NQF to the EQF as closely as possible, especially in light of the war that has forced millions of Ukrainians to seek and to find refuge in the European Union. The objectives and scope of the frameworks are very similar: both support career development, personal development, employability, and lifelong learning. The Ukrainian NQF is being implemented, but there are areas where it is not yet fully operational. It is well-advanced in higher education, but progress regarding vocational education and general education is slower. The development, assessment and certification of professional qualifications remain in an early phase, but are expected to accelerate. Regarding communication, both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF can improve so that end-users are able to make full use of the frameworks. Stakeholders are actively involved in both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF, which have clear institutional arrangements. The levels and learning outcomes are comparable. Systems for validation, quality assurance and recognition are informed by learning outcomes and the Ukrainian NQF. In short, the frameworks are comparable and can be linked. These links can be strengthened further through a Joint Action Plan that will be shared at a later stage.

Introduction to the Comparison Process

The role of the EQF in linking European qualification systems

European Union countries have diverse qualifications and education systems. In the EU, in line with Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, education and vocational training are a primary competence of Member States. The EU does not aim to harmonise education and qualification systems. Its task is to encourage cooperation between Member States and to support and supplement their actions while fully respecting the responsibility of individual countries for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education and training systems.

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning has been developed as a tool to compare and create transparency between the different national systems and qualifications frameworks. EU countries have developed national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) to bring together qualifications from different subsystems, learning contexts and types of providers. The learning outcomes approach is used to support comparability of NQFs and qualifications. Learning outcomes describe what learners know, understand and are able to do at the end of a learning process. NQFs have different levels described in terms of learning outcomes that can be used to classify qualifications. Qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes-based facilitate access, progression, inclusion, lifelong learning and mobility.

The EQF for lifelong learning is an overarching qualifications framework that connects the NQFs of 38 European countries (27 EU member states,4 EFTA countries and 7 pre-accession countries). Within this framework, participating countries can compare their NQF levels with EQF levels along with the quality assurance and transparency processes underpinning their qualifications. This process is called referencing and referencing reports are discussed in the EQF Advisory Group where all 38 countries are represented. After referencing, countries can mention the EQF level on their qualifications and link their database or register of qualifications with those of other countries through the EUROPASS platform: . However, this process is limited to the 38 countries represented in the EQF Advisory Group.

Linking EQF with qualifications frameworks from other countries through dialogue

Comparison is understood as a process that should enable trust in the quality and level of qualifications of qualifications frameworks in order to support recognition and the international mobility of learners and workers. The objective of comparison is to enhance the transparency and comparability of qualifications.

Many people arrive in the EU as refugees or as family members with the objective of studying or working.. Value chains go beyond borders and EU companies use the services of platform workers who live in their home countries. The skills and qualifications of these people are not always understood and consequently, many cannot continue their studies, or are overqualified for the jobs they manage to find. Given the EU's need for qualified workers, this is a waste of potential and talent and frustrates the integration of third country nationals in EU member states. Comparing the EQF with other national and regional qualifications frameworks will facilitate the mutual understanding of qualifications between other national and regional qualifications frameworks and the EQF. A better understanding of qualifications will make their use and recognition easier. The EQF Recommendation of 2017 asked the European Commission and the Member States to explore procedures and criteria to enable the comparison of third countries' national and regional qualifications frameworks with the EQF and makes a link to international agreements concluded between the EU and third countries and other regional economic communities.

In 2020-2021, an EQF AG project group, which included representatives from EU member states and different bodies of the European Union, developed a procedure on how to incorporate topics and criteria in a comparison exercise based on dialogue. The EQF Advisory Group has discussed these and given the green light for piloting the approach. Pilots are currently underway with Ukraine, Cape Verde and

the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework. This report represents the result of the first pilot with Ukraine.

Comparing qualifications frameworks is about understanding the similarities and appreciating the diversity of qualifications frameworks in order to draw conclusions on where the frameworks converge and diverge and whether that makes them comparable. Diversity is expected as qualifications frameworks are implemented in different contexts where traditions and objectives are different. The comparison needs to add value and have mutual benefits for both parties. For the EQF this involves enhancing transparency for individuals, employers and education providers, supporting international mobility and migration and the international positioning and use of the EQF. Comparison takes place on an equal basis in a dialogue and in relation to a set of mutually agreed topics and supporting questions to be covered. Comparison can only be done in dialogue and should result in a joint report drafted and agreed upon by both parties. Eventually, the comparison can connect qualifications frameworks around the globe and contribute to the international transparency of qualifications.

There are links to agreements that the EU has signed with other countries. Areas of international bilateral and multilateral cooperation that can benefit from increased transparency, comparability and trust in qualifications are: migration and asylum; mobility of learners and workers (including virtual mobility regarding online learners and platform workers); trade (especially trade in services); human and social development; economic, political and development cooperation.

In order to start the comparison process, the mutual benefits and operational nature of the qualifications frameworks should be established. The qualifications frameworks of third countries and Regional Economic Communities are considered operational when most of the following criteria have been fulfilled.

- Implementation structures are in place (which means stable governance structures, day-to-day administrative capacities, and financing);
- Main working methods and instruments exist (databases, communication strategies, quality assurance arrangements, by-laws and administrative regulations);
- End-users know that the NQF exists and which services it offers;
- The NQF is a reference point for how to use learning outcomes and develop, revise and renew qualifications;
- Criteria and procedures for the allocation of qualifications to levels are used;
- The NQF is gradually playing a role in improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications at the national and international level;
- The NQF is gradually supporting reform and the renewal of education, training and qualifications systems at the national level.

Having established the mutual benefits and operational nature of the qualifications frameworks the comparison process can start.

The Comparison Process

The comparison process begins with establishing a team of experts and stakeholders who can deal with the different issues and communicate with colleagues where necessary. In the case of Ukraine this included a group of 30 representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, the national qualifications agency, experts from higher education, vocational education and training and general education, the ENIC NARIC Centre, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, social partners and NGOs as well as representatives from international projects. Team Europe included the European Commission, representatives from member states, the Support Group for Ukraine, the EU Delegation, and the ETF. The first meeting was hosted by the Deputy Minister of Education and the European Commission. Fifteen meetings took place with slightly different groups of participants. The process started with defining the purpose and scope of the dialogue. In order to ensure a meaningful comparison, the benefits of and risks associated with the comparison were discussed.

Both parties agreed to implement the comparison through a dialogue according to **10 core topics**:

1. Objectives of qualifications frameworks
2. Scope of the frameworks
3. Levels and level descriptors
4. Learning outcomes approach(es)
5. VNFIL and RPL
6. Quality assurance
7. Communication, visibility, transparency, access to information
8. Recognition processes
9. Governance structures
10. Transparency and quality assurance of the comparison process

These topics were discussed in detail to clarify issues and concepts as well as adapt them to the contexts of the frameworks if needed, formulate supporting questions and discuss possible evidence. One particularity of the Ukrainian situation is that Ukraine is part of the Bologna Process, which means Ukraine is invited to self-certify its higher education qualification levels to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. Rather than looking at how the NQF is linked to other RQFs, a meeting was organised to consider Ukraine's self-certification report[11] as additional evidence. For each topic experts identified possible sources and collected evidence regarding the topics and supporting questions. These were then discussed in a working group with representatives from both frameworks to discuss the actual comparison. During this process commonalities were identified and differences discussed in order to see if the frameworks were comparable.

When Ukraine was invaded on 24 February 2022, the work was interrupted at first, but the group members remained in close contact as we were very worried about the safety of our Ukrainian colleagues, their relatives and friends. With millions fleeing the war from Ukraine to the EU, calls to resume the work increased; the comparison became urgent given the need to recognise refugees' qualifications. In March, a special meeting was organised to re-establish the work. By June, all topics had been discussed and they were presented at the EQF Advisory Group.

This report summarises the findings. It is also the basis for a Joint Action Plan that will be developed after the report has been approved and published.

[11] Self-certification report on Compliance of the National Qualifications Framework Criteria and Procedures with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area: Zvit.pro.samosertyfikatsiyu.NRK-EN-10.11-1.pdf (mon.gov.ua)

Policy context of the EQF

European education and training systems are diverse and reflect national traditions. The differences among them make it difficult to assess what someone with a qualification from another country knows, understands and is capable of doing in learning or work contexts. The value of a qualification awarded in one country is, therefore, not necessarily understood in others, which can hamper 'trust' in the quality and content of such qualifications. The same goes for qualifications awarded outside of formal education and training systems, and by international bodies and organisations. This lack of trust can impact professional development, access to employment opportunities and access to further learning, creating barriers to mobility within and without the EU..

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) aims to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications. The EQF was set up in 2008 as a common reference framework for qualifications, which are expressed as learning outcomes at increasing levels of proficiency. The framework serves as a translation tool among different European qualifications systems and their levels. It is intended to benefit learners, workers, jobseekers, employers, trade unions, education and training providers, qualification recognition bodies, government authorities and international organisations.

The EQF is a common reference framework that allows qualifications from different countries to be compared easily. This is achieved by supporting the use of learning outcomes for each qualification, in order to make them more transparent and easier to understand. In this way, the EQF supports the cross-border mobility of learners and workers as well as promoting lifelong learning and professional development across Europe.

The EQF has been a significant driver in developing national qualifications frameworks in Europe and in the shift towards learning outcomes, which have created opportunities for more flexible learning paths.

While the primary focus of the EQF has been on increasing the transparency and comparability of qualifications in Europe, the EQF Recommendation of 2017 also provides for the comparison of the EQF with qualifications frameworks from other countries. Such comparison work fosters better understanding of foreign qualifications in the European Union, making the EU an attractive choice for talent in short supply from around the world. This includes sustained support for labour market integration extended to people fleeing the war in Ukraine as long as they decide to remain in the EU.

EU legal migration and asylum rules provide for equal treatment of nationals in terms of recognising qualifications and facilitating measures as far as beneficiaries of international protection are concerned. Non-EU nationals must have the opportunity to realise their full potential and use their skills in the European labour market, but also to benefit from learning opportunities, mobility and the recognition of their qualifications. However, high rates of over-qualification and under-employment persist among non-EU nationals residing in Europe. The EQF-Ukrainian NQF comparison report aims at improving the situation of Ukrainian nationals in Europe.

Policy context of the NQF in Ukraine

The NQF as a tool for reform, quality assurance and European integration.

In 2003, Ukraine applied to join the Bologna Process. Within the framework of the Tempus program, methodological recommendations were developed to implement ECTS in Ukrainian universities from 2004 to 2005. Universities developed course catalogues where learning outcomes were established for each discipline. Since 2009, ECTS have been mandatory for all higher education institutions (HEIs).

In 2010-2011 discussions took place to develop a Ukrainian NQF analogous to the EQF in that it would cover all levels of education and training as well as focus on lifelong learning. The first edition of the Ukrainian NQF was approved in 2011. It was followed by an implementation plan.

Following the Revolution of Dignity[12], the EU Association Agreement was signed in 2014 thus strengthening political ties and economic links between Ukraine and the EU. The agreement and the association agenda, which is the associated roadmap, commit both signatories to support the development of an operational NQF grounded in European experience. The Association Agreement became operational in 2017 and since then the EU has become Ukraine's most important trading partner.

The Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" was also passed in 2014. It set into law the main features of the European Higher Education Area, which include institutional autonomy, four levels of higher education, the abolishment of Soviet degrees (e.g., the specialist and junior specialist diplomas), and the introduction doctor of philosophy / doctor of arts as higher education levels. A new quality assurance system for higher education was established based on European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). This included establishing an independent National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education designed to ensure external quality assurance by involving representatives from all stakeholder groups. Since 2019, a modern system of external quality assurance based on the ESG has been implemented. Today, every higher education standard must have a competency-based approach. A new list of specialties in line with international standards has been established and has incorporated earlier specialties by setting common learning outcomes.

In 2013, new state VET standards for specific working professions were established. However, it was only in 2021 when a system-wide shift to competency-based standards took place with the adoption and incorporation of guidelines for VET standards development. After the Law on Education in 2017 was passed, the Ukrainian New School initiative in primary and secondary education initiated the transition to 12-year education and the introduction of a competency-based approach, which reduced the number of subjects and emphasised key competences. These reforms are now well-advanced.

The Law on Education regulates educational and professional qualifications with educational qualifications confirming formal education outcomes and professional qualifications confirming outcomes in specific labour market activities. Professional qualifications are based on occupational standards. Since 2018, occupational standards, are the basis for creating relevant competency-based educational and professional programmes. As of 2022, about 200 modern occupational standards have been developed, and this work continues unabated. In 2022, the first Qualification Centres became operational and used VNFL to award professional qualifications.

The Law on Education 2017 also introduced pre-tertiary vocational education; it uses a methodological approach to design programmes similar those in higher education. Standards for pre-tertiary vocational education and higher education both take into account the requirements for NQF descriptors and levels. Professional standards also include compliance with NQF levels.

The Ukrainian NQF has been instrumental in introducing a competency-based approach to Ukraine's education system at all levels. The NQF supports competency-based education and quality assurance in a decentralised education system where providers have greater autonomy. To facilitate the

[12] Also known as the Euromaidan or Maidan Revolution.

comparison of Ukrainian qualifications with those of EU member states, it is essential that the NQF is related to the EQF. This comparison exercise is equally key for the quick and fair inclusion of Ukrainian refugees and migrants into the European labour market as well their subsequent reintegration into the Ukrainian labour market when possible.

During the past decade, the number of Ukrainians moving to the EU for professional reasons has increased. Even before the war, they were already the single largest group of migrants coming to the EU. The war has rapidly accelerated the flow of Ukrainian refugees to the EU many of whom are well-qualified and are looking for temporary professional or educational opportunities.. Millions of Ukrainians are internally displaced and many have decided to return to Ukraine after having initially fled. In many cases their places of work have been destroyed or shut down. Having access to jobs for which they are qualified is vital to their well-being and integration into where they currently live. The current crisis has compelled Ukraine and EU member states to rise to the occasion and work together to ensure that Ukrainian refugees' skills and qualifications are properly understood.

In Ukraine, the war has led to major skills shortages due to the number of people who have been mobilised, internally displaced or left the country. To address the situation, emergency responses have been required. Continued support for further qualifications reform in Ukraine is, therefore, crucial. Indeed, it is indispensable to address urgent needs and to guarantee that those returning to Ukraine can easily re-enter the labour market when circumstances allow it. This comparison exercise has been essential to facilitating these efforts.

Key topics for Comparison

1. Objectives of EQF and the NQF in Ukraine

The EQF has four broad objectives:

- Transparency – as there are many different qualification systems in Europe, transparency will make qualification systems and qualifications easier to understand and to compare.
- Comparability – learning outcomes and levels make qualifications easier to understand and links to quality assurance arrangements improve mutual trust, which facilitates their recognition .
- Modernising Education and Training Systems – learning outcomes describe what learners know, understand and are able to do at the end of a learning process. Qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes facilitate access, progression, inclusion, lifelong learning and mobility. The EQF links formal, non-formal and informal learning through validated learning outcomes.
- Increasing the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners.

The EQF aims to better link formal, non-formal and informal learning by supporting the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings. The EQF is a reference point for developing national qualifications frameworks, implementing the learning outcomes approach, and improving the transparency and recognition of skills and competences.

The Ukrainian NQF was developed in 2010 and clearly inspired by the EQF, which was adopted in 2008. The Ukrainian NQF has three key objectives:

1. Harmonising legislation on the use of qualifications in education as well as social and labour relations.

   With respect to qualifications, it is important to establish a single instrument that allows the educational system and the labour market to have a unified approach that supports both state and private actors. It is very similar to the transparency function of the EQF, but the use of the Ukrainian NQF, has been regulated. The Law on Higher Education (2014) and the Law on Education (2017) laid the legal foundation for a modernised, competency-based education and training system with a strong focus on self-directed citizens. The principle of lifelong learning and the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning is underscored and Ukraine has started to implement this.

   Specific objectives of the Ukrainian NQF are:

   - the development of qualifications – creating new educational and professional qualifications,
   - the identification of qualifications – understanding of qualifications obtained in other educational systems and labour markets,
   - correlation of qualifications – comparing professional qualifications from different types of economic activities and sectors of the economy, as well as educational qualifications from different components of education,
   - recognition of qualifications – formal recognition of educational and professional qualifications obtained in other countries and facilitating the formal recognition of Ukrainian qualifications abroad,
   - qualifications planning and further development
2. Promoting national and international recognition of qualifications obtained in Ukraine.

Qualifications are instrumental to learner and labour mobility. The NQF initially included ten levels which were increased to eleven levels in 2017, but in 2020 they were brought down to eight to be in line with EQF levels. This has increased transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications and has allowed better links and cooperation with international partners/investors. The Ukrainian ENIC-NARIC Centre makes use of the NQF, notably through learning outcomes in combination with other transparency tools (ECTS, Diploma Supplement).

3. Establishing effective interaction between the education system and the labour market.

   Formal qualifications did not meet employers' expectations at first, stressing that qualifications should be based on occupational standards, rather than educational standards. Newly introduced learning outcome-based qualifications have become a game changer on the Ukrainian labour market, matching educational and occupational standards. The goals for the near future are the further development of qualifications to bring them all in line with the NQF. Stakeholders from the world of work and from education are involved in the development and in the awarding of qualifications and in the management of the qualifications system through a tripartite collegial national qualifications agency.

Conclusions

With a focus on lifelong learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning, mobility and promoting the learning outcomes approach, the Ukrainian NQF objectives are very similar to those of the EQF. Both frameworks also support career development, personal development, employability, and lifelong learning. Both frameworks are coherent in terms of their support for employability, education reforms, use of learning outcomes, transparency, portability and comparability of qualifications. Like most NQFs that are part of the EQF, the scope of the Ukrainian NQF aims to be comprehensive; it covers qualifications at all levels and all sub-sectors in education and training. By increasing its transparency, comparability and the portability of qualifications, the NQF supports the national and international recognition of qualifications obtained in Ukraine.

Ukraine would like to link its NQF to the EQF as closely as possible, especially in light of the war that has forced millions of Ukrainians to seek and to find refuge in the European Union.

2. Scope of the EQF and the NQF in Ukraine

The EQF is a Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and includes all types and levels of qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks linked to the EQF. In an increasing number of countries' NQFs, fully comprehensive frameworks will increasingly include qualifications awarded outside formal education and training by private providers, sectors, companies and international bodies. Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden are among the countries that have opened their frameworks to include non-nationally regulated or private qualifications. Several countries do also include partial qualifications in their framework and, more recently, discussions regarding the inclusion of micro-credentials have begun in some EQF countries. There is no single approach across European NQFs regarding these categories. The EQF supports the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings, linking formal, non-formal and informal learning. All countries that are part of the EQF have put at least some validation arrangements in place, more in the education and training field than for labour market purposes Countries progress at different speeds to implement these validation systems.

