

# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## 1.1 NQF snapshot

Bosnia and Herzegovina's Council of Ministers adopted the Baseline Qualifications Framework, or BQF, in March 2011. The BQF has 8 levels and includes all types and levels of qualifications.

Governance of the framework remains unsettled. The Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) currently coordinates QF development and implementation in cooperation with the country's various sub-state authorities. But, for wider political reasons, planned governing and implementing institutions are either suspended or not yet established. Consequently, MoCA has been compelled to convene ad-hoc bodies to carry out specific urgent tasks.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) participates in the EQF process as a member of the EQF Advisory Group and is a member of the Bologna Process in Higher Education.

BiH has a strategy to implement the QF and is developing tools and approaches. Institutional arrangements for coordination of the BQF's implementation have been designed but are not operational yet. Therefore, Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the activation stage.

## 1.2 Policy context

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a potential candidate for European Union (EU) membership since 2003. It participates in the Stabilisation and Association Process and submitted its formal application to join the EU in February 2016. However, the EU considers that further reforms across a range of political and economic areas are not yet sufficiently developed to warrant EU candidate country status.

The country comprises two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (divided into 10 cantons), the Republika Srpska and a smaller administrative region, Brcko District. At BiH level, there is the Council of Ministers (i.e. the state-level government) and a presidency rotating every 8 months among the three main communities, Bosniak, Croat and Serb.

Pre-COVID, the economy had been showing slow but sustained growth, including improved employment levels. Nonetheless unemployment remained high, at 19% in 2018. <sup>1</sup>

The 2020 pandemic, however, has reversed any upward trend in the economy. International estimates suggest a -6.5 GDP contraction for 2020<sup>2</sup>. Employment is also adversely affected. Data available for the first quarter of 2020 point to a 0.5% fall in employment.

COVID caused a shift to remote learning in 2020. Digital poverty, particularly in rural areas, has exacerbated existing education exclusion. Teachers were largely unprepared for remote learning when school closures began, though schools which already had on-line learning experience e.g. in

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (2020). *The COVID-19 crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. 30 July 2020. <https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/COVID-19-Crisis-in-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> IMF (2020). *IMF World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2020  
<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2020/October>

Sarajevo Canton, were better able to adapt to on-line provision, while others established hybrid learning models (emails, social media tools etc).

Demographic changes pose major challenges for the BiH economy, notably the country's ageing population. Birth rates are declining and young people are emigrating to such extents that between 2010 and 2019, young people's share of the general population fell by 10%.

Approximately 75% of the upper secondary cohort is enrolled in VET.

The education and training system is highly fragmented, which results in a lack of common standards for education levels, teacher training and performance evaluation<sup>3</sup>. The institutional structure is complex, involving 14 different education authorities, counting state-level, entities and cantons. Education reform so far has largely been focused on development of a legislative, institutional and policy frameworks, which is a lengthy process requiring adoption at state, entity and cantonal levels.

Moving forward, a comprehensive and inclusive qualifications environment will be important for mobility of workers and recognition of qualifications both within BiH as well as with the European Union given aspirations for accession to the Union.

### 1.3 NQF legal basis

There are two main legal acts concerning the QF.

First, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Council of Ministers' Decision on Adoption of the Baseline of Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 31/11, 39/12). The decision carries the force of law.

Second, the Council of Ministers' Decision on Adoption of the Action Plan for the Establishment and Implementation of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period 2014-2020 (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 28/15)<sup>4</sup>.

A qualifications framework for higher education was developed in line with the Bologna process, with support from the Council of Europe. Legislation was adopted in 2007 (<sup>5</sup>), making the HE framework an integral part of the QF.

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2018). Commission staff working document: Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018 report, accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - 2018 Communication on EU enlargement policy {COM(2018) 450 final}. SWD(2018) 155 final, Strasbourg 17.4.2018.  
<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-bosnia-and-herzegovina-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Documents are available in English or local languages at: <http://www.mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>

<sup>5</sup> The *Framework for higher education qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina* and the strategy for its implementation were adopted in December 2007 through Decision of the Council of Ministries on the adoption of documents needed for further implementation of the Bologna process in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 13/08). Other key documents adopted through this decision included: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Recommendations for Implementing Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina; National Action Plan for Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Diploma Supplement model for Bosnia and Herzegovina; User Manuals for the Diploma Supplement for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Related legal acts at state level are<sup>6</sup>:

- the framework law on primary and secondary education (2003);
- the framework law on pre-primary education (2007);
- the framework law on higher education (2007);
- the Law on the Agency for pre-primary, primary and secondary education (2007);
- the framework law on VET (2008).

