NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – UKRAINE

1.   INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.2   NQF snapshot

Ukraine's NQF was adopted in 2011 as a ten-level framework. The Law on Higher Education in 2014 linked higher education qualifications to the NQF. The Law on Education in 2017 established the basis of a competency-based system of education and lifelong learning and linked existing qualifications to 11 NQF levels. It distinguished between educational and professional qualifications, the latter having a clear function in the labour market. It also laid the legal basis for the National Qualifications Agency[1] as a tripartite collegial body.

The National Qualifications Agency became operational in 2019. In 2018 Ukraine established an independent Quality Assurance Agency for higher education[2]. In 2020 the NQF levels were revised[3] to bring them into line with the EQF for lifelong learning. The EU4Skills[4] project, which started in late 2019, supports the implementation of the NQF and the introduction of 100 new competency-based vocational qualifications, based on occupational standards. Since 2016, Ukraine has been implementing validation of non-formal and informal learning for cooks in three cities (Odessa, Rivne and Kiev). Qualifications centres are planned to take over this role for a growing number of occupations, issuing professional qualifications. The National Qualifications Agency will accredit these Qualification Centres.

In 2021, Ukraine had begun preparing for self-certification with the Qualifications Framework for the European Area for Higher Education. It is also currently participating in a pilot to compare its NQF to the EQF. The National Qualifications Framework is intended for use by public authorities and local governments, institutions and organizations, educational institutions, employers, other legal entities and individuals for the development, identification, correlation, recognition, planning and development of qualifications.

The NQF is an instrument to harmonize approaches to qualifications in the labour market and education and training system and to promote national and international recognition. It is also a tool for European integration as the NQF is mentioned in the Association Agreement of Ukraine with the EU[5]. All educational and professional qualifications need to be described in learning outcomes formulated in accordance with the descriptors of the NQF, which are: knowledge, skills, communication, responsibility and autonomy.

Ukraine is still in the activation stage but moving towards the operational stage.

1.2   Policy context

Ukraine is a priority partner for the EU. An Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), was signed in 2014. It is the main tool for bringing Ukraine and the EU closer together: it promotes deeper political ties, stronger economic links and the

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[1] https://nqa.gov.ua/

[2] National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (naqa.gov.ua)

[3] Рівні Національної рамки кваліфікацій | Міністерство освіти і науки України (mon.gov.ua)

[4] EU Programme "EU4Skills" Supports Ukraine in Reforming System of Vocational Education and Training | Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (mon.gov.ua)

[5] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0529(01)&from=EN

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respect for common values. The Agreement entered into force on 1 September 2017. Ukraine and the EU have jointly defined a reform agenda – the Association Agenda[6].

There is a commitment from both sides to support the development of an operational NQF based on European experience - the Association Agreement (Article 432) speaks of "establishing a national framework to improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications and skills, drawing, where possible, on the EU experience".

The EU is Ukraine's main trading partner, representing 42% of Ukraine's total trade. Ukraine's export profile is gradually becoming more diversified; moreover, the value added of products and services exported is increasing. However, foreign direct investment remains low.

An increasing number of workers, known as platform workers, are involved in online work for clients in the European Union, facilitated by digital and language skills and good internet connections. Ukraine is one of the major countries of origin of new labour migrants in the European Union.

1.3   NQF legal basis

The NQF was adopted by Resolution Number 1341 of the Cabinet of Ministers on 23 November 2011, confirming the NQF as a ten-level framework for lifelong learning covering all learning from preschool to PhD and including adult learning. An implementation plan was developed for the period 2012-2015.

The Higher Education Law, Law Number 1556-VII, adopted 1 July 2014, made a direct link between higher education and the NQF by allocating HE qualifications to the NQF levels.

The Law on Education, Law Number 2145-VIII adopted on 5 September 2017, gave a central role to the NQF and competence- based education. The law supported principles for lifelong learning, giving a central place to learning outcomes and key competences and more attention to independent assessment. The law established a competency-based approach for general education and secondary VET through the New Ukrainian School concept.

VET standards should be based on occupational standards. The law distinguished between educational qualifications, delivered through formal education, and professional qualifications, focused on use in the labour market. The law on education introduced Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks and partial qualifications.

The Law on Education introduced an additional 5th level for pre-higher education to the NQF (Article 10.2), making it an eleven-level framework (covering levels 0-10). In 2020, the level descriptors of the NQF were again revised, moving from 11 to 8 levels. The revised NQF Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of 25 June 2020[7] also means that vocational education qualifications are limited to levels 2-5, while levels 6-8 are reserved for higher education. Professional qualifications linked to specific occupations can span the whole range of levels of the NQF. This may make the NQF at the higher levels less adapted to recognising lifelong learning.