The NQF in Ukraine is a tool for lifelong learning and, like the EQF, it has eight levels. It includes educational qualifications issued by the formal education system and professional qualifications to recognise labour market skills and occupations, predominantly through assessment by Qualification Centres. In Qualification Centres, professional qualifications can be awarded through the validation of non-formal and informal learning using occupational standards. Ukraine has accredited the first Qualification Centres. It already has experience with recognising the non-formal and informal acquisition of skills by Ukrainian cooks. There are arrangements for recognising non-formal and informal learning in higher education, VET and in general education, but implementation is still at an early stage. The Ukrainian NQF is planning to use partial qualifications, which have been legislated, and possibly micro-credentials, though they have not been implemented yet.

Conclusions

The scope of both QFs seems to be coherent and comprehensive.

Both QFs have a lifelong learning approach that goes beyond formal education systems. In the EQF, more and more countries are starting to include qualifications from outside the formal education system. Progress in implementing the validation of non-formal and informal learning is advancing

The use of partial qualifications and micro-credentials is also a work in progress

3. Levels and their descriptors

Qualifications frameworks use learning outcomes to define the level attained at the end of a course of study in any given educational system. Learning outcomes represent varying degrees of complexity and cover areas such as Knowledge, Skills, and Responsibility/Autonomy. Taken together, level descriptors form a grid that includes all the levels and domains covered by the qualifications framework. Any representation of a learning outcome (e.g., qualification types, educational standards, individualised qualifications, units of assessment, framework curricula, programmes, modules or individual achievements) can be compared to level descriptors, which makes it easier to identify levels from one qualifications framework to another.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The EQF is a referencing tool with eight levels. It can translate qualifications and levels from other national qualifications frameworks or education systems. Learning outcomes for each EQF level are defined in three areas or domains: knowledge, skills, responsibility/autonomy. Their definitions are as follows:

- Knowledge refers to theoretical and/or factual information;
- Skills refer to abilities that are either cognitive, which means they involve the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking, or practical, which means they involve manual dexterity, the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments; and
- Responsibility and Autonomy refer to the ability of a learner to apply knowledge and skills in an independent and mature fashion.

Level descriptors cover the range of learning outcomes that can occur in both professional and educational contexts irrespective of whether the setting is formal, non-formal or informal. Level descriptors become more complex from one level to the next. Each level builds on and subsumes preceding levels as learning outcomes become increasingly complex while progress in each area is measured in such terms as complexity, depth of knowledge, the scope of application of the acquired knowledge and skills in practice, etc.

The EQF levels are not linked to specific types of qualifications. The descriptors for the short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle), the first cycle, the second cycle and the third cycle of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (established in the context of the Bologna Process[13]) correspond to the learning outcomes for EQF levels 5-8 respectively. There is full compatibility between the EQF and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Diversity characterises the qualifications linked to these levels. The diversity of qualifications that belong to NQFs that have been referenced to the EQF is shown in the Europass NQF comparison tool on the Europass platform[14], as well as by the CEDEFOP Inventory on NQFs[15].

Ukraine's National Qualifications Framework

Ukraine's NQF is structured in terms of learning outcomes that increase in complexity from one level to the next in four areas or domain descriptors: Knowledge, Skills, Communication, and Responsibility and Autonomy (NQF decree, 2011).

Though there are slight differences, the eight levels and four level descriptors in the Ukrainian NQF were nonetheless inspired by the EQF. For example, the Ukrainian QF levels are described in greater detail and there are four domain descriptors, while the EQF only has three. The decision to add Communication was informed by the EHEA framework.

[13] European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process (ehea.info)
[14] Find and Compare Qualifications Frameworks | Europass
[15] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool

More differences can be found in the way the Ukrainian NQF defines its level descriptors. The definition of Knowledge, for example, focuses on application, while the EQF's definition of Knowledge stresses learning. Though the concepts of Responsibility and Autonomy are very similar in both, the EQF's main focus is on learners, while the Ukrainian NQF focuses on people in general, not just learners. The concepts used to describe Skills are practically identical. Finally, Ukraine's NQF includes a fourth level descriptor, Communication, while the EQF does not. This level descriptor emphasises collaboration with others.

The inclusion and placement of qualifications in the Ukrainian NQF

Ukraine's Law on Education[16] (2017) divides qualifications into two categories: educational and professional.

Educational qualifications are further subdivided into the following categories:

- general education,
- vocational education (including continuing training) and pre-higher professional education, and
- higher education.

For general education, the three qualifications listed below exist. They correspond to levels 1 through 4 of the NQF, but are not yet formally integrated into the NQF.

- the certificate of basic secondary education for special needs students,
- the certificate for basic secondary education, and
- the certificate for complete secondary education.

VET qualifications correspond to NQF levels 2 through 5. They include diplomas for skilled workers and certificates for skilled workers. There is also the diploma for pre-higher education or professional junior bachelor (formerly junior specialist) at level 5.

Qualifications for higher education (HE) include:

- level 5: Junior Bachelor,
- level 6: Bachelor,
- level 7: Masters and Doctor of Philosophy,
- level 8: Doctor of Arts and Doctor of Science.

[16] On Education | on September 5, 2017 № 2145-VIII (rada.gov.ua)

The following table compares EQF levels, Ukrainian NQF levels and the placement of Ukrainian qualifications:

EQF Level	NQF Level Ukraine	Formal Education Qualifications				
		General secondary education	Vocational education and training	Pre-higher Professional Education	Higher education	
8	8				Doctor of Philosophy Doctor of the Arts	Professional qualifications
7	7				Master	
6	6				Bachelor	
5	5		Diploma of skilled worker Certificate of skilled worker	Professional Junior Bachelor (formerly Junior Specialist)	Junior Bachelor	
4	4	Certificate for complete secondary education[1]	Diploma of skilled worker Certificate of skilled worker			
3	3		Diploma of skilled worker Certificate of skilled worker			
2	2		Certificate of skilled worker			
1	1					

While qualifications for general education are not formally included in the NQF, qualifications for VET, pre-higher professional education and higher education are linked to QF levels by the NQF decree (2011)[17]. However, VET qualifications are spread across several levels. A methodology for levelling professional qualifications[18] (i.e., determining their NQF level) has been developed, but not yet implemented retrospectively for all occupational standards. This methodology foresees the use of the best-fit principle when placing qualifications within the Ukrainian NQF.

In the EU, when applying the best-fit principle, levels should be understood as corridors and not as exact lines. Qualifications might include learning outcomes related to different levels. Different dimensions or categories of learning outcomes may be emphasised in qualifications placed at the same level. Therefore, qualifications allocated to the same level are not necessarily similar, but can be considered as comparable in terms of level of learning outcomes achieved. This does not mean that the qualifications are equivalent or interchangeable.

[17] Про затвердження Національної р... | від 23.11.2011 № 1341 (rada.gov.ua)
[18] Рішення до Протоколу №12 Методичні рекомендації.pdf - Google Drive

The use of levels is well-established in higher education where they are indicated in diploma supplements. Individual qualifications are based on levels indirectly through the description of outcomes in higher education standards. However, the level descriptors themselves are not directly used to define individual qualifications and programmes. In general education, an alignment to level four is foreseen for the end-of-school diploma.

Conclusions

Both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF have eight levels based on learning outcomes that increase in complexity as one moves through the levels. The EQF is open to any qualification via the NQFs that are referenced with it. This includes both full and partial qualifications, and qualifications from within and from outside the formal education and training system. Ukraine's NQF aims to be comprehensive. It covers educational and professional qualifications as well as full and partial qualifications. Level descriptors in the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF cover both work and study situations, irrespective of learning settings (formal, non-formal or informal).

Comparing the concepts behind the domain descriptors shows that they are very similar, but the Ukrainian NQF has a wider focus beyond learning and has an additional descriptor for Communication focusing on collaboration with others. The concepts and levels are comparable.

The spirit of the EQF is to make attributing levels to qualifications as transparent as possible. This is reflected in the EQF's referencing criteria. Some types of qualifications in Ukraine's NQF are directly linked to a specific level by the decree while others cover several levels and the procedure for their levelling is still to be implemented. The use of NQF levels is well-established in higher education, but this is not yet the case for VET or professional qualifications.

4. Learning outcome approach(es)

Definition and use of learning outcomes

In the past, learning was mainly described in institutional terms regarding what was taught, how long programmes lasted and where learning was located, but not on the basis of what individuals had learned and were able to do at the end of the learning process. The learning outcomes approach of qualifications frameworks is a major feature supporting the recognition of lifelong learning, and the comparability of qualifications and frameworks and is essential for the referencing of national qualifications frameworks to regional qualifications frameworks. By defining learning outcomes rather than inputs, it becomes possible to compare the results of learning processes in different settings. This allows people to combine different learning experiences, progress and access new learning and career development opportunities. Qualifications frameworks that are based on learning outcomes promote the use of learning outcomes in qualifications, in learning, assessment and in recognition.

Interrelated definitions

The EQF supports the shift towards learning outcomes. Learning outcomes describe what a learner knows, understands and is able to do at the end of a learning process. Learning outcomes are defined in the EQF through knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy. In the Ukrainian NQF decree, learning outcomes are understood as covering a wide range of abilities, which makes their definition close to that of competence. In practice, learning outcomes are used as expected and planned (in qualification documents, standards, educational programs, etc.). “Competence” is understood as a person's proven ability to apply the achieved learning outcomes. The guidelines for developing higher education standards[19] describe competences as open-ended and learning outcomes as measurable, assessable or observable. The EQF and NQF in Ukraine use interrelated definitions that are neutral in terms of learning context. They both refer to skills and knowledge, and autonomy and responsibility.

Identifying and using learning outcomes in the EQF

The EQF promotes the use of learning outcomes and the shift to learning outcomes. The EQF links formal, non-formal and informal learning through validated learning outcomes. According to the EQF referencing criteria, NQFs are a reference point for the use of learning outcomes and for the continuous revision and renewal of qualifications. Learning outcomes of qualifications, standards, programmes and units or modules can be compared and related to the level descriptors of a qualifications framework. The descriptors of the levels are often broad and reflect different contexts. There is, therefore, no perfect match between the level descriptors and the learning outcomes of qualifications, standards, programmes, modules or units. Countries often use best-fit to link learning outcomes.

No qualifications are registered directly in the EQF, but qualifications are linked to NQF levels. EQF referencing Criterion 3 also relates learning outcomes to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and credit systems. The European Credit Transfer System for higher education defines the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. It is in use in Ukraine as well. The Council recommendation for vocational education and training of 2020[20] recommends that units of learning outcomes can be used to support recognition, accumulation and transfer of learning, and acquiring partial qualifications.

The learning outcomes approach is implemented widely in most European countries. Thirty-six countries have formally linked (‘referenced’) their national qualification systems or frameworks to the EQF[21] and most of them are working towards comprehensive NQFs that cover all types and levels of qualification in formal education and training (VET, HE, general education); they are increasingly open to non-regulated/private qualifications[22]. In the NQFs linked with the EQF, there is experience in using learning outcomes in validation and credit systems, in the development of qualifications, modules and curricula, and in career guidance. CEDEFOP and individual countries have developed guidelines for identifying,

[19] Methodological recommendations on developing higher education standards 2020-metod-rekomendacziyi.docx (live.com)
[20] Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training (2020)
[21] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool/overview
[22]https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool/overview

writing and using learning outcomes[23]. There have been many comparative studies[24]. Countries have exchanged practice, and there have been several peer learning events on the topic. Within the EQF Advisory Group, a project group has been established to agree on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications in NQFs to make them easier to understand and compare.

Identifying and using learning outcomes in the NQF of Ukraine

Learning outcomes and competences(the terms are sometimes used interchangeably) are a central part of education and training reforms in Ukraine. Learning outcomes have been introduced gradually since the early 2000s, but the real push came after they were legislated in 2014 and 2017**.** The development of qualifications of different types in line with the NQF level descriptors was a key priority for the Ukrainian NQF Implementation Plan 2016-2020. It is now mandatory to use learning outcomes for each new qualification.

In Ukraine, there are educational qualifications that reflect the qualifications issued by formal education providers, and professional qualifications that are based on occupational standards and are focused on the labour market.

State Educational Standards

The Law on Education (art. 32-33) regulates the use of learning outcomes in state educational standards and educational programmes. State educational standards specify mandatory learning outcomes in line with NQF level descriptors. This link with the NQF is checked during the approval process of these state standards. Educational programmes and individual qualifications are developed from state educational standards, and are, therefore, indirectly linked to the Ukrainian NQF.

Occupational Standards

Occupational standards are used increasingly to guarantee the relevance of qualifications. As of 2022, about 200 modern occupational standards have been developed, and this work is continuing intensively. Learning outcomes are defined in occupational standards in the following way:

Labour market needs described in terms of
• Labour functions (units of competence)
• Labour actions (individual outcomes)

→

Learning outcomes

- ❖ Knowledge
- ❖ Skills (*including communication*)

Occupational standards are used for assessing professional qualifications, and when available for developing VET qualifications and higher education qualifications. Procedures for the development of qualifications include the use of relevant occupational standards, involvement of relevant stakeholders and an external review of quality assurance bodies. The National Qualifications Authority has approved a methodology for levelling occupational standards through the assessment of learning outcomes (based on the standard as a whole) in each of the four domains (Knowledge, Skills, Communication, Autonomy and Responsibility); and assessment of learning outcomes for each group of labour functions (for each partial qualification) in each of the four domains.

Professional qualifications are based on occupational standards (art. 39) and are awarded by authorised awarding bodies (qualifications centres), as well as through the validation of non-formal and informal learning (art. 34), which is based on an assessment of achieved learning outcomes by individuals and measured against the learning outcomes in a relevant occupational standard[25].

[23] Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes (europa.eu)
[24] Learning outcomes | CEDEFOP (europa.eu)
[25] Про затвердження Порядку присвоє... | від 15.09.2021 № 956 (rada.gov.ua)

Learning outcomes in formal education

HE qualifications and programmes

The Law on Higher Education (2014) linked higher education qualifications to the NQF, linked learning outcomes with quality assurance arrangements and introduced the diploma supplement that describes the learning outcomes of individual qualifications. In higher education, the use of learning outcomes is obligatory for educational programmes to be accredited[26]. Assessment of learning outcomes is addressed in higher education standards[27] and related programmes. General requirements for the types of higher education qualifications (junior bachelor, bachelor, master, doctor of philosophy) are defined by the Law on Higher Education (Article 5). The formulation and use of learning outcomes is described in the methodology for developing higher education standards. All standards of higher education at all levels should contain a clear formulation of learning outcomes both at the level of the programme and for each individual discipline. Universities have published these learning outcomes in their course catalogues.

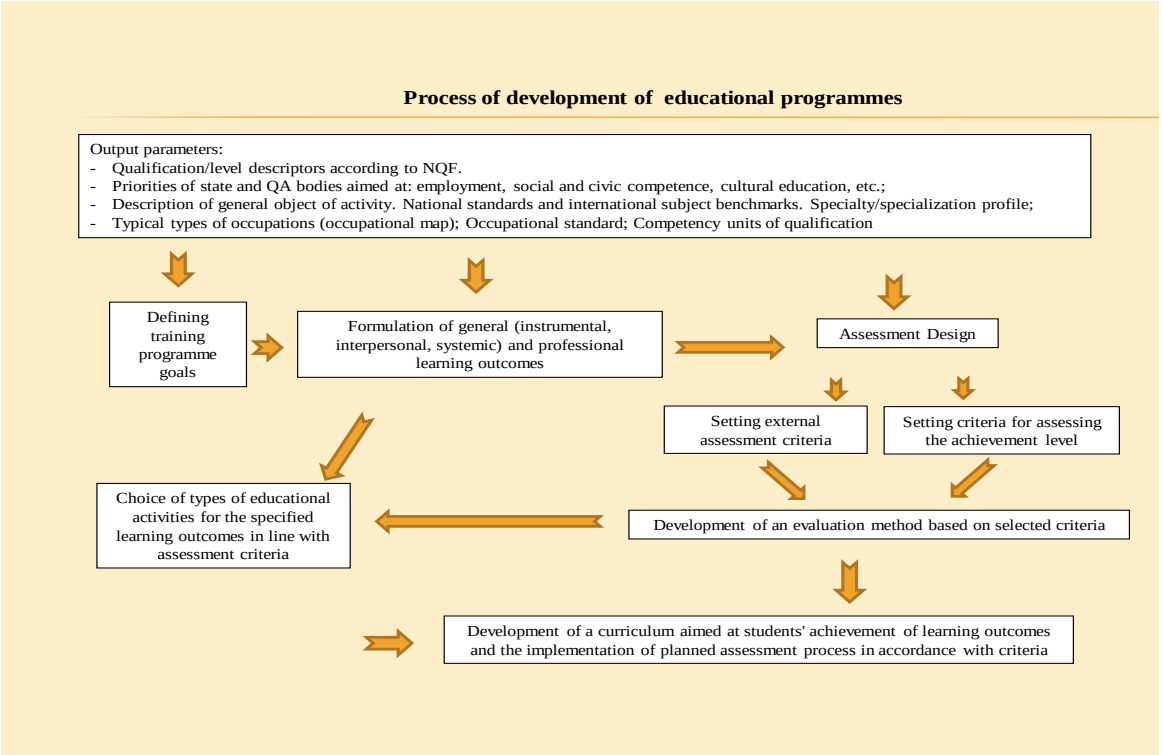
Learning outcomes for higher education specialties are defined nationally and programme learning outcomes are defined by higher education institutions. These learning outcomes include:

- a description of the suitability for employment, focusing on the professional contexts for graduates,
- integral competence focusing on problem-solving,
- general competences focusing on adaptability, abstract thinking, problem-analysis, knowledge application, generating ideas, communication, project management and working with others,
- professional competences of the specialty, and
- specific programme learning outcomes.

The programme outcomes consider the requirements of the standard for the specialty, the relevant occupational standards (if available) and the general competences which are defined at the level of the higher education institution while taking into account the mission of the institution and an analysis of the societal needs. For each programme, a project team is established. They define the portrait of the future specialist with a list of competences, determine specific learning outcomes, select the best ways to provide students with opportunities to acquire these competences and choose the most effective forms of evaluation.

The diagram below shows the process:

[26] Criteria for evaluation of education programme quality
[27] Methodological recommendations on the development of higher education standards



The Law on Education (2017) widened the competency-based, outcome based approach to general and vocational education, recognising the importance of non-formal and informal learning and introduced a legal right for VNFIL in formal education.

General Education Qualifications

With the New Ukrainian School, the Law on Education initiated fundamental general education reforms. This has provided a much stronger focus on competences and a reduction of the curriculum from 19 to 9 broader areas. The competences potential linked with a number of core competences of graduates have been the focus of the reform. In general education, learning outcomes are defined and assessed in accordance with the State standards of secondary general education[28]. National standards for primary and basic secondary education set out the requirements for compulsory learning outcomes. The standards define key competences and learning outcomes, which are further detailed in specific learning outcomes and benchmarks for the assessment of nine educational fields (language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences and technology, information technology, social and health care, history and civic studies, arts, and sports). Learning outcomes are also reflected in model educational programmes that schools can use to guide their own programmes. The New Ukrainian School focuses on outcome-based curricula for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. It has started with math and reading literacy competences and gradually integrated other descriptions of core competences such as entrepreneurial competences in line with the European EntreComp[29] framework and digital competences in line with DigComp framework[30]. These define model curricula that schools can adopt or adapt in order to make their own curricula. The Civic Education competence developed by the Council of Europe has also been integrated. Ukraine participated in PISA for the first time in 2019. It has used the PISA's concepts of reading, math and science to inspire learning outcomes for lower secondary. Reading ability, for example, refers to finding information, understanding a text and evaluating and interpreting what has been read.