## 2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Education and training reforms

As an instrument for reform, the QF supports the development of an education and training system based on lifelong learning principles, use of learning outcomes, and quality assurance at all levels of education. Given a highly fragmented legal and institutional environment, the framework is nonetheless intended to enable the development and application of common education, occupational and qualification standards, plus common standards for the certification of education service providers.

Given its potential to aid reform and create synergies, the QF is included in several strategic documents for the modernisation of education and training: “Priorities for development of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2016-2026”; “Strategic platform for development of adult education in the context of lifelong learning for the period 2014-2020”, and the old and new VET strategies<sup>7</sup>.

In the area of qualification standards, the following actions have been formulated:

- the implementation of the Action Plan for the development and implementation of the Qualifications Framework in BiH for the period 2014-2020;
- the provision of a special budget line for innovations in public curricula;
- each curricula or study programme will be designed with two outputs: one for the labour market and for continuing education;
- improvement of legislation and practice in the field of recognition of qualifications for employment purposes or continuing education;
- improvement of quality assurance policies and practice for all levels of education and training;
- establishment of qualification standards in accordance with the BQF and Action Plan for the development and implementation of the Qualifications Framework in BiH for the period 2014-2020.

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<sup>6</sup> Documents are available in English or local languages at: <http://www.mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>

<sup>7</sup> Documents are available in English or local languages at: <http://mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>

The main objectives of the strategic platform for development of adult education in the context of lifelong learning are the following:

- improving legislation for adult education in the context of lifelong learning and alignment with the EQF;
- establishing effective ways to involve relevant social partners in the process of adult education in the context of lifelong learning;
- developing programmes and increasing the accessibility of adult education;
- raising and ensuring the quality of adult education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina recently adopted “Priorities in Integration of the Entrepreneurial Learning and Key Competencies in Education Systems in BiH, 2021-2030”. This document is in line with NQF developments and aligned with the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework.<sup>8</sup>

The “Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2007-2013” (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 65/07), will be replaced by a new state-wide strategy. MoCA, with all relevant ministries, drafted the strategy “Improvement of Quality and Relevance of Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021 – 2030”, in line with the Riga conclusions. A final adoption by the Council of Ministers was expected in late 2020 to early 2021.

The seven priority areas in higher education are: (1) good governance and management (including quality assurance), (2) Resources, (3) strengthening the relationship between the labour market and higher education, in particular modernising study programmes to meet labour market needs, (4) qualification standards, (5) student experience, (6) internationalisation and (7) statistics.

## 2.2 Aims of NQF

The QF is intended as a tool for transparency and reform. While Bosnia and Herzegovina previously had a traditional qualifications classifier, the “nomenklatura”, which comprehensively described the education and training system, the QF aims not only to structure and classify qualifications, but also to provide meaningful links between education and the labour market (ETF, 2018).

The QF aims to increase access to education and social inclusion, including through supporting mechanisms for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and to enable comparability of qualifications to support mobility and progression, both within the country and abroad.

Specific goals for the QF include<sup>9</sup>:

- making understandable the different types of qualifications and their inter-relationships;
- achieving comprehensible presentations of education achievements to employers, learners and parents;
- guiding individuals in the selection of education and career paths;
- facilitating mobility and more transparent access to education throughout life;
- facilitating identification and recognition of national qualifications abroad and of foreign qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

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<sup>8</sup> Adopted by the Council of Ministers on 22 October 2020

<sup>9</sup> Documents are available in English or local languages at: <http://mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>

- creating the pre-conditions for introducing a quality assurance system for existing and new qualifications;
- creating the pre-conditions for the development of a system of evaluation and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal education / learning;
- improvement of co-operation with all social partners.

## 3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

### 3.1 NQF scope and structure

The BQF has eight levels, designed for 1-to-1 referencing to the EQF levels. It does not have the sub-levels commonly found in other countries in the region. It is a comprehensive framework, including all types of qualifications from general education, VET and higher education.

