

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – MOLDOVA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Moldova first introduced legislation formalizing a national qualifications framework (NQF) concept in 2010. A further law, aligning the framework much more closely to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), including adoption of an 8-level structure, was adopted in 2017.

The National Qualifications Framework Directorate, within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) is the NQF's coordinating body.

Moldova is a candidate for accession to the EU and thus a member of the EQF process, including the EQF Advisory Group. It joined the European Higher Education Area, the Bologna Process, in 2005. It has not yet referenced to the EQF or self-certified against the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

Moldova has established stable governance arrangements, adopted legislation to enable development of standards, and opened the framework to a broad range of qualification types.

Qualifications are placed in the National Qualifications Register and NQF levels are indicated on certificates for most types of qualifications. The NQF is therefore at the operational stage.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Policy context

Moldova became an EU candidate country in 2022. Domestic education and training strategies and reform are greatly influenced by the EU integration agenda of the country.

Over the past few years, Moldova's economic performance has fluctuated. Inevitably, growth declined in 2020 (by 8.3%), as the country's economy was hit hard by the effects of the pandemic due to disrupted global and domestic demand and the country's high dependency on migrant remittances.

In 2021, the economy made a strong recovery, growing by 13.9%. However, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis reversed this trend. 2022 saw a contraction of -5.9%, pushing Moldova into recession before limited growth, at 0.8% in 2023 (World Bank data, WDI¹).

The country is also characterized by high levels of outward migration and dependence on remittances from those migrants. As migrants are overwhelmingly young, heavy migration both reduces and ages the population. Moldova has also received circa 120,000 refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Moldova has high enrolment rates at the lower secondary level of education but relatively modest rates at the upper secondary level². In addition, the share of vocational education and training (VET) students at the upper secondary level of education was slightly less than half at 44.8% in 2022, a level that has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years (UNESCO UIS³).

Participation in lifelong learning (2.2% in 2023) is one of the major weaknesses of the education system, but the significant increase since 2022 (+0.9 percentage points) is a positive sign of a possible change.

Education and training reform

Implementation of Moldova's NQF is provided for in the country's National Development Strategy 2030, known as Moldova 2030.

¹ Cited in [Country Fiche Moldova 2024 EN web.pdf](#)

² idem

³ idem

[Moldova 2030](#) is broad in the range of policy areas it encompasses, going beyond education and training, and sets ambitious goals. It focuses on four development priorities: a sustainable and inclusive economy; strong human and social capital; honest and efficient institutions; and a healthy environment.

For the NQF, by 2030, the goal is that the relevance, transferability, and alignment of qualifications with labour market needs will be enhanced through the development or updating of at least 80% of qualification standards across all levels and fields of vocational training in higher and technical vocational education.

The VET strategic framework is now integrated into the new Education Development Strategy (EDS) 2020-2030. It aims to make the VET system relevant to the labour market; flexible in its provision and pathways; attractive to learners; and more affordable.

Measures to achieve such goals span establishing VET Centres of Excellence; strengthening social partnership in VET; developing labour market skills analyses, establishing Sector Skills Committees; developing occupational standards, and introduction of a validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) system; raising VET quality through the development of new VET standards, the QA system, and implementation of the NQF; and improving VET curricula, including by introducing a modular approach.

Moldova's NQF has undergone several iterations since the early initiatives. Joining the Bologna process spurred the country to adopt an NQF which was higher education-oriented. However, subsequently, the country has adapted the level descriptors and domains to align with the EQF i.e., a framework that will be comprehensive and lifelong learning in character.

2.2 NQF legal basis

In 2010, an [NQF concept](#) was adopted, covering all levels of education. In 2017 a revised NQF was approved by Government Decision No 1016/2017.

