

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – MONTENEGRO

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Montenegrin Qualifications Framework (MQF) was adopted in 2010. It is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework consisting of eight qualification levels, with sub-levels at levels 1, 4 and 7, and includes all types and levels of qualification. The Montenegro Qualifications Council (MQC) coordinates the framework. Montenegro is a candidate for EU accession and a full member of the EQF Advisory Group. It referenced the MQF to the EQF and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2014. The MQF has reached the operational stage.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Policy context

Montenegro is committed to the strategic goal of European integration. In the context of the EU enlargement agenda¹ and following the EU Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience² and the Osnabrück Declaration³, Montenegro has finalised the related National Implementation Plan (NIP)⁴. It reconfirms the priority of developing qualifications that respond to the needs of the labour market, including to meet the demands of the green and digital transitions, and the development and recognition of skills in a lifelong perspective. It emphasises the role of the MQF in providing information about qualifications to end-users.

The strategic development objective of Montenegro for the period 2022-2024 is to achieve digitally-based, greener, stronger, and more resilient economic recovery and growth, by diversifying the economy⁵. This objective is aligned with other strategic national goals and identified priority sectors for development and innovation: sustainable agriculture, green energy, sustainable health tourism and information technology⁶.

The National Employment Strategy 2021-2025⁷ sets a priority of creating knowledge and competences for the labour market in the digital age. This goal refers to the improvement of the labour supply and qualifications, development of qualifications in accordance with the NQF, addressing structural weaknesses in the education and training system, especially bearing in mind the new approach based on digitalisation⁸.

COVID had a significant negative impact on labour market indicators for young people. In 2022, youth unemployment increased to 37.1% compared to 25.2% in 2019, while the proportion of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) increased to 26.6% from 21.3% in 2019. These rates are also high compared to the EU averages of 16.6% and 13.1% respectively. The employment rate of recent graduates (aged 20 to 34) was 60.7% in 2021, compared to the EU average of 79.6%⁹.

Achieving adult participation in lifelong learning is still difficult. Though increased from at 2.5% in 2019 to 5.2% in 2021, this percentage is still low compared to the EU average 10.8%¹⁰. Among the country's upper secondary cohort, 69.1% are enrolled in VET. The skills mismatch continues to be a significant

¹ [European Commission's \(EC\) Enlargement Assessment Report 2022](#)

² [EUR-Lex - 32020H1202\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [osnabrueck_declaration_eu2020.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [National Implementation Plans - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ [The Montenegro Economic Reform Programme 2022-2024](#)

⁶ [Smart Specialisation Strategy of Montenegro 2019-2024 \(www.gov.me\)](#)

⁷ [JAVNI POZIV- NACRT NACIONALNE STRATEGIJE ZAPOSŁJAVANJA 2021-2025 \(www.gov.me\)](#)

⁸ [Cabinet adopts National Employment Strategy until 2025 \(www.gov.me\)](#)

⁹ European Training Foundation. [Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment \(KIESE\) 2020](#)

¹⁰ European Training Foundation. [Key policy developments in education, training and employment – Montenegro 2022](#)

challenge to the labour market, both for young and adult workers¹¹.

National VET priorities in Montenegro are defined by 4-year VET strategies. The current VET Development Strategy (2020-2024) focuses on providing quality and inclusive education as the basis for lifelong learning, economic and social integration, personal and professional development of the individual, with an effective system of management and financing. Its objectives include the development of qualifications relevant for the labour market, modularized educational programmes based on learning outcomes and including professional and key competences; establishment of a quality assurance system in vocational education at the national and school level in accordance with EQAVET; enabling access to training and qualifications for adults by supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning, recognition of prior learning, providing career guidance and counselling services and making information about qualifications and learning opportunities easily accessible¹².

The specific actions in VET are defined in the associated action plans and the National Implementation Plan for the Osnabrück Declaration (NIP)¹³. The general objectives and measures of the National Implementation Plan until 2025 include:

- strengthening of quality assurance in VET with focus on WBL in all its forms (further development of national quality assurance systems, for both IVET and CVET based on the EQAVET Framework; supporting self-evaluation; reinforcement of work-based learning and apprenticeships).
- VET from lifelong learning perspective (increased participation; greening of VET programmes; promotion of key competences as part of qualification and curricula requirements).
- harmonization of VET provision with labour market needs (development of national and regional skills intelligence systems; establishment of a graduate tracking system; strengthening career guidance and counselling).
- digitalization of VET – digital school (development of digital infrastructure for learning and teaching purposes; digital skills and tools for VET teachers and trainers; creating digital contents for teaching and learning).

