The implementation of the EQF

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EQF – dates and deadlines

• 22 April 2008; Formal signing of the EQF Recommendation by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the European Council

• 2010; Countries to refer national qualifications levels to the EQF by 2010

• 2012; Countries to introduce reference to EQF in certificates and diplomas by 2012

What is EQF about?

- **The EQF is a translation grid for qualifications throughout Europe – a neutral reference point**

- **EQF supports cross-border mobility by simplifying comparison of the content and profile of qualifications**

- **EQF facilitates lifelong learning; enables linking and combination of qualifications from different institutions and sub-systems**

Responds to the increasing diversity of qualifications in Europe

EQF Level 8

EQF Level 7

EQF Level 6

EQF Level 5

EQF Level 4

EQF Level 3

EQF Level 2

EQF Level 1

8 learning outcomes based levels

- Described by knowledge, skills and competence

- Enables reference to all learning

- Relates system to system, framework to framework and level to level

National Qualifications Frameworks - key instruments for implementing the EQF

A NQF is an instrument which aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society

(EQF Recommendation 2008)

NQFs - key instruments for implementing the EQF

- UK, Ireland, France and Malta have set up NQFs

- The big majority of EU and EEA countries are now actively developing overarching NQFs in response to the EQF

- An increasing number of EU partner countries are developing NQFs de facto reflecting the EQF

- The EQF is acting as a catalyst for the reform of national qualifications systems

Examples of emerging NQFs

• The German Qualifications Framework (DQR): A proposal presented February 2009, now being tested is sectors of education and training, a decision expected late 2010/early 2011

• The Danish Qualifications Framework: A proposal presented June 2009, a decision expected Autumn 2010

• The Romanian Qualifications Framework: Extensive ongoing work, expected implementation 2010.

• The Slovenian Qualifications Framework; expected implementation 2010/2011

• The Polish Qualifications Framework; A working group set up August 2008, proposal expected end 2009.

Etc…..

NQFs are, from the European point of view:

• an instrument for referring national qualifications levels to the EQF

NQFs are, from a national reform point of view a way to

• increase consistency of qualifications
• strengthen transparency for individuals and employers
• increase currency of single qualifications
• broaden the range of learning forms are recognised
• set a national/external reference point for qualifications standards
• clarify learning pathways and progression
• increase portability of qualifications
• establish a platform for stakeholders for strengthening cooperation
  and commitment
• increase the coherence of national reform policies

This reflects the double objective of EQF; mobility and lifelong learning

Main approaches to
NQF developments in the EU/EEA (I)

Based on <u>June 2009</u> Cedefop interviews the following main tendencies can be observed:

- *Overarching frameworks dominate - addressing <u>all</u> levels of qualifications in the national systems*

- *Emerging NQFs aim to strengthen transparency and improve communication, they are not regulatory frameworks*

- *Emerging NQFs are first and foremost instruments for national and lifelong learning reform - the European dimension seen as an additional reward*

Main approaches to developments in the EU/EEA (II)

• *Emerging NQFs are seen as first steps in a long term development*

• *Extensive and broad participation in most countries*

• *The Learning Outcomes approach is broadly accepted – challenging but not controversial*

• *While a majority of countries opt for 8 levels, the level descriptors vary and reflect the different national systems, traditions and approaches*

Main approaches to developments in the EU/EEA (III)

Some common challenges can be observed:

- *The placing of the Meister qualification*
- *The placing of Nurses*
- *The inclusion of non-academic higher qualifications*
- *The differentiation (or not) of initial VET qualifications*

Extensive cooperation between countries means that these issues are dealt with in a comparative setting; countries are carefully watching what others do.

Sectoral qualifications frameworks

The EQF recommendation asks the Commission to support '….international sectoral organisations in using the reference levels and principles of the EQF…'.

• Few International/European sectoral qualifications frameworks exists (ICT sector).

• A growing interest among sectors to develop such frameworks; to increase transparency, to better balance supply and demand of knowledge, skills ande competences etc

Sectoral qualifications frameworks

A working group set up by the EQF Advisory Group to see how sectoral frameworks can be best linked to the EQF

A number of test and plot projects initiated since 2006 to look into the question of SQFs, their added value and their possible link to the EQF. The following sectors are covered:

Metal Industry (2), Automotive industry, Tourism, ICT, Engineering (2), Construction (2), Hospitality, Financial services, Health sector, Food Industry, Geology, Hairdressing, Sports, Marketing, Aquaculture

Sectoral qualifications frameworks

A key issue:

National authorities opposed to the idea that International/European sectoral qualifications frameworks should be directly linked to the EQF, a concern that this would undermine quality.

Conclusions

Based on the June Cedefop survey of NQFs

- *EQF – and the learning outcome approach - is broadly accepted*
- *EQF deadlines seems to be respected*

- *NQFs are used as instruments to address lifelong learning and not only as a way to strengthen European comparability and transparency*
- *SQFs are developing, their precise formal role still to be clarified*