Related legal acts are:

- [Government Decision No. 222/2024](#) approving the Regulation on adult education, applying NQF provisions to adult learning programmes.
- [Government Decision No. 330 of 31.05.2023](#), approving the National Qualifications Framework.
- [Roadmap for the operationalization of the NQF for 2023–2027](#), annexed to Government Decision No. 330/2023
- Methodology for implementing qualification standards in VET and higher education institutions, [MER Order No. 896/2021](#)
- Methodology for developing, validating, and approving qualification standards, [MER Order No. 573/2022](#)
- Methodology for establishing correspondence of qualification levels prior to the NQF, [MER Order No. 1703/2019](#)
- Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal education, [MER Order No. 65/2019](#)
- Regulation on vocational training for the unemployed, [MER Order No. 1485/2019](#)
- [Government Decision No. 1199/2018](#) on the National Register of Qualifications (amended by GD No. 3 of 10.01.2024).
- Methodology for registering in the National Qualifications Register, [Order of the Ministry of Education and Research \(MER\) No. 770/2024](#)
- [Regulation](#) on the organisation of the qualification examination, 2018.
- [Government Decision No. 412](#) of 12 June 2024, approving the Nomenclature of study fields and specialities in higher education.

- [Government Decisions](#) regarding the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), 2018 (amended by GD 830/2024).
- [Law on Sectoral Committees, 2017](#) amended by LP No. 156/2022.
- [Framework Regulation](#) on post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET studies using the Credit Transfer System, 2016.
- [Government Decision No. 425/2015](#) approving the Nomenclature of vocational training fields and trades/professions (amended by GD No. 294 of 24 April 2024).
- [Government Decision No. 853/2015](#) approving the Nomenclature of fields of vocational training, specialities and qualifications for post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET (amended by GD No. 293 of 24 April 2024).
- [Education Code No. 152/2014, Article 11](#) on the National Qualifications Framework, amended in 2023.
- [Government Decision No. 678/2020](#) approving the Methodology for the development of occupational standards.
- [Classifier of occupations](#) in the Republic of Moldova (006-2021).
- [Order No. 1110/2023](#) approving the Digital Competence Framework for Teachers.
- Framework Regulation for the organisation and functioning of VET institutions, MEC Order No. 824/2024, Published 3 July 2024 in Official Monitor No. 286 Art. 525.
- [External quality assurance methodology and Regulation](#) on the calculation of service fees for quality evaluation, 2018 (amended by GD No. 830/2024).
- [Law No. 110/2022](#) on dual education.

3. NQF OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

Government Decision No. 330/2023 updated the objectives set for the NQF. These are:

1. Improving the transparency, comparability, and transferability of qualifications.
2. Enhancing the employability, mobility, and social integration of citizens.
3. Contributing to the modernization of the education and training system.
4. Ensuring better alignment between formal, non-formal, and informal learning.
5. Supporting the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different learning contexts.

Functions of the NQF:

- defining qualification levels - outlining access conditions for education and training, structuring, and linking national qualifications.
- providing information on national academic and professional qualifications, including those regulated by special rules.
- addressing individual educational needs by fostering the skills and attitudes necessary for social integration and professional success.
- supporting beneficiaries and education/training providers in making informed decisions on obtaining qualifications at different training levels.
- facilitating the selection of optimal training pathways for obtaining qualifications and ensuring their effective use in the labour market.
- assisting authorities and training providers by simplifying the identification of training offers through a common reference framework.

- enhancing academic and professional mobility within the education system and both domestic and international labour markets.
- aligning education and training with labour market requirements by integrating relevant skills and competencies.
- ensuring credible quality assurance mechanisms to build confidence in national qualifications.
- implementing validation mechanisms for qualifications and competencies acquired in formal, non-formal, and informal settings.
- awarding qualifications based on learning outcomes and certifying them through officially issued study documents.
- promoting lifelong learning and increasing the flexibility of training pathways.
- strengthening international collaboration in education and training.

Additionally, the NQF is intended to support linking the country's education and training system to international systems and instruments. The NQF thus aligns with classification instruments for qualifications, education and occupations at national, European and international levels.

This obviously applies to the NQF's relationships with the EQF and QF-EHEA, but also includes: [ISCED 2011](#), which classifies education levels; the classification of Occupations of the Republic of Moldova (CORM); the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations (ESCO); the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the Classification of Economic Activities of the Republic of Moldova, Rev. 2 (CAEM-2).

4. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

Moldova's NQF has eight levels and follows the EQF structure and domains:

- Knowledge.
- Skills.
- Competences.

4.2 NQF scope and coverage

The NQF links education and training programmes, leading to formal education qualifications, to NQF levels, also describing, assessment requirements.

