

Referencing criteria

Towards referencing to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF):
Webinar supporting the EQF referencing process for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – 10 April 2024

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CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training



Transparent and accurate
information



Clear and concise
reports

Referencing reports

Trust among stakeholders
(inside and outside the country)



Peer exchange and learning
(community of practice)

General consideration: tips

Overall aim of the report: present the national qualifications framework or system primarily to international readers that are not fully aware of the education and training system of the country

- Short overview of all the chapters to understand the logic underpinning the report
- Clarify if 'one single comprehensive report' (EQF and QF-EHEA)
- Clear on what is in place and what is planned ("status quo of the work in progress")
- Openness on potential issues/work in progress
- Clarify involvement of stakeholders (in the qualification systems and/or referencing process)
- **Clear section on the 10 referencing criteria and if applicable on the self-certification criteria**
- Use text and referencing criteria from the 2017 EQF Recommendation (annex III): [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01))
- Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms
- Use tables, figures, infographics (e.g. governance, qualifications included, access requirements, progression possibilities, responsibilities, timelines with future steps)
- Links to documents
- Examples (also as annexes)

General considerations on topics covered in the report

Countries decide report structure and content, tailoring to their context; ensuring this is relevant for understanding the NQF context and criteria fulfilment.

Examples of aspects covered:

- Information on the education and training system, qualification system
- Institutional arrangements, governance and coordination structures
- Main characteristics of the NQF (status, objective, structures, scope, *development process* and steps, uses, contributions and impact)
- Overview of the different types of qualifications awarded and levels (examples), access requirements, learning pathways, progression routes
- Involvement of stakeholders
- Applications of learning outcomes approach
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning
- Qualifications databases
- Recognition of qualifications
- ...
- Future plans (roadmap, future milestones, etc)

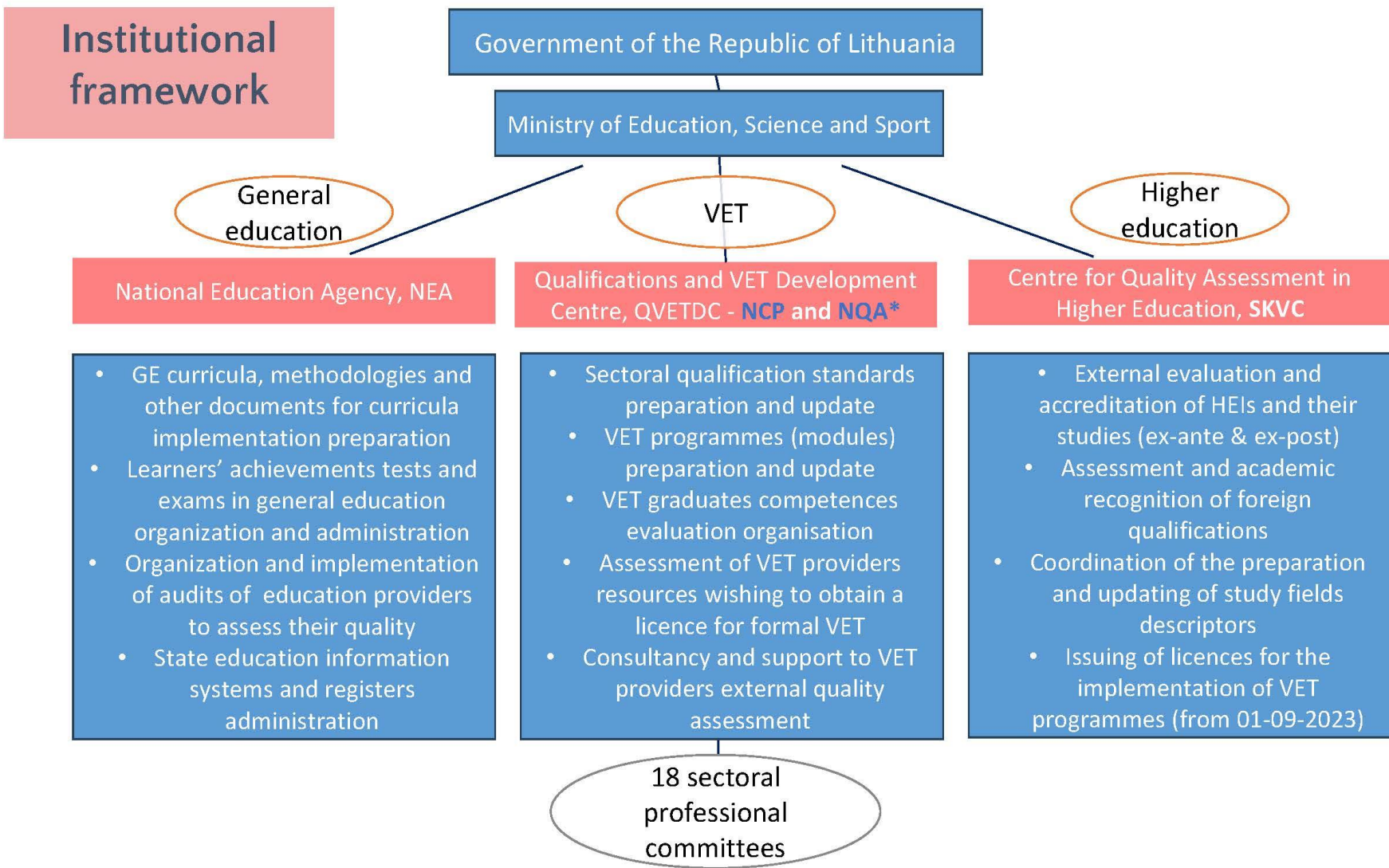
Note: detailed discussions in the report may need to be cross-referenced appropriately within the section on referencing criteria