The Law on Higher Education was amended in 2019, stating that accredited higher education institutions are allowed to issue diplomas and degrees only for accredited study programmes, making the NQF a quality assurance mechanism. Since 2018, Ukraine also has also run an independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

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[6] https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/ukraine/docs/st06978_15_en.pdf
[7] Про внесення змін у додаток до п... | від 25.06.2020 № 519 (rada.gov.ua)

The Law on Education has a chapter on the Qualifications System, describing the tasks of the National Agency for Qualifications (NQA). It coordinates the development of occupational standards and qualifications, manages the registers of standards and qualifications, supports widening of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL), and accredits qualification centres. The Statute of the National Agency for Qualifications (NQA) was adopted on 5 December 2018 with Resolution 1029. The National Qualifications Agency is a collegial body, of different ministries and social partners and was established in 2019. It cooperates closely with all relevant bodies dealing with aspects of the qualification system. The NQF register has been developed and was approved on 16 July 2021 but is not fully operational yet. Existing qualifications have been analysed and mapped.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is regulated by the Law on Professional Development of Employees, Law number 4312, stipulating that the State Employment Service can establish recognition centres for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Law on Employment, Law Number 5067-VI of 5 July 2012, confirmed the right of unemployed people to have validated their skills obtained through informal learning.

Order 256 of the Ministry of Social Policy, adopted in 2016, initiated the implementation of validation of non-formal learning for guards, cooks and welders. A national methodology for developing occupational standards was adopted by the Ministry of Social Policy on 22 January 2018, via the Ministerial Order on Approval of the Professional Standards Development Methodology Number 74, giving occupational standards a clear legal status.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1 Education and training reforms

Ukraine has a large higher education sector. In 2019, 62% people aged 30-34 had completed tertiary education, well above the EU average of 40%. Participation in higher education remains high, although student numbers are dropping due to the demographic developments i.e., the population is ageing. One in three students is extramural, showing the role of higher education in adult learning.

Higher Education reforms have been shaped by the Bologna process, breaking the linkage between higher education and the Tariff Qualification System in 2014, and abolishing qualification types inherited from the Soviet System. Quality assurance should support better employment outcomes by focusing more on learning outcomes. Apart from improved external quality assurance through the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Ukraine received a $200m World Bank loan in 2021 to support processes at institutional level.

Current preuniversity education reforms address the content of education, preparing young people better for the twenty-first century through the introduction of decentralised competency-based general education, giving more emphasis to developing key competences and transversal skills, while also aligning the duration in secondary education to European practices. These changes (part of the New Ukrainian School concept) are also affecting secondary VET, which will span levels 3-5 of the NQF.

A Concept for Modernised VET has been developed. Modernised VET will be provided in a decentralised VET system that is competency-based and much more closely linked with the needs of local companies and individual learners. Educational programmes will be modularised and developed from the learning outcomes based on occupational standards

Important reforms are underway in adult learning, linked with the legislation of professional qualifications, the validation of non-formal and informal learning; independent assessment by Qualification Centres and the development of sectoral qualifications frameworks. Partial qualifications have been regulated in addition to full educational and professional qualifications. New institutional settings are created through the establishment of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAQA), the National Agency for Qualifications (NQA), and Qualification Centres.

2.2   Aims of NQF

The objectives of the NQF have evolved over time. It started from the need for more relevant qualifications and quality assurance through European standards, also showing the desire for European integration and especially the link to the Bologna process. Through articulation with education reforms, the NQF is also becoming instrumental in supporting support wider reforms. The NQF facilitates higher education reform, the reform of general and vocational education, lifelong learning and a better coordination between education and labour market policies. The NQF supports competency-based education, and quality assurance in a decentralised education system in which providers are more autonomous.

On the labour market side, the development of occupational standards and professional qualifications, the introduction of validation of non-formal learning and independent assessment of candidates are seen as the most important tools to ensure that the workforce acquires and keeps up to date with identified skill needs. This is important as there is still a strong mismatch between supply and demand.

Self-certification against the QF-EHEA has started and is supported by the EU4Skills project. It will be addressed together with the pilot on Comparison of the NQF with the EQF. The NQF is also an instrument for EU integration.

The Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union includes a number of elements that are relevant for implementing the qualifications reforms. The Agreement promotes convergence in the field of higher education deriving from the Bologna process; establishing a national framework to improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications and skills drawing, where possible, on the EU experience; and helping young people acquire knowledge, skills and competencies outside the educational systems, including through volunteering, and recognising the value of such experiences. It also mentions joint work to bring Ukraine's vocational training system more closely in line with the modernisation of EU VET structures via EU instruments.

3.   LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

3.1   NQF scope and structure

Through the Law on Education, the NQF has clearly become an instrument for lifelong learning.

The original NQF Decree was relatively short and asks for the implementation of the NQF by different stakeholders and institutions, the development of rules for its implementation, an action plan and the establishment of an interdepartmental working group. The Annex explains what the NQF is, its purpose and key concepts, and the NQF descriptors. The NQF originally had ten levels, 0-9.

Following article 36 of the Law on Education an additional level was introduced. In 2020 these were then brought in line with the EQF, moving from 11 to 8 levels.

The revised NQF Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of 25 June 2020[8] means that vocational education qualifications are limited to levels 2-5, with several types of qualifications existing at level 5 covering vocational and higher education. HE qualifications span levels 5 to 8. Professional qualifications determined by the classifier of occupations can cover the complete spectrum of the NQF.

