

# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – TUNISIA

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# 1. Introduction and context

## 1.2 NQF snapshot

The National Classification of Qualifications (CNQ) was adopted in 2009<sup>1</sup> as a reference framework aiming to link the diplomas awarded by the various components of the human resources development system to the corresponding qualification levels. The CNQ should support lifelong learning and strengthen the links between the different components of the human resource development system, responding better to the needs of economic sectors and make qualifications easier to understand.

The human resources training system in Tunisia includes three components:

1. general education – which spans certificates for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.
2. vocational education and training (VET), covering both initial and continuing training - ranging from the certificate of professional aptitude to the higher technician's certificate.
3. higher education - covering qualifications for the license, master, and doctorate (LMD) cycles.

A wide range of ministries are responsible for human resource development, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Defence.

Learning outcomes are an important element for quality-assuring education and training. While learning outcomes have been in use since the 1990s, approaches vary between subsectors and pathways are not well developed. PISA results show a need to strengthen basic skills.

Creating new pathways is part of vocational education and training and higher education reforms. Validation of non-formal and informal learning has been piloted but is not yet an integrated part of the human resources development system. The CNQ is not actively promoted. It is difficult to find information on its use and implementation.

The CNQ has started implementation in various aspects of human resource development and is a reference in vocational education and training (VET), but it has not succeeded in linking these different dimensions. This has been attributed to the lack of common vision, and lack of joint governance which were both addressed in different strategic and legislative documents and agreements between key actors, but, according to the available evidence, not implemented. The CNQ lacks a common register of qualifications, which has not yet been provided for in legislation. The development of a common register could activate the involvement of different stakeholders in implementing the CNQ.

Implementing the CNQ more consistently can improve the relevance of qualifications and boost trust, making stronger links to identified needs and improving stakeholder involvement. The CNQ is potentially a tool to link Tunisian qualifications better with qualifications in Africa, through the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) and possibly European qualifications through comparison with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), but it will need to be developed further and fully implemented to make this possible.

The CNQ is in the activation stage. The CNQ will therefore need additional steps to become operational.

## 1.2 Policy context

Tunisia is integrating into the world economy, through Association Agreements and negotiations with the European Union (EU) for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, the Agadir

<sup>1</sup> [Décret n° 2009-2139 du 8 juillet 2009, fixant la classification nationale des qualifications.](#)

Agreement for free trade with countries in the region and talks with the World Trade Organization. However, the impact on the country's economy has so far been low.

Tunisia's overarching strategy is the National Development Plan 2016–2020 (MDICI, 2017) which is being followed by a Vision 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Strategies for the education and training sector include the Strategic Plan for the Education Sector 2016–2020 (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2016), the National VET Reform Strategy 2016–2020 (Ministère de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi – MFPE), and the Strategic Plan for the Reform of Higher Education and Scientific Research 2015–2025 (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique - MESRS).

Public institutions have taken ownership of these strategies. However, the pace of taking concrete actions has been slow. Frequent changes of governments and consequent shifts in the political agenda present barriers to implementing reforms consistently.

Tunisia has managed to keep up its high level of public expenditure in education – and has greatly improved the literacy and educational attainment rates of its population. These positive trends contrast with the persistently high early school-leaving rate.

Continuing skills mismatch on the Tunisian labour market, in its multiple dimensions, continues to hamper further economic development and a more efficient use of human capital. Some initiatives have been taken to employ young graduates. This includes the Tunisie Digitale 2020 plan, which aims to develop the ICT infrastructure throughout the country and services linked to ICTs.

Unemployment presents a persistent challenge in Tunisia. It affects people with medium and high levels of education, especially females. Despite females' increasing levels of education, their labour market participation remains one of the lowest in the world.

The Tunisian educational system does not align with the needs of the private sector, in particular the high number of higher education graduates is in contrast with the need for qualified workers. High unemployment coexists with a high number of unfilled job vacancies. It is skilled workers and specialised technicians who are being sought, particularly in the textile, hotel and catering, construction, and ICT sectors. VET enrolment numbers are low due to the lack of attractive VET offers and missing pathways to higher education. Opportunities for continuing VET are underutilised. Medium- and high-skilled profiles are also particularly affected by migration.