- general secondary education programmes correspond to NQF levels 1-3.
- secondary VET programmes correspond to NQF level 3.
- post-secondary VET programmes correspond to NQF level 4.
- post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes correspond to NQF level 5.
- higher education programmes are allocated to NQF levels 6-8.

The types of qualifications in the NQF are defined by educational level, specific learning outcomes, purpose and content of the qualification.

Types of qualifications

NQF Levels	Qualifications
Level 1,1	Special education programme for accumulation of knowledge and training of basic skills for performing simple tasks (for persons with severe learning difficulties - individualised education/special education programme); duration of studies 9 years
Level 1,2	Adult education and training programme; 3-30 study credits
Level 2,1	General education programme of secondary education, cycle I - gymnasium education, based on primary education; duration of studies, 5 years
Level 2,2	Combined programme of general secondary education, cycle I - gymnasium education and training of vocational skills (arts, sports profile), based on primary education; duration of studies, 5 years
Level 2,3	Adult education and training programme, based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies; access to the programme is also available to persons who have not completed secondary education (9 grades) but have reached the age of 16; 3-30 credits of study
Level 3,1	General secondary education programme, cycle II – high school education (theoretical track: humanistic profile and real profile), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document; duration of studies 3 years, without taking the baccalaureate exam
Level 3,2	General secondary education program, cycle II – high school education (vocational track: arts, sports, theological and military profiles), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document, duration of studies – 3 years, without taking the baccalaureate exam
Level 3,3	Combined professional skills training in related trades and general education program (part of secondary education, cycle II – high school education), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document, duration of studies - 3 years
Level 3,4	Combined professional skills training in one trade and general education programme (development of key competences), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document, duration of studies 2-3 years. Access to the 2-year program, for training in one trade, is available to people who have not graduated from secondary education (9 grades), but have reached the age of 16
Level 3,5	Professional skills training program in one trade, based on the Certificate of lyceum studies/equivalent study document with a duration of 1-2 years
Level 3,6	Upskilling programme: programme for updating/supplementing professional skills, based on the Certificate of qualification/equivalent study document; 3-30 study credits
Level 3,7	Professional requalification programme for obtaining a new vocational qualification related to the initial vocational training profession, based on the Certificate of qualification/equivalent study document; 10 - 30 study credits
Level 3,8	Partial qualification (micro-qualification): an initial/continuous professional skills training programme (carried out in various contexts), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/ Certificate of lyceum studies/ Certificate of qualification/equivalent study document. Access to this programme is also available to people who have not graduated from secondary education (9 grades), but have reached the age of 16; 5-30 credits of studies
Level 4,1	General secondary education programme, cycle II – high school education, theoretical track: humanistic profile and science profile, based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document; duration of studies, 3 years
Level 4,2	General secondary education programme, cycle II – high school education, vocational track (with the profiles in Arts (Choreography, Visual Arts, Theatrical Art, Music), Sports, Theological and Military Studies), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study act; duration of studies, 3 years

NQF Levels	Qualifications
Level 4,3	Integrated general education programme (part of the high school education programme) and professional skills training (Educator Assistant, Choreography), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document; 60/90 study credits, duration of studies, 3 years
Level 4,4	Integrated general education programme (part of the high school education program) and professional skills training, based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document, minimum study credits for professional skills; 120, duration of studies - 4 years
Level 4,5	Integrated general education programme (part of the high school education program) and professional skills training (for the Medicine and Pharmacy profiles), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document; 180 study credits, duration of studies - 5 years
Level 4,6	Professional skills training programme in specialties related to the initial trade, based on the Certificate of qualification (related trades)/equivalent study document; 120 study credits, duration of studies 2-3 years
Level 4,7	Professional skills training programme, in the form of full-time education, based on the Certificate of lyceum studies/Certificate of General Secondary Education/equivalent study document; 120 study credits, duration of studies-2 years
Level 4,8	Professional skills training programme, in the form of full-time education, for the Medicine and Pharmacy profiles, based on the Certificate of lyceum studies/Certificate of General Secondary Education/equivalent study document, 180 study credits, duration of studies; 3 years
Level 4,9	Upskilling program: programme for updating/supplementing professional skills, based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 5-30 study credits
Level 4,10	Professional requalification programme for obtaining a new professional qualification related to the specialty of initial vocational training, based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 30 - 60 study credits
Level 4,11	Specialization programme: programme for the development/completion of knowledge, skills or professional competences in a restricted area within the scope of the initial vocational training program, based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 30 study credits
Level 4,12	Partial qualification programme (micro-qualification): initial/continuous professional skills training programme (carried out in various contexts), based on the Baccalaureate Diploma/Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 5-60 study credits
Level 5,1	Integrated program of general education (part of the high school education program) and professional skills training (in the education field Pedagogy and educational sciences), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document, duration of studies - 4 years, 120 study credits
Level 5,2	Integrated programme of general education (part of the high school education program) and professional skills training (in the education field Health), based on the Certificate of gymnasium studies/equivalent study document, duration of studies - 5 years, 180 study credits
Level 5,3	Professional skills training programme, based on the Baccalaureate Diploma/Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent document; 120/180 study credits, duration of studies 2-3 years
Level 5,4	Upskilling, updating/completion of professional skills program, based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 5-30 study credits
Level 5,5	Professional requalification programme for obtaining a new professional qualification related to the specialty of initial vocational training, based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 30-60 study credits
Level 5,6	Specialization programme: programme for the knowledge, skills or professional competences development/completion in a restricted area of the specialty of initial vocational training, based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 5-30 study credits