The NQF has eight levels. There are four domain descriptors:

- Knowledge: has to be meaningful and focused on the field of specialisation, so that it can inform conscious, purposeful activities. Knowledge is divided into empirical knowledge (facts and ideas) and theoretical knowledge (conceptual, methodological);
- Skills: the ability to apply knowledge to perform tasks and solve problems. The skills/abilities are divided into cognitive skills (including logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical skills (including manual skill, the use of practical methods, materials and tools).
- Communication: interaction between persons in order to transmit information, coordinate actions, or undertake joint activities;
- Responsibility and autonomy: the ability of a person to apply knowledge and skills independently and responsibly;

3.2 Types of qualifications

Ukraine's legislation defines a qualification as a standardized set of acquired competencies (learning outcomes) recognised by an authorised entity and certified by a relevant document. Qualifications by content are classified into educational and professional; and by volume - into full and partial.

An educational qualification is a set of learning outcomes (educational requirements and competencies) established by an educational institution or other authorised subject of educational activity and certified by a relevant document. Educational qualifications are awarded, recognised and validated by educational institutions or other educational entities.

A professional qualification is a standardised set of acquired competencies (learning outcomes) recognized by a qualification centre, educational entity, other authorised entity and certified by a relevant document, which allows the person to perform a certain type of work or carry out professional activities. Professional qualifications are assigned, recognised and confirmed by qualification centres, educational institutions and other entities authorised to do so by law. Professional qualifications have principally a labour market function and are based on the Classifier of Occupations and, where available, occupational standards.

Vocational education qualifications and higher education qualifications can fall into either of the above two categories.

Both educational and professional qualifications are sets of competencies or learning outcomes. The national qualifications system provides coherence between educational and professional qualifications and their compliance with labour market needs and creates mechanisms for the recognition of qualifications acquired throughout life.

The qualification is considered complete if the person acquires a complete set of competencies defined by a standard. The qualification is considered partial if a person acquires part of the competencies defined by a standard. In principle for all qualifications, learning outcomes required can be achieved in formal, non-formal or informal settings.

A complete list of certificates for educational qualifications can be accessed through EDEBO[9], the single state electronic database for education.

This includes, for general education, the certificate of basic secondary education for special needs students, the certificate for basic secondary education and the certificate for complete secondary education, covering levels 1, 2 and 3 of the NQF[10].

VET qualifications correspond to NQF levels 2, 3, 4 or 5. They include the diploma of skilled worker and the certificate of workers assignment qualification - both span different levels 2, 3, 4, and, for some occupations, level 5. There is also the diploma for pre-higher education or professional junior bachelor (formerly junior specialist), at level 5.

Qualifications for higher education include junior bachelor (level 5), Bachelor (level 6), Master's degree (level 7) and Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Arts and Doctor of Science (level 8). Different types of professional qualifications have not yet been specified.

3.3   Quality assurance of qualifications

Quality assurance has been a main objective of the NQF. All qualifications should define minimal requirements from the learner/holder in terms of learning outcomes. Educational qualifications should promote competency-based education and include key competences. New education standards and curricula for general education, vocational education and higher education are prepared. The systematic use of occupational standards is a guarantee to make qualifications relevant for the labour market.

New approaches are developed for elaborating occupational standards, educational standards, curricula (educational programmes) and assessment standards. The focus has been on bringing standards more in line with European practices, moving from a curriculum focused subject-oriented approach to an outcome-based modular approach, strengthening the relevance of standards, strengthening assessment processes and programme accreditation of providers.

The most important quality assurance principles are legislated in the Law on Higher Education (2014), VNFIL regulations (2016), the Law on Education (2017) and safeguarded by two new institutions, namely the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAQA), and the National Agency for Qualifications (NQA), both operational since 2019. The number of accredited study programmes of higher education is growing. There is no institutional accreditation, only programme accreditation. Programme accreditation is also foreseen in vocational education, by verifying that programmes are in line with the state educational standards.

The National Agency for Qualifications accredits qualification centres which deal with independent assessment of professional qualifications, including the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Independent assessment should ensure that individuals meet the learning outcomes in the standards.

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[9] Реєстри | ЄДИНА ДЕРЖАВНА ЕЛЕКТРОННА БАЗА з питань ОСВІТИ (edbo.gov.ua)

[10] The Yerevan communique foresees that end of school certificates will be placed on level 4 of the EQF, which in analogy of the NQF would normally mean level 4 of the NQF. This is also foreseen in the Law on Education which introduced 12 year pre-university education instead of eleven but at the moment this is not yet fully implemented.

This can facilitate autonomy of providers for learning and set safeguards for assessment. Independent assessment based on qualifications standards is in theory increasingly important within a decentralised education system where providers have more autonomy to adapt the provision to local and learner needs. In practice, it needs more attention for educational qualifications.

3.4   Use of learning outcomes and standards

Learning outcomes are used in all standards. The Ukrainian education system is competency-based. Under the concept of the New Ukrainian School[11], a twelve year education system has been introduced, consisting of a general nine-years secondary education, followed by a profiled three year specialisation, bringing Ukrainian education closer to common practices in other industrialised countries.