Young Tunisians generally experience a difficult transition from education to work. Public sector jobs are scarce, and the private sector does not create sufficient jobs to absorb the growing number of young, educated, labour market entrants. Jobs are created in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and service sectors such as tourism and trade. With ongoing deindustrialisation, Tunisia's employment structure has been shifting towards the services sector. However, many of these jobs are of an informal and/or vulnerable category. Moreover, the tourism sector has been heavily affected by COVID.

The CNQ is a tool to support relevant qualifications for the development of human resources and lifelong learning. As such it is one of the few initiatives that links different subsectors of the education and training system and employment.

### 1.3 NQF legal basis

There is distinct legislation on the NQF: The Classification Nationale de Qualifications is regulated by Presidential [Decree 2009-2139 of the 8 July 2009](#).

The decree sets the levels for a reference framework for diplomas that are delivered by different elements of the system for human resource development. It consists of seven levels and six domain descriptors. The aim of the CNQ is to operationalise lifelong learning by reinforcing the links within the system for human resource development and the needs of economic sectors. These levels should guide public and private providers to ensure the quality of qualifications.

The decree explains the governance arrangements through a sub-committee of the Higher Council on Human Resources Development. It clarifies links to existing regulations on qualifications and explains the progressive implementation. It underlines the responsibilities of different line ministries involved in the implementation.

Other related legislation includes:

- The VET law: n° 2008-10 of 11 February 2008 referring to the need for the NQF to support the development of standards, explaining pathways and diplomas for initial and continuing VET, and legislating validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- The outcomes profiles of VET graduates in the Order of the Minister of Vocational Training and Employment of 2 August 2010, setting the general framework of reference for vocational training diplomas.
- Reform of the National Vocational Training System Orientation Document and Operational Plan 2014-2018 Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, 2013, including as an action to revise the CNQ in line with the new vision of the national human resources development system.
- Order of the Minister of Vocational Training and Employment of 12 May 2020, on approval, renewal of approval, cancellation of approval of vocational training certificates and diplomas and change of name of professional technician certificates.
- Decree No. 2013-47 of 4 January 2013 laying down the general framework of the system of education and the conditions for obtaining national diploma doctorate in the system “LMD” in higher education.
- Law No. 2000-73 of 25 July 2000 on private higher education, as amended by law No. 2008-59 of August 4, 2008.
- Law No. 2008-19 of 25 February 2008 on higher education, as amended by Decree-Law No. 2011-31 of 26 April 2011.
- Law No. 2009-21 of 28 April 2009 specifying the general framework for the practical training of students in higher education within administrations, companies or public or private institutions.
- National Bachelor’s degree: Decree No. 2008-3123 of 22 September 2008, establishing a general framework for the system of education and the conditions for obtaining national diploma License in the various fields of training, referees, background and specialties of the LMD system.
- National Master’s Degree: Decree No. 2012-1227 of 1 August 2012 laying down the general framework of the system of education and the conditions for obtaining national Master’s degree in the LMD system.
- Strategic plan for the reform of higher education and scientific research 2015 – 2025, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2015.
- Decree No. 2010-3080 of 1 December 2010, establishing the higher advisory councils, including the higher council on human resources development, which coordinates the human resources development policies between different components of the HRD system. According to the Decree on the CNQ a sub-committee under this council would deal with coordinating the CNQ.
- Joint Order of 8 October 2015, of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research creating a joint committee to decide issues of common interest.

## 2. Policy objectives

### 2.1 Education and training reforms

The CNQ is a tool to support human resources development in Tunisia and to improve the links with the economic sectors. The aim is to create a lifelong learning system. It builds on earlier reforms in general education and vocational education and training, linked with the introduction of the competency-based approach in the 1990s and reforms in higher education linked to the introduction of the Licence, Master, and Doctorate cycles.

For VET the law adopted in 2008 was followed by an operational plan for VET reform 2013-2015, that is still the basis for ongoing reforms, that should strengthen the quality of more autonomous VET providers. The plans foresee amongst other developments in improving access to quality vocational education, making qualifications easier to understand, the creation of new pathways between VET and higher education.