The Adult Education Strategy (2015-2025) defines five priority objectives: social inclusion of adults through lifelong learning education programmes and activities; improving knowledge, skills, and competences of adults for employability, labour market mobility and competitiveness; improvement of employee competencies; quality assurance in adult education; ensuring a flexible and sustainable adult education system¹⁴.

2.2. NQF legal basis

The law on the MQF¹⁵ was adopted in 2010, defining the principles and objectives of the framework, its levels and sublevels, qualification types and governance structure. Related regulations in education and training include the Law on national vocational qualifications¹⁶. A set of rulebooks and methodological documents set out more detailed procedures for specific aspects of NQF development and implementation¹⁷.

¹¹ European Training Foundation. [Key policy developments in education, training and employment – Montenegro 2022](#)

¹² VET Development Strategy 2020-24, <https://wapi.gov.me/download/3f8ece83-b549-4c84-8ae9-a8620ff67928?version=1.0>

¹³ [National Implementation Plans - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁴ The Strategy for Adult Education of Montenegro 2015-2025, <https://www.euprava.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=318&rType=2>

¹⁵ Law on Montenegrin qualifications framework, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 45/2010. <http://www.cko.edu.me/Library/files/Law%20on%20MQF.pdf>

¹⁶ Law on national vocational qualifications [[Zakon o nacionalnim strucnim kvalifikacijama](#)], *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 80/08, 14/09, 80/10, 18/11, 40/11 and 40/16.

¹⁷ [Rulebook on descriptors for qualification levels and sub-levels](#), *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 51/11.

[Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from level 1 to level 5](#), *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 21/12.

[Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from level 6 to level 8](#), *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 21/12.

The MQF is featured in several strategic documents, such as the National Employment Strategy 2021-25¹⁸, the Vocational Education Development Strategy (2020-2024)¹⁹, the Strategy for Adult Education 2015-2025²⁰, and the Teacher Education Strategy (2017-2024)²¹.

3. NQF OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

3.1. NQF objectives

The government sees MQF implementation and alignment to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as a priority. The law on the MQF²² defines the qualifications framework as an instrument for the classification, comparison, development and understanding of qualifications, the relationships between them, and the pathways for acquiring qualifications to meet the needs of the labour market and society.

The main policy objectives of the MQF as defined by the MQF law are:

- clear definition of qualifications using learning outcomes.
- validation of qualifications of different types within the qualification system.
- supporting and promoting lifelong learning.
- connecting and aligning the different parts of the education and training system.
- indicating horizontal and vertical progression pathways across and within the education and training system.
- aiding international comparability of qualifications.
- promoting key vocational competences.
- quality assurance of the qualifications system.

The principles underlying the development of the MQF are an emphasis on learning outcomes; classification of qualifications in levels and sublevels; credit transfer; comparability with the EQF; quality assurance of qualification development and acquisition; cooperation among all stakeholders; and transparency of procedures.

3.2. NQF functions

Additional to its transparency and comparability functions, the MQF is seen as an important tool in reforming the qualifications system using learning outcomes approaches, increasing coherence by linking the different education and training subsystems, facilitating access to qualifications, recognising non-formal and informal learning, and supporting lifelong learning²³. The implementation of NQF is also seen as contributing to improving the quality of vocational and higher education and increasing employability²⁴.

4. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND

¹⁸ JAVNI POZIV- NACRT NACIONALNE STRATEGIJE ZAPOŠLJAVANJA 2021-2025 (www.gov.me)

¹⁹ VET Development Strategy 2020-24, <https://wapi.gov.me/download/3f8ece83-b549-4c84-8ae9-a8620ff67928?version=1.0>

²⁰ The Strategy for Adult Education of Montenegro 2015-2025, <https://www.euprava.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=318&rType=2>

²¹ Teacher Education Strategy (2017-2024) [Strategija obrazovanja nastavnika u Crnoj Gori 2017- 2024. \(www.gov.me\)](http://www.gov.me)

²² Law on Montenegrin qualifications framework, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 45/2010. <http://www.cko.edu.me/Library/files/Law%20on%20MQF.pdf>

²³ Ministry of Education (2014). Referencing the Montenegrin qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area, p. 22. <https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/Montenegrin%20Referencing%20Report.pdf>

²⁴ The National Employment Strategy 2021-2025 [JAVNI POZIV- NACRT NACIONALNE STRATEGIJE ZAPOŠLJAVANJA 2021-2025 \(www.gov.me\)](http://www.gov.me)

QUALIFICATIONS

4.1. NQF structure and level descriptors

The Montenegrin National Qualifications Framework (MQF) is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework open to qualifications acquired through formal and non-formal or informal learning. It consists of eight qualification levels, with two sublevels each at levels 1, 4 and 7.