VET qualifications

[28] Державні стандарти | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[29] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1317&langId=en
[30] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10193&langId=en

In the system of formal vocational education and training, the first outcome-based educational and professional programs date back to 2013 when the Methodology for developing state VET standards for specific working professions was approved. A system-wide approach only came into force in 2021 with guidelines for the development of VET standards according to the competence-based approach. The new model of standards for VET[31] requires that learning outcomes describe key and professional competences derived from occupational standards or labour functions (which are units of occupational standards). Labour functions can also be used as the basis for units of learning outcomes and modular curricula. Learning outcomes-based curricula are now gradually being introduced[32]. There are currently 51 such state standards. The idea is that the learning outcomes approach can be used more flexibly, allowing for alternating curricula in which training in schools and training centres is combined with authentic learning in the workplace. Educational programmes contain compulsory and optional elements, so that learners can tailor the programmes to better suit their needs and interests. Units of learning outcomes can facilitate entrance control and shorten VET programmes and make them more attractive for adults. So far, only full programmes are assessed; partial qualifications cannot be obtained in formal vocational education and training.

Conclusions

Learning outcomes are central to the EQF and Ukraine's NQF. The understanding of learning outcomes and their role in level descriptors, in defining qualifications, in programmes, and their use in assessment and learning is very similar to other European countries participating in the EQF.

Clearly, Ukraine has been inspired by European and international developments. Both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF support the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings, linking formal, non-formal and informal learning. In the Ukrainian NQF, qualifications and programmes are not only inspired by the level descriptors and the way learning outcomes are used in the context of validation and credit systems, it has also used EU competence frameworks, providing an additional indirect link to the EQF.

The tools of the Ukrainian NQF are competence-based state education standards and occupational standards. There are still partially under development as part of an ongoing effort. Level descriptors and learning outcomes are comparable. In Ukraine, learning outcomes are mainly assessed for full qualifications, although the use of partial qualifications has been legislated.

Ukrainian qualifications in VET and general education are indirectly linked to the NQF descriptors through state educational standards. This link could be reinforced. Qualifications in VET could possibly benefit from the certificate supplement and the application of principles for short descriptions of learning outcomes.

[31] Про затвердження Методичних рекомендацій щодо розроблення стандартів професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти за компетентнісним підходом | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[32] Разработка модульных учебных программ | OpenSpaceOpen Space (europa.eu)

5. Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL)

The learning that takes place outside formal education and training systems is often disregarded. However, learning is an individual process. It does not solely depend on teaching and what happens in classrooms. Learning occurs in different contexts and throughout life. Authentic contexts can stimulate learning, allowing individuals to develop competences to act in the real world. Validation of non-formal and informal learning makes it possible to make that learning visible and is a precondition for lifelong learning pathways that can help people to progress in their learning, careers, and lives. Qualifications expressed in learning outcomes can be used to capture the learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. Qualifications, qualifications frameworks and systems, therefore, play an important role in promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

VNFIL and the EQF

The EQF's recommendation for lifelong learning states that NQFs and their qualifications should be based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems. The EQF Recommendation describes the 'validation of non-formal and informal learning' as the process of confirmation by a competent authority that an individual has achieved learning outcomes in non-formal or informal learning settings and that can be measured against a relevant standard. It consists of four distinct phases: identification through dialogue of an individual's particular experiences, documentation to make the individual's experiences visible, a formal assessment of those experiences and certification of the assessment results, which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

Although part and parcel of the EQF, validation of non-formal and informal learning is also addressed by a separate recommendation.[33] This recommendation asks countries to develop arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to (a) have their knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, and (b) obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, a partial qualification, on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences. The recommendation promotes the use of the four stages of validation processes of identification, documentation, assessment and certification and recommends the following arrangements:

- disadvantaged groups should be particularly targeted as they can benefit through improved participation in lifelong learning and access to the labour market
    - individuals who are unemployed or risk unemployment should have the opportunity to undergo a 'skills audit'. These skills audits[34] are aimed at helping them identify their knowledge, skills and competences for self-development, further learning, labour market integration or career development;
    - the validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by appropriate guidance and counselling and is readily accessible; this means that individuals and organisations should have access to information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as the relevant procedures, and help them prepare

- validation arrangements should create deliberate links between formal, non-formal and informal learning through NQFs, in line with the EQF;
    - qualifications or partial qualifications obtained by means of the validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences comply with agreed standards that are either the same as, or equivalent to, the standards for qualifications obtained through formal education programmes;
    - transparent quality assurance measures are used in line with existing quality assurance frameworks supporting reliable, valid and credible assessment methodologies and tools;

[33] Council Recommendation the validation of non-formal and informal learning of 20 December 2012 (2012/C 398/01)
[34] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4cbf22f1-4547-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

- provision is made for the development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process across all relevant sectors
- transparency tools are promoted in order to facilitate the documentation of learning outcomes;
- synergies should exist between validation arrangements and credit systems applicable in the formal education and training system

All relevant stakeholders should be involved in developing VNFIL systems including employers, trade unions, chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, national entities involved in the process of recognition of professional qualifications, employment services, youth organisations, youth workers, education and training providers, and civil society organisations.

Apart from the Recommendation on VNFIL, the EU maintains a European Inventory on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning that publishes a country-by -country thematic analysis of ongoing developments. The Inventory is also a tool to monitor how countries implement the recommendation. It is published on CEDEFOP's website. The 2018 synthesis report concluded that progress has been made in developing validation strategies, but, typically, these are neither comprehensive in scope, nor fully implemented on the ground. The next chapter of work to make validation a reality needs to address the labour market, education and training and wider community contexts: people need easy access to validation opportunities in all of these settings.[35] The inventory is currently being updated and the new Inventory is planned for publication in late 2023. Some EU member states have progressed much more in developing integrated systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning than others. The French NQF, for example, systematically requires VNFIL pathways for all qualifications in the register and people are entitled to have their skills validated.

In order to support implementation, European Guidelines on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning have been written; they were first published in 2009 and revised in 2015. Once again, these guidelines are being revised (with publication planned for early 2023) to draw from the latest developments and experiences in member states and to integrate elements of the EU Skills Agenda 2020, which stresses the importance of upskilling and reskilling after COVID along with supporting the digital and green transitions. Within the framework of these developments, more emphasis is paid to recognising minor qualifications, partial qualifications and micro-credentials, as well as the digital transformation of the credentialing process.

Context of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in the NQF in Ukraine

VNFIL in the context of adult learning

The term validation is not used much in Ukraine. The prevalent term in official documents is 'recognition of learning outcomes in non-formal and informal learning'. The first reference to recognising non-formal and informal learning can be found in the 2012 law on the professional development of employees[36], which introduced the concept of recognition centres established by the State Employment Service. They work with providers that have been licensed for training in specific occupations (including training centres of the State Employment Service, VET institutions, and enterprises). The certificate to be awarded would be a certificate for specific professional skills. The 2012 Law on Employment stated that the unemployed are entitled to have their skills assessed. Regulations soon followed to enable implementation. They included a resolution37 and orders to set criteria for assessment centres and a list of occupations for assessment. During 2013-2014, the first pilot in VNFIL for Cooks was undertaken, but the system only became operational in 2016. Initially it started with three occupations, but has, in reality, only worked for cooks.

[35] european_inventory_validation_2018_synthesis.pdf (europa.eu)
[36] Law № 4312 of January 2012
[37] Resolution Number 340 of May 2013

More than 600 candidates have gone through the process of confirming informal learning outcomes for the Cook profession[38]. Although this is not a very high number, validation has had a very positive impact on individual candidates and has opened up new career opportunities for them. There are three assessment centres, the VET Training Centres of the State Employment Service in Odesa and Rivne and the Higher Vocational School No. 33 of Kyiv. The assessment cost is approximately €80 according to the website of the Higher Professional School N.° 33 in Kyiv [39]. As with the European guidelines and the VNFIL recommendation, a typical validation procedure consists of identification, documentation, assessment and certification according to "The Guidelines on the process of assessment and recognition of the outcomes of non-formal vocational training". Successful candidates receive certificates approving the skills level for the occupation of cook, which encompass skill levels three to six. This certificate is recognised by their employers. These skill levels (rozryadi) are not to be confused with the NQF levels. This is a formally recognised qualification, but it is not clear whether it could be considered formally part of the Ukrainian NQF even if it is regarded as a professional qualification based on occupational standards. Although this system is still functioning, it is expected to be replaced by the system of professional qualifications soon.

Professional Qualifications and Qualification Centres

The 2017 Law on Education has a strong focus on lifelong learning and makes several references to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The next section describes formal education and educational qualifications, but we first look at professional qualifications. The Law mentioned the establishment of Qualification Centres authorised to assess and recognise the learning outcomes for professional qualifications including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning (Article 34). The Ministry of Education and Science approved a typical regulation on Qualification Centres in April 2021 as the basic national regulatory document on validation that defines the main tasks and functions of Qualification Centres. The Qualification Centres are responsible for assessing and recognising learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal or informal education or by assignment and/or the confirmation of relevant professional qualifications, as well as the recognition of relevant professional qualifications obtained in other countries. Professional qualifications are based on occupational standards. By demonstrating that individuals have achieved the learning outcomes/competences in a given occupational standard, they can obtain the corresponding professional qualification. Sometimes, they can only demonstrate a certain skill level or labour function within the occupational standard, in which case they can obtain a partial qualification. The qualification centre can confirm partial or full recognition of professional qualifications. In principle, professional qualifications can be awarded through the validation of non-formal and informal learning for all existing occupational standards, with the exception of regulated professions.

As a general rule qualification centres operate within a specific sector. Centres may be a legal entity or an accredited division of a legal entity. The procedure on accreditation of qualification centres[40] was approved by a Resolution of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers in September 2021. According to this resolution, the National Qualifications Agency is authorised to accredit qualification centres. The first qualification centre that was accredited on 12 July 2022 is the Higher Vocational School 33, which was already involved in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning for cooks. It is now accredited for assessing and certifying professional qualifications for cooks and pastry-cooks. The Qualification Centre and the Professional Qualifications will be part of the Register of Qualifications (approved in June 2021). The register will contain information on the following:

- educational / professional qualifications,
- occupational standards,

[38] https://www.dcz.gov.ua/storinka/pidtverdzhennya-neformalnogo-navchannya
[39] Неформальне навчання - ВПУ 33. Вище професійне училище №33 м. Києва. Офіційний сайт. (vpu33.com.ua)
[40] Regulation on accreditation of qualification centres" approved by Cabinet of Ministers Resolution in September 2021

- qualification centres,
- experts on the accreditation of qualification centres,
- documents on professional qualifications;
- applications for the development of occupational standards providing a unified platform for all validation actors.

The register is not yet fully operational but is being populated gradually.

The procedure for assessing, recognising and awarding professional qualifications in Qualification Centres includes:

- the qualification centre accepts the application for the professional qualification and other supporting documents submitted by the applicant on the acquired learning outcomes;
- an interview takes place with the applicant regarding the acquired learning outcomes, and relevant knowledge of occupational safety for the given occupation;
- on the basis of the interview a decision is made on the possibility of conducting the assessment;
- the assessment is carried out; and
- on the basis of the results, a decision is made regarding the confirmation procedure and issuance of the relevant document.

In cases where occupational standards are the basis for formal education, there is no need for assessing, recognising and awarding the professional qualifications in a Qualification Centre. Formal education graduates will receive a corresponding educational qualification in those cases.

Formal Education

Since 2014, VET providers can shorten the duration of study programmes for individuals based on their previously obtained knowledge, skills and competences. They will use the state standard for vocational education training for a specific occupation or with the learning outcomes of a typical curriculum or programmes for specific subjects to compare the learning outcomes obtained. This procedure is called input or entrance control (вхідний контроль/ vhidniy kontrol').[41] The procedure was introduced to make formal VET more attractive for companies and adult learners looking to change their profile. It allows for shortened formal programmes. A number of educational institutions have developed procedures for entrance control, but, currently, there is no centralised monitoring system that enables us to monitor the impact of this process.

The 2017 Law on Education defines non-formal and informal learning. It also introduces a legal right for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the formal education system (Article 8) as well as the assessment of learning outcomes acquired through external studies within education programmes and the certification of educational qualifications (Article 9). These articles affect all forms of formal education, including general education (where this has been always possible) and higher education.

Higher Education Institutions develop their own arrangements for the recognition of learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and informal learning as part of the internal QA system that are subject to external evaluation. Since 2019 the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education has looked at how different higher education institutions propose to include VNFIL in their activities during the accreditation process. In February 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted a common framework for such VNFIL arrangements in higher and professional higher education, drawing attention to the different aspects that should be considered[42]. These arrangements should be made by each

[41] MoES Order "On Approving the Procedure for Conducting Entrance Control of Knowledge, Skills and Skills for Persons Accepted to Study in Retraining or Advanced Qualification Programs at Vocational and Technical Educational Institutions" dated 06.06.2014 N 688

[42] Order of MoES of 08.02.2022 № 130 "On approval of the Procedure for recognition in higher and professional higher education of learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and / or informal education" , registered in MoJ 16.03.2022 for № 328/37664) https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/RE37664?an=86

institution. They are aimed at students who want to enter specific educational programmes and set a limit of recognising not more than 25% of the ECTS credits for the programmes.

Use of partial qualifications

According to the 2017 Law on Education, partial educational and professional qualifications may be awarded for recognising learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and informal learning[43]. For professional qualifications, the Law states that a partial qualification is obtained if an individual acquires part of the competences established by the relevant NQF level defined by the relevant occupational standard usually based on one or several labour functions. For VET qualifications, the Certificate of skilled worker can be considered a partial qualification in VET and can be obtained after a set of competences are assessed according to VET standards, rather than the complete programme. In higher education no partial qualifications exist.

Conclusions

VNFIL has a very clear place in both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF. The frameworks are comparable. The European standards (Recommendations on EQF and on VNFIL) have clearly influenced both the legislation as well as Ukrainian practices. As within many member states, there is a clear strategy for the wider use of VNFIL in Ukraine, but VNFIL is not yet operational across all sectors and levels of the Ukrainian NQF.

The State Employment Service has recognised the cook occupation through VNFIL since 2016. Qualification Centres accredited by the National Qualifications Agency are expected to be the main bodies dealing with VNFIL and will award professional qualifications based on occupational standards. The first Qualification Centre has been accredited recently; it can build on its first experiences with VNFIL. In formal VET, there is some experience with entrance control that could be better monitored. Most Higher Education Institutions are expected to develop VNFIL procedures. VNFIL is expected to be further developed with the establishment of additional Qualification Centres and the implementation of VNFIL in formal education.

With the impact of the war and Covid, VNFIL processes are becoming more and more important and will allow people to progress in their learning, careers, and lives. Establishing close cooperation between countries in the EQF and Ukraine regarding the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning can foster the exchange of experiences on how to operationalise VNFIL systems and support new developments, such as the use of micro-credentials, where Ukraine has initiated a pilot for reconstruction skills.

[43] See art 8 and 34 of the Law on Education

6. Quality assurance

Trust in the quality and level of qualifications is essential in order to support the recognition of learning as well as the mobility of both learners and workers within and across sectors and countries. Countries are responsible for quality assurance arrangements with regard to qualifications in their National Qualifications Frameworks or systems.

However, it is expected that all qualifications with an EQF level meet the EQF's common principles on quality assurance, but approaches may vary according to qualification type: general education, VET, higher education and adult learning. In the case of Ukraine's National Qualifications Framework, the objective is to demonstrate that the NQF's quality assurance framework is comparable with the EQF's quality assurance framework.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Quality assurance is a fundamental underlying principle of the EQF. It is considered as the foundation for mutual trust between countries and systems, which in turn is a decisive factor for the success of the EQF referencing process.

Quality assurance in the context of the EQF includes the following elements:

1. EQF referencing criteria

The EQF Recommendation states that Member States should ensure that qualifications with an EQF level are in accordance with the common principles for quality assurance set out in Annex IV, without prejudice to national quality assurance principles that apply to national qualifications.

The two referencing criteria 5 and 6 state that when countries reference their NQFs to the EQF, EQF referencing criteria require them to illustrate that their QA arrangements are linked to the NQF and are consistent with the principles of quality assurance as specified in Annex IV of the EQF Recommendation (criterion 5); and that the EQF referencing exercise report, shall include a written statement by the relevant national QA bodies confirming that the report is consistent with national arrangements, provisions and practice regarding quality assurance.

2. Quality assurance principles for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF): (Annex IV)

The EQF contains common principles regarding quality assurance for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the EQF. The principles are fully compatible with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and the *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training*. These principles address quality assurance processes for the following objectives:

- designing qualifications as well as applying the learning outcomes approach;
- valid and reliable assessment with learning outcomes-based standards as the basis for certification;
- continuous feedback and improvement, involvement of relevant stakeholders;
- consistent evaluation methods, including self-assessment and external review;
- integration of quality assurance in the management systems of the national bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level;
- use of clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines;
- access to appropriate resources;
- regularly reviewing existing external monitoring bodies or agencies as well as carrying out quality assurance checks; and

- making evaluation results available online.

3. EQAVET framework

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) is the European reference framework for QA in VET[44]. It is a toolbox used in national quality assurance systems for both initial and continuing vocational education and training. It covers vocational education and training in all learning environments (e.g., school-based provision of education and training as well as work-based learning, including apprenticeship schemes) and all learning types (e.g., digital, face-to-face or blended), delivered by both public and private providers. It is also underpinned by a set of indicative descriptors and common reference indicators for quality assurance in VET applied both at system and provider level depending on the national arrangement in place[45].

EQAVET also promotes European co-operation in developing and improving QA in VET through the EQAVET network, which is a community of practitioners that brings together countries and social partners. It is supported by scientific advisers, CEDEFOP and the European Commission.

4. Quality Assurance Arrangements for Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

The 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning[46] requests the implementation of transparent QA measures, in line with existing QA frameworks, that support reliable, valid and credible assessment methodologies and tools.

QA is key in establishing the link between NQFs and validation. For QA validation arrangements, the majority of countries use (or intend to use) the general QA mechanisms already in place for the educational system and their NQF, signalling that validation of non-formal and informal learning is subject to the same quality requirements as any other assessment and certification process. Only a small group of countries follows the approach of establishing specific QA arrangements for validation.

Ukraine's National Qualifications Framework

Like the EQF, the Ukrainian quality assurance framework for qualifications includes mechanisms that foster the development and approval of qualifications as well as measures in order to ensure the quality of the country's qualifications provision. In the next section, the areas analysed correspond to and are comparable to the EQF.

1. Quality assurance of the development of qualifications

Qualifications that belong to the Ukrainian NQF are developed based on educational or occupational standards. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MoES)[47] is the body responsible for the development and approval of educational standards as well as the methodology they use for development. Educational standards specify requirements for mandatory competences and learning outcomes[48]. Educational programmes are developed based on the respective educational standards.

