NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – NORTH MACEDONIA

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1   NQF snapshot

The NQF in North Macedonia was adopted by law in 2013. It is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework, consisting of eight levels, of which levels 5 to 7 have two sublevels each. There are three sets of level descriptors, namely knowledge and understanding, skills and competence.

Coordination of the North Macedonia Qualifications Framework (NMQF) lies with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which guide its development and implementation. Operational management, including approval of qualifications and their allocation to the NMQF levels, is the responsibility of the National Board for the NQF.

All new and reformed qualifications are based on learning outcomes. Reformed vocational programmes are linked with qualification standards and occupational standards. Authorities are progressing establishment of a system for validation on non-formal and informal learning.

North Macedonia is a candidate for EU accession. The country is a member of the EQF Advisory Group and referenced its NQF to the European Qualifications Framework and self-certified against the Bologna framework in higher education, in 2016.

NQF governance arrangements are in place; most of the necessary enabling regulations have been adopted; instruments and systems for quality assurance are being applied; and the framework has begun to play a role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications domestically and internationally. Therefore, the NQF in North Macedonia is at the activation stage of NQF development.

1.2   Policy context

The NQF is a key reform instrument in the country's principal economic, social, employment and education strategies.[1] The Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020[2] and the Economic Reform Programme 2018-2020[3] provide the broad policy framework in employment and education. These strategies specify the NQF's role in improving the quality of the education and training system, adapting it to labour market needs, and promoting lifelong learning and mobility.

Before early 2020, labour market data had shown some improvement. Employment rates of those aged 15 and over had risen from 37.9% in 2010 to 43.7% in 2018. For the 20-64 years span, the 2018 figure was 56%. Unemployment affects one in five adults and nearly half of young people. We can expect that COVID will have reversed some of the recent employment gains.

VET enrolment, according to ETF's analysis, accounts for 60% of the country's upper secondary cohort.

---

[1] British Council; IME (2017). *Framework for strategic engagement of employers in Northern Macedonia.* http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Ramka-za-stratesko-vklucuvanje-na-rabotodavaci.pdf

[2] Government of the Republic of Macedonia (2017). *Employment and social reform programme 2020* (in English). http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/word/esrp_dokumenti/ESRP%20Macedonia%20-%20final%20(ENG).pdf

[3] Ministry of Finance (2018). *Economic reform programme 2018-20* (in English). https://www.finance.gov.mk/files/Macedonia_ERP_2018.pdf

Responding to the COVID crisis in 2020, the authorities closed schools in early March. Online and distance learning for all school and university students was introduced later that month, with a rolling digital training scheme for teachers. Daily distance learning lessons broadcast by two national TV channels and donors also provided support for online learning. Work-Based Learning was suspended. Final exams (the state Matura) were cancelled, replaced by final grades based on cumulative scores and online assessments.

1.3   NQF legal basis

The VET system is mainly regulated by the Law on Vocational Education and Training approved in 2006 and amended in 2015. The NQF in North Macedonia for Lifelong Learning was formally adopted in 2013 via the law on the NQF[4], No 137/2013, which came into effect in 2015. It defines the principles and goals of the framework, its structure, levels, sublevels and level descriptors, mandatory elements of qualification standards, volume and types of qualifications, as well as its governance, quality assurance aspects and the roles of stakeholders in the qualification system.

2.   POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1   Education and training reforms

Significant improvement in transition to higher levels of education and training has been facilitated in the past decade through a number of education policies, such as making secondary education compulsory for all, streamlining progression routes of graduates from three-year VET programmes to four-year VET programmes giving access to higher education, and stimulating participation in higher education.

Higher education institutions have been reforming their curricula and qualifications in implementation of the Bologna principles. Notably, amendments to the law on higher education in 2010[5] introduced learning-outcomes-based study programmes.

The key sector-specific strategic documents are the Strategy for Vocational Education and Training in a lifelong learning context 2013-20[6], the Comprehensive Education Strategy 2018-2025[7], the Adult Education Strategy 2019-2023[8] and the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2017-2020.