Level descriptors are learning outcomes based, defined for each level or sublevel, and increasing in complexity from level 1 to 8. They follow the EQF categories of learning outcomes: knowledge (factual and theoretical), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (autonomy and responsibility)²⁵.

Sublevels descriptors within a level are similar but were introduced to address the different types of qualifications related to the requirements of the labour market.

4.2. NQF scope and coverage

The MQF includes qualifications of three types:

- Educational qualifications attained upon completion of a formal education programme in general education, VET, and higher education represent attainment of an education level.
- Vocational qualifications, called National Vocational Qualifications or NVQs, are based on occupational standards. They can be acquired following an assessment of the candidate on completion of formally-recognised training, either: part of a formal education programme in the form of modules or courses; an adult education programme; a special training programme in higher education; or through validation of non-formal learning.
- Additional qualifications are other qualifications that are acquired outside those programmes leading to the educational or vocational qualifications mentioned above. They supplement a person's qualification level, testifying acquisition of additional knowledge, skills, and competence, and may be a prerequisite for working in a specific field.

Primary and secondary general education qualifications are allocated to MQF levels 1 and 4, VET qualifications correspond to MQF levels 2-5, while higher education qualifications are allocated to MQF levels 6-8. Vocational qualifications can be allocated to any MQF level²⁶.

OVERVIEW OF THE MONTENEGRIN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

NQF levels	Educational qualifications (formal education)	National vocational qualifications (NVQs) (*)	EQF levels
8	Diploma of doctoral studies	NVQ	8
7.2	Diploma of master studies (**) Diploma of master studies	NVQ	7
7.1	Graduate specialist academic and applied studies diploma Higher education diploma (**) First cycle academic and applied studies diploma (**)	NVQ	

²⁵ Level and sublevel descriptors are defined in the rulebook on level and sublevel qualification descriptors, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 51/11. [Pravilnik o opisu nivoa i podnivoa kvalifikacija \(www.gov.me\)](http://www.gov.me)

²⁶ as defined by the Law on national vocational qualifications [Zakon o nacionalnim strucnim kvalifikacijama], Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 80/08, 14/09, 80/10, 18/11, 40/11 and 40/16. [Zakon o nacionalnim strucnim kvalifikacijama.doc \(www.gov.me\)](http://www.gov.me)

6	Diploma of first cycle academic and applied studies	NVQ	6
5	Diploma of post-secondary vocational education	NVQ	5
4.2	Master craftsman examination certificate	NVQ	4
4.1	Upper secondary school leaving diploma (general, gymnasium) Upper secondary school leaving diploma (vocational, four years)	NVQ	
3	Diploma of secondary vocational education (three years)	NVQ	3
2	Diploma of lower vocational education (two years)	NVQ	2
1.2	Certificate of completed primary education (nine years)	NVQ	1
1.1	Certificate of completed first cycle of primary education or completed functional literacy programme	NVQ	

(*) Labour-market-oriented qualifications, attained through assessment of vocational ability to perform sets of tasks linked to an occupation. Demonstrated knowledge, skills and competences can be acquired through formal or non-formal learning, including special education programmes or part of formal education programmes that corresponds to an occupational standard.

(**) Pre-Bologna diplomas, in use until adoption of the Higher Education Act of 2002. Source: Adapted from the Montenegrin Ministry of Education, 2014.

4.3. Use and renewal of learning outcomes and standards

Qualifications and educational programmes are developed based on learning outcomes, at all MQF levels. The law on the MQF introduced the learning outcomes orientation as a standard for all levels of qualification. Qualification standards include the following mandatory elements: title and type of qualification, level or sublevel, qualification code, credit value, learning outcomes description of qualification (specification), and content (entry requirements, mandatory and optional modules, assessment methods and criteria for assessment of learning outcomes)²⁷.