NQF Levels	Qualifications
Level 5,7	Partial qualification programme (micro-qualification): initial/continuous professional skills training program (carried out in various contexts), based on the Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent study document; 5-60 study credits
Level 6,1	Training programme for transversal, cross-sectoral and professional skills, based on the Bacalaureate Diploma/Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent act of studies, one specialty; 180-240 study credits
Level 6,2	Training program for transversal, cross-sectoral and professional skills, in double specialties (Educational sciences, Philology, Military sciences), based on the Bacalaureate Diploma/Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent act of studies; 240 study credits
Level 6,3	Program of upskilling, updating/completion of professional skills, based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree/ equivalent study document; 5-30 study credits
Level 6,4	Professional requalification programme for obtaining a new professional qualification related to the specialty of initial vocational training, based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree/equivalent study document, 60-120 study credits
Level 6, 5	Specialization programme: programme for the knowledge, skills or professional competences development/completion in a restricted area of initial professional training, based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree/equivalent study document, 5-30 study credits
Level 6, 6	Partial qualification program (micro-qualification): initial/continuous professional skills training program (carried out in various contexts), based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree/equivalent study document, 5-60 study credits
Level 7,1	Professional master's programme – training/strengthening of professional competences in one or more fields of professional training, based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree/equivalent study document; 90/120 study credits
Level 7,2	Scientific master's programme – in-depth training in a scientific field and development of skills for the production of original scientific knowledge, based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree/equivalent study document; 90/120 study credits
Level 7.3	Integrated programme (cycles I and II of higher education), based on the Bacalaureate Diploma/Diploma of Professional Studies/equivalent act of studies, at least 300 study credits (Stomatology and Pharmacy) with a duration of 5 years, and 360 study credits (Medicine, Veterinary medicine, Architecture), with a duration of studies of 6 years
Level 7.4	Partial qualification programme (micro-qualification): initial/continuous training programme of specific/innovative skills, completion/deepening of the qualification (carried out in various contexts), based on the Diploma of Bachelor's Degree; 5-60 study credits
Level 8.1	Scientific doctoral programme – training of research, development, innovation skills and production of original scientific knowledge, based on the Diploma of Master's Degree/Diploma of Integrated Higher Education/equivalent study act;180 study credits, with the defence of the doctoral thesis
Level 8.2	Professional/vocational doctoral program – training of research, development, innovation skills and production of original scientific knowledge in a professional field, based on the Diploma of Master's Degree/Diploma of Integrated Higher Education/equivalent study act, 180 study credits, with the defence of the doctoral thesis
Level 8,3	Industrial doctoral programme – training of research, development, innovation skills and production of original scientific knowledge in a sector of industry, based on the Diploma of Master's Degree/Diploma of Integrated Higher Education/equivalent study act; 180 study credits, with the defence of the doctoral thesis
Level 8,4	Postdoctoral programme; duration up to 3 years

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR)

The NQF is open to, and already includes, qualifications from non-formal education, international qualifications, partial qualifications and micro credentials. Education Code no. 152/2014, Government Decisions 330/2023 and 222/2024 define partial qualifications (micro-qualification), international qualifications, study module/unit, and their characteristics for each NQF level.