Qualifications awarded outside formal education and training can be included, but criteria and procedures for inclusion and levelling these are yet to be defined. A methodology for such allocation was developed as part of the EU project “Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”.

Level descriptors are derived from the EQF’s. Three domains of learning outcomes are used: knowledge, skills, and competences (responsibility and autonomy). The level descriptors may be further developed to better represent the country context, and to serve the EQF referencing process.

### 3.2 Types of qualifications

According to the “Action Plan for the Development and Implementation of the Qualifications Framework”, a qualification is defined as “a formal title of the result of a process of assessment and validation obtained once a competent body determines that an individual has achieved the learning outcomes as per the defined standards”. In practice, however, the distinction between curriculum and qualifications is not always clear.

Different types of qualifications distinguished are:

- General education qualifications;
- VET qualifications;
- Higher education qualifications.

### 3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

In practice, except for higher education, quality assurance in qualifications is little developed in the country. Especially in VET, it is highly fragmented.

In higher education, the institutional lead lies with the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (HEA). In recent years, it has conducted accreditation of higher education institutions, private and public, of which a few offer short-cycle, level 5 qualifications, which are VET-oriented. To date, this has been general accreditation for both providers and programmes, but not yet for individual qualifications. The Agency has also been updating quality assurance procedures in higher education, to meet the Bologna Process’ European Standards and Guidelines.

An EU-funded project developed a manual for quality assurance in VET which includes guidelines, including standards and criteria, for external evaluation and self-assessment based on best European practice and models. However, its take-up and use by authorities and providers has been partial.

Significant challenges in quality assurance of VET qualifications are lack of comparable education or occupational standards, lack of agreed criteria for development and validation of qualifications, minimal external assessment, and fragmented functions among the many actors. The Manual for Enhancement of Vocational Qualifications was developed by the EU-funded project "Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning" to overcome these challenges. The manual is intended for all institutions and bodies involved in developing the basic elements of the qualifications framework such as occupational standards, qualification standards, curricula and programmes and use of learning outcomes.

This manual is directly linked to the training programme for enhancement of VET qualifications, which includes additional materials for training qualifications developers.

### 3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

To be placed in the framework, qualifications should be composed of units of learning outcomes. But designing learning-outcomes-based qualifications has been a challenge, especially in VET. ETF conducted an inventory of vocational qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2017, covering qualifications from Levels 2 to 5. It revealed that of the 1,155 qualifications reviewed, most were not based on learning outcomes. Moreover, more than half were developed in 1995 and 1996, and required revision.

Based on this analysis, the decision was made to include only newly developed and learning outcomes-based VET and higher education qualifications in the BQF. So far, 21 VET and 5 higher education qualifications have been included in the BQF.

### 3.5 Credit systems

Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Bologna process in 2003. In 2006, all public universities began the process of implementing first and second cycle study programmes and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). ECTS has since been introduced in all higher education programmes.

A credit system is not described in detail for the other levels in the BQF document. ECVET is used for new VET qualifications as mentioned in the Manual for enhancement of VET qualifications developed as part of the EU project "Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning", but implementation is still limited.



## 4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

### 4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex and fragmented constitutional, legal and institutional landscape, which hinders implementation of the QF. The Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995 provided for a decentralised constitution, which poses challenges in creating a truly national qualifications framework with equal validity and application across the country (ETF, 2018).

The Ministry of Civil Affairs has a coordinating role in QF development and implementation, bringing together the relevant authorities from the Republika Srpska, the 10 cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brcko District.

The Council of Ministers established an Inter-sectoral Commission (ISC)<sup>10</sup> in 2013 as an interim executive policy-making and executive structure. This body was intended to steer the QF's early development, including designing a detailed Action Plan to implement the QF. The Council had planned that, in time, the ISC's decision-making functions would pass to a permanent governing body, working alongside MoCA, to manage the QF, and that the ISC would continue in an advisory capacity.

The Inter-sectoral Commission comprises nineteen members in total. There are six members for each of the three major population groups – Bosniak, Croat and Serb - plus one member for minorities such as Roma, representing education and training, the academic community, labour and employment, statistics institutions, and other social partners<sup>11</sup>. Its decisions are made by majority vote, requiring a minimum of two thirds of votes from the representatives of each constituent community. The Ministry of Civil Affairs chairs the ISC.