Occupational standards are a common element for both VET qualifications and NVQs. It is possible to attain a vocational qualification (or part of one) by completing a specific module of a relevant VET programme. A vocational qualification can be recognised to enable access to a formal VET programme.

VET programmes are developed on a modular basis, in line with qualification units (units of learning). Key competences are an integral part of qualification standards and are promoted in education and training programmes.

The work on the establishing a VNFIL system is in progress. It is possible to attain a vocational qualification (or part of it) by completing a specific module of the VET programme, or through the VNFIL process. A vocational qualification can be recognised to continue education in a formal VET programme.

4.4. Quality assurance arrangements

The institutions responsible for the development of qualifications at levels 1 to 5 are the VET Centre and the Bureau of Educational Service. Qualifications at levels 6-8 are developed by higher education institutions.

Qualifications are developed according to the methodology and procedures adopted by the Ministry of Education²⁸. Educational qualifications are developed based on several related occupational standards if in

²⁷ Law on Montenegrin qualifications framework, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 45/2010. Article 8
<http://www.cko.edu.me/Library/files/Law%20on%20MQF.pdf>

²⁸ [Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from level 1 to level 5](#), Official Gazette of Montenegro, No 21/12.

vocational education, or educational standards if in general education. NVQs are developed based on a single occupational standard.

The development of qualifications entails the development of a qualification standard, which must be validated by the relevant sectoral commission and adopted by the Qualifications Council. Additional to the qualification standard, there are other requirements in developing a qualification. These are: for VET qualifications, a VET programme; for vocational qualifications, an examination catalogue²⁹ (which serves as an assessment standard for the qualification). In higher education, qualification standards are developed. For HE qualifications, these are based on accredited higher education programmes, for vocational qualifications, part of a programme.

5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

5.1. Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for education policy and provides strategic direction for MQF development and implementation. The framework is managed by the Montenegro Qualifications Council, in cooperation with the National Council of Education and the Higher Education Council, which also provide policy advice to the ministry.

Responsibilities of the national coordination point for the EQF (EQF NCP) lie with the Division for Qualifications at the Ministry of Education, established in 2011. The role of the EQF NCP is to ensure harmonisation of the MQF to the EQF and international cooperation in qualifications framework development; to maintain the qualifications register; to propose procedures for qualification development; to ensure access to information about the MQF; to implement the measures adopted by the Qualifications Council; and to provide administrative and technical assistance.

The Montenegro Qualifications Council was established to improve the qualifications system and to steer the MQF's development³⁰. Its main tasks include approval and inclusion of qualifications in the MQF; establishing, coordination and monitoring the work of Sectoral Commissions; proposing the development and improvement of qualifications; and adopting methodological documents. The Council is a permanent body, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, higher education institutions, the Employment Agency of Montenegro, the Chamber of Economy, employers' associations, trades union, the national VET Centre, the Bureau for Educational Services, and the Examination Centre. The presidents of the National Council for Education and the Higher Education Council are also members, ensuring coordination of work on the qualifications system.

5.2. Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The National Council of Education approves formal education programmes and examination catalogues and determines the compatibility between education programmes and qualification standards. It is responsible for the qualification attainment process, and organisation of learning and teaching in formal education, adult education, and special education. Its work is supported by the Bureau for Education Services and the VET Centre.

The Higher Education Council provides expert opinion on regulations in the field of higher education and proposes improvements in higher education. The Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education³¹ oversees quality assurance in higher education, particularly the accreditation of study

[Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from level 6 to level 8](#), *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 21/12.

²⁹ Examination catalogues are documents that prescribe the assessment procedure and criteria for assessment.

³⁰ Decision of the Government of Montenegro on constitution of the Qualifications Council, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 29/11.

³¹ <https://akokvo.me/>

programmes, reaccreditation and ranking of higher education institutions, and proposals for improving quality of higher education.

In addition to the three Councils, involvement of stakeholders in MQF implementation is carried out through 15 Sectoral Commissions set up as permanent bodies of the Qualifications Council, one for each of the 15 MQF sectors defined in the Law on the MQF. These are composed of representatives of employers, trades unions, universities, relevant ministries, and institutions involved in education development³². Sectoral commissions analyse and identify labour market needs in skills and qualifications; propose new occupational standards, or revision of existing ones; develop the basic profiles/specifications of qualifications; give opinions on the compliance of proposed new qualifications with occupational standards; validate examination catalogues (as indicated above these set out assessment procedures and criteria); and consider initiatives for the development of new qualifications.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare approves occupational standards upon the proposal of the Qualifications Council, and adult education programmes that lead to the acquisition of vocational qualifications.