Government Decision no. 330/2023 defines the process for inclusion of qualifications in the NQF. Qualifications must meet criteria including diverse pathways to obtain the qualification, including via VNFIL; labour market relevance; and credit accumulation and transfer.

4.3 Use and renewal of learning outcomes and standards

Outcomes are used in qualifications, qualification standards, occupational standards and programmes.

Formulation of outcomes is naturally more generic at programme level, achieving more granularity at standard and module/unit levels.

According to [Government Decision No. 678/2020](#) on the approval of the Methodology for the development of occupational standards, occupational standards provide the basis for the development of qualification standards for the NQF's levels 3, 4 and 5 [vocational training programmes](#).

Qualification standards are the basic document from which education providers develop and offer programmes, which lead to the acquisition of a qualification at a certain NQF level. The qualification standard is developed in accordance with the requirements of the national labour market (occupational/competence standard), specific international occupational standards, current recommendations of international sectoral/specialized associations and good practices in the field.

The definition of specific learning outcomes at the level of a study program for a qualification draws on ESCO and ISCO fields; the Nomenclature of Vocational Training Areas; ISCED and NQF/EQF levels; and learning outcomes from the relevant qualification standard(s); and occupational learning outcomes.

According to [GD No. 222/2024](#), initial and continuing vocational training of adults in the context of formal education is organized distinctly by NQF levels and occupations/trades/specialties, taking into account the needs of employers, the general skills of adults, the requirements for the functions they perform and their possibilities for promotion or employment.

Guidelines developed for the implementation of standards to support curriculum development, assessment, and formulation of learning outcomes, include:

- [Methodology for implementing qualification standards by VET and higher education institutions](#) (2021).
- [Methodological guidelines for translating professional competences into learning outcomes](#) (2022).
- [Methodological guidelines for developing the qualification assessment procedure](#) (2020).

4.4 Quality assurance of qualifications

Qualifications of all NQF levels are defined in the [qualification standards](#). They should relate to professional and general/key competences specified in the occupational standards or occupational profiles (for VET qualifications), or competence standards (for higher education qualifications). Learning outcomes should also correspond with the relevant NQF qualification level descriptors.

The development, revision and approval of qualification standards is carried out according to the [methodology](#) adopted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR). Qualification standards are developed by the MECR working groups with the involvement of representatives of social partners and educational institutions. They must meet the requirements of the relevant NQF level descriptors, be validated by the corresponding Sectoral Committee and line ministry, and

approved by MECR based on the decision of the National Council for Qualifications. VET qualifications are developed on the basis of occupational standards⁴.

Government Decision No. 330/2023 specifies that the National Council for Qualifications is an advisory body under MECR, responsible for the development of the NQF and public policies for human capital development.

The Council provides expertise in public policy related to the development of the NQF, qualification standards, and the qualifications necessary to prepare a competitive human resource, capable of functioning effectively in a constantly evolving knowledge-based society.

The Council is composed of 15 members:

- 3 representatives from public authorities responsible for qualifications: 1 from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; 1 from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; 1 from the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization.
- 3 education and training providers, between them covering different education levels.
- 1 representative from the national quality assurance authority, ANACEC.
- 1 representative from the National Agency for Curriculum and Assessment, ANCE.
- 1 representative from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova, CCI.
- 1 representative from the alliance of Sectoral Committees for Vocational Training.
- 1 representative from the National Employment Agency, NEA.
- 1 representative from the Economic Council under the Prime Minister.
- 1 representative from the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) Association.
- 1 representative from the Foreign Investors Association or foreign development partners implementing projects in education and vocational training.
- 1 representative from the National Youth Council of the Republic of Moldova.

Mandate of the Council:

- ensuring dialogue among stakeholders: vocational education and training institutions at all levels, central specialized authorities, the business sector, sectoral committees for vocational training, trade unions, and non-governmental organizations, for the purpose of developing and updating qualification standards.
- endorsing new and revised qualification standards and verifying the correct assignment of NQF levels to programmes that lead to the acquisition of qualifications and the issuance of related study documents.
- providing expert evaluation regarding the compatibility of NQF qualifications with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- participating in the development of the normative and methodological framework.
- contributing to the development of studies, analyses, and forecasts concerning the demand for qualifications and competences, as well as the relevance of qualifications.
- participating in the planning and development of human capital in line with the national development strategy of the Republic of Moldova, regional development strategies, and sectoral development strategies.