Students should be trained to become responsible citizens, patriots, innovators, and critical thinkers. All secondary school graduates need to develop ten key competences: communication in the state language and in foreign languages; mathematical literacy, sciences and technology, and digital competences; the ability to learn and adapt; social and civic competences for effective and constructive participation in society; entrepreneurship; general cultural literacy to understand works of art, express ideas artistically, and help to understand cultural diversity; and environmental and health competences.

Moreover, the following skills are seen as indispensable for developing the key competences: reading abilities, oral and written expression, critical thinking, ability to give one's opinion logically, the ability to constructively manage one's emotions, initiative, creativity, problem-solving skills, evaluating risks and decision-making, the ability to work in teams.

In higher education, learning outcomes are used in all education standards and related programmes, but assessment has not been systematically addressed yet.

In VET, experience with learning outcomes-based curricula on an experimental basis goes back to 2006. Since then, hundreds of new standards have been introduced with aspects of a learning outcomes based approach, although only a limited number have a direct link to occupational standards. The new model of education standards for VET describes modules and learning outcomes that have been derived from the labour functions in the occupational standards. Common education requirements and key competences are integrated in a basic block that provides the learning outcomes common to all VET qualifications. After successful completion of each module, students will be able to get a partial qualification. These partial qualifications will also form a bridge to professional qualifications.

VET standards do not any longer have typical curricula for theoretical subjects and practical training; the list of educational subjects is determined by educational institutions together with employers; curricula for work-based learning are developed by the educational institution together with enterprises and agreed with the regional education authorities.

Exams in VET have not changed yet due to the delay in VET legislation and the COVID crisis.

3.5   Credit systems

In higher education ECTS is used. Apart from modules (units of learning outcomes) used in VET and higher education, there are partial qualifications for integrating different target groups into learning and the labour market. These include e.g., Ukrainian language proficiency tests. This modularised

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approach is opening the opportunities for a credit based approach, but this is not yet currently on the agenda.

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

Since the beginning many stakeholders have been involved in the development and implementation of the NQF and the qualification system. Currently developments include the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministries of Education, Economic Development and Trade, Social Policy, Regional Development, Finance, Culture, and Agriculture and the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of the Modernisation of Education, the State Employment Service, the VET Research Institute, regional training and methodological centres, the Federation of Employers, the Confederation of Employers and the Institute for Professional Qualifications, the Chamber of Industry, Professional Bodies, Economic Clusters, the Federation of Metallurgists, Sector Committees, lead enterprises, the State Railways, trade unions, universities, NGO's and other training providers.

4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The Ministry of Education is the main policy body in the area of qualifications. It has been collaborating closely with the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of Economy and Trade. The Ministry of Social Policy has been in charge of developing and implementing validation of non-formal and informal learning, occupational standards, the Classifier of Professions, guidance and counselling, but many tasks have been taken over by the Ministry of Economy and Trade while others are transferred to the National Qualifications Agency. Article 38 of the Law on Education legislates the National Qualifications Agency as a collegial body, co-founded by government and social partners to strengthen coordination in the field of qualifications.

According to the law, NQA has 17 tasks. These include coordination of, and informing, stakeholders, supporting legislation, developing and maintaining the registry of qualifications, coordinating the development of occupational standards, supporting the development of educational standards, accrediting qualification centres, overseeing the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and establishing the criteria for the recognition of foreign qualifications. The statute of the National Agency for Qualifications[11] was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 5 December 2018 and revised in 2019[12].

NQA supports the introduction of the NQF in line with the Law on Education, carries out international cooperation in the field of qualifications, in particular in order to harmonize the NQF with relevant international instruments; and provides information support for the National Qualifications System and the National Qualifications Framework. The NQA is in charge of coordinating the creation of educational and professional standards, educational programs, standards and procedures for assessing learning outcomes and qualifications.

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[11] Деякі питання Національного аге... | від 05.12.2018 № 1029 (rada.gov.ua)

[12] Про внесення змін до Статуту Нац... | від 10.07.2019 № 693 (rada.gov.ua)

In accordance with paragraph 13 of the Statute of the NQA the agency has a board of 12 members, two each representing the Ministry of Education and Science Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, and the Ministry of Economy and Trade, while three each from the Joint representative body of employers' organisations and the Joint Representative Body of All-Ukrainian trade union associations. In essence, the NQA is an institution of social dialogue. The NQA board was approved by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in April 2019. The tenure of the board is three years, so that in 2022 a new board will be established. The NQA became fully operational in November 2019, when it was registered as a state organization in the Unified State Register of Legal Entities, natural persons-entrepreneurs and public formations. This allowed the Secretariat of the Agency to start its activities.

The key priorities for the first three years are:

1. establishing communication and institutional ties with domestic and foreign stakeholders;
2. developing the legal aspects and settings such as qualification (examination) centres;
3. revising the process for developing occupational standards;
4. launching the national register of qualifications, including its regulatory basis;
5. identifying qualification needs in line with changing labour market demand;
6. developing a new edition of the Classifier of Occupations.

5. RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND LEARNING PATHWAYS

5.1 VNFIL arrangements

Implementation of VNFIL began under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Policy and the State Employment Service. Three occupations - cook, guard and welder - were identified for implementation in three locations (Odessa, Rivne and Kiev), but so far only cooks have received certificates via validation – by the end of 2020, 470 people had been qualified[13] across the three centres. Although this is not a very high number, validation has had a very positive impact on individual candidates, opening new career opportunities. The role of the NQA and the establishment of Qualification Centres should widen the practice of VNFIL further.

The law on professional development of employees (Law № 4312 of January 2012) introduced the establishment of recognition centres by the State Employment Service. In order to verify the employee's professional qualification, the recognition centres should work with training centres of the State Employment Service, VET institutions, enterprises, and other providers licensed to carry out educational activities for certain occupations. The certificate to be awarded could be a certificate for specific professional skills or for improvement. The procedure for evaluation was determined by the Ministry of Social Policy in consultation with the Ministry of Education. In 2012 a new Law on Employment was adopted that stated that unemployed are entitled to have their skills assessed. This legislation was followed by other regulations providing further guidance for implementation. In May 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Resolution "On the Procedure for validation of blue-collar

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[13] Підтвердження неформального навчання | Державний центр зайнятості (dcz.gov.ua)

occupations, non-formal and informal learning outcomes" Number 340. This was followed in December 2013 by Ministry of Social Policy Order Number 875/1776 which sets criteria for (private) assessment centres and the ministerial order 886 which sets list of occupations for assessment. During 2013-2014 the first pilot in Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning for Cooks was undertaken.

The system became operational only in 2016 through Order Number 256 of 2016 of the Ministry of Social Policy. The Odessa and Rivne training centres of the State Employment Services and the Higher Commercial College of the National Trade and Economic University in Kiev acquired the status of assessment centres. The latter was replaced by Higher Vocational School n. 33, which has since seen the highest number of candidates. There is a need for more assessment centres, trained assessors, verifiers and standards, which measures together can facilitate assessment to widen these first pilots to a truly national system. There is also progress with the introduction of validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education.

The latest Bologna Report[14] mentions that there is no national validation system in HE in the country, however there are VNFIL procedures in operation at some higher education institutions for specific study programmes. Websites of different higher education institutions show that they include VNFIL in their activities, as higher education institutions are requested to have such procedures by the Quality Assurance Agency. A regulation on VNFIL for pre-higher and higher education in an advanced stage of preparation.

The focus on boosting validation practices is linked with the establishment of qualification centres, development of professional qualifications and assessment standards, and the training of assessors, which all depend on the National Qualifications Agency. The establishment of a network of qualification centres is foreseen in the Concept for the implementation of the state policy in vocational education, approved by the Ukrainian Government in 2020.

Based on professional qualifications, the NQA will authorise qualification centres to assess and recognise the learning outcomes of individuals (including those obtained through non-formal or informal education). The qualification centre can confirm partial or full recognition of professional qualifications. 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. Some centres are already operating within large companies like Ukrzaliznytsia (Ukrainian State Railways) and the energy company DTEK, but these have not been authorised yet. A regulation of the Ministry of Education on Qualification Centres, prepared by NQA, was registered in June 2021, opening the way to start the accreditation process.

6.   NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

6.1   Key achievements and main findings

In 2011 the NQF was adopted and in 2012 a first NQF implementation plan overseen by an interdepartmental committee. There has been progress in various areas of work during the first five years.

This started with testing new approaches and developing methodologies for standards, and development of a concept for the National Qualification System (which was not approved), the

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[14] Підтвердження неформального навчання | Державний центр зайнятості (dcz.gov.ua)

development of occupational standards by the employers in cooperation with other stakeholders and in developing the legislation for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the preparation of a new law on higher education. In 2014, the Association Agreement with the EU mentioned the need for developing a functioning NQF.

On 14 December 2016 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (Governmental Order Number 1077) adopted the NQF implementation plan for 2016-2020. The plan is the result of constructive cooperation between stakeholders from the world of work, from vocational and higher education under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Science, and with an active role of the Federation of Employers.

The plan includes seven areas:

1. Coordinate activities and provide legislative and regulatory support for the development of the National Qualifications System
2. Modernize the system for skills needs anticipation and occupational standards development
3. Develop qualifications of different types (educational standards and curricula based on learning outcomes) in line with the NQF descriptors and levels
4. Develop a system for the validation of learning outcomes based on professional qualifications
5. Improve processes for quality assurance of qualifications
6. Improve communication on the NQF implementation
7. Ensure international recognition of the NQF and national qualifications.

In 2017 a new interdepartmental working group was established to monitor NQF implementation. That same year the Law on Education brought the NQF back as a tool to support lifelong learning, with a stronger focus on competences, and on more relevant qualifications. It provided a much stronger legal framework for the NQF as a pillar for wider education and training reforms, moving towards a competency-based education system. In 2018 these have been succeeded by a regulation and national methodology for developing occupational standards. New educational standards formats, and methodologies have been developed and are implemented for higher education, general education and for vocational education.