The government adopted in 2018 the Comprehensive Strategy for Education 2018–2025. It defines a vision of a comprehensive, inclusive and integrated education system focused on the learner, based on modern programmes for equipping people with the knowledge, skills and competences for participation in society and the labour market. It addresses all education sectors, including VET and adult education. It will review and seek to improve the education system infrastructure, including building facilities, equipment and teaching and supporting technologies; capacities of human

---

[4] Law on national qualifications framework. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 137/2013 and 30/2016. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NQF-LAW_MKD-EN_rev-final-1.pdf

[5] Law on higher education. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia,* No 115/10.

[6] Strategy for vocational education and training in a lifelong learning context and action plan 2013-20. http://www.csoo.edu.mk/images//vet%20strategy_en%20-%20final.pdf

[7] *Education strategy for 2018–2025 and action plan*, Skopje: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-ENG-WEB-1.pdf

[8] Стратегија за Образование на Возрасни 2019-2023/ Strategy on adult education [in Macedonian]. https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/strategija-za-obrazovanie-na-vozrasni-2019-2023-mk.pdf

resources including managers, teaching and support staff; the autonomy of education institutions; and legislation, management and funding.

The main policy priorities established for VET are to harmonise VET with labour market needs, improve the learning environment and quality of VET, increase enrolment, and improve capacities of human resources.

In 2019, in view of the reforms planned in the new Comprehensive Strategy, the government started to review the entire education legislative framework.

2.2   Aims of NQF

The framework aims to improve education and training through implementation of the learning outcomes approach; to aid access to learning in every context and make learning outcomes explicit for every citizen; to raise the overall level of qualifications of the population; and to strengthen the links between qualifications and employment prospects[9].

The main goals of the NQF are to integrate and coordinate the education sub-systems and to improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and the civil society[10]. The main policy objectives listed in the law on the NQF[11] are to:

- define the learning outcomes at the different levels;
- establish a system for validation of different qualifications within the overall qualifications system;
- encourage and promote lifelong learning;
- demonstrate clear links between different parts of the education and training system;
- indicate transfer and progression (horizontally and vertically) across and within all types of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal);
- enable international comparability of qualifications;
- promote the importance of key and professional competences;
- ensure mobility of participants in education and training and inclusion in the labour market at national and international levels;
- create a single system for quality assurance;
- balance quality of service providers;
- ensure cooperation of all stakeholders;
- ensure harmonisation with national economic, social and cultural needs;
- be part of the developments related to the EQF.

---

[9] Education strategy for 2018-2025 and Action plan.
http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-ENG-WEB-1.pdf
[10] The Roadmap for Further Development and Implementation of the MQF (2016)
http://mrk.mk/?page_id=918&lang=en
[11] Law on national qualifications framework. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 137/2013 and 30/2016. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NQF-LAW_MKD-EN_rev-final-1.pdf

ETF Working together Learning for life
European Training Foundation

3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 NQF scope and structure

The NQF in North Macedonia is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework. It consists of eight levels, of which levels 5 to 7 have two sublevels each to reflect the specificities of the national education and training system and meet the requirements of employers[12].

Level descriptors are defined in terms of expected learning outcomes and follow the EQF domains: knowledge and understanding, skills and competence. They were developed for each level taking into account the EQF level descriptors, the Dublin descriptors for levels 6 to 8, the characteristics of national education and training levels, and strategic national priorities. Different dimensions of the Dublin descriptors have been integrated into the three domains of the NQF.

Levels 5 to 7 have two sublevels each, so that the framework contains Levels 5A and 5B, 6A and 6B and 7A and 7B. The learning outcomes are the same in the A and B sublevels. Instead, the function of the extra levels is to cater for different types of qualifications (see below).

