

Consultation on the European Commission Staff Working Document
“Towards a European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning”
conclusions of the consultation process in Romania

The rationale of an EQF

- EQF is in our view a translation device and a driver of change - Romania is in favour of both perspectives and is taking part in all related developments as: introducing QA in all education and training sectors, prior learning validation, ECVET.
- EQF workpaper should emphasize more on learners’ benefits since LLL approach is one of its added values. Maybe an additional document, reader friendly, will help others than experts to read and understand better what EQF is about and which, are the different stakeholders’ benefits.
- EQF should be better co-ordinated with European directives on qualifications.
- More practical samples, good practices or an implementation guide from countries that have put in place their NQF correlation to EQF will facilitate EQF work in practical terms. However, clear parameters for examples of good practice are needed.

The reference levels and descriptors

- The intention seems to be to separate out the various constituents of knowledge, skill and personal competence. Though in some senses this is useful, it may actually make more difficult the process of allocating a given qualification to an EQF reference level. This is for two reasons:
 - the ‘narrower’ fields sometimes make it difficult to differentiate between levels; for example, what is the difference between “a wide range of field-specific practical and theoretical knowledge” (EQF 4) and “broad theoretical and practical knowledge that is often specialized within a field” (EQF 5)?
 - it leaves entirely open the practical question of *how many* of the various descriptors a qualification needs to satisfy in order to be allocated to a level. If the answer is “some but not all”, nowhere is guidance given other than that a ‘best fit’ solution needs to be found.

For these reasons most people will refer to the much more concrete Table Two and the focus on EQF will be diluted.

Therefore level descriptors should be more relevant and distinctive and clear guidance should be on minimum descriptors that define a reference level.

- Between EQF 5 and 6 there is a glass ceiling which divides the academic world from the vocational one.
- At national level more details on the qualifications framework could be included as indicative information in relation to EQF (table two).

National Qualifications Framework

- At the end of 2005 about 30% of VET qualifications are learning outcomes based.
- The Romanian NQF action plan includes, as priority, the qualification development based on learning outcomes, and the completion timeframe is three years from now. All developments will be assisted by Phare projects (Phare programming years 2004-2006). The validation of achieved results will take about 5- 8 years.
- Correlation of VET and HE is part of the above priority. At the same time, despite the clear aspiration in time to merge the Bologna EHEA framework and EQF, more agreements between the two will be at help.

Sectoral qualifications

- Qualifications development has already a sectoral approach for VET in Romania. Sectoral Committees are on the process of institutional building, some more being advanced than others. The above mentioned Phare assistance, as well as other projects, is supporting these developments and EQF is a real catalyst in this respect. But, decisions related to this investment sustainability in terms of role distribution, resource allocation, authority, responsibility and accountability are crucial in the near future.
- Sectoral developments as other developments in education and training should be based on collaboration of key stakeholders. Dialogue between sector and national levels has not to be an exception in case of qualifications development.
- The facility for sectors, rather than whole member states, to use the EQF to establish equivalences with similar sectors in other member states is sensible and might be a major use of EQF until the “common language” of credits will be agreed. Globalized business is increasingly working to common standards in any case.

Mutual trust

- EQF can contribute to mutual trust development, but trust between partners should also be part of the process of making EQF a reality.
- Trust is based on transparency, common procedures, rules and assurances – this is what EQF is calling for.
- It is vital for all achieved qualifications that are to be correlated to EQF to be quality assured (QA). But smaller steps could smooth the progress of trust building, for example if QA achieved competences will be mutually recognised in their relation to a reference level of EQF. Thus, mobility organised either by European Community Programmes or through bilateral agreements would be appropriate to be associated with references to EQF.
- A European network of institutions acting as Qualifications Authorities might be helpful for informed cooperation and enhancing mutual trust.
- This is a long term change so commitment and persistence are needed.