In 2019, the EU4Skills project supported by the EU and some member states started its implementation including the development of 100 VET standards and curricula, piloting of qualification centres and VNFIL, self-certification of the NQF and the development of the National Agency for Qualifications.

Since 201,9 the National Qualifications Agency and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education have become operational, strengthening a systemic approach to the use of learning outcomes and the NQF. Recently, legislation has been adopted for the NQF register and for the accreditation of qualification centres.

In 2020, NQF levels were revised to bring them more in line with the EQF, although the new levels 6-8 are exclusively reserved to higher education.

Further, in late 2020 a national working group was established to prepare the self-certification of the with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process). Ukraine was also selected a first pilot for comparison of the EQF with qualifications framework outside the EQF countries, as provided for in the revised EQF Recommendation of 2017.

These two processes, self-certification against the QF-EHEA, and comparison of the NQF with the EQF, will be coordinated so that they can go forward at the same time, each gaining from synergies.

6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

A single national register of qualifications was adopted through a regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers on 16 June 2021.The Register will provide information about:

1. professional and educational qualifications, and qualification centres, providing open access within the registry;
2. occupational standards and standards under development, providing open access within the registry;
3. awarded professional qualifications and part-qualifications to individuals (credentials), with limited access to respect privacy regulations.

At the time of writing, the register[15] contained 168 occupational standards[16] but not yet any qualifications or qualification centres. Currently a new procedure for developing occupational standards under the responsibility of NQA is in consultation reviewing the procedure that was issued by the Ministry of Social Policy in 2017. With support of the ETF, a prototype of the register was developed that is compatible with the 2017 recommendation on the EQF. In 2020 ETF handed the ownership to NQA.

6.3 Career information and guidance

Career Hub[17] is a new online platform for career guidance for professionals and for youth. It is an integrated website with links to career and learning opportunities, with continuous new information. There is not yet a link to occupational standards, the NQF register, the NQA, or to Europass, the European platform for managing career and learning opportunities.

6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

Academic recognition is well developed in Ukraine, which is a signatory to the Lisbon Convention.

In 2011, the National Information Centre of Academic Mobility was established[18]. The functions of the National Information Centre are now delegated to the State Enterprise Information and Image Centre[19] of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The State Enterprise Information and Image Centre is part of the ENIC-NARIC network. Its tasks are to:

- ensure free access and provide real-time information exchange with similar bodies of countries - signatories of the Lisbon Convention on specific issues of national systems;
- provide citizens and institutions with information and explanations on academic mobility and recognition of credentials
- verify the authenticity of credentials issued by education providers at home and abroad;
- organize equivalency evaluations of qualifications issued by education providers abroad;

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[15] Реєстр кваліфікацій (nqa.gov.ua)

[16] Відомості про професійні стандарти (nqa.gov.ua)

[17] Головна | Career Hub – платформа розвитку кар'єри

[18] Resolution No 924 of the Cabinet of Ministers, dated August 31, 2011

[19] Main (enic.in.ua)

- take part in the preparation of drafts of bilateral and/or multilateral inter-governmental qualification recognition agreements; (the Centre has actively contributed to the UNESCO Global Recognition Convention of 2019
- taking part in information and research programs, workshops and other events held within the information network
- promote education and academic services of Ukrainian educational institutions abroad;
- take part in international exchange programs for pupils, students, and postgraduates;
- provide organizational support for study, internship, or professional advancement of Ukrainian citizens abroad.

Principles for automatic recognition of HE qualifications allow education institutions to take admission decisions without having to go through the Centre. Ukraine has adopted clear legislation and procedures for refugees and displaced persons with qualifications.

A Procedure for recognition in Ukraine of professional qualifications obtained in other countries[20], was approved at a Government meeting on 2 June 2021. It states that persons who have obtained professional qualifications in other countries can have them confirmed in Ukraine by applying to the competent authority.

7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Ukraine, though not part of the EQF process or a member of the EQF Advisory Group, seeks to align its NQF with the EQF. Its NQF level descriptors have been brought into line with the EQF recently. Further, the Association Agreement with the EU specifically refers to establishing an NQF to improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications and skills, drawing on EU experience.

However, Ukraine has been a member of the Bologna process since 2005 and established a committee for self-certification with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) in December 2020. This group and its work are supported by the EU4Skills project.

The 2017 EQF Recommendation also provides for the comparison of the EQF with third country qualifications frameworks. Ukraine has been selected as a pilot for comparison. The comparison process can be combined with Ukraine's self-certification process, ensuring that all types of qualification in the NQF can benefit from more transparency. This is especially relevant given the number of migrants to the EU who hold vocational qualifications.

7.2 International cooperation

The Bologna Process is one of the main drivers for the development of the NQF. The independent National Agency for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education[21] has started 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 learning outcomes. In 2020 the agency joined the International

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[20] Головна | Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (kmu.gov.ua)
[21] National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (naqa.gov.ua)

Network of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education and became an affiliated member of ENQA, the European Network. The National Qualifications Agency is also looking for international partnerships.

