



Brussels, 29 November 2018

EQF Advisory Group, 11-12 December 2018, Brussels

Note AG 48-4 Note on Communication

1. Introduction

The EQF helps to better understand the content (learning outcomes), level and value of qualifications. It signals that the qualifications included in the NQF and linked to the EQF have been quality assured. The purpose of this note is to improve the communication around the EQF at both EU and national levels.

The 2017 Council Recommendation invites the Commission, within the EQF AG to develop guidance to communicating the EQF, in particular how to present EQF levels on newly issued certificates, diplomas and Europass supplements, and/or registers of qualifications, in accordance with national systems and regulations on certificates and diplomas (recommendation 12).

It further invites Member States to make the results of the referencing process publicly available at national and Union levels and, where possible, ensure that information on qualifications and their learning outcomes is accessible and published, using the data fields in accordance with Annex VI (recommendation 6).

Communication about the EQF should aim at promoting its added value and its use to various target groups: employers, employment services, education and training providers, guidance and counselling practitioners, qualification recognition bodies, learners and workers. Communication should be understood in the broadest sense of informing about the NQF and EQF added value and benefits going beyond inclusion of levels on certifications, diplomas, Europass supplements and qualifications registers, and producing publication material (i.e. brochures, infographics, folders and videos). It includes supporting community building, peer-learning and peer-exchange at a national, regional and European level.

The goal is to ensure that the EQF, its levels and its descriptors are adequately understood. This means both communication on what the EQF is and can do, but also on what the EQF is not and does not do. To be effective the Commission and Member States should engage in a process of monitoring the effectiveness of the different means of communication and, if necessary, review and make changes.

2. State of play on communication

Although concrete figures are missing, it is fair to say that the awareness of the existence of the EQF, of the national frameworks referenced to it, and of the benefits it brings for different target groups, is overall still limited, albeit with a large variety between countries and stakeholders. The ongoing survey Commission – Cedefop survey on implementation, communication and use of NQF/EQF that is currently being analysed may shed a new light on the situation. Its results will be presented to the EQF AG in February 2019.

Currently most EQF countries are involved in processes of including qualifications in their frameworks. So far 23 EQF countries have put EQF levels on degrees, certificates and/or Europass supplements. Some countries have included EQF and NQF levels in all qualifications documents and databases and others have tended to principally focus on the area of VET. A smaller number of 25 EQF countries are developing or already have national databases or registers in place. Databases and registers are at different stages of development; some countries have comprehensive registers in place including all levels and types of qualifications¹. A total of 18 countries have filled in the qualifications comparison module of the LOQ Portal. A current weakness is that only 6 EQF countries have connected their national registers or databases to the European portal, which reduces the transparency of the EQF to end-users. The different grant schemes for developing databases and relating these to the European portals should improve this situation in the next 1-2 years.

The current European web-portal, the “LOQ”, does not give a full overview of where the EQF and NQFs stand. As part of communication improvement the Commission is developing the new Europass portal, in which information currently communicated through the LOQ portal will be integrated. Cedefop is hosting the European Inventory of NQFs, comparative monitoring reports and briefing notes on NQF development and implementation (²). The LOQ and Cedefop’s portals should be better interlinked in order to give a comprehensive overview of EQF’s state of play.

At national level there is a large variety of situations. Most, but not all, countries have an NQF website or web service in place. The Commission will ensure that links are created to the NQF websites from the LOQ portal.

3. Target group approach

This note suggests that when communicating about the EQF the Commission and Member States should take account of the diverse needs of different target groups.

- From an **end user** (learner or worker) perspective, the EQF increases employability and social integration of individuals and facilitates labour mobility, lifelong learning and cross-border learning.

¹ http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4163_en.pdf.

(²) <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf>

- Making qualifications more understandable and readable assists **employers** in tapping into new talent pools both at national and European level, supporting human resource development (recruitments and developing career pathways) and in promoting in-house training and lifelong learning of their employees.
- The EQF helps **education and training providers** in granting partial exemptions to students with proof of prior learning and they are able to attract a greater range of students, thus encouraging learner mobility (nationally and Europe-wide) and lifelong learning.
- Transparency of qualifications (learning outcomes, level of a qualification, quality assurance) aids **qualification recognition bodies** and credential evaluators in recognising various kinds of qualifications and the resulting mobility of learners and workers.
- It can aid **policy-makers** with plugging labour and skills shortages and facilitate validation of non-formal learning.