During examination of higher education standards, compliance of the learning outcomes with the Ukrainian NQF descriptors is verified. The Ministry of Education and Science requires this verification before it can approve the education standards. The compliance of educational programs with educational standards is confirmed during accreditation (in higher education) or approval (in general education and VET).

Occupational standards define requirements that match workers' skills and are used in the development of professional qualifications, VET and higher education standards. They are developed

[44] The Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience (2020) EUR-Lex - 32020H1202(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
[45] EUR-Lex - 32020H1202(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
[46] EUR-Lex - 32012H1222(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
[47] art. 64 law of Education
[48] art. 32 Law of Education

by relevant stakeholders, submitted for wider consultation and approved by the Ministry of Economy, while the National Qualification Agency or joint representative body of employers oversees their development.[49] After approval they are registered in the Register of Qualifications. Occupational standards need to be updated regularly.

Box 4: Quality assurance of qualifications development

The main instruments for qualifications development QA are educational and occupational standards. Procedures for the development of standards include the involvement of relevant stakeholders and external review. Educational standards specify minimal requirements for educational qualifications in terms of mandatory competences and learning outcomes. Occupational standards are used to guarantee the relevance of qualifications for the labour market. There are guidelines for developing standards.

2. Quality assurance of the provision of qualifications

Procedures for the quality assurance of the education provision include internal (institutional) and external quality assurance in education, as well as the quality assurance of quality assurance bodies[50]. The bodies responsible for external quality assurance and their main function are listed below:

- the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the licencing of education providers;
- the State Service for Education Quality is responsible for the institutional audit, state control and monitoring, authorisation of VET institutions and their programmes, accreditation of pre-higher professional programmes, and approving educational programmes in general education;
- the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education is responsible for the accreditation of higher education programmes;
- the National Qualifications Agency is responsible for the accreditation of qualification (assessment) centres dealing with the independent assessment of professional qualifications, including the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Box 5: Quality assurance of provision of qualifications

Provision of educational qualifications include both internal QA and external evaluation. Assessment and certification are part of internal QA processes of qualification providers and are subject to external evaluation and monitoring by QA bodies.

Main elements in the national system of quality assurance for qualifications that are part of the Ukrainian NQF

In general education, model curricula are developed by the Ministry of Education based on state standards in secondary education[51]. These have been informed by international competence frameworks such as DigComp and EntreComp, which are indirectly tied together through the EQF. In particular, the acquisition of key competences is emphasised. All programmes are expressed in terms of learning outcomes and general education programmes other than the model or programmes based on model. They must be approved by the State Service for Education Quality[52]. General education providers are subject to licencing by regional educational authorities.

VET programmes are based on state VET standards that are developed for specific occupations using occupational standards, if available[53], and involve stakeholders. The standards are approved by MESU after validation by the Ministry of Economy and other relevant public authorities in consultation with the joint representative body of employers at the national level. VET providers are authorised for specific programmes by the State Service for Education Quality's accreditation commission, which includes MESU representatives, other public institutions, educational institutions, and social partners.

[49] The procedure for the development, entry into force and updating of occupational standards Прозатвердження порядку розробл... | від 31.05.2017 № 373 (rada.gov.ua)
[50] Art. 41 law of Education
[51] Державні стандарти | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[52] Art. 67 law of education
[53] State VET standard Про затвердження Державного ста... | від 20.10.2021 № 1077 (rada.gov.ua);

Professional qualifications issued by Qualification Centres are being introduced. They have been developed based on occupational standards[54] and are awarded by qualification centres according to the established procedure for assessment[55]. The National Qualifications Agency accredits Qualifications Centres for specific professional qualifications that are developed from occupational standards[56].

Assessment of learning outcomes is an integrated part of quality assurance arrangements. In Ukraine, learning outcomes are mainly assessed for full qualifications. Assessment of learning outcomes is addressed in higher education standards[57] and related programmes. Occupational standards are used for assessing professional qualifications. This assessment can also focus on a set of competences. In general education learning outcomes and benchmarks for assessment are defined in the State standards of secondary general education. In formal VET only full programmes are assessed, but partial qualifications can also be assessed including those for retraining or upskilling purposes.

The table below illustrates the main elements in the national quality assurance system regarding Ukrainian NQF qualifications.

Quality Assurance Arrangements for higher education

Common quality assurance arrangements for higher education apply to both the higher education qualifications of the EQF countries and Ukraine as a full member of the Bologna Process. These are:

1. European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

The European standards and guidelines (ESG)[58] provide the framework for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Not only do they address internal and external quality assurance, they also lay out principles for quality assurance agencies in higher education. Moreover, they emphasise the primary responsibilities of higher education institutions in terms of quality assurance. They also ensure that QA reflects the diversity of systems, institutions, programmes and students. Finally, QA should support a quality culture and take into account the needs and expectations of students, stakeholders and society.

Box 3: The revised ESG (2015)

The revised guidelines include this standard:

"*The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the NQF for higher education and, consequently, to the framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*" (Standard 1.2).

2. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

ENQA[59] was set up in 2000. Its purpose is to share information, experiences and good practices in higher education QA. ENQA membership is open to QA agencies that operate in EHEA member states. It requires compliance with the ESG. This compliance undergoes an independent review process every five years.

3. European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

Set up in 2008, the EQAR[60] maintains a register of those higher education QA agencies that substantially comply with the ESG. Compliance must be demonstrated through an external review by

[54] Art. 39 law on education
[55] Procedure for awarding and confirming professional qualifications by qualification centres Про затвердження Порядку присвоє... | від 15.09.2021 № 956 (rada.gov.ua)
[56] Деякі питання акредитації кваліф... | від 22.09.2021 № 986 (rada.gov.ua); Art. 38 Law on education
[57] Methodological recommendations on the development of higher education standards
[58] Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015) ESG • ENQA
[59] Home • ENQA
[60] The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education - EQAR

independent experts. The main objective of the EQAR is to provide the public with clear and reliable information on QA agencies operating in Europe; the register is thus web-based and freely accessible.

EQUAR contributes to the transparency of EHEA countries alongside the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR[61]), which was launched in 2018. It includes higher education institutions that have been externally quality assured by an EQAR-registered agency (at institutional or programme level) to comply with the ESG.

In Ukraine, quality assurance processes in higher education are aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines. The independent National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education[62] has launched an ambitious accreditation programme. New processes for programme accreditation, new higher education standards and new curricula have been developed and introduced. All programmes and their components are now expressed in terms of learning outcomes and must be aligned with the outcomes of specialties that have been defined in the national higher education standards.

In 2020, the agency joined the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education and became an affiliated member of ENQA. Ukraine also recognises certificates of accreditation for educational programs issued by foreign accreditation agencies or quality assurance agencies of higher education if the agency is registered with EQAR. A list of recognised foreign agencies is approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine[63].

[61] www.deqar.eu
[62] National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (naqa.gov.ua)
[63] Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 554 of 10 Jul 2019 on the approval of the list of agencies which accreditation decisions are recognised Про затвердження переліку іноз... | від 10.07.2019 № 554-р (rada.gov.ua)

Table on Quality assurance measures for Ukrainian NQF qualifications

Quality assurance measures	Qualification types				
	General secondary education	***Higher education qualifications***	***Pre-higher professional education qualifications***	***VET qualifications***	***Professional qualifications***
QA of development of qualifications	Development and approval of state secondary education standards Development and approval of model curricula	Development and approval of higher education standards (on specialities) Accreditation of higher education programmes	Development and approval of pre-higher professional education standards (on specialities)	Development and approval of state VET standards (on occupations)	Development and approval of occupational standards
QA of provision	Approval of educational programme of the educational institution by the State Service for Education Quality Licencing of general education providers	Licencing of higher education providers Accreditation of higher education programmes of the higher education provider by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, or other foreign quality assurance body approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	Licencing of pre-higher professional education providers Accreditation of pre-higher professional programmes by the accreditation commission of the State Service for Education Quality	Licencing of VET providers Authorisation of VET providers and their programmes by the accreditation commission of the State Service for Education Quality	Accreditation of bodies awarding professional qualifications (qualification centres) by the National Qualifications Agency

Conclusions

In Ukraine quality assurance has been one of its NQF's main objectives. The focus is ensuring standards align with European Union practices, which entails moving away from a curriculum-focused and subject-oriented approach to an outcome-based, modular approach. Learning outcomes play an important role. The learning outcomes in the Ukrainian NQF descriptors are translated into qualifications through educational standards. Educational qualifications promote competency-based education and include key competences. This focus on the use of learning outcomes strengthens the relevance of standards, assessment processes and programme accreditation by providers.

Common principles for QA of NQF qualifications apply to both EQF countries and Ukraine: quality assurance arrangements address designing qualifications and involvement of relevant stakeholders, applying the learning outcomes approach in learning and assessment. .higher education qualifications in both EQF countries and Ukraine are quality assured in line with the ESG and linked to the NQF. The QA system for VET qualifications and general education is in place, but its link to the Ukrainian NQF needs to be made explicit.

Occupational standards are increasingly used to guarantee the relevance of qualifications. They are used to define standards for vocational education and training and higher education, while Qualification Centres are in charge of organising independent assessment and awarding professional qualifications, based on occupational standards.

7. Recognition of foreign qualifications

Recognition is an important topic for cooperation with third countries as it can support migration, labour mobility, learner mobility, virtual cross border cooperation and the integration of refugees. This is particularly important in the context of EU-Ukraine relations as 6.7 million people have fled the war in Ukraine to EU member states. The EU has made the transparency of refugees' skills and qualifications a priority area. It has asked the ETF to establish a resource hub to support people fleeing the war in Ukraine by finding recognition for their qualifications, opportunities for further studies and work in the EU, and informing member states about the education and qualifications system in Ukraine. The Commission has published a recommendation on professional recognition (Recommendation 2022/554, see below) and together with ETF it has translated into Ukrainian key European documents such as the EU Skills tool for Third Country nationals, the EUROPASS e-profile and ESCO to support the transparency of qualifications and skills of Ukrainian citizens. The comparison exercise is another key component in this process as it , clarifies the relationship between Ukraine's NQF and the EQF.

The EQF Recommendation refers to high rates of over-qualification and under-employment among third-country nationals, a better understanding and a fair recognition of qualifications awarded outside the Union is needed. This was one of the main reasons for starting the comparison of the EQF with third country qualifications frameworks. Qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes make it easier to compare qualifications and this can facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications.

The EQF Recommendation describes 'formal recognition of learning outcomes' as a process of granting official status by a competent authority to acquired learning outcomes for the purpose of further study or employment. This can be done in the form of a qualification certificate; through the validation of non-formal and informal learning; or by granting an equivalence, credit or waivers.

EQF and recognition of qualifications in Europe

The EQF Recommendation's main objectives are to enhance the transparency and comparability of qualifications in the European space. The EQF can support existing recognition practices thanks to the strengthened trust, understanding and comparability of qualifications they bring. This can make the process of recognition for learning and working easier. The EQF is first and foremost a transparency tool; the EQF Recommendation mentions the term *recognition of qualifications* several times, but in a context of support to recognition processes. The use of the EQF or of the NQFs referenced to it for recognition, is not part of the referencing criteria of NQFs to the EQF.

Bodies involved in the recognition of academic and professional qualification can use the EQF, NQFs and other transparency tools such as QA mechanisms, credit systems, etc. to support recognition practices as they establish trust, understanding and the comparability of qualifications, making the process of recognition for learning and working purposes easier. Qualifications frameworks and other transparency tools can facilitate recognition through the comparison and combination of qualifications and learning outcomes including partial recognition, the recognition of micro-credentials and stacked learning.

The EQF does not provide for automatic recognition. The Commission Recommendation 2022/554[64] on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine provides Member States' authorities with guidance and practical advice to ensure a quick, fair and flexible recognition process.

The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region contains a supplementary text[65] which recommends that overarching qualifications frameworks such as the EQF and referenced NQFs are information tools to support recognition practices. It sets out the following principles:

- Qualifications frameworks are important information and transparency tools for the recognition of higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education

[64] EUR-Lex - 32022H0554 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
[65] DGIIEDUHE_2012_14_Rev09_FINAL_-_LRC_Supplementary_Text_on_the_Use_of_QFs_ENGLISH.pdf (enic-naric.net)

- From a lifelong learning perspective, qualifications frameworks can facilitate the recognition of prior learning.
- Qualifications frameworks may be helpful in establishing similarities between foreign qualifications and relevant qualifications within the education system in which recognition is sought, and whether or not there are substantial differences between qualifications.
- Qualifications Frameworks facilitate recognition especially when they have been linked in a transparent and comparative way.
- The positioning of qualifications within the NQF of the awarding country and their relation to one or more overarching frameworks gives important information to facilitate the recognition processes.

Qualifications frameworks should be used while considering the five key elements in recognition: level, learning outcomes, quality, workload and profile. For any given level, there is, as a general rule, no need for the competent recognition authority to investigate the level of qualifications further if the NQF is referenced to the EQF or self-certified to the QFEHEA. If there is a need for more information on the level or learning outcomes, the Diploma Supplement can provide more information. Regarding quality, a transparent link between recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance should be established. Beyond the learning outcomes, which are the basis for assessing qualifications, competent recognition authorities may also be guided in their assessment by the workload, normally expressed as credits, which indicate the typical workload expected to achieve the learning outcomes associated with a qualification. Professional profiles are more difficult to assess based on the qualifications framework.

The European Area of Recognition Manual,[66] which contains standards and guidelines on all aspects of the recognition of foreign qualifications, aims to provide credential evaluators with a practical tool to assist them in their daily recognition work. It stresses the importance of viewing foreign qualifications within their national systems and here NQFs are a useful tool. The manual refers to qualifications frameworks as tools that can compare qualifications on the basis of learning outcomes.

EU level work on the recognition of qualifications primarily addresses higher education qualifications and qualifications that give access to higher education. EU cooperation on the recognition of qualifications in the VET, adult learning, but also of micro-credentials, partial qualifications is less developed. Digital credentials add new tools for recognition processes.

The Ukrainian NQF and recognition

In Ukraine, the recognition of foreign formal qualifications is based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention and other international agreements. Ukraine has made approximately 20 bilateral agreements on recognition. Recognition is regulated based on procedures for Higher Education Degrees and documents in secondary education and secondary vocational education.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for recognition through the ENIC NARIC Centre. The Ministry of Education and Science can make recognition decisions that are valid across Ukraine. Higher Education Institutions can also make recognition decisions, but these are only binding within the specific institution. Although the recognition decisions from the Ministry of Education and Science are legally binding, higher education institutions and employers decide on admission to studies or work. Line ministries are responsible for issuing licenses for work in regulated professions, e.g. the Ministry of Health for health professions.

There is a central database of recognition decisions. Recognition processes can cover formal qualifications and study abroad periods certified in the formal education system. For PhDs there is a separate arrangement. For professional qualifications, there is no system in place yet, but it is foreseen that accredited Qualification Centres will deal with these in the future. If there is a substantial difference, the qualification can be partially recognised.

Before the war, the number of recognition requests grew more than six times from 4 694 in 2016 to 29 744 in 2021. Most of these applications were handled by the Ministry of Education and Science but the numbers dealt with directly by Higher Education Institutions increased during the last years. This reflects

[66] European Area of Recognition - EAR Manual (enic-naric.net)

the growing popularity of Ukraine as a destination for foreign students before the war who mainly came from third countries.

The recognition process includes establishing the authenticity of the document, the status of the issuing educational institution and assessment of elements to determine equivalent academic or professional rights. The qualifications framework and learning outcomes play a role in the assessment of the level, workload, quality, profile and learning outcomes of a qualification in line with the EAR Manual. The NQF and overarching qualifications frameworks can be used to compare qualifications. This can shorten the recognition process especially if there is a link to the EQF.

NQFs as transparency instruments confirm the level, learning outcomes and often the type of qualification. Databases on Higher Education Institutions are also very useful. Assessment is done indirectly through the EQF and the QF EHEA as the NQF in Ukraine is not yet linked to the EQF.

The electronic network UaReNet has existed since 2020. It is a platform that encourages exchange between the Ministry of Education and Science, the ENIC NARIC Centre and Higher Education Institutions. Recognition offices in Higher Education Institutions are trained by the ENIC NARIC Centre to use the EAR HEIs Manual.

Conclusions

Recognition is a key area for cooperation between the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF given the large number of people that have fled from the war in Ukraine to the EU.

Qualifications frameworks facilitate recognition, especially when NQFs are linked to overarching frameworks. This has changed the way recognition is being carried out. Since qualifications frameworks have become operational and linked, they can be used to support the comparison qualifications and shorten recognition procedures.

Ukraine is signatory to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The principles for recognition using the national qualifications framework, overarching frameworks and learning outcomes are comparable with those used in countries that have referenced their NQFs to the EQF.

The Comparison of the EQF with the Ukrainian NQF and the self-certification of the Ukrainian NQF to the Qualifications Framework of the European Area for Higher Education create links that will facilitate the recognition of qualifications. The diploma supplement, and the network of ENIC NARIC centres provide additional tools to improve recognition processes. Ukraine can further benefit from cooperation with the EQF in emerging areas such as the national databases of qualifications and digital credentials, digitisation of diploma supplements, and recognition of micro-credentials.

8. Governance structure/Governance arrangements

NQFs are considered operational when implementation structures are in place. Governance structures should be **inclusive** to be effective and **facilitate participative governance**, transparent and open access to information and decision making. Governance structures and stakeholder involvement promote co-ownership and co-creation of qualification systems. Good governance reinforces mutual trust.

EQF

The EQF is based on a recommendation[67] which is not legally binding but supports voluntary actions of EU Member States to improve cooperation. The EQF recommendation facilitates further cooperation between them to increase transparency and to promote mobility and lifelong learning. It fosters change by supporting and informing reform. Although not legally binding, its adoption by EU Member States reflects the commitment to use the EQF to reference national qualifications frameworks or systems and to compare all types and levels of qualifications in the European Union.

The EQF includes the following governance arrangements and mechanisms:

The EQF Advisory Group (EQF AG)

The EQF Advisory Group[68] is the central governance group responsible for the consistent, coherent, transparent and coordinated EQF implementation. It includes representatives from the 27 EU Member States, four EFTA countries (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) and seven pre-accession countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey) as well as employment, education and training and other stakeholders at the European level, including Social Partners, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, providers' networks, adult learning providers, the voluntary sector, the Council of Europe, as important for the link to the Bologna Process. With the European Council having decided to grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine on 23 June 2022, Ukraine is entitled to become a member of the EQF AG.

The **European Commission** plays a steering role and is bolstered by technical expertise from both CEDEFOP and the ETF. Implementation of the EQF is supported through peer discussions, comparisons and development of methodologies and processes. A country has referenced to the EQF once the EQF Advisory Group considers its referencing report to be sufficiently transparent and to respect all ten EQF referencing criteria. The EQF Advisory Group is also the forum where the VNFIL recommendation is implemented[69].

Project Groups are established under the EQF AG to address specific issues like comparing methodologies for levelling qualifications, developing methodologies for the descriptions, using and applying learning outcomes, how to deal with levelling of international qualifications, developing guidance for communicating the EQF, how to indicate EQF level on certificates, comparing third countries' national and regional qualifications frameworks with the EQF, etc.