Criterion 1

The **responsibilities** and/or **legal competence** of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.

Considerations:

- Overall responsibility of the NQF and Day-to-day implementation of the NQF
- List of stakeholders involved in the referencing process and in NQF implementation



Criterion 2

There is a clear and demonstrable **link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.**

Considerations:

- Central focus initial referencing
- Levels (vertical dimension) and learning domains (horizontal dimension)
- How level descriptors have been developed and their relationship to the EQF descriptors (linguistic analysis, conceptual similarities and differences, stakeholders opinion, etc)

Table 6g. Comparison of PQF universal descriptors with EQF descriptors – level 7

	EQF Descriptors	PQF Descriptors
Knowledge	Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields <i>Wysoce wyspecjalizowana wiedza, której część stanowi najnowsza wiedza w danej dziedzinie pracy lub nauki, będąca podstawą oryginalnego myślenia lub badań; krytyczna świadomość zagadnień w zakresie wiedzy w danej dziedzinie oraz na styku różnych dziedzin</i>	a person knows and understands :
		an in-depth level of selected facts, theories, methods and complex dependencies between them, also in relationship to other fields; the diverse, complex conditions and axiological context of conducted activities
Skills	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields <i>Specjalistyczne umiejętności rozwiązywania problemów potrzebne do badań lub działalności innowacyjnej w celu tworzenia nowej wiedzy i procedur oraz integrowania wiedzy z różnych dziedzin</i>	a person is able to :
		complete tasks as well as formulate and solve problems with the use of new knowledge, also from other fields; independently plan one's own lifelong learning and direct others in this area; communicate with various groups of respondents, appropriately substantiate one's position
Competence (social)	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams <i>Zarządzanie i przekształcanie kontekstów związanych z pracą lub nauką, które są złożone, nieprzewidywalne i wymagają nowych podejść strategicznych; ponoszenie odpowiedzialności za przyczynianie się do rozwoju wiedzy i praktyki zawodowej lub za dokonywanie przeglądów strategicznych wyników zespołów</i>	a person is ready to :
		establish and develop models of good practice in the environments of work and life; initiate actions, critically assess oneself as well as the teams and organisations in which one participates; lead a group and take responsibility for it

– **green colour**

the PQF descriptor exactly or very closely corresponds to the EQF descriptor (consistency within the category of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, social competence),

– **orange colour**

the EQF descriptor is implicitly expressed by the PQF universal descriptor; direct references are found in the second stage generic descriptors,

– **blue colour**

the PQF descriptor includes content that was not directly expressed by the EQF descriptor.

The Polish qualifications framework (PQF) introduces level descriptors at three levels of generality. At the most general level, universal descriptors – expressed in terms of **knowledge, skills and social competence** (presented in the slide) – form the basis for the comprehensive PQF and act as a common reference point for development of more specific descriptors: for the different subsystems (general education, VET, higher education); and for subject areas or economic sectors.