See the annex to this note for a more detailed analysis of communication action towards the different target groups at both European and national levels.

4. Proposed working method

A project group could be set up to address communication issues around the EQF. Possible issues that could be dealt with by the project group:

- Communication strategies at the EU level, seeking synergies with communication regarding other EU transparency tools
- Communication strategies at the national level promoting the EQF
- Articulation between communication on the NQF and the EQF at national level
- Development of guidelines for referring to the EQF on national degrees, certificates and supplements

The following Peer Learning Activities are planned:

- “Databases on qualifications”, 22-23 March 2019, to be hosted by Hungary
- “Communication: How to better promote EQF-NQFs and raise awareness”, to be hosted by the Netherlands (dates to be confirmed).

Proposed timetable:

In the case of AG endorsement of the approach outlined in this note, the following table for the work on communication is proposed:

15 January 2019	Information to the Commission on interest in joining the group
February – October 2019	3-4 meetings of the group
December 2019	Presentation of the work to the EQF AG

The EQF AG will be informed about the progress achieved by the group.

Before the end results are discussed by the EQF AG, the findings of the group could be subject to the Peer Learning Activity on communicating the EQF as proposed by the Netherlands.

5. Support by the Commission and Cedefop

The Commission will fully support the group by:

- Chairing it, hosting its meetings and ensuring its secretariat.
- Reimbursing travel costs for participation in meetings in accordance with the Commission rules for experts.
- Providing technical support by external contractors if considered relevant and necessary by the group.

Cedefop will, as part of its mission, fully support the work on communication in the context of the EQF AG work programme.

Annex: analysis of communication on the EQF per target group

Target Group	Means of communication	
	National level	European level
End user (learner, jobseeker, worker, citizen)	<p>Ensure that the level of a qualification is indicated on diplomas, diploma supplements and certificates;</p> <p>Develop national databases where individuals can learn more about the content and value of their qualification and compare different qualifications with each other;</p> <p>Develop communication material (video, flyer, infographic, brochure, social media messages...) on the added value of their respective NQF.</p>	<p>Compile and share a catalogue with good practices;</p> <p>Ensure a coherent use of terms that are in line with the terms used in the EQF Recommendation, e.g. through an online FAQ section or a glossary;</p> <p>Provide a forum for Member States to exchange communication practices and learn from another;</p> <p>Develop communication material (video, flyer, infographic, brochure, social media messages...) on EQF to be disseminated at national level.</p>
Employer	<p>Ensure that the level of a qualification is indicated on diplomas, diploma supplements and certificates and develop national databases to help employers and E&T providers understand the content and value of foreign, private, international qualifications and compare them with one another;</p>	<p>Encourage and facilitate community building where employers, E&T providers and qualification recognition bodies can meet and exchange best practices through i.e. conferences, meetings, an online platform...;</p> <p>Stimulate regional cooperation and bottom-up initiatives;</p>
Education and Training provider	<p>Stimulate regional cooperation and bottom-up initiatives;</p> <p>Develop communication material (video, flyer,</p>	<p>Draft guides and catalogues to provide an overview of initiatives across Europe;</p>

	<p>infographic, brochure, social media messages...) on the added value of their respective NQF.</p>	<p>Organise prize for best VNFIL practices;</p> <p>Develop communication material (video, flyer, infographic, brochure, social media messages...) on EQF to be disseminated at national level.</p>
<p>Qualification recognition body</p>	<p>Encourage and facilitate exchange with employers, E&T providers and policy-makers.</p>	<p>Provide technical guidance through expert workshops, publications, thematic reports... and involve qualification recognition bodies in the drafting process;</p> <p>Identify together with qualification recognition bodies common challenges (Learning Outcomes, Quality Assurance, International Qualifications...) to be tackled by policy-makers;</p> <p>Actively involve qualification recognition bodies in PLAs and communicate the outcomes wider among the EQF-AG.</p>
<p>Policy-maker</p>	<p>Encourage and facilitate exchange with employers, E&T providers and qualification recognition bodies;</p> <p>Stimulate local and regional cooperation.</p>	<p>Organise conferences (i.e. Validation Festival) to enable exchange with each other and other stakeholders;</p> <p>Develop communication material (video, flyer, infographic, brochure, social media messages...) on EQF to be disseminated across the EU.</p>