Other key institutions are the VET Centre, responsible for the coordination of the development of occupational standards, qualification standards and educational programs in vocational and adult education; and the Examination Centre³³, which conducts the external assessment of knowledge, skills, and competences for primary and secondary education.

Representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and the Union of Employers are also members of the sectoral commissions, the Qualifications Council, and the National Council for Education.

6. RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

6.1. Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

There is a legal framework enabling validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) for the award of vocational qualifications at MQF levels 1-5. The relevant legislation includes the Law on the MQF (2010), the Law on national vocational qualifications (2008, amended in 2016), and the law on adult education (2011, amended in 2017)³⁴. As part of the secondary legislation, the rulebook³⁵ defining the procedures for VNFIL in accordance with the revised law on national vocational qualifications (NVQs)³⁶ was adopted in 2019.

The law on national vocational qualifications stipulates that NVQs can be acquired via formal programmes and via direct assessment of knowledge, skills, and competences. Assessment for vocational qualifications at MQF levels 1-5 is carried out by licensed adult education providers based on examination catalogues. Examination catalogues are developed for each vocational qualification based on qualification standards.

The examination commission is formed by the education provider from the list of licensed examiners, on proposal of the Examination Centre. The Examination Centre organises training and licensing of assessors (examiners), and shortlists them for each vocational qualification.

Higher education institutions can carry out assessments and award vocational qualifications at MQF levels 6 -

³² Their composition is published on the MQF website <http://www.cko.edu.me/Default.aspx?cid=13>

³³ <https://iccg.co.me/>

³⁴ Available at: [Biblioteka Vlade Crne Gore \(www.gov.me\)](http://www.gov.me)

³⁵ [Rulebook on the manner and procedure of assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies in the process of acquiring vocational qualifications](#), Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 13/2019

³⁶ Amendments to the Law on NVQs in 2016 transferred responsibility for assessment of knowledge, skills and competences for vocational qualifications from the Examination Centre to the adult education providers licenced by the Ministry of Education.

8 based on the special training programmes accredited by the Higher Education Council, in accordance with the act of the higher education institution.

For the period 2019-2022, a total of 2,160 certificates were issued based on VNFIL, 1,172 of them for vocational qualifications, and mainly in accounting and construction³⁷.

6.2. Credit systems

The Montenegrin Credit Transfer System (MCTS) was introduced by the law on the MQF to determine the size of qualifications. Credits are transferable and can be allocated to qualifications and their units, as well as to programmes or their modules. One MCTS credit refers to 25 hours of workload. The minimum size of educational qualification is 60 credits, corresponding to one academic year.

The MCTS is aligned to the European Credit System for Vocational Education (ECVET) and to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Use of the ECTS has been a requirement for higher education institutions since 2004.

6.3. Promoting lifelong learning

Governments have introduced various initiatives to create the conditions to enable people to access formal education and to increase the participation of adults in education and training. These span modularisation of VET programmes; transferability and allocation of credits to qualifications and their units; the openness of the MQF to qualifications outside formal education; and the opportunity to acquire national vocational qualifications through the VNFIL process, and for these to be recognised to enable learning in formal VET programmes.

VET is popular at upper secondary level in Montenegro, as 69% of all students at that stage of the education and training system follow VET programmes. The picture is less bright for adult participation in lifelong learning - while it increased from 2.5% in 2019 to 5.2% in 2021, this is still quite low compared to the EU average.

7. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

7.1. Stage of implementation

The MQF is advanced in implementation and has reached an operational stage. The legal basis and governance structures for MQF implementation are in place and operational, significant progress has been made with the development and inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications database. Efforts are continuing to review and redefine existing qualifications and educational programmes and develop new ones based on the learning outcomes approach, at all MQF levels.

The MQF is seen as part of the wider set of economic, labour market and education policies to support human capital development. Its aims are aligned with policy priorities for education development outlined in the national strategic documents.

Montenegro is a candidate for EU accession and a full member of the EQF Advisory Group. The MQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2014.

7.2. Indicating RQF/NQF levels

³⁷ Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report 2023 – Montenegro (ETF, upcoming)

VET qualifications are certified by *diploma*, national vocational qualifications – by a *certificate*. Europass certificate and diploma supplements are issued, both MQF and EQF levels are indicated. In higher education, Europass diploma supplement is issued, with the NQF level included³⁸.