Peer Learning Activities are organised for practical exchanges among EQF countries – they allow for more in depth discussions of specific topics that cannot be addressed within the context of EQF Advisory Group meetings.

EQF National Coordination Points (EQF NCP)

National Coordination Points at the national level support their authorities in referencing NQFs to the EQF and in bringing the EQF closer to individuals and organisations. NCPs provide information and guidance to stakeholders on how national qualifications through NQFs relate to the EQF and they promote the participation of all relevant stakeholders on the comparison and use of qualifications at the European level.

[67] EUR-Lex - 32017H0615(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
[68] Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities (europa.eu)
[69] EUR-Lex - 32012H1222(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

Ukrainian NQF

In Ukraine, the policy lead for the NQF is with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine. Two other bodies have been created especially to support the implementation of the Ukrainian NQF: the Interdepartmental Committee for the implementation of the NQF and the National Qualifications Agency.

Interdepartmental Committee for the implementation of the Ukrainian NQF

Established in 2010 to support coordination in developing the Ukrainian NQF, the Interdepartmental Committee (working group) was operational until 2019 and involved all the main stakeholders in developing and implementing the NQF in Ukraine. The working group was composed of representatives of all relevant ministries in the area of qualifications, Parliamentary Committees for Education and for Social Policy, Social Partners, the Chamber of Industry, State Employment Service, State Statistics Service, scientific research institutes and NGO's. It was responsible for preparing the NQF and supporting its implementation, including ensuring interaction and coordination between stakeholders and institutions, preparing recommendations for mechanisms designed to implement the NQF, and engaging in developing legislation[70].

The National Qualifications Agency (NQA)

The National Qualifications Agency[71] was legislated through the Law on Education in 2017[72]. It was established in 2019 as a tripartite collegial body to strengthen coordination in the area of qualifications. It was co-founded by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Social Policy in cooperation with social partners at the national level. The agency is the main body supporting the Ukrainian NQF implementation and the development of the professional qualifications system.

Box 4: The tasks of the National Qualifications Agency[73]

The National Qualifications Agency:

- participates in the development of normative legal acts in the field of qualifications;
- ensures the interaction, coordination and efficiency of the stakeholders in the field of qualifications;
- accompanies the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework in compliance with the requirements of the Ukrainian Law on Education o
- carries out international cooperation in the field of qualifications, in particular with the aim of harmonising the National Qualifications Framework with similar international instruments;
- coordinates the assessment of state policy's effectiveness in the field of qualifications;
- provides forecasting of labour market needs in qualifications;
- provides information support to the National Qualifications System and the National Qualifications Framework;
- creates and maintains a Register of Qualifications;
- prepares a draft procedure for the development, commissioning and revision of occupational standards and submits it to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine for approval;
- registers occupational standards and ensures open access to standards;
- coordinates the development of occupational standards;
- participates in the development of education standards;
- carries out the accreditation of qualification centres;

[70] Проутвореннямiжвідомчоїробоч...Про утворення міжвідомчої робоч... | від 29.12.2010 № 1225 (rada.gov.ua)
[71] Головна (nqa.gov.ua)
[72] ПроосвітуПро освіту | від 05.09.2017 № 2145-VIII (rada.gov.ua)
[73] ПроосвітуПро освіту | від 05.09.2017 № 2145-VIII (rada.gov.ua)

- develops criteria and procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications obtained in foreign countries;
- establishes requirements for procedures to award professional qualifications and, recognise results of non-formal and informal training;
- interacts with bodies and institutions assuring the quality of education;
- exercises other powers provided for by law.

Conclusions

When we compare the governance structures of the EQF with the Ukrainian NQF we see that both include representatives from different stakeholders, and both cooperate with other stakeholders. Ukraine's National Qualifications Agency is a relatively young institution and its effectiveness has not been reviewed yet, while at the EU level the EQF AG and the National Coordination Points (NCP) network have been in place for a longer period (since 2009). Even though each framework has a different scope, their governance structures are largely comparable. Both structures are inclusive and participative.

9. Communication, visibility, transparency, access to information

The communication of qualifications frameworks to end users and stakeholders plays an important role in qualifications frameworks that are operational. Qualifications frameworks are operational when main working methods and instruments such as databases and communication strategies are in place. End-users are being made aware of the existence and the services of qualifications frameworks, and the qualifications framework is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes and for the continuous revision and renewal of qualifications. In short, qualifications frameworks are gradually playing a role in improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications at the national and international level.

Communication, visibility, transparency, access to information in the context of the EQF

The EQF Council Recommendation defines actions linked to awareness raising and communication of the added value of NQFs and the EQF, clearly recognising communication as key for future take up and implementation of NQFs and the EQF[74].

Box 5: Key elements for communicating the EQF[75]

- *Target groups*: end-users (individuals/citizens), employers, education and training providers, qualification recognition bodies, policymakers.
- *Actors involved*: national authorities, EQF National Coordination Points and the European Commission are key actors responsible for EQF-relevant communication activities. Actors such as CEDEFOP, ETF and other stakeholders also play a role in disseminating information.
- *Scope of communication activities*: the scope of activities is broad, including outreach efforts at national and EU levels to various target groups via different communication channels, the increase and improvement of available information (e.g., via inclusion of levels on documents and registers), and the exchange of experience and community building at a national, regional and European level.

The European Commission has enhanced the provision of information on NQFs and the EQF via the introduction of the Europass platform in 2020 and via the improvement of its links to CEDEFOP's[76] and ETF[77]'s websites and by preparing and translating infographics, leaflets, the EQF brochure and videos in 2018 / 2019.

Apart from traditional tools, such as brochures, etc., the general public is increasingly reached through NQF websites – including qualifications databases and registers – and a mix of social media channels. NCPs play a central role in coordinating stakeholders and developing comprehensive overarching communication strategies at the national level. Thirty-three countries indicate EQF levels on certificates, diplomas or supplements, while 23 do so on databases or registers of qualifications, and 18 countries publish qualifications on Europass.

Europass platform[78]

The Europass online platform[79] is the EU platform for provision of information on the EQF. Among others, it provides information on qualifications and qualifications frameworks and on learning

[74] The EQF Council Recommendation of May 2017:
- invites countries to include a reference to an EQF level on documents and/or registers of qualifications, to ensure results of the referencing are publicly available and to encourage the use of EQF by relevant stakeholders.
- defines a key task of EQF NCPs as providing support to national authorities to bring the EQF closer to individuals and organisations.
- recommends that the Commission, in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders within the EQF Advisory Group, develop guidance for communicating the EQF.

[75] Note AG 48-4 Note on Communication, 58 EQF Advisory Group meeting, 28 November 2018.
[76] National Qualifications frameworks (NQFs) online tool | CEDEFOP (europa.eu)
[77] Qualifications | ETF (europa.eu) and Group Blog | Open Space (europa.eu)
[78] Home | Europass
[79] Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC

opportunities, and it brings together web-based tools and relevant information in order to help end-users to better communicate and present their skills and qualifications and to compare qualifications.

EQF-relevant content available in the Europass platform includes:

- A general introduction of the EQF, stakeholders involved and the referencing process;[80]
- Information on National Qualifications Frameworks, including contact details of EQF NCPs and EQF referencing reports and national qualifications registers or databases;[81]
- A comparison tool that shows how National Qualifications Frameworks relate to each other;[82]
- Information on the use of learning outcomes and level descriptors;[83]
- National referencing reports.[84]

Europass interoperability aims to support the exchange of CVs and profiles, and information on job and learning opportunities, and qualifications, including digital credentials. With regard to the availability of information on learning opportunities and qualifications, the platform allows to search for courses and qualifications from all countries that submit this information[85]. Furthermore, the Europass platform contains information linked to validation of non-formal and informal learning[86], relevant EU services, policy background information and relevant links relating to the recognition of skills and qualifications.[87]

Ukrainian NQF

In Ukraine, the **National Qualifications Agency** (NQA) is primarily responsible for communicating on the NQF[88]. The NQA website[89] includes sections with information about the national qualification system, resources, links to useful sources, related legislation, key documents and publications. The agency maintains the register of qualifications[90] which provides information about:

- professional and educational qualifications, and qualification centres;
- occupational standards; and
- awarded professional qualifications to individuals (credentials)[91].

The register has not been fully populated yet and currently includes occupational standards, mainly.

Box 6: Communicating on the NQF

Information about NQF in Ukraine is communicated via:

- official websites (NQA, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukrainian ENIC, educational institutions, other interested organisations);
- social networks (e.g., NGAs' Facebook pages, other interested organisations);
- organising conferences, forums, round tables (NQA, interested educational institutions and other organisations);
- visual materials and presentations (Ministry of Education and Science, Ukrainian ENIC);
- referring to an NQF level in Diploma Supplements.

[80] The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) | Europass
[81] National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) | Europass
[82] Find and Compare Qualifications Frameworks | Europass
[83] Description of the eight EQF levels | Europass
[84] EQF Referencing Reports | Europass
[85] Courses | Europass
[86] Validation of non-formal and informal learning | Europass
[87] Recognition of skills and qualifications | Europass
[88] According to Ukrainian legislation (Law on Education, art. 38)
[89] Головна (nqa.gov.ua)
[90] Реєстр кваліфікацій (nqa.gov.ua)
[91] Cabinet of Ministers decree on 16 June 2021 No.620

The Ministry of Education and Science's website provides information on the Ukrainian NQF implementation, including visuals representing the NQF, analytical and informational materials, sectoral councils, relevant legislation and reports. The Ministry also maintains online repositories of educational standards:

- General secondary education state standards[92]
- VET standards[93]
- Professional pre-higher education standards[94]
- Higher education standards[95]

The **Single State Educational Database** (EDEBO)[96] includes registers of educational establishments, issued educational credentials, independent external certificates for access to higher education, student cards, and certified teachers. The database allows for the verification of issued educational credentials.

The **ENIC-NARIC** website[97] includes a visual representation of the NQF[98] and a description of Ukraine's education system[99]. It also provides information about relevant legislation and the NQF self-certification report.

Diploma Supplements in Ukraine follow the European format and contain information on the NQF level and corresponding QF EHEA levels[100]. Setting-up a digital credential register that would include Diploma Supplements in electronic format is planned. Certificate Supplements do not refer to the NQF.

The NQF is not yet used by career information and guidance services.

Conclusions

Comparison as a process helps improve the transparency of qualifications for individuals, employers and education providers. It also supports international mobility, migration and the EQF's use internationally. These outcomes are directly tied to effective communication on the EQF's role and the comparison of qualifications frameworks for end users and stakeholders.

The information on both qualifications frameworks is available online and actively disseminated. However, the nature of information and communication is changing due to digital technologies, and new systems provide more personalised and accurate information regarding the holder's achievements. In the case of the EQF, the new Europass promotes the use of the EQF and data on qualifications to end-users and stakeholders, integrating the information with other tools such as the Europass CV and the Digital Credential Infrastructure.[101] In Ukraine, lots of information is available, but the register of qualifications is not fully operational yet and still needs to be populated with additional information on qualifications. The NQF is not yet used to support career guidance.

Mentioning NQF levels on qualifications is the most tangible information for end users and employers. Ukrainian higher education qualifications have a clear reference to the NQF, but this is missing in other types of qualifications.

It is difficult to say to what extent both qualifications frameworks are known by end-users. This is an area where probably all qualifications frameworks can still improve. The EQF has a longer history than the Ukrainian NQF and has had more time to reach stakeholders and end-users. Communicating about Ukrainian qualifications, the NQF and how it compares to the EQF is very important in the current situation when millions of Ukrainians are fleeing from the Russian aggression to the European Union.

[92] Державні стандарти | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[93] Освітні стандарти, навчальні плани та програми | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[94] Затверджені стандарти | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[95] Затверджені стандарти вищої освіти | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)
[96] Реєстри | ЄДИНА ДЕРЖАВНА ЕЛЕКТРОННА БАЗА з питань ОСВІТИ (edbo.gov.ua)
[97] Main (enic.in.ua)
[98] National Qualifications Framework (enic.in.ua)
[99] Education system of Ukraine (enic.in.ua)
[100] forma-dodatka-do-dyploma-yevropeyskoho-zrazka.docx (live.com)
[101] What are digital credentials | Europass

10. Transparency of the Process

The comparison process is a dialogue where two parties work to reach a common understanding of each other's framework. In the case of the comparison between the EQF and Ukraine's NQF, European participants came from the European Commission, EU member state representatives from the EQF Advisory Group and the ETF. The Ukrainian participants came from the Ministry of Education and Science (responsible for Higher Education, adult learning, vocational education and training and general education), the Ministry of Economy, the National Qualifications Agency, the ENIC NARIC Recognition Centre, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, universities, regional methodological centres for VET, social partners (employers' organisations and trade unions) companies and NGOs. The dialogue took place in English and Ukrainian to ensure all relevant stakeholders were included and had full access to the process.

Participants followed a prescribed procedure, which consisted of agreeing on core topics, identifying and inviting relevant stakeholders and experts to partake in the process, and working through the key topics over the course of many meetings. For each topic, relevant information was collected based on written sources that had been translated and presented in working papers; these were then discussed and finalised. A number of in-depth expert discussions were organised between plenary meetings in order to explore topics in greater detail. Relevant stakeholders were asked to join the discussions so that their perspective regarding certain issues could be heard. These discussions focused on issues that needed to be clarified, while the plenary discussions focused on agreeing to what extent the frameworks were comparable by key topic. After each meeting, minutes were drafted and draft papers that brought together key issues were amended collectively.

One of the more complex issues addressed by the exercise has been to clarify the role and status of professional qualifications. In Ukraine, the Law on Education of 2017 distinguishes between educational qualifications issued by formal education providers (as is the case in all EQF countries) and professional qualifications with a labour market function. The latter exists in some member states, but not all of them. One of the most challenging aspects of the exercise was to clarify the role of professional qualifications, especially since the system is not yet fully operational. Moreover, it took considerable effort to understand how occupational standards and professional qualifications are linked and connect to the NQF. During the exercise, new regulations were adopted regarding levelling qualification standards and using qualification centres to help clarify the role of professional qualifications.

Since the process is aimed at finding a common position regarding the comparison of the framework based on dialogue, there was no role for external experts. However, since transparency is the goal of this exercise, all participants acted as critical friends. Transparency was, thus, ensured through the participation of a large group of relevant stakeholders.

The outcomes of the process are documented in this joint report, which intends to safeguard transparency by systematically addressing the different topics both from an EU and Ukrainian perspective, making the different contexts clear and providing evidence, insights and findings through participant interaction. The report has been jointly drafted by the Ukrainian and EU teams.

In June 2022, a presentation by Ukrainian and EU participants was made in the EQF AG on the progress achieved. In October, the draft report was presented to the EQF AG and shared for comments. Every effort was made to ensure that the comparison process was as transparent for and accessible to all those involved.

Conclusions and next steps

The comparison of the Ukrainian NQF with the EQF aimed at exploring the extent to which links can be established among them. It is different from referencing to the EQF where a country has to show how it complies with the EQF referencing criteria. Comparison is based on an open dialogue, evaluating together if various aspects of both frameworks are comparable and are sufficiently developed and implemented for the exercise to be meaningful. This comparison exercise was based on ten core topics.

The comparison dialogue proves that the frameworks are comparable and can be linked. These links can be strengthened further through a Joint Action Plan that will be shared at a later stage and address areas for improvement.

Ukraine's participation in the EQF Advisory Group will provide a unique opportunity to address many of these issues, though some of them will require specialised work.

Comparing the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF has helped create a better understanding of the Ukrainian qualifications framework, the processes behind it and its comparability with the EQF.

- Similarity of objectives and scope

The objectives of both frameworks are very similar. With a focus on lifelong learning, the validation of non-formal and informal learning, personal development, mobility, employability and the promotion of learning outcomes as an approach. Ukraine would like to link the Ukrainian NQF to the EQF as closely as possible, especially in light of the war that has forced millions of Ukrainians to seek and find refuge in the European Union.

Both frameworks are comprehensive; they cover qualifications at all levels and all sub-sectors in education and training. The Ukrainian NQF covers educational and professional qualifications as well as full and partial qualifications. There are some areas where the NQF is not yet fully operational. It is well-advanced in higher education, but progress regarding vocational education and general education is slower. The assessment and certification of professional qualifications in qualification centres has begun only recently and is expected to accelerate.

- Related functions for levels and learning outcomes

Both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF have eight levels based on learning outcomes that increase in complexity as one moves through the levels. Level descriptors in the EQF and the NQF cover both work and study situations, irrespective of learning settings (formal, non-formal or informal). The concepts of learning outcomes and level descriptors are comparable. Ukrainian level descriptors are more detailed than the EQF descriptors. Learning outcomes are central to the EQF and Ukraine's NQF. The understanding of learning outcomes and the role they play in defining level descriptors, qualifications and programmes as well as their use in assessment and learning is very similar to other European countries participating in the EQF. In Ukraine, level descriptors are sometimes used directly and sometimes indirectly.

- Promoting Validation of non-formal and informal learning and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

Both the EQF and the NQF support the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings, linking formal, non-formal and informal learning. VNFIL has a very clear place in both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF. As in many member states, VNFIL is not yet operational across all sectors and levels of the NQF, but there is a clear strategy for the wider use of VNFIL in Ukraine. With the impact of the war and Covid, VNFIL processes are becoming increasingly important and will allow people to progress in their learning, careers, and lives.

Qualifications frameworks facilitate recognition, especially when NQFs can be linked to overarching frameworks. Since qualifications frameworks have become operational and linked, they can be used to support the comparison of qualifications and shorten recognition procedures. Comparing the EQF with the NQF and the NQF's self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Area for Higher Education creates links that facilitate recognition. Recognition is a key area for cooperation

between the EQF and the NQF given the large number of people that have fled from the war in Ukraine to the EU.

Ukraine is a signatory to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The principles for recognition using the national qualifications framework, overarching frameworks and learning outcomes are comparable with those used in countries that have referenced their NQFs to the EQF. The diploma supplement, and the network of ENIC NARIC centres provide additional tools to improve recognition processes.

- Strong emphasis on Quality Assurance

European standards and recommendations on the EQF and VNFIL have clearly influenced both Ukrainian legislation and practices. Systems for validation, quality assurance and recognition are informed by learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. In Ukraine, qualifications and programmes are not only inspired by level descriptors and the way learning outcomes are used in the context of validation and credit systems, they also draw on EU key competence frameworks and are indirectly linked to the EQF, thus providing an additional unintended link to the EQF.

Common principles for the quality assurance of NQF qualifications apply to both EQF countries and Ukraine. Quality assurance arrangements address designing qualifications and involving relevant stakeholders as well as applying the learning outcomes approach in learning and assessment. In Ukraine, quality assurance has been one of the NQF's main objectives. Learning outcomes play an important role in QA. Level descriptors influence learning outcomes related to qualifications through state educational standards. The focus on learning outcomes strengthens the relevance of provision, assessment processes and programme accreditation by providers. HE qualifications are quality assured in line with the ESG and the NQF. Occupational standards are increasingly used to guarantee the relevance of qualifications. They are used to define standards for vocational education and training and higher education, while Qualification Centres are in charge of organising independent assessments and awarding professional qualifications based on occupational standards.