Criterion 3

The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of **learning outcomes** and related to arrangements for **validation** of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to **credit** systems

Considerations:

- Learning outcomes (LOs) as a translation device, promoting transparency & increasing trust
- The use of LOs in the country (at different levels and ET subsystems)
- How validation is integrated into systems and frameworks
- Presentation of credit systems (if applicable)

ANNEX V

Principles for credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) ⁽¹⁾

The EQF and national qualifications frameworks or systems, by using the learning outcomes approach, should better support individuals when moving (i) between various levels of education and training; (ii) within and between sectors of education and training; (iii) between education and training and the labour market; and (iv) within and across borders. Without prejudice to national decisions to (i) make use of credit systems; and (ii) relate them to national qualifications frameworks or systems, different credit systems, where appropriate, should work together with national qualifications frameworks or systems to support transitions and facilitate progression. To this aim, credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems where appropriate, should respect the following principles:

1. Credit systems should support flexible learning pathways, for the benefit of individual learners.
2. When designing and developing qualifications, the learning outcomes approach should be systematically used to facilitate the transfer of (components of) qualifications and progression in learning.
3. Credit systems should facilitate transfer of learning outcomes and progression of learners across institutional and national borders.
4. Credit systems should be underpinned by explicit and transparent quality assurance.
5. The credit acquired by an individual should be documented, expressing the acquired learning outcomes, the name of the competent credit awarding institution and, where relevant, the related credit value.
6. Systems for credit transfer and accumulation should seek synergies with arrangements for validation of prior learning, working together to facilitate and promote transfer and progression.
7. Credit systems should be developed and improved through cooperation between stakeholders at the appropriate national and Union levels.

Criterion 4

The **procedures** for **inclusion** of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for **describing** the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are **transparent**.

Considerations:

- Key for transparency and trust and functioning of the EQF
- Criterion covered to varying degree deepening on NQF maturity
- Overview of qualifications
- Criteria used to determine the level and rules governing the process: explicit and detailed
- Examples and evidence

Criterion 5

The national **quality assurance system(s)** for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this recommendation.

Considerations:

- Key for increasing trust in the EQF process
- Information on quality assurance arrangements
 - QA strategy
 - Internal – external evaluation
 - QA indicators
 - Legislation underpinning QA in ET
 - The role of QA actors
 - Including qualifications in the NQF

ANNEX IV

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

All qualifications with an EQF level should be quality assured to enhance trust in their quality and level.

In accordance with national circumstances and taking into account sectoral differences quality assurance of qualifications with an EQF level should ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾:

1. address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach;
2. ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification;
3. consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement;
4. involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process;
5. be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review;
6. be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level;
7. be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines;
8. be supported by appropriate resources;
9. include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance;
10. include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results.

Criterion 6

The referencing process shall include the **stated agreement** of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national **quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.**

Considerations:

- Links to criterion 5
- In addition to possibly playing a part in the referencing process quality assurance bodies are required to agree on the report
- Involve bodies from different education and training systems

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve **international experts** and the referencing reports shall contain the **written statement** of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.

Considerations:

- Crucial role, promoting peer learning
- Involvement of international experts from an early stage
- Country visit – get better understanding of the national context
- Assessment of the report

Criterion 8

The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. **One comprehensive report**, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be **published** by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall **address separately each of the criteria**. **The same report can be used for self-certification** to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, **in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter**.

Considerations:

- Encouragement to cover the entire range of qualification levels (and types) reflecting overarching character of the EQF
- Joint report (EQF & QF-EHEA) welcomed → separate, but coordinated and compatible processes
- Criteria for both processes should be included

Criterion 9

Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall **publish the referencing report** and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.

Considerations:

- Transparency for stakeholders and end users
- Dissemination of the outcome of the referencing process inside and outside the country

Criterion 10

Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a **clear reference**, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate **EQF level**.

Considerations:

- Key milestone of the 2008 EQF recommendation
- 2017 recommendation stresses the role of qualifications databases/registers
- Important for visibility of EQF/NQF – trust and portability
- Plans

Thank you

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