⁴ Art. 66, Education Code.

- monitoring the implementation of the NQF in accordance with the normative reference framework and EQF principles, in order to better adapt it to the educational needs of society and the labour market.
- contributing to the drafting of the NQF development and implementation plan; identifying the need for new qualifications; and formulating concepts for the modernization of education and vocational training.
- monitoring the development of qualifications frameworks at European and international level and facilitating the transfer of good practices and models into national practice concerning the development, implementation, and management of the NQF.
- carrying out other activities relevant to the development and implementation of the NQF.

VET qualifications are developed on the basis of occupational standards.

Occupational standards must be developed for the occupations included in the Classifier of Occupations. Sectoral Committees develop the occupational standards, which are then validated and approved by the relevant line ministry or central administrative authority according to [the Methodology for the development of occupational standards](#).

Qualification standards also define the requirements for assessment and award of qualifications in line with the NQF. Qualifications are awarded by accredited education institutions. Both the institutional and programme accreditation are mandatory. External evaluations are carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) or a quality assurance agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)⁵. Accreditation standards require that education programmes correspond with the relevant NQF level.

5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

Since 2017, the body responsible for the overall coordination and supervision of the NQF has been the National Qualifications Framework Directorate, a division of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.

This directorate is responsible for the development, implementation, monitoring, and updating of the NQF. It also ensures that the NQF is designed and updated in alignment with European policies in this field, the EQF, and the QF-EHEA.

The NQF Division acts as:

- National Coordination Point for the EQF.
- National Information and Coordination Point for the ENIC-NARIC network.
- National Europass Centre.
- National Contact Point for the Recognition of Qualifications.

It also acts as the country's ENIC-NARIC, analysing foreign qualifications for recognition purposes.

⁵ [The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education - EQAR](#)

5.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection serves as the National Contact Point for information and communication regarding the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO).

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) coordinates, monitors and ensures the funding of occupational standards development, while the line Ministries and central administrative authorities are responsible for their validation and approval. MHLSP is the main actor for the development of labour market policies and anticipating and matching skills demand and supply. It carries out a mid-term forecast of the labour market, and also reviews the occupations classifier.

The National Employment Agency (NEA), responsible to the MHLSP, produces annual short-term labour market forecasts, and develops employer surveys, to identify workforce requirements and labour shortages.

[Sectoral Committees](#) have been established by law to promote social partnership in VET. They are associations with a legal status, established on a voluntary basis by employers and trade unions associations in the respective economic sector. Their main functions and responsibilities include:

1. improving communication and cooperation between social partners, and between social partners and public authorities; and contributing to the development of the VET regulatory framework, including assessment and certification of competences.
2. initiating, coordinating and participating in the development and revision of occupational standards.
3. participating in the development and updating of qualifications.
4. participating in the NQF's development.
5. supporting and promoting the implementation of competence-based training and assessment.
6. delegating representatives to participate in the qualification examinations, certification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal or informal contexts.
7. making proposals for updating the occupations classifier.
8. engaging in skills needs analyses and anticipation.
9. endorsing modular or subject-based VET curricula.

[The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research \(ANACEC\)](#) is responsible for the external evaluation and accreditation of education institutions and programmes at all levels of education, including continuing education. The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) adjusts accreditation standards, evaluation criteria, and performance indicators for external evaluation in line with the quality assurance principles of qualifications according to the European Qualifications Framework, for the purpose of provisional authorization and accreditation of study programmes and institutions.

It develops and periodically reviews evaluation methodologies, accreditation standards, national reference standards and performance indicators used in quality assurance and evaluation. The governing board of the agency includes representatives of higher education and VET institutions, a student representative and a business representative.

6. RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

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

The regulatory framework for VNFIL was established by MECR in 2019. According to the [MECR Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal education](#), validation is carried out by VET institutions and only against their accredited programmes.

The regulation establishes requirements for the VNFIL process, assessment commission and assessors. The assessment commission shall comprise at least 3 members and may include representatives of the VET institution, experts delegated by the relevant ministry, Sectoral Committee, or Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The VNFIL process must meet the requirements of the relevant occupational standard.

Validation arrangements give access to qualifications placed in the NQF, allow learners to receive credits/exemptions towards a qualification or lead to a partial or full qualification.

Legal acts adopted in 2023 and 2022 respectively enable [validation centres](#) to assess applicants for award of qualifications for professional skills corresponding to level 6 qualifications, and also at Levels 3, 4 and 5.

A particular need is validation of skills acquired while abroad by returning migrants. The ongoing EU Twinning project has addressed this dimension.

6.2 Credit systems

In higher education, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is used. One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits, so that:

- for the first cycle, at NQF level 6, programmes have 180 -240 ECTS credits.
- In the second cycle, NQF level 7, programmes vary between 90-120 ECTS, or 300-360 ECTS for the integrated programmes in medicine, veterinary medicine, and architecture.

In post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET, the [credit system](#) based on ECVET is applied⁶. Higher education institutions may recognise up to 60 VET credits

7. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

7.1. Stage of implementation

Moldova's NQF is at the operational stage.

Governance is stable, qualifications that are placed in the NQF and register adhere to a defined methodology and bear, for most qualification types, an NQF level on associated certificates. Occupational standards, qualification standards and other outcomes-based tools inform qualifications and curricula design.

⁶ Framework Regulation on the organization of post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET studies based on the Credit Transfer System approved by MESR order 234 of 25 March 2016.

The Government Decision of 2023 on the NQF included the Roadmap for the Operationalization of the National Qualifications Framework in convergence with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2023–2027). It outlines the objectives, strategic actions and activity timeline for implementing the NQF.

Qualification standards define qualifications in learning outcomes. However, the development of new, and updating of existing, qualifications is still a challenge. Until now, only a few qualifications developed have been based on occupational standards. 33 occupational standards have been developed so far.

7.2 Indicating NQF/RQF levels

NQF levels are now indicated on certificates issued for most qualification types of the NQF, including doctorates, upskilling certificates, certificates of professional competence, certificates of specialisation, partial qualifications/micro credentials etc. Likewise for the Diploma/Certificate of Qualification Supplement and in the National Register of Qualifications.

MECR is in the process of approving Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks for the fields of Education, ICT and Health, which are currently under public consultation.

7.3 NQF dissemination

- No national campaign or broad awareness-raising has been conducted. There have been workshops, for example with representatives of all public authorities to map the primary and secondary sectoral regulatory framework and harmonize sectoral qualifications in correlation with the NQF.
- Events to promote Erasmus calls cover the NQF and qualifications and standards development.
- MERC has organised information sessions for teachers on the development of curricula and qualification standards in correlation with the NQF level descriptors.

7.4 Qualifications databases and registers

Moldova has a functioning qualifications register, the [National Register of Qualifications](#) (NCR) which contains 324 qualifications. Qualification standards and programmes are also listed, along with the providers of study programmes by qualification levels - higher education qualifications at levels 6–8 of the NQF; technical vocational education qualifications at Levels 3–5; and qualifications for lifelong professional training at Levels 1–7.

Only study and vocational training programmes that have been accredited or provisionally authorized by officially designated external evaluation bodies are registered in the NQF.

The information fields for the registration of qualifications in the NCR are aligned/adapted to the EQF recommendations, in order to ensure comparability of national and international qualifications and interoperability with European qualifications instruments. The sheet with elements of the recommended data fields for the electronic publication of information in the National Qualifications Register includes all the elements of Annex VI to the EQF Recommendation and some additional fields.

The register was updated in 2024 in accordance with revisions made to the Nomenclatures of VET specialisms, qualifications in post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education, and to study fields in HE.

The Qualifications Register is linked to the Education Management Information System, the Register of Occupational Standards, and with the Occupations Classification.

Data from the National Qualifications Register is in Romanian and some data such as qualification standards for higher education will shortly be available in English and Russian.

It is not yet linked to Europass.

7.5 Use in recognition of foreign qualifications.

Moldova ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention⁷ in 1999 and the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in 2024. The NQF Directorate within MECR hosts the National Information Centre, which is a member of the [ENIC-NARIC network](#). The country concludes bilateral and multilateral agreements on mutual recognition of qualifications.

NQF Directorate also acts as the National Europass Centre.