- Inclusive governance structures

When we compare the governance structures of the EQF with the Ukrainian NQF, we can observe that both include representatives from different stakeholder groups and both cooperate with other stakeholder groups. Stakeholders are, thus, actively involved in both the EQF and the Ukrainian NQF, both of which have clear institutional arrangements in addition to being inclusive and participative. Though each framework differs in scope, their governance structures are largely comparable.

- Increasing importance of online information and communication to stakeholders and end-users

Regarding communication, digital technologies are transforming the nature of the discipline. New systems provide more personalised and accurate information regarding qualification holders' achievements. The EQF and the Ukrainian NQF can take advantage of recent advances in communication to ensure end-users are able to make full use of the frameworks. Indeed, communicating about Ukrainian qualifications, the NQF and how it compares to the EQF is very important given the current context where millions of Ukrainians are fleeing the Russian aggression and pouring into the European Union. The information on both qualifications frameworks is available online and actively disseminated.

Recommendations for strengthening the Ukrainian NQF reinforcing the link to the EQF

1. The link between level descriptors and the learning outcomes of qualifications can be further strengthened in VET, general education and existing professional qualifications.
2. Mentioning NQF levels in relation to qualifications is the most tangible information for end-users and employers. Ukrainian higher education qualifications are clearly referenced in the NQF, but this is missing in other types of qualifications
3. Qualifications in VET could benefit from certificate supplements and applying the principles for shorter descriptions of learning outcomes.

4. Validation of non-formal and informal learning in Ukraine is widening to different qualification types under the NQF. Establishing close cooperation in VNFIL between EQF countries and Ukraine can foster rich, effective exchanges on how to operationalise VNFIL systems and support new developments, such as the use of micro-credentials.
5. The QA system for VET qualifications and general education is in place, but its link to the NQF needs to be made explicit
6. In Ukraine, the register of qualifications is not fully operational, yet; it still needs to be populated with additional information on qualifications.
7. The use of the NQF to support career guidance could be further developed.

Next Steps including a Joint Plan

- EU and Ukraine jointly disseminate the results of Comparison

The European Commission, the Ukrainian Authorities (Ministry of Education, National Qualifications Agency, the Ukrainian ENIC-NARIC Centre, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the EU Member States, the ENIC-NARIC Network, ETF and Cedefop will actively promote the results of this Comparison exercise to support the transparency and comparability of qualifications between Ukraine and the EQF Zone. This will also facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications.

- Ukraine assumes its responsibilities as a Candidate Country with support of the EU

Ukraine has become a Candidate Country in June 2022 and has now joined the EQF Advisory Group, which means that it will be fully involved in EQF implementation activities, which also include the possibility to participate in EQF AG project groups, in EQF Peer Learning Activities and to get EU funding under Erasmus+ for EQF National Coordination Point activities. Another implication is that as from now Ukraine can start preparing for referencing the Ukrainian NQF to the EQF. Closely linked to the EQF Recommendation is the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning which invites to the setting up of arrangements for validation of learning outcomes resulting from the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Other examples of Council recommendations for which the same applies concern micro-credentials, the Council Recommendation on VET and the existing arrangements in the field of adult learning. In the context of EU enlargement Ukraine was recently also invited to join the Europass Advisory Group and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training.

The Commission and appropriate EU Agencies (like the ETF) will support Ukraine in assuming its responsibilities

- EU and Ukraine develop and implement a Joint Action Plan

Over the next period a Joint Action Plan will be agreed between the EU and Ukraine that should address the different recommendations in relation to the Ukrainian NQF reinforcing its links to the EQF as mentioned above.

Some of these could be accommodated in the cooperation in the framework of the EQF AG and the peer learning activities, others will require specific actions.

Ukraine can further benefit from cooperation within the EQF AG in emerging areas such as the national qualifications databases and digital credentials, the digitisation of diploma supplements, and the recognition of micro-credentials, a domain where Ukraine has recently initiated a pilot for reconstruction skills.

ANNEXES

APPROVED

By the decision of the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

On December 2, 2021

Minutes No. _____

SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT

on Compliance of the National Qualifications Framework Criteria and Procedures with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

Drafted by the Working Group pursuant to the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1554 of December 24, 2020

KYIV, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The pan-European reform across the national education systems to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), now known as the Bologna Process, recently reached its 20th anniversary. The reform was formally launched by the ministers of education of 29 European countries in June 1999 in Bologna to celebrate the 900th anniversary of Europe's oldest university. Following its adoption by the ministers, the Bologna Declaration defined its ultimate goal as follows: to improve the European education's quality and competitiveness by maintaining national education legacy and enriching it jointly by further enhancing student and faculty mobility, developing a pan-European quality assurance and greater international cooperation.

The Bologna Declaration and the decisions of subsequent Ministerial Conferences set out the basic EHEA principles and alignment tools, among which the EHEA Qualifications Framework (EHEA QF) and the harmonized national qualifications frameworks play a special role. Their principal contributions are to build clarity and facilitate the comparability of educational qualifications, help improve the quality of qualifications, and serve as a tool for recognizing qualifications awarded in other countries.

The objective to establish a pan-European higher education qualifications framework was set in 2003 at the Berlin Ministerial Conference, and as early as in 2005 the EHEA QF was approved at the Bergen Conference. At the same time, the Bergen Communiqué obliged the Bologna Process member states to make their national frameworks compliant with the pan-European one.

Ukraine joined the Bologna Process in 2005. This led to its accelerated efforts towards higher education reform and the implementation of the main Bologna Process tools, i.e. the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), Diploma Supplements (DS), together with further enhancement of international cooperation and student and faculty academic mobility.

The objective of developing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was set by the Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of August 27, 2010, No. 1727-r, on 'Some Issues for Developing the National Qualifications Framework'. The Ordinance tasked the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MES) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Ukraine, with the engagement of other central government agencies involved in the implementation of public policy in education, employment, and social affairs, to establish an interagency working group on the development and implementation of the NQF. The Working Group's composition and Charter were soon approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of December 29, 2010, No. 1225 'On Setting Up the Interagency Working Group for the Development and

Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework'. During the same period, the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of November 3, 2010, No. 1054, 'On Setting Up Working Groups to develop the National Qualifications Framework' established working groups to develop the NQF according to levels in higher, vocational, general secondary and preschool education. This order provided for the possibility of engaging employees from other central government agencies, institutions, and organisations in the working groups.

While developing the NQF draft, the working groups proposed the levels, structure, and scope of the descriptors. In order to maximize stakeholder engagement, broad consultations and public discussions on the NQF draft were held and provided proposals for the NQF. They were elaborated in subsequent working group meetings, national and international workshops, and conferences. Representatives of education and labour, national and international experts were engaged in the discussions and consultations. The Ukraine's NQF was approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of November 23, 2011, No. 1341, 'On the Approval of the National Qualifications Framework'. The NQF first edition included 10 levels (0 to 9) and 5 descriptors (knowledge, skills, communication, autonomy and responsibility, as well as integrated competences). In general, the newly developed NQF was generally consistent with the EHEA QF in terms of levels (the NQF Levels 6 – 8 corresponded to the EHEA QF Cycles 1 – 3) and descriptors (the NQF descriptors generally complied with the Dublin descriptors).

The NQF implementation in Ukraine was initiated by a joint order of the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on April 20, 2012, No. 488/225 'On the Approval of the National Qualifications Framework's Action Plan'. The order envisaged organisational, methodological, regulatory, communication and human resource support activities between 2012 – 2015 for the NQF implementation; cooperation with social partners; onboarding of international technical and financial assistance; international recognition of the NQF and a number of pilot projects.

In 2014, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted a new Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education', which approved a competence-based education (CBE) approach, and the use of learning outcomes in both higher education standards and in the development and implementation of educational programs/curricula. The Law also introduced a new level in higher education – i.e. the initial (*or entry*) level (short cycle) in higher education – and aligned the levels in higher education with the NQF levels: initial level – NQF Level 5, Level 1 (bachelor's) – NQF Level 6; Level 2 (master's) – NQF Level 7; Level 3 (educational-scientific/educational-creative) – NQF Level 8. The higher education degrees/levels consisted of a junior bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and the degree of Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Arts. The existing

scientific level of ‘the Doctor of Science’ degree in Ukraine was categorised as NQF Level 9.

To implement the provisions of the new Law and further facilitate the NQF implementation, the Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of December 14, 2016, No. 1077-r approved the ‘Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for 2016 – 2020’. As part of the Action Plan, the composition of the interdepartmental working group on the development and implementation of the NQF was updated and it was tasked with developing educational standards and programs with a competence-based approach using learning outcomes and bringing the higher education quality assurance system in line with European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education Quality Assurance (ESG). The Ministry of Education and Science is committed to periodically reviewing the National Qualifications Framework to ensure that it is aligned with current economic development, the needs of society, the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework, and to build effective communication with stakeholders in the National Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications System.

In 2017, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted a new Law of Ukraine ‘On Education’, which introduced certain amendments to the NQF, including an additional level for professional pre-higher education. Thus, Levels 6 – 10 became the levels of higher education (including Doctor of Science). These amendments were reflected in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of June 12, 2019, No. 509, ‘On Amendments to the Addendum to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of November 23, 2011, No. 1341’, which also removed integrated competence from the descriptors.

In December 2019, the Law of Ukraine ‘On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Improving Higher Education’, No. 392-IX of December 18, 2019, stipulated that the NQF number of qualification levels should correspond to the number of levels in the European Qualifications Framework, i.e. 8 levels. To implement the requirements of this Law, on June 25, 2020, the relevant Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 519 ‘On Amendments to the Addendum to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of November 23, 2011, No. 1341’ was adopted.

Thus, today the NQF contains 8 levels – from level one to level eight. The categories of level descriptors define knowledge, skills, communication, responsibility, and autonomy. The qualifications in higher education are as follows: Junior Bachelor’s degree – Level 5, Bachelor’s degree – Level 6, Master’s degree – Level 7, degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Arts and Doctor of Science – Level 8. Resolution No. 519 also defines the interpretation of the main NQF concepts, and matches the qualifications of professional

(vocational), professional pre-higher and higher education to the relevant NQF levels (Annex 1).

The aforementioned Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for 2016 – 2020 also set the task of drafting the necessary NQF recognition materials. In this regard, the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on December 24, 2020, No. 1554, set up a working group on the design compliance measures of the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and criteria of the European Higher Education Area's Qualifications Framework (EHEA QF), with the added task of publishing a self-certification report. The working group included representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine, the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, the State Education Quality Service of Ukraine, the National Qualifications Agency, the Information and Image Centre, the Social Policy Research Institute of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, EU4Skills in Ukraine, GIZ GmbH, Erasmus+ Project 609995-EPP-1-2019-1-PL-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP 'Qualifications Recognition Support for Ukrainian Universities' and leading universities of Ukraine. The composition of the working group was:

1. VITRENKO, Andriy — First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine (Chairman)
2. BALANYUK, Yuriy – Chairman of the National Qualifications Agency (Deputy Chairman)
3. MELNYK, Serhiy – Member of the National Qualifications Agency
4. RASHKEVYCH, Yuriy – Member of the National Qualifications Agency
5. GOZHYK, Andriy – Vice-Rector of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
6. SOLODKA, Natalia – Chief of the Qualifications Framework Support Unit, Qualifications Department, National Qualifications Agency Secretariat
7. ZAKHARCHENKO, Vadym – Vice-Rector of the Odesa Maritime Academy, National Coordinator of the Erasmus+ Project 609995-EPP-1-2019-1-PL-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP 'Qualifications Recognition Support for Ukrainian Universities'.
8. BALUBA, Ihor – Task Force Leader, Higher and Adult Education Directorate, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

9. PONOMARYOVA, Halyna – State Expert, Vocational Education Directorate, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
10. VASYLENKO, Natalia – State Expert, Professional Development Task Force, Directorate for Labor Market Development and Remuneration, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine
11. ILCHUK, Leonid – Acting Director, Social Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
12. SAVCHENKO, Natalia – State Expert, Professional Development Task Force, Directorate for Labor Market Development and Remuneration, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine
13. HOROVOY, Roman – COP of EU4Skills in Ukraine, GIZ GmbH
14. LELET, Halyna – Chief Specialist, Adult Education Monitoring Unit, Higher, Professional Pre-Higher and Adult Education Monitoring Department, State Education Quality Service of Ukraine
15. KRASNOSHCHOK, Valentyna – Advisor on Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, Information and Image Centre, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
16. MORKLYANYK, Bohdan – Deputy Chairman, National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance
17. MRUHA, Maryna – State Expert, Professional Pre-Higher Education Directorate, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine.

The following international experts worked closely with the working group while the report was being drafted:

1. Professor Bastian Baumann – Managing Director, European Quality Assurance Agency, Managing Partner, Shbeemann Consulting.
2. Dr. Ilze Buligina – Senior Expert, VET and Adult Learning Department, Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia.
3. Linards Deidulis – Senior Expert, State Educational Development Agency, Latvia.

Section 1. HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRIANE

1.1. Higher education reform in the Bologna context

At the time of its independence in 1991, Ukraine inherited a higher education system, with the following principal characteristics:

1. Relative elitism – only 20% of secondary school leavers continued to higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. Entirety (i.e. no division into cycles) of educational programs – complete higher education consisted of 4 (teachers training institutes) to 6 (medical institutes) years of study.
3. Lack of academic autonomy of HEIs – mandatory standards covered up to 90% of the curricula and included a strict and unified list of disciplines, and their scope.
4. Centralised system with no external quality assurance in higher education. Accreditation procedures were carried out within the system under the guidance of the Ministry without external stakeholder engagement or foreign expertise.
5. No academic mobility for students.
6. State-owned higher education institutions only.

The Law of Ukraine on Education (1991) actually consolidated this status quo although it introduced one significant novelty, namely the ability to establish private HEIs with the same requirements on licensing, accreditation of individual specialties and institutional accreditation as in the state-owned HEIs.

The beginning of genuine reforms in higher education can be considered to have come about on the approval of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 896 as of November 3, 1993, and introduction of the new National Program called ‘Education’ (Ukraine of the XXI century). One of the most important innovations was the introduction of a cycle-based education: at first, this was a 3-cycle system (bachelor; specialist; master) which later evolved into a 2-cycle system (bachelor; specialist/master). The involvement of Ukrainian higher education in the pan-European TEMPUS program was extremely important for the development potential of HEIs, and had, among others, a decisive influence on the international academic mobility of both students and faculty.

Further impetus to the reform efforts came from the increasing interest in higher education (e.g. in 1991, some 173,700 people were enrolled in the first

year in HEIs, whereas by 2006, this number had increased to some 507,700 students. At the same time, the number of HEIs increased from 156 in 1991 to 350 in 2006) and the harmonization of educational systems in Europe brought change to Ukraine's higher education system as it prepared to join the Bologna Process. These and other changes were reflected in the National Education Doctrine of Ukraine approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine and the Higher Education Law (2002). Unfortunately, the new legislation failed to nurture the autonomy of HEIs, and the system as a whole remained traditionally centralized.

The subsequent reform of Ukraine's higher education was in line with the principles and tools of the Bologna Process, which Ukraine joined in 2005. ECTS and DS were introduced, and international cooperation, academic and scientific mobility increased rapidly. One of the most important innovations was the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework. Another important impact on higher education quality and accessibility was the introduction of the new HEI enrolment procedure based on external independent evaluation outcomes.

Radical reforms began with the adoption in 2014 of the new Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' with its emphasis on institutional autonomy and development within the spirit of the trends in the European Higher Education Area.

The most important innovations that this new law brought about were:

1. A modern level-based (cycle-based) higher education system, consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011, 2013); the introduction of four levels in higher education corresponding to the four cycles in the EHEA QF (with amendments in 2018). For the first time ever, the law introduced the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Arts as a higher education level.
2. Institutional autonomy and academic freedom were recognized as fundamental principles of Ukrainian higher education.
3. The higher education quality assurance framework was based on European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
4. Establishment of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance as an institution independent of the Ministry and designed to ensure external quality assurance with the broadest possible stakeholder engagement.
5. Development of new competence-based standards for higher education.

6. Integration of educational and scientific specialties and creation of a new list of specialties harmonized with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2013).
7. Academic integrity.
8. Support for student government.
9. Designing a legal framework with new HEI funding mechanisms (money follows the student, formula-based funding, etc.).

During 2015 – 2021, the key provisions of the new Law were implemented, and saw further improvements to the legislation (amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' 2019 and 2020 and the adoption of the new Law of Ukraine 'On Education' in 2017).

1.2. Higher education today

By the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year, higher education in Ukraine had developed, and its main features are as follows:

The total number of HEIs of all types and forms of ownership was 289, 211 of these were in state and municipal ownership, and 78 privately owned. Compared to the previous years, there have been slight fluctuations quantitatively with a tendency for the numbers to shrink (345 HEIs in 2011 vs. 289 in 2017).

Due to the demographic decline, there has been a decrease in the number of students: 1.266 million in 2020 (including more than 25,000 postgraduates) vs. 1 370 million in 2017. However, the share of the population that has completed or is completing higher education remains traditionally high – over 73% aged 15 – 64. About 80,000 foreign nationals study in Ukraine, and about 77,000 Ukrainians study abroad.

The range of HEI graduates is as follows: 44% represent social, economic and humanitarian fields of education, 16% – engineering; 8% – medical, 7% – education (teacher training?), 6% – transport, 4% – natural sciences, the rest – other fields and specialties. According to the share of HEI graduates of all levels in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which is 25.3%, Ukraine is ranked fairly high – 35th place out of 131 countries according to the Global Innovation Index in 2020.

Public policy in the field of education is determined by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine and implemented by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science, other ministries and local government agencies.

Governance in higher education is the responsibility of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science, other ministries, the

National Academy of Sciences and sectoral academies of sciences, local government agencies managing higher education institutions in their jurisdictions, and the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance.

Central to the higher education governance is the Ministry of Education and Science, which develops strategies and higher education development programs, delivers legislative support, and exercises many other powers in accordance with the law. At the beginning of 2020, according to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science is also responsible for the vast majority of state-owned HEIs (142). Other ministries having 5 or more HEIs in their subordination are Ministry of Health of Ukraine (21), Ministry of Culture of Ukraine (12), Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (8), and Ministry of Internal Affairs (11). The Ministry of Social Policy and the Security Service of Ukraine manage one HEI each. Other HEIs are owned by municipalities.

Among the important powers of the Ministry of Education and Science is the development, enhancement and coordination of the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework. In this regard, the Ministry works closely with the National Qualifications Agency, which is legally bound to supporting the implementation and communication of the NQF.

In 2019, the total budget spending on education at all levels amounted to 6.07% of GDP, expenditures from participatory budgets – 5.44% of GDP. Education spending for ISCED Levels 5 – 8 (excluding research and scientific (experimental) developments) amounted to 1.84% of GDP, including from participatory budgets – 1.34% of GDP.

