

**THE GREEK POSITION FOR THE  
EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

**Athens December 2005**

The Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs greets the initiative taken by the European Commission to launch in public consultation its proposal for a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning. EQF will help and enhance mobility, transparency, mutual trust and will enable the transfer and recognition of the qualifications of individual citizens, which are crucial elements in order to achieve the Lisbon goals.

The Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs conceives EQF as a meta framework structured into 8 levels, based on learning outcomes, which are described with terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The EQF should be supported by various tools, including ECVET, EUROPASS and PLOTEUS, amongst others. This initiative should be voluntary and not entail any legal obligations for the member states.

### **Aims and objectives of EQF**

In order to ensure the successful application of the EQF, the provision of comprehensive and simple guidance on the part of E.U is necessary, as well as the presentation of the basic principles of the framework in a simple and accessible way particularly in relation to its descriptors and architecture.

A very important fact is the innovative approach of the initiative, which strongly puts the emphasis on learning outcomes, irrespective of the learning pathways (ie formal, informal and non-formal). Towards this direction E.Q.F should be closely linked to the labour market for the provision of knowledge, skills and competences that will meet the needs both of the employers and the employees.

This new approach, focussing on competences and skills and no more only on academic titles, should also strongly contribute to reach the parity of esteem and links between VET and general education, in particular with higher education. As far as Higher Education is concerned the European Qualification Framework must be completely compatible with the Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA that was adopted by Education Ministers in Bergen and must be comprised of three cycles, generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. For instance, it should be mentioned that with regard to level 5 of the EQF, identifying skills or qualifications which may result from post-secondary education or a short cycle of

university studies, does not affect lead to the change or the bypassing of the national formal educational system and will certainly not lead to the recognition of a formal degree. It will be a presentation of knowledge, skills and competences, that a person may have and these will be taken into account, along with the formal degrees that a person may have, by the labour market.

The function of a proposed meta-framework, even as a translation mechanism, is the right approach for relating better with each other, national qualifications and national qualification frameworks, wherever they exist. However, the decision on if, when and how, to develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), has to be left at national level.

### **Levels and level descriptors**

The Commissions' proposal for the institution of eight levels satisfies the complexity of lifelong learning and facilitates the transition from one level to another through the progressive accumulation of knowledge and the consequent improvement of skills and competences.

It should be taken into consideration the fact that these eight levels might not fully correspond to the existing situation in some professions which might possibly require less levels. However, the number of eight levels is sufficient and at the same time, necessary to cover a wide range of all existing professions. In any case, given the non binding nature of the EQF, the possibility of establishing less than eight levels of skills at national level should not be excluded.

Moreover, the eight levels should provide further flexibility, so that, it should be possible for the same person to have some competences, skills and knowledge from different levels, (for example some knowledge from level 3 and skills and competences from level 4). It is obvious that each level corresponds to a specific type of skills, which is not only the result of attending studies at a formal educational scheme, but also the result of recognizing schemes of non formal and informal learning. This process should not, in any case, lead to the direct or indirect abolition of the structures and systems of formal education, as these have been established at national level. Therefore, with regard to level 3 of the EQF, for instance, which corresponds to the secondary obligatory education, in the Greek education context, taking into account skills which been acquired through informal learning

schemes (i.e. learning through experience, on-the-job learning) does not lead to the abolition of the level of formal education, which refers to a specific type and period of study, but it will be a tool of recognizing skills in general (not only knowledge) that a person may have acquired till that specific moment.

The concepts of knowledge, skills and competences are closely interlinked and consequently it seems difficult to be divided. Nevertheless, we can understand the necessity to have a separation of the descriptors of the system for practical reasons mostly.

### **National Qualifications Framework**

Ideally, the NQF should be compatible with the suggested EQF, but it should also be flexible enough to be able to be linked to existing sectoral initiative. At the same time, EQF should be in a position to be linked to any kind of qualification framework, be it national and/or sectoral.

In Greece, the legislation of an NQF should be done towards a basic direction, that of the provision of vocational training with study programs based on expected learning outcomes. The National system should aim at the service of national priorities and the strategy of convergence with the countries of the E.U.

### **Sectors Qualifications Framework**

There is a significant experience on European level regarding the creation of Qualification Frameworks in fields of economy. These frameworks are structured on the grounds of clarification of the qualifications and the possibility of transfer and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences. EQF should develop the existing experience and function as a “bridge” which will contribute to the strengthening of communication, comparison and mutual trust as well.

The role of the social partners should be of particular importance when designing a National Framework as well as in the procedures of certification of qualifications that constitute a structural element in the system. Pilot applications in sectors of economy with

active participation of the social partners will help greatly in the process of NQF's development and operation.

### **Mutual trust – quality assurance**

The parameter of quality assurance is extremely important and it should include mutual actions and exchange of experiences. The assessment of learning outcomes is an important part of the quality assurance process and a common approach can help enhancing the transparency of the national systems and national qualification bodies that must be anticipated in the context of strengthening mutual trust.