The ISC's first task was developing the QF's Action Plan. The Plan's provisions on institutional arrangements foresaw establishment of a permanent QF Council which would be a decision-making body, advised by the ISC and various technical expert groups, and cooperating with MoCA and the entities and cantons.

The technical expert groups would include sectoral councils, tasked to develop qualifications in specified sectors such as wood, metal processing etc. They currently operate on an ad-hoc basis, advising on request APOSO or bilateral donors when they are developing new VET qualifications.

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<sup>10</sup> Decision on the Appointment of a Commission for the Development of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>11</sup> Members of the Inter-sectoral Commission include: five representatives of education sector (Ministry of Civil Affairs; two canton representatives; Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska; Education Department of the Government of the Brcko District); three representatives of the Rectors Conference; three representatives of education agencies (Agency for pre-school, primary and secondary education; Agency for the development of higher education and quality assurance and the Centre for information and recognition of documents in higher education); three representatives of the statistics sector (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Institute for Statistics, Institute for Statistics of Republika Srpska); three representatives of labour and employment (Ministry of Civil Affairs, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Labour and Protection of Veterans and Disabled Persons of Republika Srpska); one representative from the Association of Employers and one representative of the Confederation of Labour Unions.

However, for wider political reasons, the ISC itself has not sat since 2015, which has blocked progress in implementing much of the Action Plan, including the setting-up of the permanent QF Council. In the absence therefore of a permanent governance system, temporary arrangements are made. The Conference of Education Ministers in BiH and an ad-hoc “Referencing working group” set up for the EQF referencing process, have tried to bridge the gap until the bodies foreseen by the Action Plan are put in place.

## 4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

Since 2003, MoCA has been responsible for coordination of activities, harmonisation of plans of entity authorities and defining strategies at the international level and in the education field (Article 15 of the Law on Ministries and Other Bodies of Administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Official Gazette of BiH No. 5/03”).

MoCA is responsible for educational policy at state level, in liaison with the international community and has a coordinating role in QF implementation. It also chairs the ISC and is designated to chair the planned QF Council.

The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (HEA) is the lead institution for quality in higher education. It is an affiliated member of the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher education (ENQA). It accredits public and private higher education institutions and updates quality assurance procedures to meet European standards and guidelines.

The Agency for Pre-primary, Primary, and Secondary Education (APOSO) has overall responsibility for quality in pre-university education. In cooperation with all responsible education authorities, it develops education and occupational standards and guides curriculum development. Development of the occupational standards is carried out mainly with the support of pedagogic institutes, companies and schools, and often with significant donor support.

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

## 5.1 VNFIL arrangements

There is no state-wide system in place for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), but given the high rate of labour migration, authorities see recognition and validation as useful tools. Creating the pre-conditions for their development is one of the policy objectives for QF implementation and among the activities outlined in the Action Plan<sup>12</sup>.

Two strategic documents were adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2014 as a basis for development of lifelong learning and for regulating adult learning: “Principles and standards in the field of adult

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<sup>12</sup> Action plan for the development and implementation of the qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-20 (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 28/15) <http://www.mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>; [www.eqf.ba](http://www.eqf.ba)

education in BiH and Strategic adult education development platform in the context of lifelong learning for the period 2014-2020". A first concept for establishing country-wide VNFIL arrangements was developed in 2018, by a working group within the EU-funded project "Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning".

Two new EU-funded projects will both include a component on RPL to further support the development of RPL in the country.

## 6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

### 6.1 Key achievements and main findings

Qualifications from vocational education and training and higher education are being prioritised for inclusion in the QF, due to their potential to support employability. To date, 21 VET and 5 higher education qualifications have been included in the BQF.

However, levelling of greater numbers of qualifications is slowed by various factors. One reason is lack of capacity across the education and training system, as the country is generally dependent on donors for development of new qualifications. Another reason, related, is the wider political, and so education-administrative, fragmentation, which hinders cooperation by the necessary actors.