Spending on higher education (excluding research and development) in the EU was 0.9% of GDP in 2017. Although there are some discrepancies in the calculation methodology for this indicator, it can be concluded that, in relative terms, the total spending on higher education in Ukraine is at the level of EU member-states. At the same time, in absolute figures in US dollar terms, the total funding for higher education in Ukraine is still assessed as insufficient despite the constant increases.

1.3. Levels, degrees, qualifications and standards in higher education

Higher education levels and degrees

The Law of Ukraine ‘On Higher Education’ has defined the following levels in higher education (Annexe 2):

- Entry level (short cycle) to higher education corresponds to the NQF Level 5, the scope of the educational program after completing general secondary education is 120 ECTS credits.

- Level 1 (Bachelor's) corresponds to the NQF Level 6, the scope of the educational program after completing general secondary education is 180-240 ECTS credits.
- Level 2 (Master's) corresponds to the NQF Level 7, the scope of the educational program after completing the bachelor's degree is 90-120 (for educational and professional programs) and 120 ECTS credits (for educational and scientific programs); for medical, veterinary and pharmaceutical specialties, the scope of the educational program after completing general secondary education is 300-360 ECTS credits.
- Level 3 (educational-scientific/educational-creative) corresponds to the NQF Level 8; the standard time to educate a Doctor of Philosophy after completing a master's degree is 4 years, thus the scope of an educational component of the educational-scientific program is 30-60 ECTS credits; the standard time to educate a Doctor of Arts after completing the master's degree is 3 years, thus the scope of an educational component of the educational-creative program is 30-60 ECTS credits.

When enrolling in Junior Bachelor's, Bachelor's and Master's Programs in medicine, veterinary and pharmaceutical specialties after completing professional pre-higher education, a higher education institution has the right to transfer ECTS credits for the amount specified by the higher education standards.

Obtaining higher education at each level requires successful completion of an educational program, which is the basis for awarding the appropriate higher education degree (of Junior Bachelor, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Arts) with the issuance of a respective higher education document – a diploma.

Educational qualifications

The Law of Ukraine 'On Education' defines the concept of *'educational qualification'* as one recognized by an educational institution or other authorized entity in education and scope of study certified by the relevant document in line with the educational standards and personal learning outcomes (competencies).

The Law also stipulates that:

- Organisations responsible for awarding, recognition and confirmation of educational qualifications are educational institutions or other education entities.
- Learning outcomes and competences required for awarding educational and/or occupational qualifications can be achieved and obtained in formal, non-formal or informal education.

The Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' defines qualifications obtained in higher education as 'educational' and equates them with higher education degrees, since:

- a higher education qualification is the official evaluation and recognition outcome obtained when an authorized institution has established that an individual achieved competencies (learning outcomes) in accordance with the higher education standards, as evidenced by the relevant higher education document issued.
- the title of the qualification consists of information about the degree of higher education obtained by the person, specialty (specialty, field of knowledge - for interdisciplinary educational programs), and specialization.

In this case, the educational institution may independently introduce areas of study as components that are indicated in the educational qualifications awarded to individuals who have successfully completed training in educational programs.

Higher education standards

According to Ukraine's Law on Higher Education, an educational program must take into account the requirements of the relevant higher education standards, i.e., a set of educational program requirements that are common to all educational programs within a certain higher education level and specialty.

Higher education standards have been developed for each level in higher education within each specialty in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework and are used to determine and assess the higher education quality and performance of HEIs (research and development institutions), as well as learning outcomes in relevant specialties.

The Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' defines the following key components in each of the higher education standards:

- ECTS credits required to award the appropriate higher education degree.
- Required educational background of applicants for each program and set of learning outcomes.
- Mandatory competences of graduates.
- Standard scope of training programs based on expected learning outcomes.
- Forms of appraisal (testing) of higher education applicants.
- Requirements for developing single-, double- or multiple-specialty (subject-matter) educational and training programs (Junior Bachelor Standards), interdisciplinary educational and scientific programs (Master's and Doctor of Philosophy Standards).
- Required professional standards (if any).

The Law also stipulates that higher education standards on access to regulated professions may contain additional requirements regarding admission rules, the structure of educational programs, learning scope, learning process and evaluation of graduates. The following regulations have been adopted to implement this legislative requirement:

- Cabinet of Ministers Resolution 765 of September 2, 2020, 'On the Approval of the Pre-Higher Education Degree-Based List of Specialties for Regulated Professions.
- Order 673 of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine of May 22, 2020, 'On the Approval of the Education Degree-Based List of Specialties for Access to Regulated Professions.

The development of educational standards is within the powers of the central government agency in the field of education and science. To develop a methodology and guidelines for developing higher education standards, as well as drawing up the higher education and learning standards themselves, the Ministry of Education and Science forms a Research and Methodological Board (RMB) and Research and Methodological Commissions (RMCs).

The RMB and RMCs are formed for a period of up to three years and consist of representatives of the state, employers and their associations, higher education of all forms of ownership, R&D institutions, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and sectoral national academies of sciences, professional associations, and international experts.

RMCs can be sectoral and intersectoral. Within each RMC, sub-committees may be set up for individual specialties. Currently, 14 RMCs have been formed, they include 126 sub-committees consisting of a total number of more than 1,000 people.

Higher education standards of all levels are competence-based for each specialty and developed by the relevant sub-committee with the consideration of proposals from subject-matter government agencies managing the respective HEIs and sectoral employer associations. They are approved by the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance.

The standards define only those learning outcomes that are common to all possible educational programs within the specialty. For master's degrees, the difference between the learning outcomes of educational and occupational and educational and research programs is reflected. The standards may include for additional mandatory learning outcomes in educational programs required for regulated professions.

As of September 17, 2021 – 107 of the required 113 standards for bachelor's studies and 89 of the required 121 standards for master's studies have been

approved. The standards for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy are still under development.

Awarding educational qualifications

Awarding higher educational qualifications is carried out by a higher education institution based on the evaluation results establishing compliance of learning outcomes (research or creative) of higher education students with the educational programs and/or the state qualification examination requirements.

The Unified State Qualification Exam is conducted across higher education specialties at Level 1 (bachelor's) and/or Level 2 (master's) in the manner prescribed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The law established the possibility of revoking a graduate's degree and an appropriate qualification awarded by a higher education institution in case academic integrity violations are found, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification.

1.4. Quality assurance in higher education

According to the legislation, higher education quality assurance is part of the mandate of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (hereinunder – the Agency), which is a standing collective body with the status of a legal entity under public law that operates under the Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' and the Charter approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The mandate of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance includes:

- Drafting legislative proposals for higher education quality assurance and requirements for the higher education quality assurance framework, developing regulations on the accreditation of educational programs.
- HEI performance quality monitoring, annual reporting on higher education quality in Ukraine.
- Institutional accreditation.
- Maintaining a specializations' database.
- Educational program accreditation.
- Developing the criteria for HEI performance quality assessment, including R&D achievements and rating HEIs in Ukraine.
- Developing the awarding and revocation procedures for Doctor of Philosophy degrees by non-recurrent dissertation committees at HEIs.

- Accreditation of independent evaluators and quality assurance institutions in higher education, and maintaining the register of these.

The Agency is composed of 23 individuals appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine based on competitive vetting carried out by a Selection Commission consisting of nine experts – four international experts from the European Higher Education Area and the other 5 from the MES of Ukraine, the Joint Representative Body of All-Ukrainian Associations of Employer Organisations, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Association of Students – the Member of the European Students' Union. The Agency, as well as the higher education quality assurance framework in general, follow the European Higher Education Area's Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

The composition of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance is based on the representation of no more than one person from a single field of study and includes:

- three individuals elected from among the representatives of all-Ukrainian associations of employer organisations
- two individuals from among Level 1 or Level 2 higher education students
- at least one representative from among full-time employees of:
  - National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
  - National sectoral academy of sciences (one representative from each of the 5 academies)
  - State-owned HEIs
  - HEIs of municipal ownership
  - Private HEIs.

Members of the Agency are appointed for three years, while the same individual may not serve as a member of the Agency for more than two terms.

The legislation contemplates the involvement of independent higher education evaluators and quality assurance institutions accredited by the Agency, which may issue their own evaluation certificates for HEIs' educational programs, provide quality assurance reports, and make program accreditation proposals to the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance.

The main tool for external quality assurance in higher education is the educational program accreditation, which is mandatory for all HEIs regardless of their ownership. Newly created educational programs are accredited by the Agency for 5 years, certificates of second and subsequent accreditations are valid for 10 years.

The current membership of the Agency was appointed in December 2018, and it assumed operations in February 2019. A number of legislative, regulatory and guidance documents were developed, including a new 'Regulation on Educational Programs Accreditation of for Higher Education' approved by Order 977 of July 11, 2019, of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The Regulation takes full consideration of all the requirements and recommendations outlined in the European Higher Education Area's Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG-2015). For the first time in Ukraine, this Regulation introduced a new educational program accreditation framework in line with all the recommendations of the Bologna Process. The Agency also proposed the Recommendation on Internal Quality Assurance at HEIs and the Recommendation for HEIs on Academic Integrity.

From October 2019 to February 2020, the Agency accredited 400 bachelor's and master's degree programs. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions since March 2020, accreditations have been conducted online. The Agency has developed and implemented an Interim Due Diligence and Accreditation Procedure based on Videoconferencing Solutions. In 2021, educational program accreditations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Arts began.

In total, as of March 2021, more than 1,500 accreditations were conducted with the following results: exemplary accreditation – 3.3%, standard accreditation – 68.9%, conditional accreditation (for 1 year) – 25.4%, failed accreditation – 2.4% of all submitted educational programs.

The Agency is also active internationally. Memoranda of cooperation and understanding have been signed with the agencies of Poland, France, Georgia and Kazakhstan. The National Agency has set the task of becoming a full membership in ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and joining the EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register). In November 2019, representatives of the Agency took part for the first time in the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF). In June 2020, the National Agency received an affiliated status in ENQA. In February 2020, it received full membership in INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education). In July 2020, the National Agency became a member of the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI). At the same time, the National Agency was granted full membership in the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA).

1.5. Recognition of foreign qualifications

The recognition of foreign educational qualifications is carried out in Ukraine to promote mobility and secure the rights of citizens who have studied abroad to continue their education and/or professional activity in Ukraine. The recognition procedure involves the authentication and assessment of foreign educational qualifications or length of study by the competent recognition body in order to enable the right holder to apply for admission to an educational institution, and/or to continuing education, and to apply for employment in Ukraine.

The recognition of foreign educational qualifications in Ukraine is carried out on the basis of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region – Lisbon, April 11, 1997 (hereinafter - the Lisbon Convention), ratified by the Law of Ukraine of December 3, 1999, No. 1273-XIV 'On the Ratification of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region', international agreements on mutual recognition and equivalence academic credentials and titles, and the relevant national legislation, namely: The Recognition Procedure for Higher Education Degrees Obtained in Foreign Higher Education Institutions; and the Ukraine's Recognition Procedure for Secondary, Vocational and Professional Education Credentials Issued by Foreign Educational Institutions (approved by Order 504 May 5, 2015, of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, registered in the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on May 27, 2015, Registration Numbers 614/27059 and 615/27060 respectively).

As approved by the Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of December 14, 2016, No. 1077-r, 'Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for 2016 – 2020' explicitly requires the National Qualifications Framework to be used as a tool for foreign qualification recognition.

Ukraine has signed more than 20 bilateral mutual recognition agreements and recognised the equivalence of academic credentials and titles with countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. Legal provisions and NQFs are considered in the recognition procedure.

The recognition of foreign educational qualifications in Ukraine may be carried out by the following competent bodies:

- Any higher education institution for the purpose of enrolment in this institution and/or the appointment to the position of a research associate or academic staff at this HEI.
- The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for the purpose of studying at educational institutions and/or for access to professional occupations in Ukraine.

ENIC Ukraine – the National Information Centre of Academic Mobility – was established under Article IX of the Lisbon Convention to promote the recognition of higher education qualifications by providing access to reliable and accurate information on the higher education and qualifications in Ukraine and other countries, and sharing information on recognition procedures applicable in Ukraine and recommendations on recognition and assessment of qualifications under the national law.

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution 924 of August 31, 2011, on 'Issues of National Information Centre of Academic Mobility', the functions of ENIC Ukraine were assigned to the Information and Image Center (a state-owned enterprise) under the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in order to perform the following tasks (for more information about the Centre, please go to: http://enic.in.ua/):

- free access for Lisbon Convention stakeholders and member states to information on the integration of the national education system into the European education area
- sharing information and clarifications with citizens and stakeholders on academic mobility and recognition of credentials
- authenticity verification of educational credentials (proof documents) issued by educational institutions of Ukraine and other countries
- due diligence for equivalence of qualifications awarded in accordance with credentials issued by educational institutions of foreign countries
- drafting opinions on the recognition of foreign educational qualifications based on the authentication and qualification assessment findings for informed decisions on recognition by the competent authority
- hosting conferences and workshops on academic mobility and recognition, application of the Lisbon Convention in the recognition procedure
- engagement in drafting bilateral and multilateral intergovernmental agreements on the recognition of qualifications.

In addition, the Centre operates under the auspices of the international information network of European national information centres on academic recognition and mobility (ENIC-NARIC), which was established to facilitate information exchanges on education frameworks and qualifications, sharing recognition experiences and best practices (for more information, please go to https://www.enic-naric.net/), in particular:

- The Centre shares one-stop information on the national legislation in the field of education, qualification awarding procedures, accreditation status of Ukrainian educational institutions, licensing of educational services, issuance of credentials and confirmation of their authenticity

- It shares operational data within the information network to contribute to the efficiency of the recognition mechanism for credentials issued in Ukraine and other Lisbon Convention member states
- ENIC Ukraine takes part in information and research programs, international projects, workshops and other events initiated by the information network and is engaged in the implementation of the latest standards.

Within its international agenda and ENIC-NARIC network engagement, the Centre participated in implementing international educational projects aimed at developing national legislation on recognition in accordance with the Lisbon Convention (I-Comply, Thematic Peer Group on the Lisbon Recognition Convention). EHEA's automatic recognition (I-AR), the quality assurance of recognition authorities (SQUARE, TST Peer Review), preventing diploma mills and document fraud (FRAUDOC), and creating educational databases (SCAN-D).

As part of its international operation, the Centre also cooperates with competent educational bodies, embassies and educational institutions of other countries, recognition centres in other regions, participates in the work of the Lisbon Convention Committee and monitors the implementation of its provisions.

The Centre is actively involved in awareness building among higher education institutions of Ukraine. In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine together with the Centre jointly established UaReNet – the All-Ukrainian Foreign Qualifications Recognition Network. The intention behind it was to build a platform for effective interaction and sharing information with higher education institutions on the recognition of foreign qualifications, databases and facilitating the international recognition of Ukrainian educational qualifications and periods of study abroad.

Section 2. EHEA QF COMPLIANCE CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO THE NQF

The entire process of developing and implementing the NQF was based on the requirements and recommendations of the National Qualifications Framework comparability verification with the EHEA QF.

2.1. Compliance criteria

Criterion 1. National Qualifications Framework for higher education and the body or bodies responsible for its development shall be appointed by the national ministry responsible for higher education.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued an Ordinance on August 27, 2010, No. 1727, instructing the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine engaging other stakeholders to set up an interagency working group on the development and implementation of the NQF. The Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution dated December 29, 2010, No.1225, on the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Science approved the composition of the group and the Charter governing its engagement.

The implementation of the NQF in Ukraine was commenced through a joint order of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on April 20, 2012, No. 488/225. All the subsequent changes to the NQF, as described in the Introduction, were approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine based on proposals from the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Law of Ukraine on Education prescribes that the National Qualifications Framework as well as amendments thereto shall be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine proposed by a central executive body for education and science, which is the Ministry of Education and Science.

Conclusion. The criterion has been met: according to the law the Ministry of Education and Science is directly responsible for the development and modernization of the NQF. The working groups responsible for the development and implementation of the NQF were set up by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine following a proposal by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Criterion 2. There shall be a clear and explicit connection between the qualifications in the national framework and qualification cycle descriptors of EHEA Qualifications Framework.

The development of NQF started in 2010 when both the EHEA Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework were introduced, and their

coherence was demonstrated (three cycles of the EHEA QF and EQF Levels 6 – 8).

The NQF reflects Ukraine's qualifications system. However, in the course of the NQF descriptor list selection and formulation, both the Dublin and EQF descriptors were taken into account. The first revision of the NQF contained 4 descriptors: knowledge, aptitudes/skills, communication, responsibility and autonomy, and an additional fifth descriptor – integral competency. This integral competency descriptor was removed from the current revision of the NQF. Thus, the list of the NQF descriptors is in full accordance with the descriptors of both European frameworks – the EHEA QF and EQF.

As stated in Chapter 1.3, the higher education qualifications in Ukraine are in full compliance with the EHEA QF cycles: Junior Bachelor's – short cycle, Bachelor's – first cycle, Master's – second cycle, and Doctor of Philosophy – third cycle.

Regarding the comparability of the NQF descriptors Levels 5-8 with the EHEA QF descriptors, the comparative analysis mentioned in Annex 3 demonstrates their high correlation.

Conclusion. Criterion 2 has been fully met since:

- There is a clear connection between the NQF and EHEA QF descriptors;
- Qualifications of the higher education in Ukraine clearly refer to both the NQF and EHEA QF.

Criterion 3. The National framework and the qualifications included therein shall be based on educational performance while the qualifications shall be related to ECTS credits.

The Law of Ukraine on Higher Education clearly states that both the higher education standards and training programs are drafted on a competence basis and are based on educational performance. The Law also defines the number of ECTS credits necessary to obtain each of the higher education qualifications. Moreover, for the Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Arts qualifications, the ECTS credits are used just to determine the scope of the educational component.

Conclusion. Criterion 3 has been fully met since:

- Descriptors in the NQF are cascaded according to educational performance for various levels (cycles) of higher education;
- The ECTS credits are stated for all the qualifications of higher education.

Criterion 4. The procedures of inclusion of qualifications in the National Framework shall be transparent.

1. Levels and qualifications of higher education are defined by the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" while their breakdown to the NQF levels – by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the Approval of the National Qualifications Framework." According to the Resolution the qualifications of higher education comply with:

Junior Bachelor – Level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework and the short cycle of higher education of European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework.

Bachelor's – Level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework and the first cycle of higher education of European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework.

Master's – Level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework and the second cycle of higher education of European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework.

Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Arts – Level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework and the third level of higher education of European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework.

Conclusion. Criterion 4 has been fully met as the procedures of qualification inclusion in the National Framework are clearly defined by the Ukrainian legislation.

Criterion 5. National higher education quality assurance shall refer to the National Qualifications Framework and, according to the Berlin Communique and any other subsequent communiques, be approved by the ministers under the Bologna Process.

The internal and external quality assurance in higher education according to the European Higher Education Area's Quality Assurance Standards and Recommendations (ESGs) is clearly envisaged by Article 16 of the Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education'. All the criteria and procedures used by the National Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency in the accreditation of educational programs also comply with the ESGs, which is reflected in their Self-Assessment Report (SAR) https://naqa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Self-Assessment-Report.pdf

The National Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency is a fully-fledged member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Central and Eastern European Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (EENQA) as well as an associated member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2020.