MQF levels of qualifications are also indicated in the qualifications database³⁹.

7.3. NQF dissemination

Tools to facilitate the use of the MQF have been developed⁴⁰. These include, for example:

- the Handbook, "National Qualifications Framework in Montenegro".
- a video with basic information about the National Qualifications Framework, its alignment with the European Qualifications Framework, and on its benefits for individuals, employers, and educational Institutions
- a flyer on the Montenegrin Qualifications Framework.

The Qualifications Council and institutions that develop and implement qualifications adhere to the following bylaws and methodological documents:

- the Rulebook on procedures for developing qualifications from the first to the fifth level of the MQF.
- the Rulebook on description of levels and sublevels in the NQF.
- Guidelines for the development of qualifications for levels I-V.
- Methodology for assigning qualification codes.
- Basis for modularization and credit evaluation of vocational education programmes.
- Guidelines for the work of the sectoral commissions.
- the Rulebook on the manner and procedure of assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies in the process of acquiring vocational qualifications⁴¹.

7.4. Qualifications databases and registers

Qualifications adopted by the Qualifications Council are entered in the database of qualifications⁴². The qualifications database currently includes more than 360 qualifications from formal VET (diplomas) and from the national vocational qualifications system (certificates) at MQF levels 2-5. Qualifications are classified according to type, size, MQF level and sector, and ISCED.

The VET Centre is working towards publishing occupational standards, VET programmes and curricula, and adult education programmes on the governmental portal⁴³.

7.5. Use of NQF in recognition of foreign qualifications

The MQF law establishes the correspondence of national qualifications that were awarded before the framework's adoption with the MQF levels and sub-levels. Recognition of foreign educational qualifications is

³⁸ The rulebook on the content and form of Europass documents and the manner of filling them out [[Pravilnik o sadržaju i obrascu Europass dokumenata i načinu njihovog popunjavanja](#)]. *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No 56/2018 of 3.8.2018

³⁹ The qualifications database is available at <http://www.cko.edu.me/ckoview/Default.aspx>

⁴⁰ Available at [MQF - Naslovna strana \(cko.edu.me\)](#)

⁴¹ Documents are available at: [GOV.ME Document Library \(www.gov.me\)](#)

⁴² The qualifications database is available at <http://www.cko.edu.me/ckoview/Default.aspx>

⁴³ [Standardi zanimanja, obrazovni programi, ispitni katalozi - Centar za stručno obrazovanje \(www.gov.me\)](#)

based on the comparison of a qualification with the corresponding qualification standard in Montenegro⁴⁴.

7.6. Career information and guidance

The Centres for professional information and counselling of the Employment Agency of Montenegro⁴⁵ provide information on occupations, secondary school curricula, and on learning and employment opportunities. NQF levels are used in job descriptions to indicate the required level of a qualification. The National Europass Centre⁴⁶ promotes the implementation of Europass in the country.

7.7. Awareness and use of the NQF

The NQF levels are used to present information about qualifications for labour market stakeholders and individuals, including in job descriptions, employment statistics by the Employment Agency of Montenegro, or information related to the labour market needs in qualifications. Information about relevant NQF principles and procedures for qualification development is available for education and labour market stakeholders⁴⁷.

7.8. Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

No systematic evaluation of the NQF use or impact has yet been carried out⁴⁸.

7.9. Impact of the NQF

Based on experience so far, the framework has played a key role in improving the qualifications system and improving education and training programmes. It has influenced to a large extent the promotion and use of learning outcomes, while learning units have become credit-evaluated and transferable from one qualification to another. It has influenced the review, renewal, and quality assurance of qualifications. Processes and procedures for qualification development have become more transparent. It has also supported dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders across education and training sectors, and between education and the labour market⁴⁹.

8. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

8.1. Referencing to the EQF

Montenegro completed the process of referencing the MQF to the EQF and self-certification against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) in 2014. A joint report is published on the Europass portal⁵⁰.

8.2. International cooperation

Montenegro is a candidate for EU membership, and a participating country in the establishment of a regional economic area in the Western Balkans. The country is a member of the EQF Advisory Group.

