

**NATIONAL REPORT: Status of implementation of the National Qualifications Frameworks and sectoral frameworks in Slovenia**

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**Introduction**

A comprehensive Slovenian qualifications framework (SQF) is being developed. The development builds on a series of reforms since the mid 1990s in all education and training subsystems (in VET, higher education, general education and adult education) and introduction of the certification system in 2000.

In 2006, the Slovenian government adopted the Decree on the introduction and use of the classifications system of education and training (Klasius) (OG, No 46/2006), which provides the basis for building the national framework. It is a key national standard to collect, process, analyse and demonstrate the statistical and analytical data which are important to illustrate the social, economic and demographic developments in Slovenia.

Other elements underpinning the SQF are the national register of occupational standards and the register of assessment qualifications catalogues for national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The registers are created by the National Professional Qualifications Act (2000, amended 2003, 2006 and 2009). A third register, of national VET programmes, includes assessment catalogues and vocational titles of VET diplomas, governed by the Vocational Education and Training Act (2006) and for higher VET by the new Higher Vocational Act (2004).

The developments are supported by the Slovenian qualifications framework project (2009-2014) jointly financed by ESF. The project, which falls under the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, is managed by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cedefop. (2010): The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p.142-146

### 1. National qualification framework

In Slovenia, a consensus emerged between relevant ministries (the Ministry of Education and Sport, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology as well as the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs) and social partners about the need to set up the Slovenian Qualifications Framework. Thus, the Slovenian Qualifications Framework would mean an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved.

In January 2010, a National Steering Committee for referencing NQF levels to the EQF was nominated by the Government. It is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sport (chair), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, the Statistical office, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training and social partners. The National Steering Committee has formal decision making powers when it comes to the development of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework (hereafter SQF). Administrative support is provided by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training.

The National Steering Committee nominated an expert group for the preparation of descriptors in the SQF. They prepared the proposal of the SQF. The proposal is now in public debate. We expect the proposal to be approved after the closing conference in April 2011.

The proposal attempts to take into consideration national characteristics of the Slovenian education system and labour market, both in the number of levels set up as in the basic logic behind descriptors allowing for gradation. It is also in conformity with the EQF, which serves as the basic reference framework for the EU Member States. In the light of expected labour market trends, the expert group also included the National Vocational Qualifications in the framework as they might prove to be an important complement to formal learning paths in the following period. The draft proposal proposed 10 levels for the SQF. Two main criteria were observed when determining the number of levels: every level has specific rights to employment and every level enjoys specific rights to further education.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Slovenian Qualifications Framework. Draft proposal. Ljubljana, October 2011

### 2. Sectoral qualifications frameworks

Currently, there are no official Sectoral qualifications frameworks in Slovenia. It is necessary to prepare and implement the Slovenian Qualifications Frameworks first, only then we will be able to start with the preparation of Sectoral qualifications frameworks.

### 3. Descriptors of the SQF

In the current draft proposal the level descriptors for the SQF are defined in terms of outcome criteria - knowledge, skills and competences:

- **Knowledge** is the result of learning and acquisition of concepts, principles, theories and practices. It is obtained in different settings: in educational process, at work and in the context of private and social life,
- **Skills** are in the context of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework described as cognitive (e.g. use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and/or practical (e.g. manual skills and the use of materials, tools and instruments).
- **Competences** pertain to the ability to use and integrate knowledge and skills in educational, work, personal and/or professional situations. Competences vary in the light of their complexity, independence and responsibility for action. We distinguish between generic and vocationally specific competences.<sup>3</sup>

There are three types of qualifications in Slovenia:

1. **Education** - Publicly recognised education is obtained after successfully completing publicly approved educational programmes.
2. **National vocational qualification** - A national vocational qualification is defined as a work related vocational or professional capacity required to perform an occupation at a certain level of complexity.
3. **Supplementary qualification** - A supplementary qualification is the result of education and training complementing, deepening and expanding an individual's knowledge, skills and competences for life and work. It is demonstrated by a certificate. The certificate can be a requirement for employment or further performance of duties, but it does not represent a qualification for the entry into higher levels of education.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Slovenian Qualifications Framework. Draft proposal. Ljubljana, October 2011

<sup>4</sup> Cedefop. (2010): The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p.142-146

#### **4. The relationship between the used descriptors and the European descriptors**

The referencing process planned to be finished in 2012.

#### **5. The levels open to VET**

In the draft proposal of SQF levels 3 to 6 are open to VET, while levels 7 to 10 are designed for higher education.

#### **6. VET**

The learning outcomes approach is already embedded in the Slovene education system and well accepted. The term 'educational outcomes' is used by the Decree on the introduction and use of the classifications system of education and training (Klasius) and defined as 'the set of knowledge, skills and competences for 'life and work' achieved by learners in the process of formal, informal and non-formal learning. Educational outcomes are certifiable as a 'rule'.

Education programmes have moved from a content-based to an objectives-based approach. The relationships between objectives and outcomes and between learning objectives/outcomes and learning standards are now being discussed. A balance is being sought in emphasising the role played by general knowledge and acquired key competences, sufficiently broad technical knowledge and certain pedagogical processes in the defining educational outcomes.

In VET, the learning outcome approach is seen as a very useful way of bringing vocational programmes and schools closer to 'real life' and the needs of the labour market. The basis for all VET qualifications is a system of occupational profiles and standards, identifying knowledge and skills required in the labour market. National VET framework curricula define expected knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to be acquired by students. Syllabuses usually follow the Bloom taxonomy/concept of learning outcomes. Broad competence in catalogues for modules/subjects is defined as ability and readiness to use knowledge, skills and attitudes in study and work contexts.

In addition to the national VET framework curriculum, the school curriculum was introduced and it represents an important innovation in Slovenia by giving schools increased autonomy in curriculum planning, especially by taking into account the local environment and employers' needs when developing the curriculum.

Assessment in VET (at levels 4 and 5) consists of assessment in the form of project work, testing practical skills and underpinning knowledge; written tests are also used at level 5 to test theoretical professional knowledge and knowledge of general subjects (Slovenian language, foreign languages, mathematics).

New programmes in general education (compulsory and upper secondary) include learning outcomes which need to be achieved either at the end of the three-stage in compulsory education or at the end of upper-secondary education tested with the external Matura examination.

The National Professional Qualifications Act (2000, amended in 2003, 2006 and 2009) enables validation of vocationally-related knowledge, skills and experiences acquired out of school. The NVQ and the validation of non-formal knowledge in Slovenia are based on assessment qualifications catalogues (catalogues of standards for professional knowledge and skills).<sup>5</sup>

### **7. Involvement of stakeholders**

The work was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Sport in close cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs in 2005 through EQF consultation process. In 2005 and 2006, several conferences on the development of the EQF were organised with all stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A broad partnership approach and commitment of all stakeholders is important. Further development of the NQF should be based on the requirements and needs of the national context and experiences gained, using the existing infrastructure and no additional bureaucracy. Developing common concepts and ensuring consistent use of common concepts and terminology is a challenge.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cedefop. (2010): The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p.142-146

<sup>6</sup> Cedefop. (2010): The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p.142-146

<sup>7</sup> Cedefop. (2010): The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p.142-146