Conclusion. Criterion 4 has been fully met as the national system of quality assurance in higher education has been organized in compliance with the Berlin Communique and the subsequent communiques while the NQF is the basis for the quality assurance of educational programs and qualifications in higher education.

Criterion 6. The NQF and any harmonization with the EQF shall be mentioned in all the Diploma Supplements.

The Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' defines the European Diploma Supplement (DS) as an integral part of the degrees for Junior Bachelor, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Arts. DS contains information on the Ukraine's education system, compliance of educational levels with NQF levels and an estimated compliance with EHEA QF and EQF levels.

Conclusion. Criterion 5 has been fully met.

Criterion 7. The responsibilities of the national parties for the National Framework are clearly defined and published.

Article 35 of the Law of Ukraine 'On Education' defines the Ministry of Education and Science as a responsible body for the development and updating of the NQF, while the Article defines the National Qualifications Agency as a responsible body for information support of the NQF.

The Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' has assigned responsibility to the Ministry of Education and Science for the development of standards of higher education taking into account the NQF, while the higher education institutions are individually responsible for educational programs in compliance with the requirements of these standards.

The relevant laws are published, thus the information on the responsibilities of the national parties is readily available.

Conclusion. Criterion 7 has been fully met since the legislation has been explicitly defined and published with specific the responsibilities of all the parties involved in development, upgrading, implementation and support of the National Qualifications Framework.

2.2. Compliance procedures

Standard 1. Competent national authority/authorities shall certify compliance of the NQF with the EQF

Pursuant to National Qualifications Framework Implementation Action Plan for 2016 – 2020 approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the MES Order established a working group to draft and publish a self-certification report on the National Qualifications Framework's compliance with the European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework. The self-certification report

prepared by the working group was presented for public discussion and approved by the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which included representatives of all the stakeholders.

Conclusion. Standard 1 is reached

Standard 2. The self-certification process shall include the consent of the quality assurance body in the country concerned and be recognized under the Bologna Process.

Higher education quality assurance in accordance with the legislation is within the competence of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance. Bohdan Morklyanyk, Deputy Head of the Agency and a member of the National Qualifications Agency, is a member of the working group that drafted the self-certification report. Thus, the report was agreed on with the competent quality assurance body.

Conclusion. Standard 2 is reached

Standard 3. The self-certification process shall engage international experts

The following international experts worked closely with the working group while drafting the report. They provided consultancy and recommendations for the conclusions:

1. Professor Bastian Baumann – Managing Director, European Quality Assurance Agency, Managing Partner, Shbeemann Consulting.
2. Dr. Ilze Buligina – Senior Expert, VET and Adult Learning Department, Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia.
3. Linards Deidulis – Senior Expert, State Educational Development Agency, Latvia.

Conclusion. Standard 3 is reached

Standard 4. The self-certification outcomes and evidence for the conclusions shall be published and match each individual criterion

Upon completion of the self-certification, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine will publish the final report on its website (www.mon.gov.ua), the website of the National Information Centre of Academic Mobility – Information and Image Centre (www.enic.in.ua) and the National Qualifications Agency (www.nqa.gov.ua), as well as on the websites of ENIC-NARIC and the Bologna Process (www.enic-naric.net, www.ehea.info).

The report will provide evidence for the conclusions in the context of each criterion in particular.

Conclusion. Standard 4 is reached

Standard 5. ENIC and NARIC networks should keep an open list of countries that are confirmed to have passed the self-certification process

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution 924 of August 31, 2011, 'Issues of the National Information Centre of Academic Mobility', the functions of the National Information Centre of Academic Mobility are assigned to Information and Image Centre (state-owned enterprise under the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine.

Valentyna Krasnoshchok – Advisor on Recognition of Foreign Qualifications at the Information and Image Centre – is a member of the working group that drafted the self-certification report.

Conclusion. Standard 5 is reached

Standard 6. Completion of the self-certification shall be noted in the diploma supplements issued later to demonstrate the link between the National Framework and the European Framework

In Ukraine, the Diploma Supplement template has been determined by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Upon full completion of the self-certification process, the MES will make appropriate changes to the Supplement template and communicate this to the higher education institutions that issue the supplements to each graduate.

Conclusion. Standard 6 is reached

CONCLUSIONS

The working group was set up by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine of December 24, 2020, No. 1554, to design compliance measures of the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and criteria of the European Higher Education Area's Qualifications Framework (EHEA QF) with the publication of the self-certification report. The working group included representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine, the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, the State Education Quality Service of Ukraine, the National Qualifications Agency, the Information and Image Centre, the Social Policy Research Institute of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, EU4Skills in Ukraine with the engagement of international experts from Germany and Latvia

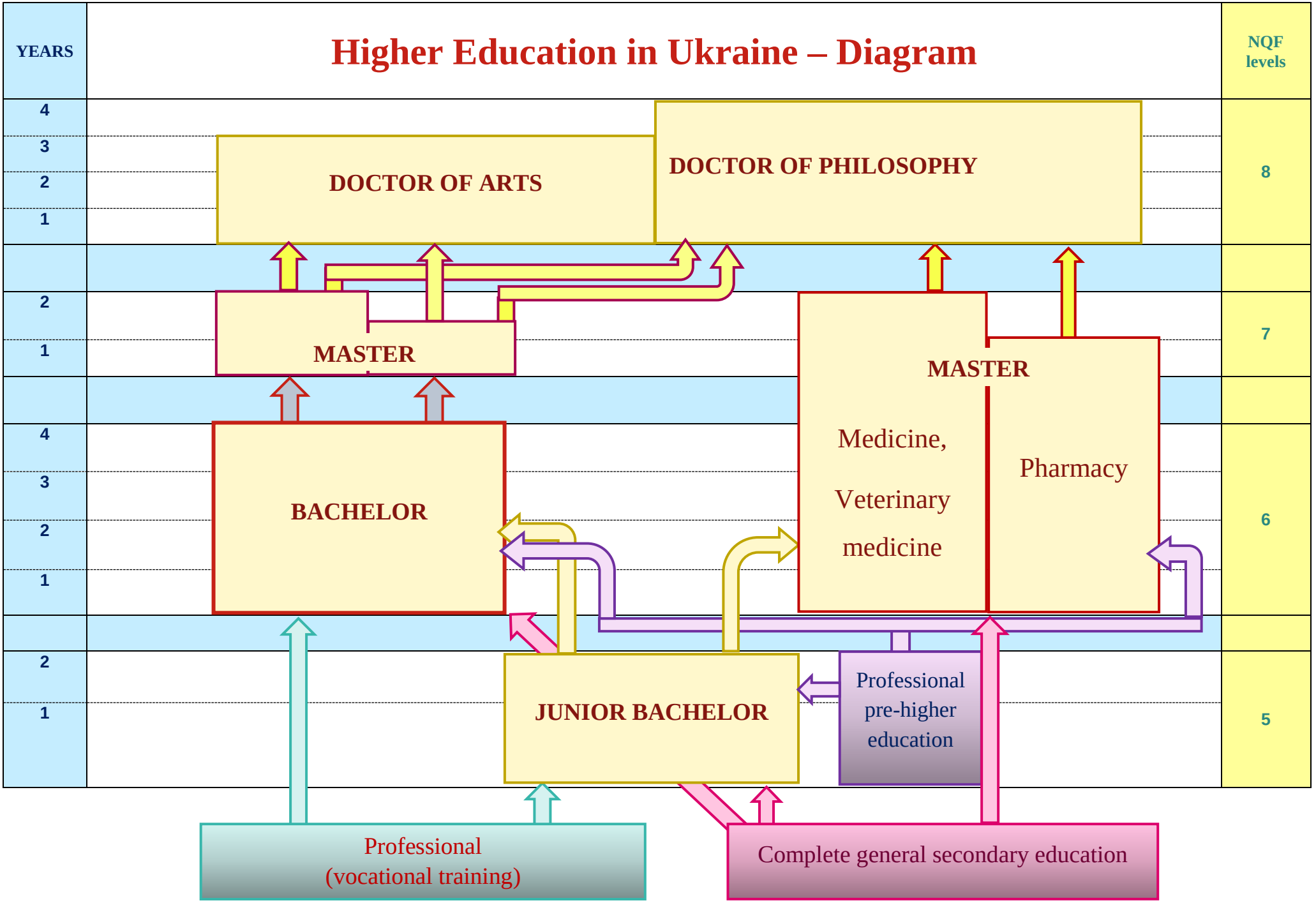
found that there are significant similarities between the National Qualifications Framework (Levels 5 – 8) and the European Higher Education Area's Qualifications Framework. This similarity applies to all the 7 criteria and 6 procedures for verifying the comparability of the NQF with the EHEA QF approved by the Bologna Follow-Up Group in 2005.

The conclusion was unanimously supported by all the Working Group members.

Annex 1. НРК CMU Resolution on the NQF Approval

Annex 2. Ukraine's Higher Education Framework (Diagram)

Annex 3. Comparison of Dublin Descriptors (EHEA QF) and NQF Levels 5 – 8 Descriptors


YEARS
Higher Education in Ukraine – Diagram
NQF levels
4
3
2
1
DOCTOR OF ARTS
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
8
2
1
MASTER
MASTER
Medicine,
Veterinary
medicine
Pharmacy
7
4
3
2
1
BACHELOR
6
2
1
JUNIOR BACHELOR
Professional
pre-higher
education
5
Professional
(vocational training)
Complete general secondary education

Annex 3

Comparison of NQF Level Descriptors and EHEA QF Cycle Descriptors

QF EHEA Short cycle	NQF Level 5
Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education **short cycle** are awarded to students who:	
have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that build upon general secondary education and are typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, or further studies to complete the first cycle*	**Knowledge** Comprehensive specialised empirical and theoretical knowledge in the field of study and/or professional activity, awareness of the knowledge frontiers
can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts**	**Aptitudes/skills** A broad range of cognitive and practical skills needed to solve complex problems in specialised areas of professional activity and/or training Planning, analysing, monitoring and evaluating one's own work and the work of others in a specialised context **Responsibility and autonomy** Organisation and supervision (management) in an occupational context or training in unpredictable change conditions

	Improving the results of one's own activities and the work of others
can identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems	**Aptitudes/skills** Finding creative solutions or responses to clearly defined specific and abstract problems based on the identification and application of data
can communicate their understanding, skills and activities with peers, supervisors and clients	**Communication** Interaction with peers, managers and customers in matters related to understanding, skills and activities in an occupational and/or study context Bringing one's own understanding, knowledge, judgements and experience to a wide range of people (colleagues, managers, customers), in particular in an occupational context
have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy	**Responsibility and autonomy** The ability to continue learning with some degree of autonomy

*) 'Knowledge and understanding at a level supported by advanced textbooks' is reflected in the NQF as 'empirical and theoretical knowledge'.
**) 'Applying knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts' is reflected in the NQF as 'application of cognitive and practical skills needed to solve complex problems in specialised occupational areas of work and/or study (planning, analysing, monitoring and evaluating, etc.)'.

QF EHEA First cycle	NQF Level 6
Qualifications that signify completion of **the first cycle** are awarded to students who:	
have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that build upon their general secondary education and are typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study*	**Knowledge** Conceptual scientific/academic and practical knowledge, critical thinking of theories, principles, methods and concepts in the field of professional activity and/or study
can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study	**Aptitudes/skills** In-depth cognitive and practical aptitudes/skills, mastery and innovation at the level required to solve complex specialised tasks and practical problems in the field of professional activity or study **Responsibility and autonomy** Managing complex technical or professional activities or projects Responsibility for formulating and making decisions in unpredictable occupational and/or study contexts Arranging and managing the professional development of individuals and groups

can gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues	**Communication** Data collection, interpretation and application **Responsibility and autonomy** Making judgements while considering social, scientific and ethical aspects
can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences	**Communication** Communicating information, ideas, problems, decisions, personal experience and rationale to both specialists and non-specialists Communicating on professional matters, including in a foreign language, orally and in writing
have developed learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy	**Responsibility and autonomy** The ability to continue learning with a substantial degree of autonomy

*) 'Knowledge of the forefront of their field of study' is reflected in the NQF as 'Conceptual scientific/academic and practical knowledge'.

**) A 'professional approach to the work or vocation' is reflected in the NQF as 'In-depth cognitive and practical aptitudes/skills, mastery and innovation at the level required to solve complex specialised tasks and practical problems in the field of professional activity or study'.

***) The description of 'communication' is expanded in the NQF with 'communication in a foreign language'.

QF EHEA Second cycle	NQF Level 7
Qualifications that signify completion of **the second cycle** are awarded to students who:	
have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that are founded upon and extend and/or enhance what is typically associated with the first cycle, and that provide a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context*	**Knowledge** Dedicated (specialised) conceptual knowledge, which includes modern scientific achievements in the field of professional activity or expertise and is the basis for ingenuity and research capacity and critical thinking of problems in the field and on the verge of the knowledge frontiers
can apply their knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study** can integrate knowledge, handle complexity and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but including reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements	**Aptitudes/skills** Dedicated problem-solving skills required for research and/or innovation in order to develop new expertise and procedures Ability to integrate knowledge and solve complex problems in broad or multidisciplinary contexts Ability to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments with incomplete or limited information based on the aspects of social and ethical responsibility **Responsibility and autonomy** Managing work or learning processes that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches

	Responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practices and/or evaluating the performance of teams and co-workers
can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning them, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously	**Communication** Clear and unambiguous communication of one's own knowledge, conclusions and rationale to both specialists and non-specialists, in particular to students
have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous	**Responsibility and autonomy** Ability to continue learning with a high degree of autonomy

*) 'Extension and/or enhancing knowledge and understanding (in comparison with the first cycle)' is reflected in the NQF as 'knowledge, which includes modern scientific achievements'.

**) 'Applying knowledge and understanding and problem-solving abilities within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts' is expanded in the NQF as 'research and/or innovation in order to develop new expertise and procedures'.

QF EHEA Third cycle	NQF Level 8
Qualifications that signify completion of **the third cycle** are awarded to students who:	
have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field* have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with academic integrity	**Knowledge** Conceptual and methodological knowledge in the field or on the verge of knowledge frontiers or professional activity **Aptitudes/skills** Aptitudes/skills and techniques required to solve significant problems in the field of professional activity, science and/or innovation, expansion and reassessment of existing knowledge and professional practices Initiation, planning, implementation and adjustment of a consistent and profound research process in compliance with proper academic integrity
have contributed through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international peer-reviewed publication**	*Excerpt from Article 5 of the Ukrainian Law on Higher Education:* The educational and scientific level of higher education involves … conducting one's own research producing results with scientific novelty, theoretical and practical significance.

	The Doctor of Philosophy degree is awarded by a non-recurrent dissertation committee of a higher education institution or research and development institution based on the results of successful completion of the relevant educational and research programme with a subsequent public *viva voce* in front of a non-recurrent dissertation committee.
are capable of critically analysing, evaluating and synthesising new and complex ideas	**Aptitudes/skills** Critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas
can communicate with their peers, the wider academic community and society in general on their areas of expertise***	**Communication** Fluent communication with peers, the academic community and society in general on issues related to the field of scientific knowledge and expertise Using academic Ukrainian and foreign languages in the professional field and in research
can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge-based society	**Responsibility and autonomy** Demonstration of significant credibility, innovation, a high degree of independence, academic and professional integrity, and continuous commitment to the development of new ideas or processes in advanced professional and scientific contexts Capability for continuous self-development and self-improvement

*) A ‘systematic understanding of a field of study’ is reflected in the NQF as ‘conceptual and methodological knowledge’.

**) ‘Requirements regarding contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work’ are defined in the Ukrainian Law on Higher Education.

***) The description of ‘communication’ is expanded in the EQF by ‘using foreign languages in the professional field and research’.

Annex 4. Ukraine – Demonstration of the Competence Potential for entrepreneurship in social and health education

- Subject area: Social and health education
- Ukrainian key competence: Entrepreneurship and financial literacy
- EU key competence: Entrepreneurship

Descriptors/learning outcomes				Components
4th grade	6th grade	9th grade	12th grade	
Ideas and opportunities				**Skills** To realise their weak and strong sides in the projection of future professional activities and their own welfare, to analyse the labour market and its needs, to work in conditions of unpredictable situations, to define the goal and achieve it, to predict and evaluate risks, to think critically, to make decisions, to initiate and implement social projects. To evaluate the cost of maintaining health and compare these costs with the cost of treatment and rehabilitation; to plan family spending on health, its formation and development, security and well-being.
I can show that I want to know something new (Level 1) I can find examples of ideas that have value for me and others (Level 1)	I can explore new ways to use available resources (Level 2) I can show how different groups, including companies and institutions, create value in my community and environment (Level 2)	I can experiment with my skills and competences in new situations for me (Level 3) I can see the difference between social, cultural and economic value (Level 3)	I can actively search for new solutions to meet my needs (Level 4) I can decide on what value I want to act, and then choose the most appropriate way to do this (Level 4)	
Resources				
I can identify my needs, desires, interests and goals (Level 1) I can identify things that work well for me and things that I do not use (Level 1)	I can describe my needs, desires, interests and goals (Level 2) I can identify things that are good for me and things that I do not use (Level 2)	I can be persistent in meeting my needs, desires, interests and goals (Level 3) I am focusing on the desire to use my strengths and abilities to make the most of the opportunity to create value (Level 4)	I can translate my needs, desires, interests and aspirations into the goal, and it will help me to reach them (Level 5) I can team up with others to offset our weaknesses and strengthen our strengths (Level 5)	
Transformation in action				**Attitude** Awareness of the relationship between life's success and all the components of health; attitude to well-being and safety as a sign of entrepreneurship; valuing attitude to life experience, the ability to take risks and take into account their consequences; responsibility for their decisions. Consciously placing health as the basis of economic and financial well-being.
I am not afraid to make mistakes when trying something new (Level 1) I can provide examples that show improvement in my abilities and competences with experience. (Level 1)	I am not afraid to make mistakes when trying something new (Level 1) I can predict that my abilities and competence will improve with experience, thanks to successes and failures (Level 2)	I am not afraid to make mistakes when trying something new (Level 1) I can predict that my abilities and competence will improve with experience, thanks to successes and failures (Level 2)	I can actively look for, compare and contrast different sources of information that help me to reduce ambiguity, uncertainty and risk of decision-making (Level 4) I am always looking for opportunities to strengthen my strengths and reduce or compensate for my weaknesses (Level 4)	

ACRONYMS

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the development of vocational training
DigComp	Digital Competence framework
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EDEBO	Single State Educational Database of Ukraine
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC-NARIC	National information centres on academic recognition
ENQA	European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
EntreComp	Entrepreneurial competences framework
e-profile	Electronic profile on-line
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
EQAVET	European
EQF	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
EQF AG	EQF Advisory Group
ESCO	European
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUROPASS	Online tools for learning and working in Europe
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NCP	National Contact Point
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQA	National Qualifications Agency
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PISA	The Programme for International Student Assessment of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QA	Quality Assurance
QFEHEA	Qualifications Framework of the European Area for Higher Education
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning (see also VNFIL)
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
UaReNet	Ukrainian Network for the Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

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