3.2 Types of qualifications

The NQF includes qualifications of two types defined by the NQF law[13]: educational qualifications from all formal education sectors (general education, VET, higher education), and vocational (or occupational) qualifications based on occupational standards. The general education qualifications are allocated to the NQF levels 1 and 4, VET qualifications correspond to the 2-5B NQF levels, the higher education qualifications are allocated to the 5A-8 NQF levels. Vocational qualifications can be allocated at NQF levels up to 5B according to their level of complexity.

Only educational qualifications enable vertical progression in the formal education system. Vocational qualifications are regarded as partial (CVET) qualifications[14], which can be acquired by completing a formally recognised training course – either part of a formal education programme (modules, courses) or a verified special programme for adult education; or through validation of non-formal learning.

3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

The NQF law establishes the competent bodies and procedures for the development and quality assurance of qualifications. The institutions responsible for the development of qualifications at levels 1 to 5B are the VET Centre, the Centre for Adult Education and the Bureau for Development of Education. Qualifications at levels 5A to 8 are developed by higher education institutions. The approval and allocation of qualifications in the NQF are the responsibility of the National Board for the NQF.

---

[12] Ministry of Education and Science (2016). EQF referencing report of the Macedonian qualifications framework and self-certification to the QF-EHEA., p. 63

[13] Law on national qualifications framework. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 137/2013 and 30/2016. Article 11. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NQF-LAW_MKD-EN_rev-final-1.pdf

[14] Vocational qualifications constitute proof that smaller groups of learning outcomes have been achieved or combinations of learning outcomes that do not meet the requirements for achieving the education level (Art. 12 of the NQF law) http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NQF-LAW_MKD-EN_rev-final-1.pdf

Vocational (CVET) and VET qualifications are developed based on occupational standards, and awarded by the verified or accredited providers. Educational and training programmes are verified both in formal VET as well as Adult Education.

Higher education qualifications are awarded by accredited education institutions. All higher education institutions are obliged to undergo both institutional and programme accreditation by the Agency for Quality of Higher Education.

3.4   Use of learning outcomes and standards

All new and reformed qualifications are based on learning outcomes. The law on the NQF stipulates the following mandatory elements of qualification standards: title and type of qualification, level or sublevel, qualification code, credit value, description of qualification (measurable indicators of learning outcomes relating to the acquired knowledge and understanding, skills and competence) and contents (entry requirements, number of mandatory and optional subjects, assessment methods and criteria for assessment of learning outcomes)[15].

Reformed VET programmes are based on the qualifications standards linked with relevant occupational standards. Programmes are modular. In adult education, verified non-formal training programmes are designed in learning outcomes and based on occupational standards.

Since 2010, higher education institutions have designed their programmes in learning outcomes. In accordance with the law on higher education[16], higher education programmes should contain learning outcomes according to the national framework for higher education qualifications[17].

3.5   Credit systems

The volume of qualifications is expressed in credits, using three credit systems. The European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) is used for higher education qualifications, the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) for VET qualifications, and the North Macedonian credit system for general education (NMCSGE) for primary and general secondary education. ECTS has been applied to all three cycles of higher education since 2005.

---

[15] Law on national qualifications framework. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 137/2013 and 30/2016. Article 6. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NQF-LAW_MKD-EN_rev-final-1.pdf

[16] Ministry of Education and Science (2018). *Law on higher education*. Article 140. https://uklo.edu.mk/filemanager/2019/Zakon%20za%20visikoto%20obrazovanie.pdf

[17] Decree on the national framework for higher education qualifications. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 154, 30.11.2010. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Appendix_1_Decree_for_the_NQF_HE.pdf

ETF Working together Learning for life
European Training Foundation

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The NQF law stipulates that the development, adoption, approval and classification of qualifications are the responsibility of the National Board for NQF, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bureau for Development of Education, VET Centre, Centre for Adult Education, and Sectoral Qualifications Councils.

The Ministry of Education and Science has overall responsibility for developing the NQF and for EQF referencing; it is the EQF national coordination point (EQF NCP). It has a coordinating role, shared with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in leading the NQF's development and implementation. In quality assurance, it verifies programmes for formal VET and runs accreditation and verification of VET and adult education providers.