7.6 Career guidance and counselling

The National Employment Agency's (NEA) [portal](#) provides description of occupations, including information on the related qualifications, training providers, skills, trends in the labour market and average salaries, and links this data to the available vacancies published on the NEA job search [portal](#).

7.7 Awareness and use of the NQF

Quality assurance professionals, education and training providers and other education/labour market specialists have fairly high awareness of the NQF, given the framework's relative longevity, and engagement by MERC of such actors. Providers for example contribute to development of qualification standards.

Learners may sometimes confuse NQF levels with those in ISCED⁸, a classifier for educational system levels e.g., secondary etc.

Employers have moderate levels of awareness overall, being involved in the NQF in certain cases where they join Sectoral Committees and act as developers and validators of qualification standards.

Professionals or staff in careers guidance and employment services will have variable exposure to the NQF in their respective functions. Their web pages and other services may refer to NQF levels and suitable qualifications linked to careers or vacancies.

7.8 Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

No evaluation has been carried out.

7.9 Impact of NQF

The NQF's foremost impact has been its contribution to moving qualifications to an outcome-based approach. Across all sectors of the education and training system, qualifications, standards, curricula and assessment are increasingly guided by design and implementation against outcomes.

Via its increased alignment to the EQF, the NQF is also supporting application of EU principles, systems and tools in national education.

⁷ [Lisbon Recognition Convention - Higher education and research](#)

⁸ [International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\) | UNESCO UIS](#)

The register has made qualifications more visible and accessible.

8. REFERENCING TO THE EQF

8.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Moldova has been a member of the Bologna Process since 2005 and joined the EQF process in 2023. It has not yet certified its NQF against the QF-EHEA or referenced to the EQF.

Undertaking and completing these processes will link Moldova's qualifications to those of other European countries already self-certified and/or referenced. These alignments would support recognition both of the Moldovan qualifications carried abroad by its own citizens, and of qualifications awarded by institutions in these other European countries to Moldovan citizens when they return to the country.

8.2 International donor support

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) is an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and a full member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA).

The EU-funded Twinning project "Enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system" was launched in 2019. The main aims of the project are:

- to strengthen the institutional and operational capacities and staff competences of ANACEC.
- to continue the implementation of the NQF in Moldova.
- to build capacities for effective cooperation between VET providers and the private sector.
- to encourage VET teachers in centres of excellence to become multipliers through pedagogical training.

ETF is supporting testing of the interoperability of the NQF with the Europass Platform, ESCO, and the European Learning Model.

9. REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

Enablers of the NQF so far include institutional coordination, via establishment of the National Qualifications Directorate within MERC.

Development of qualification standards and occupational standards for programmes and qualification, and the transition to learning outcomes, have been key in modernising qualifications. Similarly, adoption and application of tools such as a credit system and a qualifications register operationalise the NQF for learner and citizen use.

Coordination mechanisms to ensure that qualifications are developed in line with the labour market have been established. Employers and other stakeholders are engaged via the sectoral committees.

Conversely, to date, there are several obstacles or issues to address.

While the sectoral committees are operating, not all industry sectors are represented and so have no formal input to the NQF and associated standards. Existing committees need to increase numbers of occupational standards for new vocational qualifications.

Although the CNC is up and running, there is a register, processes are in place for development of standards etc., there is still some fragmentation among the tools needed for its operationalization – the

transfer of credits/hours from one programme or level of qualification to another, the organization and recognition of parts of qualifications, the recognition of previous studies or skills, the recognition of non-formal and informal studies at the level of higher and general education and so on.

Outside those most involved in the NQF, public awareness is low.

It follows that some priorities are:

- institutionalization of the dialogue platform with stakeholders and extending the committees to unrepresented sectors.
- updating of the quality assurance system of qualifications according to the EQF principles.
- communication, and increasing the NQF's visibility.
- referencing the NQF to the EQF and self-certification to the QF-EHEA.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
CEENQA	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies
CNC	National Qualifications Framework (Moldova)
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ELM	European Learning Model
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESCO	European Classifications of Skills, Competences and Occupations
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
ISCED	International System for Classification of Education
MERC	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
NCR	National Qualifications Register
NEA	National Employment Agency
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
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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Further Information

National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
<http://www.anacip.md/index.php/en/>