### 2.2 Aims of NQF

The Classification Nationale des Qualifications (CNQ) is a reference framework which links the qualifications issued by the different components of the human resources development system at the corresponding skill levels.

The Tunisian NQF has several objectives:

- to contribute to a better readability of competences.
- to bridge the gap between the economy skills needs and education and training provision.
- to provide common references to foster geographical, sectoral, and professional mobility.
- to take into account all modes of learning in a lifelong learning perspective.
- to reduce dead ends in learning pathways, in particular between VET and HE.

## 3. Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

### 3.1 NQF scope and structure

The CNQ is comprehensive as it is seen as an instrument to link the components of the Human Resource Development System. It has 7 levels covering all formal qualifications starting from the Certificate of Competence, issued for special skills development programmes for people without 9 years of compulsory education to the Doctorate (PhD) at the highest level. Many programmes are delivered by private providers which all are formally licensed and accredited by the Ministries in charge of Education, Vocational Education and Higher Education and the agency for QA in HE.

Despite the efforts made in favour of the establishment of a national system for the recognition of learning outcomes regardless of the pathway of the acquisition of skills subject to certification (formal, informal, or non-formal learning), this system remains non-operational from which it is not yet possible to validate the acquired experience of a person following informal learning. Non-formal training, which leads to a certificate of end of learning (CFA), or the vocational training certificate (CFP) issued to young people who have undergone training in a company or in VET centres is also not formally recognised. Training courses for adults in the context of active labour market measures or retraining and upgrading of skills in companies are also not sanctioned by qualifications and therefore are not

included in the CNQ. The future development of mechanisms for the recognition of fields of professional competence could make it possible to obtain recognition for these forms of learning.

The Classification Nationale des Qualifications has 7 levels.

The CNQ has six domain descriptors: four descriptors refer to dimensions relating to attitudes in a work or study situation (complexity, autonomy, responsibility, adaptability) two refer to competences that are required (in terms of knowledge and know-how / behaviour).

Level descriptors are used to support the definition of standards and curricula. Public and private education, training and higher education establishments must take the necessary measures to ensure the quality of the qualifications developed and their consistency with the descriptors defined in the classification for the target level.

Levels five, six, seven and eight cover the Licence, Master, and Doctorate cycles of Higher Education.

Higher education and vocational training are not well linked, although within higher education there are professional as well as academic degrees. The pathways between the vocational training system and secondary and higher education were regulated by the 2008 law on vocational training. These were reconfirmed in the strategic reform programmes for VET 2014-2018 and Higher Education 2015-2025, however in practice there is not much progression.

## 3.2 Types of qualifications

The CNQ provides a direct link between each of its 7 levels with the outcomes of national diplomas. These levels are correlated with the responsible departments of Education, Vocational Training and Higher Education.

Level	MoE	MoE&VT	MoHES
1	Diploma of completion of basic technical education (DFEBT), Diploma of completion of basic education (DFEB)	Certificate of competence (CC)	
2		Certificate of professional competence /Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle (CAP)	
3	Baccalauréat	Professional Technician Certificate, Brevet de technicien professionnel (BTP),	
4		Higher technician certificate /Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)	
5			Bachelor/Licence Applied Bachelor/Licence appliquée
6			Master Professional Master/ Master professionnel
7			Doctorat

In Tunisia, the availability or provision of vocational qualifications is based on initial training in VET centres or in companies as either a dual pathway or as an apprenticeship. The diplomas are issued by the ministry in charge of vocational training. This includes agricultural qualifications and those related

to tourism. These diplomas are classified in four registers: Competency certificates (CC), professional aptitude certificates (CAP), Professional technicians' certificates (BTP), and the Brevets de Technicien Supérieur (BTP). Qualifications are classified by sector and level. Training providers need to be accredited to deliver specific qualifications. For continuing training, the same diplomas based on the same exams can be awarded.

Although higher education programmes cover both professional and academic routes, the progression routes from VET to higher education are not very developed. The strategic plan for the reform of higher education and scientific research 2015 – 2025 shows that there are several actions for improving pathways, but it is not clear how far these have been implemented.

Partial qualifications are identified by the Field of Professional Competence (CPC) which are part of VET qualifications. They have been used in the pilots for validation of non-formal and informal learning but cannot be awarded as independent qualifications.