7.3   International donor support

In the period before 2019, a number of education projects, limited in size and scope, were implemented. The Tempus and Erasmus Plus Programme for Higher Education have been a continuous source for cooperation in Higher Education. Additionally, the British Council has also given support to the development of the NQF and higher education reforms.

In general education the Polish and Finnish governments have been providing bilateral support to implement the New Ukrainian School concept. In VET there has been a Twinning Project and some smaller bilateral initiatives, including cooperation to develop dual education. Estonia has implemented a project for the Volyn region, which provided school partnerships and curriculum development support and has been particularly important as a trailblazer for moving towards a competency based, decentralised VET system.

The ULEAD project from the EU has also been providing support for the decentralisation of VET. In order to assist the development and implementation of a competency-based education system and the NQF, the ETF provided bridging support which included principles for decentralisation, key competences, the NQF implementation plan, the establishment of the National Qualifications Agency and the development of new standards and modular curricula.

The EU4Skills programme supports the Modernisation of Vocational Education, and the implementation of the NQF. This includes support for the development of the National Agency for Qualifications, the development and implementation of standards and VET curricula for 100 profiles and widening the offer of VNFIL. It further supports the NQF's comparison with the EQF and strengthens systemic changes to vocational and professional qualifications in Ukraine.

A World Bank loan of $200m for the programme, "Ukraine: Improving Higher Education for Results"[22] should further help boost the quality of the higher education sector, as well as its relevance to the labour market, including teaching and research facilities and digital learning infrastructure. Ukraine has been a very active participant in the Tempus and Erasmus+ programmes, which have mainly benefitted higher education institutions but are gradually opening up for cooperation in VET and lifelong learning.

8.   IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Ten years after the adoption of the NQF, the NQF has become a policy instrument clearly moving education, training and lifelong learning policies towards an outcomes based, competency based system. It is embedded in key legislation and linked with reform initiatives in general education, VET and higher education and with important international cooperation initiatives and donor programmes.

Institutionally, the paradigm shift to an outcomes based qualification system is embedded in the National Qualifications Agency, as a tripartite body, the independent National Agency for Quality

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[22] Development Projects: Ukraine Improving Higher Education for Results Project - P171050 (worldbank.org)

Assurance in Higher Education and the Information and Image Centre for recognition, within the Ministry of Education, which are all operational.

New standards and curricula have been developed and a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning has been in operation since 2016. There has been a break with the Unified Tariff Qualification System and a point of no return has been reached.

Overcoming the legacy of the past is not easy, moving from a selective education system based on knowledge acquisition to a system emphasising the development of competences, away from academic subjects to integrated modules focused on competences of learners. The new changes have not yet been applied across the whole qualification system, and fully reached the end-users. Reforms will need to include more stakeholders and institutions to take effect. In particular teachers, university staff, trainers, assessors, methodologists, quality assurance experts and guidance counsellors, will need to be addressed. This will require more capacity building, experimentation and guidance, especially as the reforms coincide with more autonomy for providers. The NQF register will need to be populated with standards and qualifications. New qualifications can facilitate the move to modular curricula and new forms of learning in which the focus is on active learning. There is a particular need to develop professional qualifications to support adult learning and learning outside the classroom. The emphasis on learning outcomes does not only affect learning. Standards set the expectations in terms of expected learning outcomes. With more alternative pathways, summative assessment needs a rethink, to make sure it is independent, outcome based and modularised as well.

There is a need to carefully evaluate the use of professional and educational qualifications on lifelong learning opportunities and adult learning including pathways from professional to educational qualifications and vice versa and the possibility to use partial qualifications to accumulate learning experiences supporting horizontal or vertical progression. This is still a grey area. Validation of non-formal and informal learning has been limited, but this experience has nevertheless been important. Qualification centres will need to be accredited to widen the scope and opportunities for validation and recognising adult learning. These Qualification Centres can serve the needs of enterprises, to certify their personnel, but special attention needs to be paid to people without qualifications. This implies a diversification of institutions that will become qualification centres.

There are new developments that are important for the coming years. These concern the internationalisation and digitalisation of the qualification system, and the role of key competences. Digitalisation and greening are gaining importance in addition to the other key competences that are central in the current reforms. Partial qualifications deserve more attention as they can be building blocks for lifelong learning and personalised pathways. In this sense there is a need to consider the position of micro-credentials in the NQF and the NQF register.

Career guidance and counselling and lifelong learning opportunities will need to be integrated with the new qualifications system. The interoperability of the database of qualifications with other databases in the country (including EDEBO) and international databases is important to take full advantage of the new systems. COVID has shown the importance of better online resources and more online provision that will need to be integrated. Moreover, international online provision is gaining importance both Ukrainian learners and Ukrainian providers.

The self-certification of the NQF to the QF-EHEA and the forthcoming comparison of Ukraine's NQF to the EQF offer an important opportunity to benchmark the NQF internationally.