Initiatives and developments in the different education and training sub-systems have been undertaken over the past years, mostly as part of EU-funded projects<sup>13</sup>. The EU-funded project "Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning", which ran March 2016 to June 2018, focused on several aspects of the QF, such as quality assurance, accreditation procedures, EQF referencing and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

A "Manual for Enhancement of Vocational Qualifications" was developed with involvement of representatives from all relevant education authorities and key partners; it is intended for all bodies involved in developing occupational and qualification standards, curricula and programmes, and in using learning outcomes. The criteria defined in the manual are considered when developing new qualifications.

Communication about the QF has so far been directed at stakeholders relevant for, and directly involved with, the development and implementation of related elements and processes. These included policy makers in education and employment, teachers, students, education and employment agencies and employers. The main channels used were the websites of different ministries, social media, leaflets, conferences and workshops. A new website has been developed for further communication of the QF in relation to the EQF (<https://eqf.ba/>).

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<sup>13</sup> The proposal for the Bosnia and Herzegovina qualifications framework was developed as part of the EU VET III project, and the VET IV project developed vocational qualifications based on occupational standards, which were a new development in the country. A joint EU and Council of Europe project developed a good practice guide for development of qualifications and occupational standards in higher education. An IPA-funded project managed by the British Council (2014-2016) sought to raise the quality of primary and general secondary education and to reform the school-leaving *Matura* exam; the project prioritized training for teachers, pre- and in-service, in the primary and secondary education.

As the QF is only at an early stage of implementation, no evaluation studies have been carried out to assess its impact. Given its major reforming role, QF implementation initiatives are starting to influence the introduction and use of learning outcomes, and the review, renewal and quality assurance of qualifications. The QF has helped formalise cooperation between stakeholders across education sub-sectors and institutions at different levels (political, technical, expert) and is seen as a solution for enhanced dialogue between stakeholders from education and training and those representing the labour market. It provides a basis for developing arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and is expected to increase permeability in the education and training system and to support recognition of foreign qualifications.

## 6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

In addition to providing information on the QF and key documents, the web portal for the qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes databases of occupational standards and qualification standards in vocational education and training, and higher education, as basic elements of the qualifications framework. By the end of 2020, 23 occupational standards for VET and two for higher education had been included in the database. The database also includes the 21 VET and 5 higher education qualifications mentioned earlier.

## 6.3 Qualification documents

The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance issued in 2009 the Instruction on the Form and Content of Diploma and Diploma Supplement Issued by Accredited Higher Education Institutions (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 86/09). This Instruction is obligatory for all competent education authorities and accredited higher education institutions.

## 6.4 Career information and guidance

Career guidance and counselling are under-developed across Bosnia and Herzegovina. Career counselling in education is mainly organized in secondary vocational schools and provided by psychologists and pedagogists. The public employment services offer career counselling as well, but the counsellors face big caseloads. Only a limited number of careers counsellors have received training in the use of the QF.

## 6.5 Recognition of foreign qualifications

The Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education is fully operational in BiH. The procedures of recognition of higher education qualifications in BiH are regulated primarily by the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education and are prescribed by laws on recognition, laws on higher education, by laws and statutes of higher education institutions.

In practice, there are still some differences between the ten cantons, Republika Srpska and Brčko District. The previously adopted legislative acts have been neither coherent nor clear in terms of terminology, criteria, or prescribed procedures for recognition. A harmonisation process has started, led by Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education <sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.cip.gov.ba/en/the-legislation>

## 7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

### 7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a full member of the EQF Advisory Group since 2015 and referencing the BQF to the EQF is considered a state-wide priority.

A final draft of the EQF referencing report has been produced and is awaiting adoption by the relevant authorities. It covers both referencing to the EQF and self-certification against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education area (Bologna Process). The State of Play report was presented to the EQF Advisory Group in June 2019.

### 7.2 International cooperation

The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance is an affiliated member of the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher education (ENQA). Full membership has not been granted yet.

### 7.3 International donor support

BiH receives financial assistance from the EU via the Instrument for pre-Accession (IPA).

Initiatives and developments in the different education and training sub-systems have been undertaken over the past years, mostly as part of EU-funded projects<sup>15</sup>. The EU-funded project “Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”, which ran from 2016 to 2018, addressed several elements of the BQF, including quality assurance, accreditation procedures, EQF referencing, and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Both IPA16 and IPA19 will further support the development of occupational standards and RPL.

Different donors are involved in the development of occupational and qualification standards.

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<sup>15</sup> The proposal for the Bosnia and Herzegovina qualifications framework was developed as part of the EU VET III project, and the VET IV project developed vocational qualifications based on occupational standards, which were a new development in the country. A joint EU and Council of Europe project developed a good practice guide for development of qualifications and occupational standards in higher education. An IPA-funded project managed by the British Council (2014-2016) sought to raise the quality of primary and general secondary education and to reform the school-leaving *Matura* exam; the project prioritized training for teachers, pre- and in-service, in the primary and secondary education.

## 8. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The (BQF) is an important development towards better education quality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, increased access to lifelong learning and more relevant qualifications for citizens and the labour market. Part of the country's efforts to gain EU membership, the QF is seen as contributing to the increased mobility, flexibility and competitiveness of the labour force<sup>16</sup>.

Implementation actions are however at an early stage and behind schedule. Technical work necessary to implement the QF Action Plan has started, primarily through EU-funded projects. Useful tools, such as methodologies for qualification development, provide the groundwork for improving quality assurance systems and setting up mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, donor-supported projects always have a limited timeframe and scope for intervention; sustained follow-up is necessary, with allocation of financial resources from national funds at all relevant levels of government.

Reform of vocational education and training and higher education is continuing, but quality of provision remains a challenge. Efforts should be made to increase the number of learning outcomes-based qualifications and to revise curricula for existing qualifications. Procedures and criteria for placement of qualifications into the QF should be adopted and applied country wide.

The complex institutional arrangements, which allow State institutions only very limited mandates, make the overall pace of reform slower than might otherwise be the case and represent the main challenge in QF implementation so far. Support is needed to re-establish the operational capacities of the Inter-sectoral Committee at technical level, and to create the QF Council as a permanent NQF structure at decision-making and policy level.

COVID-19 has forced suspension of many NQF implementation activities, including delivery, assessment and certification of qualifications in the NQF.

## 9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Adam S., Dželalija, M. (2015) *Manual for Development and Use of Qualification Standards and occupations in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. EU and CoE.

Dželalija, M., Morris, I. D., Ranfelt, L. (2018). *Development of Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*. EU.

Overview of laws and strategic plans: <http://www.mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>

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<sup>16</sup> Action plan for the development and implementation of the qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-20 (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 28/15) <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1465728/8504223/7.+Action+Plan+BIH+QF.pdf/150757bf-2e65-4399-bd1d-d24c62815f41>

## 10. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE NQF/NQF OVERVIEW TABLE

Level	Type of education and training	Qualification titles (position in the labour market)	Award type (diploma / certificate / education level)
8	Third cycle of higher education	Titles of qualifications and contents of diploma and diploma supplement for levels 6, 7 and 8 will, at a later stage, include relevant NQF/ EQF levels and will be further elaborated by the adoption of the Rulebook on use of academic titles and acquisition of scientific and professional titles..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ PhD</li> <li>■ Doctorate diploma and Diploma supplement</li> </ul>
7	Second cycle of higher education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Master diploma (MA)</li> <li>■ Master level diploma and Diploma supplement</li> </ul>
6	First cycle of higher education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bachelor diploma (BA)</li> <li>■ Diploma issued by the institution of higher education</li> <li>■ Diploma supplement</li> </ul>
5	Postsecondary education, including master craftsman exams and similar exams	Highly skilled worker specialised for a certain occupation	Diploma/certificate of completed post-secondary education or passed master craftsman exam and/or similar exam for a certain occupation, with a supplement
4	Secondary general education	Generally skilled worker	Secondary School graduation diploma with a supplement
	Secondary technical education	Specialised skilled worker for technical and related occupation	Diploma/Certificate of secondary graduation with a supplement
3	Vocational education and training	Skilled worker for a certain occupation	Diploma/certificate of final examination (matriculation) with practical work, including a supplement
2	Occupational training programmes	Low-skilled worker	Certificate on completed programme or education for lower level occupational qualifications
1	Elementary education	Unskilled worker	Certificate on completed elementary education (nine years)

Source: Adapted from European Training Foundation, 2016.

## ABBREVIATIONS

APOSO	Agency for Pre-primary, Primary, and Secondary Education
BQF	Baseline Qualification Framework
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQF	European qualifications framework
HEA	Agency for development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance
ISC	Intersectoral Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QF	Qualifications Framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

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