Apart from the diploma types mentioned above, non-formal learning does not lead to a recognized or approved diploma. It includes:

- apprenticeships, organized within a contractual framework between learners and economic enterprises, and taking place mainly in production spaces, subject to additional theoretical training provided by vocational training establishments. This type of apprenticeship leads to an unapproved End of Apprenticeship Certificate (CFA); it is open to young people who do not meet the conditions for access to initial vocational training cycles sanctioned by a CAP, BTP or BTS.
- these young people can also pursue residential training in vocational training centres to obtain an unapproved Vocational Training Certificate (CFP).
- other forms of non-formal training focused more on adults are the continuing training for workers, the promotion and development of which are entrusted to the Centre National de Formation Continue et de Promotion Professionnelle (CNFCPP) created in 1993.
- the literacy programme for adults (79% of adults are literate).
- additional training or retraining organized for the benefit of the unemployed under active employment programs.

### 3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

Quality assurance is linked with the development and delivery of qualifications. Sector committees in both VET and Higher Education need to ensure the relevance of qualifications. Sectors, however, have different connotations in VET and higher education.

For the delivery of qualifications, the focus is on providers and programme accreditation. There is a growing awareness of the role of providers to ensure continuous quality. In VET new guidelines on self-assessment and monitoring of the quality assurance of providers have been tested that take into account learning outcomes. Currently, widening these guidelines to all VET providers is being discussed.

In accordance with law n ° 2008-19 of 25 February 2008 relating to higher education, the National Body for Assessment, Quality Assurance and Accreditation (INEAQA) is the body in charge of improving quality in higher education. This body is responsible for examining higher education institutions and accreditation of degree programs.

### 3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

Since the mid-nineties, all programmes in general education and VET have been developed based on learning outcomes, using the Approche par Compétence (APC) (competence-based approach). However, the focus has been on education and training and pedagogy, rather than on assessment.



The on-going reform of the VET system requires a change in orientation towards assessment and certification and articulation with the CNQ. The new vocational qualification standards should allow access to a national diploma through formal learning and through the validation of prior experience, as required by law. The changes that were needed became clear in the latest pilots on validation that had to start from a reconstruction of the standards, allowing assessment of each module or field of competence.

Another change was the desire to make these qualifications understandable to a larger public, including employers, prospective students, and families. This meant that standards need to be more concise and accessible through an online database of qualifications in line with the Europass Certificate Supplement and EQF Recommendation Annex 6 guiding this process.

In Higher Education, the LMD system was introduced between 2004 and 2010 with the intention of anchoring itself to the Bologna Process. All aspects of the process have been legally addressed: from the (centralized) organization of the LMD system, to university accreditation and quality assurance, reporting directly to the Ministry, which in 2006-2007 initiated a Quality Support Programme for universities.

Universities do not have the freedom to choose the title and content of fields and specialties. All standards and curricula are based on learning outcomes.

### **3.5 Credit systems**

In Higher Education the validation of the student's achievements (continuous control, exams) is ensured (in principle) by the allocation in each teaching unit of credits calibrated to the hourly volume of teaching and personal work. Credits should be transferable from one university to another, in Tunisia and abroad.

## **4. Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement**

### **4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF**

There is no single institution in charge of NQF coordination and operational functions. The governance of the qualifications system comprises numerous institutions, exercising mandates of a different nature, related with such key functions as quality assurance, development of standards and learning programmes, recognition of qualifications and management of different reforms with international assistance in key domains of the NQF.

The NQF decree (art. 5) stipulated the establishment of a commission emanating from the Higher Council for the development of Human Resources. It is responsible for monitoring the implementation of national qualifications and will propose possible updates. While the Higher Council has been functioning, the sub-committee was never established. The implementation of the CNQ, as well as the monitoring of the compatibility of the programmes with the different decreed levels, is mandated to the various ministries adhering to the human resources development system (ministries of education, vocational training, higher education, defence, health, and specialised agencies of these ministries) with the participation of economic and social partners.

To better coordinate the reform projects of the three systems and the human resources training system, the joint decree of 8 October 2015 established a tripartite commission between the three ministries concerned. However, so far, the commission has not fulfilled its designated role in coordinating the implementation of the CNQ.

Currently, discussions are on-going to explore the possible role of the Permanent Committee for Vocational Training which brings together all relevant national stakeholders from ministries and social partners and has links as well with sectoral and regional structures. This would require a new legal act to confirm its new mandate.

## 4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

According to art 8 of the Decree on the CNQ, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Higher Education and Research, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources, the Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Health and the Minister for Employment and Vocational Training are responsible for the execution of the CNQ.

In 2018, the Ministry of Higher Education established Sectoral Committees for the LMD system in charge of evaluating the offer of HE institutions with the aim to readapt the programmes and make them more focused on agreed learning outcomes and employability.

Sectoral Committees are also a substructure of the Permanent Committee for vocational education. In the draft legislation nine committees are foreseen, including agri-food and fisheries, construction, textile and leatherware, electrical and mechanical engineering, transport and logistics, hotel and catering, administration, press and media, paramedics, and personal care. They should deal with identification of skill and training needs and are responsible for approving qualification and training standards.

The National Employment and Qualifications Observatory (ONEQ) under the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, is a specialised body supporting decision-making in the field of Employment and Qualifications and is responsible for the identification of skills and competences needs at national level.

Several agencies under different ministries are charged with related tasks such as setting standards, quality assurance, and coordinating training provision for initial and continuing training.

## 5. Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

### 5.1 VNFIL arrangements

The website of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training mentions the organisation of trade exams for several crafts laid down in the government decree 3078 of 29 November 2005.

The first pilots in validation of non-formal and informal learning were developed by the Ministry for Employment and Vocational Training in the period 2005-2007, with support from AFPA, the continuing vocational training body under the French Ministry of Labour. This piloting took place in the ready-made garment and automobile sectors.

VNFIL was further established in legislation by the Law on Vocational Education and Training n° 2008-10 of February 11, 2008. In art 62 the possibility of validation of non-formal and informal learning for all diplomas that fall under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training except for the professional baccalaureate, which is a joint responsibility with the Ministry of Education, is stipulated. The conditions for the validation of non-formal and informal learning should be established by order of the minister responsible for vocational training.

More recently, validation was piloted in the framework of the EU PEFESE project in 2015/2016. Implementation of VNFIL was associated with the CNQ and the reform of the certification system (development of qualification standards).

The pilot sought to establish if a person could be authorized to sit for exams to obtain partial certifications (linked to modules or units of professional competences or CCP). It is therefore a derogation from the examination process. This allowed people who had not followed formal training to participate in the exam. The piloting resulted in:

- - a draft VNFIL decree (not yet approved).
- - a complete procedure for VNFIL from identification to certification.
- - a set of instruments and supports intended for "candidates" for VNFIL and actors of the system.
- - an experiment in 3 sectors (construction, hotel-catering, fisheries) and four qualifications involving a dozen candidates and twenty professionals and trainers.

The qualification standards chosen needed to be adapted to support VNFIL. The biggest problem was related to the confusion between the training programme and the certification framework, and related to how the competency-based approach has been applied, as it does not facilitate independent assessment of modules.

Although validation has been successfully piloted, it is not yet widely applied in VET.

The Higher School of Journalism in Tunis allows professional journalists to access studies through validation and to obtain exemptions leading to a Diploma, after completing several selected modules. The Diploma is part of the CNQ, but the process is not set in law yet.

## 6. NQF implementation and impact

### 6.1 Key achievements and main findings

The CNQ has been in an activation stage since 2009 but is still not fully operational.

There is a tradition of using learning outcomes in the country. Since the 1990s Tunisia has introduced the competency-based approach in general education and VET. In HE, it has introduced the three-cycle Licence (Bachelor) Master and Doctorate system in analogy of the Bologna Process, which was phased in between 2004 and 2010. There is a good understanding of the needs to implement the NQF among stakeholders.

Information on the implementation of the CNQ developments is not easy to obtain or accessible. There is not a single access point on information. Implementation has advanced within specific subsectors but not across the whole framework. There are outcome-based qualifications in general education, VET, and higher education. Validation is underway in VET.

The lack of a coordinated approach undermines the development of human resource development policies, which are fragmented across many different ministries and institutions. Governance arrangements, although legislated in 2009, are still not implemented in practice. A register is being planned and will be an important instrument to link qualifications in Tunisia as well as internationally. It can make qualifications more transparent and accessible and strengthen trust in Tunisian qualifications at home and abroad. A database will need specific legislation and resources and support structures.

After the revolution of 2011, it has been very difficult to pass laws to make the necessary changes, and to agree governance arrangements. While the three key ministries of Education, Higher Education and Research and Employment, and Vocational Training cooperate sporadically, and with the social partners, including via the Permanent Committee for Vocational Training, decision-making has not advanced.

Joint work on the register of the CNQ, a new mandate for the Permanent Committee on Vocational Training and the prospects of comparison with the EQF and referencing to the ACQF, may stimulate

further development, provided that there is political, stakeholder and donor support for these developments.

## 6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training has started scoping work on a joint register for the CNQ and for Vocational Training. It is planned that this register will provide information to stakeholders and the wider public and link qualifications, learning and validation opportunities, guidance and counselling, and accredited providers. It should capitalize on all the information relating to training and training providers, provide the general public with information relating to training and certification pathways, ensure the readability of diplomas, and support the operationalisation of the national classification of qualifications (CNQ).

A register is an important precondition to ensure the transparency of the CNQ and Tunisian qualifications. By making use of international standards such as the Open Source European Learning Model, QDR and Annex VI of the EQF which stipulates the data fields that can make data on qualifications internationally comparable and interoperable, such a qualifications database would also allow for online comparison with qualifications in EU member states and other countries using these European standards.

A National Nomenclature of Sectors and Specialties of Training exists as well as a database of training specialties including links between specialties and training operators (ATFP, AVFA, AFMT, Private, etc.) covering 20 training sectors / sub-sectors / specialties validated by professionals, professional federations, and the Permanent Committee for Vocational Training. It is not easily accessible.

The Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research created an online directory of higher education programmes on offer (Annuaire Tunisien des Offres de Formations Universitaires (ATOFU)). The directory includes all the diplomas of the license-master-doctorate (LMD) system, and the non-LMD system (medical studies, engineering studies, architecture, bachelor, etc.) which are currently approved and are offered by public and private higher education establishments. The directory presents a total of 6,390 training programmes, i.e., 2,785 for public education and 3,605 for private education. It details the university training provided by higher education and research establishments, the diplomas and certificates that can be obtained and the duration of the programmes. However, the information is rather limited. The website [www.orientation.tn: site de l'orientation universitaire en tunisie](http://www.orientation.tn: site de l'orientation universitaire en tunisie) provides a single-entry point for admission procedures and support services to prospective students.

## 6.3 Qualification documents

CNQ levels do not seem to be mentioned systematically on the diplomas, and it is not clear how descriptors and levels are used. Tunisia should have been issuing Diploma Supplements (DS) since 2006, when it implemented parts of the Bologna process. In practice, however, files rarely include a diploma supplement.

## 6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

The introduction of the LMD structure and other transparency tools such as the diploma supplements has supported academic recognition, enabling the recognition of learning outcomes nationally and internationally.

The Direction of Equivalencies of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is responsible for organising the recognition processes.

Two structures are authorized to issue equivalence decisions in Tunisia:

- a national commission for the equivalence of diplomas and titles.
- sectoral diploma and qualification equivalence committees. These sectoral committees are made up of the following major groups of disciplines: economics, legal sciences, letters and civilization, human, social and religious sciences, basic sciences, engineering sciences, medical and paramedical sciences, architecture, town planning and the arts, secondary education (basic education, baccalaureate).

The [ministry's website](#) provides detailed and standardized information in Arabic and French on the equivalence procedures and criteria used to assess foreign diplomas or diplomas obtained from private Tunisian universities. The [Meric-NET](#) project aims to revitalise the Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres in Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia and create links and exchange of experience with the ENIC-NARIC network.