⁴⁴ Law on Recognition of Foreign Educational Documents and Equalization of Qualifications. *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No. 57/2011 and 42/2016. wapi.gov.me/doc/live.com

⁴⁵ <http://www.zzzcg.me/cips/>

⁴⁶ <http://europasscrnagora.me/start/index.html>

⁴⁷ European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

⁴⁸ European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

⁴⁹ European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

⁵⁰ Montenegrin Ministry of Education (2014). The referencing of the Montenegrin qualifications framework to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area. <https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/Montenegrin%20Referencing%20Report.pdf>

The Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (AKOKVO) established in 2017 became an associate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, 2019) and a full member of the Central Eastern European Network of Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA, 2020). The country ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 2004.

Montenegro continues to participate actively in the EU Erasmus+ programme as a partner country and the regional ERISSE⁵¹ projects, including on developing regionally-based occupational and qualification standards.

The EU aids Montenegro in education and labour market reforms under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). In the area of education, the specific objective for the 2021-2027 programme period is to strengthen access to, and quality of, inclusive education, including vocational education and training, participation in Early Childhood Education and Care and lifelong learning opportunities at all levels⁵². In particular, the programme will support the quality, effectiveness, and labour market relevance of education, including vocational education, and training systems to provide people with skills adjusted to digitalisation, technological change, innovation, and economic change.

9. REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

Work on the MQF was undertaken as part of Montenegro's accession to the EU and supported by resources and expertise accessed through EU programmes. The strategic approach to developing and implementing the framework and commitment of all key stakeholders involved are considered as key success factors in the progress achieved so far.

The challenges related to MQF implementation include the need to improve the match between the skills and qualifications demanded on the labour market and those provided through the education and training system. A wider and more systematic involvement of labour market stakeholders is needed to improve analysis and anticipation of skills and qualifications needs.

Enhancing the capacity of sectoral commissions so that they are able adequately to articulate the labour market and society's needs, identify qualification and skill gaps, and propose development of qualifications of different types and levels, remains a key challenge for the upcoming period⁵³.

The necessity to communicate the MQF beyond the education and training system and to make it more visible and understandable to all relevant stakeholders and the public has become apparent. Providing information on qualifications and learning opportunities to end-users, in particular adults and employers, has been prioritized to promote lifelong learning and adult participation⁵⁴.

The work on the establishing a VNFIL system is also on the reform agenda⁵⁵. Certain elements of the Montenegrin education and training system provide a good basis for future work on VNFIL: the principles underlying the MQF, particularly the shift to learning outcomes; modular design of VET qualifications; well-established provision for development of professional competences; licencing of staff involved in the assessment for national vocational qualifications (NVQs); and work to expand the network of licenced adult education providers⁵⁶.

The main challenges to be tackled to advance VNFIL implementation include improving quality assurance mechanisms and procedures for assessment of non-formal and informal learning; addressing the lack of

⁵¹ Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe [Home - ERI SEE Secretariat](#)

⁵² [IPA III programming framework \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵³ European Commission and Cedefop (2020). Survey on implementation, use and impact of NQF/EQF [unpublished].

⁵⁴ Montenegro: National Implementation plan for the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET and Osnabrück Declaration, 2022 [National Implementation Plans - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵⁵ VET Development Strategy 2020-24, <https://wapi.gov.me/download/3f8ece83-b549-4c84-8ae9-a8620ff67928?version=1.0>

⁵⁶ A total of 129 adult education providers were licensed by the end of 2022, with 15 new providers licensed in 2021 and 2022 (Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report 2023 – Montenegro (ETF, upcoming)).

information about VNFIL, both among the general public and among labour market stakeholders; and promoting VNFIL opportunities in a systematic manner.

Other important key measures and policies that have been put in place or are planned include revision and development of qualifications and programmes in line with MQF principles and labour market needs; modularization of educational programmes based on learning outcomes and inclusion of key competencies; and improving the quality assurance system⁵⁷.

ABBREVIATIONS

EQF	European Qualifications Framework
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession, the EU support programme for candidate and potential candidate countries
MCTS	Montenegrin Credit Transfer System
MQC	Montenegro Qualifications Council
MQF	Montenegrin Qualifications Framework
NCP	National Coordination Point
NQF	national qualifications framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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⁵⁷ The Strategy for development of vocational education in Montenegro (2020-2024) <https://wapi.gov.me/download/3f8ece83-b549-4c84-8ae9-a8620ff67928?version=1.0>

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Montenegrin NQF website: <http://www.cko.edu.me/default.aspx>

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