The National Board for the NQF, created in October 2015, ensures the involvement of stakeholders in framework governance. Its role is to evaluate education, employment and regional development policies, to help forge links between education and the labour market, to propose development of qualifications and decide on their allocation in the NQF in North Macedonia, to set up and supervise the sectoral qualifications councils; it also has a monitoring and methodological role. It has two representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science and one from each of the following: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, VET Centre, the Centre for Adult Education, the Bureau for Development of Education, the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility, higher education, the chambers, the Organisation of Employers, and the Independent Union for Education, Science and Culture.

4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy proposes the development of qualifications, adopts occupational standards and is responsible for setting up a system for collecting information on labour market needs and changes in required competences.

Sectoral qualifications councils are provided for by the NQF law, one for each of the 16 NQF sectors[18], of which 10 have so far been established. Their members represent the Ministry of Education and Science, the ministry responsible for the sector, the employers association for that sector, the relevant trades unions in the sector, universities, the VET Centre, the Centre for Adult Education, the Bureau for Development of Education, and the relevant body for regulated professions. The mandate of sectoral qualifications councils is to analyse labour market trends, propose and promote qualifications in a particular sector or subsector, evaluate current qualifications and propose priorities in developing new ones, give opinions on the compliance of examination programmes (assessment standards) with occupational and qualification standards, and establish commissions for assessment and validation of non-formal learning.

The VET Centre is responsible for the VET content: development of occupation standards, VET qualifications, programmes and curricula, and monitoring of their implementation. *The Bureau for Development of Education* is responsible for the development of programmes and curricula for

---

[18] Law on national qualifications framework. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 137/2013 and 30/2016. Article 18. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NQF-LAW_MKD-EN_rev-final-1.pdf

primary and general secondary education, including the general subjects taught in VET programmes. *The Centre of Adult Education* proposes the development of vocational qualifications, verifies adult education programmes and monitors their delivery, develops programmes and curricula for primary and secondary education of adults.

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

5.1   VNFIL arrangements

Development of a validation system in North Macedonia is tied to development of the NQF and largely inspired by the EU's 2012 Recommendation. So far, while authorities have devised plans and adopted some legislation, the system is not yet implemented on the ground.

A *Roadmap for implementing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning*[19] adopted in 2016, set out measures that became integrated in the new Comprehensive Education Strategy 2018-25[20], the strategy on adult education for 2019-23[21] and the concept document on lifelong learning. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Centre for Adult Education are the leading institutions; the Ministry has overall policy responsibility and will be the accrediting body for institutions providing VNFIL services, while the Centre for Adult Education provides coordination, technical and capacity-building support.

The regulatory framework for VNFIL is not fully established yet. A draft legal act containing the main principles and provisions for setting up and implementing the VNFIL system was developed in 2019. According to the draft law on Adult Education[22] validation can be carried out by accredited education institutions or adult education providers. Validation will be possible only for vocational qualifications included in the NQF or education qualifications at NQF level 1. The assessment commission shall comprise three certified assessors, one of whom represents the VNFIL service provider, and two others to be nominated by the Centre for Adult Education.

The methodology package for VNFIL was introduced in 2017. Two substantial methodological documents were developed – the *Guide note on VNFIL processes* and the *Handbook for assessment in the context of validation of non-formal and informal learning*[23].

---

[19] *Roadmap for implementing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning.* http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/VNFIL-Roadmap_angl-1.pdf

[20] *Education strategy for 2018–2025 and action plan*, Skopje: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-ENG-WEB-1.pdf

[21] Стратегија за Образование на Возрасни 2019-2023/ Strategy on adult education [in Macedonian]. https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/strategija-za-obrazovanie-na-vozrasni-2019-2023-mk.pdf

[22] Draft law on Adult Education (2019) https://ener.gov.mk/default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=55701

[23] CAE; ETF (2017). *Guidance note on VNFIL processes* [in Macedonian] *http://cov.gov.mk/2485-2/* .
CAE; ETF (2017). *Handbook for assessment in the context of validation of non-formal and informal learning* https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/22Nov2017_Handbook%20VNFIL%20assessment_fYR%20Macedonia_Engl_with%20Intro_FINAL.pdf.

The law on higher education[24] stipulates that higher education qualifications may be awarded via VNFIL as well, but quality assurance regulations are yet to be adopted.

6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

6.1 Key achievements and main findings

The NQF is now an integral part of the qualifications system, seen as an important reform tool embedded in several strategies. North Macedonia reached a milestone in 2016 when it referenced its NQF to the EQF.

Reform of VET and adult education programmes in line with the NQF is in progress. Two and three-year VET programmes (NQF levels 2-3) have been revised or newly developed based on learning outcomes. The four-year programmes (NQF level 4) are being updated and their implementation started in 2017. In adult education, a total of 555 verified programmes based on learning outcomes are currently available. A qualifications register was set up and inclusion of qualifications in the register started in 2017. Currently it includes over 70 qualifications at NQF levels 2-5.

The work on establishing a VNFIL system is in progress. The Centre for Adult Education has developed a concept and roadmap for VNFIL, procedures and guidelines and has trained assessors in line with principles of the 2012 EU Council recommendation. VNFIL provisions have been included in the draft of a new adult education law.

6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

Qualifications approved by the National Board for NQF are registered in the NQF Register[25]. It is designed as a comprehensive NQF register to include all NQF qualifications, however higher education qualifications are not included yet[26].

As a starting point for the development of a qualifications register, a comprehensive inventory of qualifications was made in 2015 in cooperation with the ETF. It covered all formal qualifications from higher education, general education and VET, and the verified non-formal adult education programmes[27].

Qualifications are classified according to type, NQF level and sector. For higher education qualifications, OECD classification of Fields of Research and Development is applied. Occupational standards, VET programmes, curricula and examination programmes are published at the VET Centre portal http://csoo.edu.mk/.

---

[24] Ministry of Education and Science (2018). *Law on higher education*.
https://uklo.edu.mk/filemanager/2019/Zakon%20za%20visikoto%20obrazovanie.pdf

[25] available in Macedonian at: http://registar.mrk.mk/registri-kvalifikacii/

[26] A sub-register of higher education qualifications is available at http://mrk.mk/?page_id=1374&lang=mk

[27] The inventory is available on the official NQF website at http://mrk.mk/?page_id=960&lang=mk

ETF
Working together
Learning for life
European Training Foundation

6.3   Qualification documents

VET qualifications are certified by a certificate for vocational training (NQF level 2) or diploma (NQF levels 3-5), vocational (occupational) qualifications are certified by a certificate. NQF levels are indicated only in higher education diplomas and diploma supplements[28].

6.4   Career information and guidance

The Centre for Adult Education portal http://cov.gov.mk/ provides information on adult education providers and programmes. The Employment Service Agency uses these programmes as part of its active labour market measures.

6.5   Recognition of foreign qualifications

Recognition of foreign qualifications is carried out by the ENIC/NARIC Centre, housed in MES. The NQF law establishes the correspondence of national qualifications awarded before its adoption with the NQF levels and sub-levels.

6.6   Tools to use NQF

Several documents were produced to support the development of qualifications and their allocation in the NQF: Procedure for development of qualifications; Format of qualifications; Protocol for cooperation among the stakeholders involved in the process of NQF and Methodology for including qualifications in NQF[29].

6.7   NQF evaluation

No systematic evaluation of the NQF use or impact has yet been carried out. Based on experience so far, the framework has influenced use of the learning outcomes approach; the review, renewal and quality assurance of qualifications; and dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders across education and training sectors and between education and the labour market[30].

---

[28] A bylaw that stipulates the indication of levels on higher education qualifications was adopted in June 2018. *National Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, No 102, 1 June 2018. http://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/751f8cc071e44013865e3b3401f440a3.pdf

[29] Documents are available at: http://mrk.mk/?page_id=73&lang=en

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

7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

North Macedonia referenced its NQF to the EQF in 2016 and self-certified in the same report against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process).

The report is published on the NQF website and the Europass portal[31].

MES is the designated National Coordination Point for participation in the EQF process.

7.2 International cooperation

North Macedonia's strategic priority is accession to the EU and it has been a formal candidate for EU entry since 2005. Its socio-economic and education and training reforms are geared to contributing to achieving membership of the Union.

North Macedonia adopted the RIGA 2015 conclusions on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020. MTD 3 is related to the NQF: Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning

In deploying EU assistance in education and training, the country prioritizes widening access to quality education, training and lifelong learning; raising attainment; developing VET and promoting work-based learning to facilitate transitions to the labour market; and improving the quality and labour market relevance of higher education. North Macedonia also participates in EU programmes such as Erasmus Plus, as a programme country.

In regional cooperation, North Macedonia is a member of the Regional Cooperation Council of South-East Europe. RCC's aims include establishment of a Regional Economic Area which foresees such actions as promoting mobility of professionals, students, researchers and academics. South East Europe Strategy 2020[32] addresses smart growth needs and also aims at increasing the share of highly skilled people in the region.

The new Agency for Quality of Higher Education (AQA) established in 2019 is an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

7.3 International donor support

National and international actors have provided the funding for the functioning and capacity-building of NQF structures. International donors, notably the World Bank and the EU, through its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), fund most of the NQF implementation activities.

The IPA twinning project "Further improvement of the system for development and implementation of the national qualifications framework (2016-2017)" aimed at activities for review of NQF-related

---

[31] Ministry of Education and Science (2016). *EQF referencing report of the Macedonian qualifications framework and self-certification to the QF-EHEA.*
https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/North%20Macedonian%20Referencing%20Report%20.pdf
[33] IPA project *Support to the modernisation of the system for post-secondary education (2016-2017).*

legislation; strengthening institutional capacity; and development of methodologies and qualifications in line with the NQF.

The IPA project "Enhancing / Strengthening Lifelong Learning through modernising VET and adult education systems (2015-2017)" supported the development of 3-year VET programmes and adult education by developing new qualification and occupation standards, reforming curricula and strengthening cooperation between stakeholders and VET teachers. The 4-year programmes (NQF level 4) are being updated by the World Bank project "Skills Development and Innovation Support" (2014-2021), making these programmes outcomes-based and linked with qualification and occupational standards.

Projects have also supported the modernisation of post-secondary education[33]; cooperation between higher education institutions and the business community[34]; and building capacity of the EQF national coordination point (EQF NCP) and other relevant stakeholders[35].

The ETF has supported the referencing of the NQF to the EQF, capacity- building for stakeholders, revision and analysis of qualifications, and levelling of a number of VET qualifications using learning outcomes.

8.   IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The Comprehensive Education Strategy for 2018-25[36] identified the further development and sustainability of the NQF as a national priority, acknowledging a number of challenges, including funding and legislative arrangements, capacity- building, stakeholder engagement and cooperation.

The existence of a legislative gap between the implementation of pilot initiatives and their scaling up at national level is considered to be a common reason across such pilots for limited impact of reforms[37]. The review of different legislative frameworks is currently ongoing to address different new policies (e.g. review of the adult education law for the introduction of VNFIL), however there are still contradictions and inconsistencies between the NQF law and other relevant legislation.

Further efforts are needed for qualifications to become more responsive to labour market and individuals' needs. Insufficient involvement of stakeholders representing the labour market and a need to take labour market information more into account remain a challenge.

Adult education programmes are still to be better placed within the qualification system. Their features - they are linked to occupational standards, follow a common structure, and are designed using learning outcomes fit them for the vocational qualification type. Adult education programmes leading to vocational qualifications that are included in the NQF could ensure better links with VNFIL arrangements, strengthen the involvement of the private sector and address fragmentation of the adult education offer.

---

[33] IPA project *Support to the modernisation of the system for post-secondary education (2016-2017)*.
[34] IPA project *Cooperation between higher education institutions, private sector and relevant public bodies*. (2016-2017)
[35] Erasmus + grant (2016).
[36] The Education strategy for 2018-25 and the action plan are available at: http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-ENG-WEB-1.pdf
[37] National Torino Process report 2018-2020 https://europa.eu/!qb77hT

ETF
Working together
Learning for life

European Training Foundation

During 2020, COVID-19 some education and training programmes were slowed. Ensuring the financial and human resources for the functioning of the newly established NQF structures, and ensuring coordination and coherence of the different actions and of the multiple projects aimed at reforming VET qualifications in line with NQF principles, are factors that will impact the extent to which the NQF will be successfully implemented.

9.   MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Education and Science is the EQF NCP: https://mon.gov.mk/
- NQF/EQF website: http://www.mrk.mk
- Register of qualifications: http://registar.mrk.mk/
- Ministry of Education and Science (2016). *EQF referencing report of the qualifications framework of the Republic of Macedonia and self-certification to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area.* https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/North%20Macedonian%20Referencing%20Report%20.pdf

10. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE NQF

NQF levels		Educational qualifications	Vocational qualifications*	EQF
8		Doctorate diploma	NVQ	8
7	A	Second cycle master of science diploma (from 60 to 120 ECTS)	NVQ	7
	B	Second cycle diploma for specialist studies (60 ECTS)	NVQ	
6	A	■ First cycle university diploma (240 ECTS) ■ First cycle vocational diploma (240 ECTS)	NVQ	6
	B	■ First cycle university diploma (180 ECTS) ■ First cycle vocational diploma (180 ECTS)	NVQ	
5	A	Short cycle higher education (vocational) diploma	NVQ	5
	B	■ Post-secondary diploma for specialist education ■ Craftsman diploma	NVQ	
4		■ Upper secondary general education diploma ■ Upper secondary technical diploma ■ Upper secondary arts diploma	NVQ	4
3		Vocational diploma (three years)	NVQ	3
2		Vocational certificate (two years)	NVQ	2
1.1		Certificate of primary education	NVQ	

* According to the law on the NQF, vocational/occupational qualifications can be acquired for part of a formal education programme (modules, courses), by completing a special programme in adult education, or through validation of non-formal learning.
Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Science, 2016.

ABBREVIATIONS

CVET   Continuous vocational education and training

ECTS   European credit transfer and accumulation system

ECVET   European credit system for vocational education and training

EQF   European qualifications framework

ETF   European Training Foundation

EU   European Union

NMCSGE   North Macedonian credit system for general education (Makedonski kredit system za opshto obrazovanie).

NQF   national qualifications framework

VET   vocational education and training

VNFIL   validation of non-formal and informal learning

REFERENCES

Cedefop (2020), National qualifications framework developments in Europe 2019. Luxembourg: Publications Office. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4190

European Training Foundation (2019). Policies for human capital development: North Macedonia. An ETF Torino Process assessment. https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/trp-assessment-reports/north-macedonia-2019

Ministry of Education and Science (2016). *EQF referencing report of the Macedonian qualifications framework and self-certification to the QF-EHEA*. https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/North%20Macedonian%20Referencing%20Report%20.pdf

Ministry of Education and Science (2018). *Education strategy for 2018–2025 and action plan*, Skopje: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018. http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-ENG-WEB-1.pdf

NRF (2020). Republic of North Macedonia - national Torino Process report 2018-2020. https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-07/TRPreport_2019_Macedonia_EN.pdf

Spasovski, O. (2019). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: North Macedonia. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_North_Macedonia.pdf

Where to
find out more

ETF

Working together
Learning for life

European Training Foundation

THE EU AGENCY SUPPORTING COUNTRIES
TO DEVELOP THROUGH LEARNING