9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

National Qualifications Agency, https://nqa.gov.ua/

Ministry of Education, https://mon.gov.ua/ua

European Training Foundation (ETF), https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/trp/torino-process-2018-2020-ukraine-national-report and ETF bridging support to Ukraine's vocational education and training system and qualifications system in 2016-2019 | Open Space (europa.eu)

10. UKRAINIAN NQF

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Communication	Responsibility and autonomy
1	Basic general knowledge, understanding of the simplest concepts about yourself and the environment, the basics of safe behaviour	basic skills needed to perform simple tasks	integration into groups that make up the immediate social environment appropriate response to simple written and oral messages	work or study under direct supervision or supervision in a structured context limited liability for their actions formulation of elementary judgments
2	Basic empirical knowledge and understanding of the main (general) processes in the field of education and / or work	use of relevant information to perform simple tasks and solve everyday problems in typical situations with the use of simple rules, instructions and tools for evaluating the results of their own activities in accordance with established criteria, the use of reasoning to substantiate their own opinions and conclusions	interaction in the team in order to perform the tasks of producing detailed oral and written messages	work and / or training under the guidance or supervision with a certain independence individual responsibility for the results of tasks during training and / or work
3	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in the field of education and / or professional activity	performing typical tasks and solving problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information for evaluating the results of tasks in accordance with pre-known criteria	ability to work effectively in a team of perception of criticism, advice and instructions for the production of detailed oral and written messages, in particular in professional activities	responsibility for performing tasks while working or studying adapting their behaviour to external circumstances while performing tasks or solving problems
4	Empirical and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts and understanding of principles, methods, processes in the field of education and / or professional activity	performing complex specialized tasks, finding or making decisions on specific problems in the field of professional activity or learning to plan their own work and in a limited context organization, control, evaluation and adjustment of the work of others	mentoring, transfer of experience in producing complex detailed oral and written messages, in particular in professional activities or training	self-organization according to rules that exist in work or study contexts and are usually predictable, but may be subject to changes in the supervision of the day-to-day work of others, limited responsibility for evaluating and improving the performance of their work or study
5	Comprehensive specialized empirical and	a wide range of cognitive and practical skills needed to solve complex problems in	interaction with colleagues, managers and clients in matters	organization and supervision (management) in the context of professional activity or

ETF Working together Learning for life
European Training Foundation

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Communication	Responsibility and autonomy
	theoretical knowledge in the field of education and / or professional activity, awareness of the limits of this knowledge	specialized areas of professional activity and / or learn to find creative solutions or answers to clearly identified specific and abstract problems based on the identification and application of data planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation own work and the work of others in a specialized context	related to understanding, skills and activities in the professional field and / or in the field of learning to convey to a wide range of people (colleagues, managers, clients) their own understanding, knowledge, judgments, experience, in particular professional activity	training in the conditions of unpredictable changes improvement of results of own activity and work of others ability to continue training with some degree of autonomy
6	Conceptual scientific and practical knowledge, critical understanding of theories, principles, methods and concepts in the field of professional activity and / or training	in-depth cognitive and practical skills, mastery and innovation at the level required to solve complex specialized tasks and practical problems in the field of professional activity or training	communication to specialists and non-specialists of information, ideas, problems, solutions, own experience and argumentation collection, interpretation and application of communication data on professional issues, including in a foreign language, orally and in writing	management of complex technical or professional activities or projects ability to be responsible for making and making decisions in unpredictable working and / or educational contexts forming judgments that take into account social, scientific and ethical aspects organization and management of professional development of individuals and groups ability to continue learning with considerable autonomy
7	Specialized conceptual knowledge, which includes modern scientific achievements in the field of professional activity or field of knowledge and is the basis for original thinking and research, critical thinking of problems in the field and on the border of fields of knowledge	specialized problem-solving skills required for research and / or innovation to develop new knowledge and procedures ability to integrate knowledge and solve complex problems in broad or multidisciplinary contexts ability to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments in the presence of incomplete or limited information, taking into account aspects of social and ethical responsibility	clear and unambiguous communication of own knowledge, conclusions and arguments to specialists and non-specialists, in particular to students	management jobs or training processes that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and / or performance evaluation teams and groups the ability to continue their education with a high degree of autonomy
8	Conceptual and methodological knowledge in the field or on the border of fields of knowledge or professional activity	specialized skills and techniques needed to solve significant problems in the field of professional activity, science and / or innovation, expansion and reassessment of existing knowledge and professional practice of initiating, planning, implementing and adjusting a consistent process of thorough research with due academic integrity critical analysis, evaluation and	free communication on issues related to the field of scientific and expert knowledge, with colleagues, the general scientific community, society as a whole, the use of academic Ukrainian and foreign languages in professional activities and research	Demonstration of significant authority, innovation, high degree of independence, academic and professional integrity, constant commitment to the development of new ideas or processes in the advanced contexts of professional and scientific activities, the ability to continuous self-development and self-improvement

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Communication	Responsibility and autonomy
		synthesis of new and complex ideas		

Appendix in the wording of the Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers № 509 of June 12 , 2019 , № 519 of June 25, 2020

ABBREVIATIONS

ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EDEBO	Single state electronic database for education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU4Skills	EU programme for Modernisation of VET and support for NQF
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
NAQA	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
NQA	National Qualifications Agency
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area
U-LEAD	multi-donor action of the EU and MS to strengthen local self-government.
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning