

**NATIONAL REPORT: Draft guidelines I – for Stakeholders for implementation
of NQFs and SQFs and assignment of qualifications**

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April 2012

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1. Guidance for the work on WP 12

WP 12 aims at developing a stakeholders' guideline for implementation of NQFs and SQFs and for the assignment of national qualifications and ordinances to QF levels (NQF and EQF). In the following a batch of questions is put together that should itself guide the preparation of contributions from different countries. *These questions should help to disclose the principles and possible advancements of the implementation of sectoral qualifications frameworks or for the development of sectoral approaches in the referencing of qualifications looking from the perspective of the project partners' countries.* Answers to these questions should be based on the findings of the project partners in the previous work packages. In case of the lack of information the partners can execute some additional consultations with the local experts of stakeholders or use different documents and other sources of information.

Main questions:

- What are the needs, goals and objectives, regulatory function and scope of the SQFs in partners' countries?
- What is the situation and implementation of the sectoral qualifications in your country?
- What is the relationship between SQFs and curricula/training regulations?

2. Key aspects to be consider in National qualifications framework (NQF) and sectoral qualifications frameworks (SQFs)

As reported in previous National Reports (WP 7, 9, 11), Slovenia has not adopted **National qualifications framework** (hereinafter referred to as: **NQF**) till this moment yet¹. Till now, we still have draft proposal although this proposal was already well discussed with stakeholders and presented to highest decision making bodies (National Councils for GE, VET, AE and HE) in different educational sectors.

We also prepared draft proposal on **referencing Slovenian qualifications to NQF and NQF levels to EQF** (see WP 11), but discussions on referencing needs to be further discussed with all relevant stakeholders.

As mentioned in National reports (see WP 11, pp. 4), the NQF is a framework of communication with a limited scope for reform. Sectoral legislation and the classification system of education and training (hereinafter referred to as: KLASIUS) serve as a starting point for the classification and assignment of qualifications into the NQF. When comparing education and qualification levels, we relied on so far existing placement practices of occupational standards in relation to VET programmes and National Vocational Qualifications. We also took into account learning outcomes at different levels of difficulty (knowledge, skills and competences).

Therefore, in Slovenia we² first designed NQF, secondly assigned qualifications to NQF and referenced NQF levels to EQF and after official adoption, we will start with developing **Sectoral qualifications frameworks** (hereinafter referred to as: **SQFs**). Sectoral qualifications frameworks will be prepared in cooperation with the representatives of social partners. As basis for preparing sectoral qualifications frameworks we are going to take: NQF (10 levels, level descriptors, 3 types of qualifications etc.), methodology for placement of qualifications in NQF and NQF levels to EQF, and sectoral qualifications structures for VET qualifications (see also WP 9, pp. 12).

¹ It is expected that till the end of 2012, when the law on NQF will be prepared and the government will accept it, we will have officially established NQF.

² National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI). For more detailed information see WP 9, pp. 11.

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SLOVENIA

That is the reason, as reported in WP 6 (see pp. 2), that we don't have official Sectoral qualifications frameworks in Slovenia yet. Nevertheless, we would like to stress out that In Slovenia, VET qualifications are classified in **Sectoral qualification structures** approved by Sector committee for occupational standards (ibid).

The basis for all VET qualifications is a system of occupational profiles and standards, identifying knowledge and skills required in the labour market. The preparation of occupational standards is done through social dialogue (ibid, see also WP 7, pp. 3-4).

It is important for the employers to explain what kind of personnel with what kind of knowledge and skills they need now and in future and that occupational standards are prepared in cooperation with experts who are familiar with the profession, work organisation, technology and, last but not least, trends in the development of the profession and the sector itself (WP 6, pp. 2).

“In Slovenia, the Sectoral qualifications structure is a list of all nationally recognised occupational standards and catalogues for NVQ classified into sectors according to the standard classification of activities and the level of difficulty. VET qualifications are classified in Sectoral qualification structures approved by Sector committee for occupational standards. Minister responsible for labour, family and social affairs established 10 Sector committees for occupational standards composed of experts and representatives of Chambers, Ministries and Trade Unions.” (WP 9, pp. 12)

3. Needs, goals and objectives, scope and regulatory function of the SQFs

As we stress out above the NQF is the main “focus” in the case of Slovenia and NQF is communication framework and not reform one (see WP 11, pp. 4). This means that the framework doesn't have regulatory function. The main purpose of NQF is to integrate and harmonise Slovenian qualifications subsystems and enhance transparency, accessibility, progress and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society (WP 9, pp. 3). The same can be expected for SQFs when developed (till the end of 2013). As planned, the main purpose of SQFs will be to **list and classify all qualifications that exist in one sector into one SQF**. Under the project “Slovenian qualifications framework” we are planning to develop 26 SQFs structures.

As the NQF is the “main” framework, SQFs are going to be “subordinate” to NQF which means that, for example, qualification “Vehicle mechanic” in field of car sector that “belongs” to education (see WP 11, pp. 5) qualification at level NQF 4, could not be placed differently in SQF (for example on higher or lower level in SQF in the field of car sector). Also, types of qualifications included in the SQFs will be the same as they are in NQF (see examples in car, electrical and metal sectors; WP 7, pp. 5–6).

We expect that other goals and objectives will be quite similar to goals and objectives of NQF which are written in the WP 9, pp. 3-4.

4. Situation and implementation of SQFs in Slovenia

In terms of number of levels SQFs shouldn't be structured differently than NQF. We are also not planning to develop SQFs with new descriptors for individual sectors different from NQF descriptors or to reference qualifications placed in SQFs differently than types of qualification are placed in NQF. The core principle to be followed when referencing SQFs is to use the same methodology as developed for the purpose of referencing NQF to EQF.

For the designing of SQFs is responsible National Institute for VET (CPI) who runs and coordinate the work with social partners on NQF developments under the project “Slovenian qualifications framework” together with National Steering Committee (see WP 9, pp. 11). The issue that still remains open is, which body should be responsible for development and maintenance of qualifications database. On one side we have three separate databases (For HE, NVQ and VET) and on the other common database of educational qualifications run by Statistical office of Slovenia, that's way we need to reach agreement between social partners about this issue.

With individual developments of SQFs in sectors, without NQF “monitoring”, we could face also with “negative scenario” because some sectors are traditionally “stronger” than others and that could cause that the same types of qualifications in negotiation process would be referenced differently to EQF (for example qualification “Vehicle Mechanic” would be placed at higher level as hairdresser because “technical” work is “more difficult” from “cutting hair”).

5. SQFs in relation to curricula and training regulations

How the VET curricula is structured and connected with sectors and sectoral qualifications is already described in WP 7 (see pp. 7-9). How the learning outcome approach is used and understood in NQF generally and in three selected sector (car, metal and electrical sector) can be found in WP 11 (see pp. 8-16).

We assume that, although we designed and we see NQF as transparency tool, NQF will have in the future (if successfully implemented and used in practice) also impact on curricula design, occupational standards, catalogues of knowledge (for technical modules) in VET and on a catalogue of standards for knowledge and skills (for NVQ) because it defines level descriptors and expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) at particular level, which will probably serve as a “model” or milestone for designing a scope of qualifications at particular levels.

6. Guidelines

- 1. Written learning outcomes are important transparency tool for describing qualifications all over Europe nowadays in terms of describing what a qualified person has learnt by the end of learning and assessment process to enable recognition in other countries. But to truly understand one qualification additional “input” criteria or “parameters” should be also used, such as: duration and credits, admission requirements, providers, assessment and awarding, transferability.***

We believe that this is consistent with communications role of the national framework. In this respect NQFs cannot themselves solve all systemic problems in education and training system and it is better to address them separately.

- 2. When developing NQF or SQFs respect national tradition and procedures.***

When designing NQF, there was a lot of discussion, weather it is better to follow national tradition (tradition of our qualification and education system) or to make NQF as similar to EQF as possible (because of easier comparison of frameworks). At the end members of National Steering Committee agreed that the “right” way is to follow national tradition and practise.

- 3. For assignment of qualifications to NQF or SQFs transparent methodology should be used to prove the placement of qualifications at selected levels and to achieve international comparability and mutual trust about qualifications between member states.*

This methodology is described in WP 11, see pp. 6 – 16.

- 4. Non-formally acquired qualifications should be recognized through quality assured system for recognition of non-formal knowledge and included in SQFs and NQF.*

In this way, qualifications that exist in the labour market and are not part of the formal educational or qualification system could be recognized by representative body (based on transparently prepared methodology for recognition of non-formal learning) and included in SQFs and NQF.

6.1. And questions to be further discussed:

- 1) Is it possible that SQFs developments in individual sectors, based on social dialog between relevant stakeholders, can lead us to “negative scenario” where similar qualifications (for example all from ISCED 3C group) are placed to different levels in SQFs. Furthermore, what does that mean for assignment of qualifications to NQF?*
- 2) Can SQFs (or NQF) be used as “transparent tool” for social bargaining and collective agreements between government, employers and trade unions?*
- 3) In light of EQF as meta framework for transparency and recognition of foreign qualifications, is it possible, that “similar” qualifications in different EU countries (for example vocational or general matura certificate, or master craftsman certificate) are referenced to different EQF levels (vocational/general matura certificate to EQF levels 4 or 5; master craftsman certificate to EQF levels 4, 5 and 6)? What does that mean for EQF as transparency tool?*

- 4) *Please note. It is not evident that “new” ISCED (2012) with 8 levels corresponds to EQF 8 levels (level by level). This issue should be further explored.*