Additionally, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment has created a [service to support the recognition of foreign vocational training diplomas](#). Vocational qualifications are evaluated against the national classification of occupations (in accordance with Order No. 1397 of 20 June 1994 for the approval of certificates and initial and continuing vocational training diplomas) and as well with the CNQ levels. An advisory commission responsible for the equivalence of foreign diplomas is evaluating the requests in line with the conditions of equivalence of foreign vocational training diplomas laid down in the ministerial order N° 79 of 27 September 2010.

## 7. Referencing to regional framework/ other frameworks

### 7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

The CNQ is not yet linked to any Regional Qualifications Framework, though is expected to be referenced to the ACQF in due course. Tunisia is actively involved in the capacity-building and development of the ACQF. In higher education, Tunisia is not eligible for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. However, the Bologna Process' three-cycle structure, credit arrangements and quality assurance principles, have been influential in Tunisia, although the approach has been much more centralized than in the Bologna countries.

Aspects of the EQF have influenced the CNQ, but both in terms of levels and level descriptions, the CNQ is quite different. There have been discussions about comparing the CNQ to the EQF, and there is a strong interest from both European and Tunisian partners in this option. However, for now, the CNQ is not yet sufficiently operational to start comparison.

These international processes are important as they can improve the transparency, portability, and comparability of Tunisian qualifications and promote more mobility.

### 7.2 International cooperation

Tunisia participates in regional cross-Mediterranean fora such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the Mediterranean Universities' Union (Unimed), whose activities include qualifications components. There is still reference to using the Q4M methodology developed with ETF to compare, link and co-create vocational qualifications with neighbouring countries. Tunisia is active in Erasmus and is becoming a destination country for students from Africa. As mentioned above, Tunisia is actively involved in developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework. There is active bilateral cooperation with many countries and a growing number of joint degrees. Qualifications also play an increasingly important role in the cooperation on legal, circular migration.

On 3 March 2014 Tunisia and the European Union agreed a Mobility Partnership. Article 4 stipulates the intention to:

*improve the possibility for Tunisian vocational training and higher and university graduates to have access to study and employment in the Member States, corresponding to their qualifications, and facilitate recognition of professional and university certifications issued by Tunisian institutes by the competent authorities of the Member States, in particular thanks to the operationalization of the Tunisian Qualifications Framework in correspondence with the European Qualifications Framework.*

### 7.3 International donor support

In the field of mobility and migration, the EU funds a regional project, THAMM<sup>2</sup>, under the EU emergency fund for Africa, covering Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. One of its objectives is to improve mechanisms for the assessment, certification, validation, and recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications. Recognition of migrants' qualifications is a major issue in facilitating access to the labour market.

The IRADA programme<sup>3</sup> contributes by reviewing existing standards for vocational education in line with the National Qualifications Framework.

As mentioned, there is also the Programme d'appui au système de l'Education/Formation – Enseignement Supérieur et Employabilité des diplômés (PEFESE), which has been used to pilot validation.

Between 2015-2019, Tunisian partners participated in capacity-building and international credit mobility projects, including 43 in higher education.

ETF has been providing support for the reform of the qualification system in Tunisia since 2009, through targeted activities including the Q4M project (2010-2015) and more recently support for the conceptualisation of the register.

## 8. Important lessons and future plans

The Decree on the CNQ was adopted in 2009. The implementation has been fragmented, limited to the individual components of the human resource development system, and is not very visible. The lack of inter-institutional coordination, no shared vision for human resource development and lifelong learning, and the absence so far of a common register of qualifications, are impediments to implementation. After the revolution of 2011, it has been very difficult to legislate relevant changes and to agree governance arrangements.

In Tunisia there is a tradition of using learning outcomes. Since the 1990s, the country has introduced the competency- based approach in both general education and VET, and introduced the LMD system in higher education, parallel to the equivalent in the Bologna Process. Learning outcomes play an increasingly important role in quality assurance. Stakeholders recognise the need to implement the NQF, and support digitalisation. There is also a wish to benefit more from international developments, such as the EQF and the Bologna Process and the ACQF, which would accelerate implementation of the CNQ.

The CNQ is a unique tool to support the development of human resources, to link qualifications both nationally and internationally, to make qualifications more transparent, and relevant to the changing needs of the economy. Revitalising the CNQ is therefore an important opportunity to support lifelong learning, improve the relevance of training provision, and improve the trust in qualifications and support better information for career development.

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<sup>2</sup> Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Regional initiative to support sustainable economic development.

The development of the online register of the CNQ is an important opportunity to reactivate the CNQ and to establish appropriate joint governance arrangements, e.g., on the Permanent Committee for VET . The systemic involvement of stakeholders from sectors and making better use of information on international labour market trends can make qualifications more relevant, reducing the skills mismatch. ONEQ could also play a clear role in this system, informing stakeholders of changing and emerging qualification needs and monitoring the value of existing qualifications.

To promote lifelong learning, it is important to put more emphasis on assessment and certification, rather than starting from programmes. This will make it easier to recognise alternative pathways, including more learning on the job and online learning, and creating more pathways between the components of the human resource development system to meet individual needs. In particular for adult learning, it is important to also consider the role of smaller, fit-for-purpose qualifications such as micro-credentials.

## 9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment <http://www.emploi.gov.tn/fr/>

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research <http://www.mes.tn>

Ministry of Education <http://www.education.gov.tn/>

ETF, [POLICIES FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN TUNISIA | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

ETF, [etf\\_skills\\_and\\_migration\\_country\\_fiche\\_tunisia\\_2021\\_en\\_1.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

## 10. Infographic of the NQF/NQF overview table

Level	MoE	MoE&VT	MoHES
1	Diploma at the end of basic education (DFEB)	Certificate of competence (CC) Diploma at the end of basic technical education (DFEBT)	
2		Professional Aptitude Certificate (CAP)	
3	Baccalaureate	Professional Technician's Certificate (BTP), Professional Baccalaureate,	
4		Higher Technician's Certificate (BTS)	
5			Applied or Professional License (Bachelor) Basic or Academic License (Bachelor)
6			Professional Master Research Master Engineer
7			Doctorate

## Abbreviations

ACQF		African Continental Qualifications Framework
AFMT	Agence de Formation dans les Métiers du Tourisme	Coordinating body for training centres in Tourism
AFPA	Agence nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes, France	French agency for adult learning
ATFP	Agence Tunisienne de la Formation Professionnelle	Coordinating body for vocational training centres
AVFA	Agence de vulgarisation et de formation agricole	Coordinating body for training centres in agriculture
APC	Approche par Compétence	Competency based approach
ATOFU	Annuaire Tunisien des Offres de Formations Universitaires	Dataset of offered programmes in higher education
BTP		Professional Technician's Certificate Level 3 CNQ
BTS	Brevet de Technicien supérieur	Higher Technician's Certificate, Level 4 CNQ
CAP	Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle	Professional Aptitude Certificate Level 2 CNQ
CC	Certificat de compétence	Certificate of Competence Level 1 CNQ
CCP	Champs de compétences professionnels	Units of vocational qualifications
CNQ	Classification nationale des qualifications	National Qualifications Framework of Tunisia
DFEB	Diplôme de fin de l'enseignement de base	Diploma at the end of basic education
DFEBT	Diplôme de Fin de l'enseignement de Base Technique	Diploma at the end of basic technical education Level 1 CNQ
DS		Diploma supplement
EQF		European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning
ENIC NARIC network		European Network of Academic Recognition Centres
IEAQA	Instance nationale de l'Evaluation, de l'Assurance-Qualité et de l'Accréditation	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Tunisia
IRADA	Initiative Régionale d'Appui au Développement économique durable	Regional initiative to support sustainable economic development (EU project supporting regional development and VET)
LMD	License, Master, Doctorat	Three cycle structure for higher education according to the Bologna Model
Meric-NET		Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres



<b>NQF</b>	Cadre national de certification	National Qualifications Framework
<b>ONEQ</b>		National Employment and Qualifications Observatory
<b>PEFESE</b>	Programme d'appui au système de l'Education/Formation – Enseignement Supérieur et Employabilité des diplômés	EU project for the education, training and employment sector in Tunisia
<b>Q4M</b>		Qualifications for the Mediterranean (ETF project)
<b>THAMM</b>		Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa - EU multi country project
<b>UfM</b>		Union for the Mediterranean
<b>Unimed</b>		Union of Universities in the del Mediterranean
<b>VNFIL</b>	Validation des acquis d'expérience	Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning