INTRODUCTION

The thirty-third meeting of the EQF AG was attended by representatives of 31 countries, and by representatives of social partners and stakeholder organisations. In addition, representatives from the European Commission, Cedefop, the European Training Foundation, the Council of Europe, and external experts to the Commission also attended.

COM chaired and opened the meeting. The agenda was accepted without further comment. The action points of the thirty-second meeting of the EQF AG of 5-6 October 2015 were also adopted without further comment.

COM welcomed the representative from Kosovo to the EQF AG, informing the group that Kosovo is now the 39th country taking part in the EQF Referencing Process. COM furthermore welcomed delegations from Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong.

1. RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

COM referred to the latest developments and follow-up to the meeting of the EQF AG of 5-6 October (cf. Note AG33-1).

Referring to Note AG32-4 on a common format for qualifications in EQF databases and in ESCO, COM had previously announced that they would plan to organise training workshops on the technical specifications for the use of LOD (linked open data), targeted at national experts for technical implementation. COM informed the EQF AG that so far, there has been relatively little demand for these workshops. Besides the workshops it will also be possible for the IT team to visit countries supporting them (free of charge). COM will prepare an information e-mail, including the revised Note AG32-4 for distribution to the group.

COM referred to the written feedback provided by EQF AG members to Note AG32-3 on the methodology and work programme for ‘horizontal comparisons of levelled...’

1 Please note: all meeting documents and Power Point presentations have been uploaded to the e-community of the EQF Advisory Group: http://europa.eu/sinapse/directaccess/qualification_framework
COM will revise the Note based on the feedback received and circulate it within the EQF AG. COM suggests starting the pilot exercise shortly, and to adjust the methodology, where required, throughout the process. The results of the pilot exercise will be discussed within the EQF AG.

COM referred to HU, IS, IT, LV, NO, PL, SE who volunteered for participation in the pilot and invited further countries to signal their interest in taking part in the pilot exercise. COM also informed the group that BUSINESSEUROPE and UEAPME have confirmed their interest in taking part in the pilot exercise.

Comments and questions (reactions from DE, FR, AT, UK, Cedefop, ETUC):

Comments on Note AG32-3 on the methodology and work programme for a pilot exercise on the ‘horizontal comparison of levelled qualifications’

- EQF AG members expressed diverging views towards the suggested procedure. Some participants argued that the pilot exercise should only start once the pending issues regarding the methodology and quality assurance of the ‘horizontal comparisons’ have been resolved. Other participants commented that it would be preferable to start the pilot exercise as soon as possible and adjust the methodology during and after the pilot.
- It was commented that it might be important to involve representatives from the Bologna Process in this exercise, depending on the choice of qualifications.
- ETUC signalled their interest in taking part in the pilot exercise.

Cedefop informed the group of a soon-to-be launched study, which will take an in-depth look at the learning outcomes of ten different individual qualifications, with a possible link to ongoing work by UNESCO and WorldSkills.

COM announced that a webinar will be organised together with the countries interested in taking part in the pilot exercise. There is the possibility to use funding from NCP grants for the pilot exercise.

Comments on further topics

- Participants requested to discuss the current developments related to EURES at one of the upcoming EQF AG meetings.
- The group requested to receive an update on the status quo of the ESCO online survey.

Information on the Bologna Process

Council of Europe informed that under the new Bologna Secretariat, two working groups will deal with issues related to qualifications frameworks. There will be continuity regarding the meetings of national qualifications framework coordinators.

Council of Europe also provided an update on the study on monitoring of the legal implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and its subsidiary texts and announced to give a presentation on the outcomes at the February meeting. It is about ongoing UNESCO work on the development of a global recognition convention, further to a mandate obtained for this at the November 2015 ministerial meeting.

Council of Europe referred to the current migration flows, which have led to exploding numbers of applications with some ENIC-NARIC centres. If a refugee has a qualification that is part of a national qualifications framework supported by rigorous quality
assurance procedures this can support recognition. On 1 March 2016 the Commission and the Council of Europe will organise a conference on the topic of recognition of qualifications of refugees, displaced people and people in refugee-like situations

Information from the Presidency

Luxembourg informed the EQF AG that the new priorities for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) were adopted at the end of November. The joint report of the Council and the Commission refers to the EQF as a transparency tool that can facilitate recognition processes. COM announced to send the joint report per e-mail to the group.

2. Overview of national developments related to the implementation of the EQF

COM requested countries to indicate their planned presentation dates for EQF Referencing Reports and ‘state of play’ presentations, in order to update the roadmap on referencing (cf. Note AG33-2, ppt).

- SE confirmed to present their 2nd ‘state of play’ at the EQF AG meeting in February 2016.
- FYROM plans to present their EQF Referencing Report at the EQF AG meeting in February 2016.
- RO plans to revise their EQF Referencing Report following political changes; the expected presentation date (February 2016) is unlikely to hold.
- “Kosovo***2 wishes to present their EQF Referencing Report in Q2/2016.
- ES plans to present their EQF Referencing Report in 2016, but currently impossible to confirm a date.
- FI: no update.
- CY and LI were not present to confirm their presentation dates.

Results of the Cedefop survey on NQFs

Cedefop presented the preliminary results of a survey on NQFs, carried out in November among National Coordination Points (NCPs). The survey in particular aims at exploring how strong and sustainable NQFs already are, and how visible they are to the general public. Preliminary results show a significant increase in the number of operational NQFs (Frameworks in 23 countries (out of 38 countries covered) have reached an operational stage (compared to 18 countries in 2014). 17 countries have got fully operational frameworks ((only 7 in 2014).. 6 countries were waiting for a formal legal adoption of their frameworks in November 2015. The remaining countries, mostly those having joined the EQF cooperation in the last two years. are still working on the design and (to some extent) the formal adoption of their NQFs

Feedback from NCPs suggests that NQFs are increasingly seen as a permanent feature of the national qualification systems. Some point out that the frameworks’ ultimate impact will depend on their integration into mainstream policy processes. Politically and institutionally isolated frameworks will be less able to meet expectations. The

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2 “This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence”
stakeholder involvement in NQFs is quite broad. Approximately one third of the frameworks have a specific reform role. While many countries initially emphasised that NQFs should be used to describe – and not to change – qualifications systems, they now tend to discover their NQFs’ reform potential and display an interest in combining both transparency and reform functions. Cedefop also referred to an interesting reply received from one country which stated that they consider their NQF as an ‘enabler of change’, rather than a ‘driver for change’. As for the visibility of the NQFs, an increasing number of countries are moving towards including NQF levels in certificates, diploma or Europass supplements. While fifteen countries have already gone about it, about another ten have flagged their intention to do so in the near future.

The surveyed NCPs identified the following five groups of challenges for the future: systematic integration of validation of non-formal and informal learning; implementation of the learning outcomes principle; general public’s awareness of the NQF; stakeholder involvement; integration into mainstream education and training policy. Cedefop’s Briefing Note on results of this survey will be published beginning 2016.

3. **EXTERNAL COOPERATION**

COM, together with EQF AG members and representatives from Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong presented the outcomes of the three pilot projects comparing the EQF with the Australian, New Zealand and Hong Kong qualifications frameworks.

Joint technical report between the HKQF and the EQF (cf. ppt)

For Hong Kong the main aims of this exercise have been: to enhance understanding of Hong Kong qualifications and standards in Europe, and vice versa; to create a zone of trust on qualifications and standards; to strengthen mutual recognition of qualifications, and facilitate learner and labour mobility; to foster economic cooperation and collaboration between HK and Europe, and to provide a platform for further qualifications framework development.

Hong Kong considers the comparability study as an opportunity for self-evaluation and reflection with regard to the HKQF, and as an opportunity to learn from the experience of European countries and to identify areas for future improvement. Hong Kong considers the comparability study as a starting point for further cooperation and collaboration with Europe at different levels, and for the initiation of a formal review and evaluation on the infrastructure and development of the HKQF.

From an EQF perspective, it was noted that the implementation of the HKQF is at a more advanced stage than many NQFs in Europe. It represents a key element in the country’s education and training system and quality assured qualifications.

**Comments and questions** (reactions from UK, NO):

- Participants were interested in learning more about Hong Kong’s motivation for reviewing their NQF, based on the experience made in the pilot project; and the position of the school-leaving diploma.

Joint technical report between the AQF and the EQF (cf. ppt)
The pilot project helped Australia to broaden their understanding of education and training policies, frameworks and systems in Australia and Europe. For Australia, this process very much has helped them to reflect on their own system, but the added value of this has yet to be determined.

The pilot project has allowed both sides to reach new levels of mutual understanding and trust. Australia has developed a strong respect for the robustness and complexity of EQF referencing. Furthermore, they expect that this work will complement other Australia-Europe engagements, such as the ENIC-NARIC network or the UNESCO Global Recognition Convention.

From an EQF perspective, it was noted that in Australia, education is much more considered as a market than it is in most European countries. Much of the Australian system is built around this core objective. It is a very organised and regulated market, with strong quality assurance. Furthermore, the AQF is characterised by strong industry involvement and its highly dynamic state (need to adapt to globalisation).

Comments and questions (reactions from IE, HR, UK, Council of Europe):

- Participants commented that the pilot projects allowed the EQF AG to develop a good understanding of how processes in Australia work. Is this reciprocal or is there asymmetry in this relationship?
- Participants requested to receive more information on how the AQF is used for recognition purposes; and the role it plays for the social cohesion and other societal aspects.

Joint technical report between the NZQF and the EQF (cf. ppt)

The New Zealand delegates stressed that the visits and exchanges of ideas within the technical working group had helped to shape the work relationships between the EQF and the NZQF and to deepen the understanding of the implementation of other NQFs. New Zealand also pointed out that they found the EQF Advisory Group’s decision-making processes challenging to engage with. The international feedback received during this project has enabled New Zealand to reflect on its own qualifications framework and its associated processes.

New Zealand concluded by stating that they look forward to continuing to develop the relationships formed through the project; to updating the report, to continue to share expertise; and possibly to forming bilateral arrangements.

From an EQF perspective the importance of visits was underlined, in particular the possibility to experience first-hand and meet people who inhabit the institutions and talk to them about how they go about their work in implementing the NZQF. Referring to the fact that some differences of view on NZQF level 8 (Bachelor Honours Degrees and Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates) and how it relates to the EQF (no clear correspondence to either EQF level 6 or EQF level 7 was found) could not be resolved, it was noted that it is not required to reach definite agreement on everything in order to have substantial achievements or a solid basis for cooperation. coordination,

COM thanked the delegations from Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong for the joint work on the pilot projects and fruitful cooperation. COM also thanked the Member
States’ and Cedefop members of the technical working groups for their valuable contributions to the technical work.

4. **Referencing Report of the Slovak Republic**

Slovakia presented their report on the referencing of the Slovak Qualifications Framework (SKKR) to the EQF (cf. ppt). The process of NQF development in Slovakia began in 2009. The Slovak Qualifications Framework (SKKR) aims to serve as (a) a communication tool; (b) a transformation tool and (c) a regulatory tool.

The expected impact of the SKKR was described as follows: increased transparency of the education system (including LLL); increased transparency of qualifications; response to identified labour market needs (link to National Occupations Register); modernisation of the education system; and increased quality assurance and relevance of non-formal and informal learning through monitoring the processes of identification, validation and recognition of qualifications.

The SKKR is an 8-level framework. There are three categories of descriptors: knowledge, skills and competence. There are subgroups to each descriptor category (e.g. ‘general’ and ‘vocational’ for ‘knowledge’). There is a qualifications catalogue, which is an inventory that contains a list of full qualifications and a list of partial qualifications.

The methodology of levelling follows an alphanumerical code. 24 different Sector Councils work on identifying and describing the qualifications. The NQF Working Group will provisionally assign a level to each qualification based on the methodology. The levelling decision will then be reviewed by the Sector Council and a ‘Guarantor’. The National Board for Education and Qualifications then gives the final approval on the levelling of a qualification. In the course of 2014/15, Sector Councils have identified 427 full qualifications and 573 partial qualifications.

Concerning the further steps to be taken in the process, Slovakia plans to revise the Act on Lifelong Learning in 2016, which shall help eliminate some of the current terminological issues. Furthermore, previous work has shown that even though the Slovak qualifications framework has been designed as one comprehensive framework, further development and implementation (in the period between 2016 and 2020) is planned to follow in four sub-frameworks (general education, VET, tertiary and occupational learning pathway) in order to achieve the comparability of learning pathways.

**Comments and questions** (reactions from DE, IE, EL, FR, PL, UK, Cedefop, CoE):

- The group expressed appreciation for the work done so far, which involves not only the development of an NQF, but also a comprehensive educational reform. Such enormous task cannot be achieved within a short period of time. The presentation of the Slovak education system was comprehensive and clear. However, the report also makes clear that EQF referencing is still work in progress. Therefore the presentation was considered a ‘state of play’ presentation rather than a presentation on referencing the SKRR to the EQF.
- More efforts may be required to help other countries better understand the situation of implementation of Slovak NQF; the terminology and concepts used are not always...
clear and need better explanation, such as the relationship between the different types of standards used (occupational/qualification/educational standards), and the use of the term ‘qualification’. It is in particular the responses to criteria 3, 4 and 5 that require more effort and detailed information.

- Criterion 1: The report describes the involvement of VET stakeholders in a clear manner. It is however not clear whether and how QA bodies and higher education stakeholders have been involved in the referencing process.

- Criterion 3: The state of play of the implementation of the learning outcomes approach in the different subsectors should be described more clearly.

- Criterion 4: The exact scope of the current framework is not clear. It is not clear which qualifications are included. More information and evidence from levelling qualifications and examples of qualifications levelled to different SKKR levels was requested.

- Criterion 7: The involvement of international experts in the process has been insufficient. The report should be more precise on the involvement of international experts and EQF AG members suggested the inclusion of the statements made by the international experts in the report – this would provide added value to outside readers.

- Higher education: It would be interesting to learn more about the expected timeframe for self-certification to the QF-EHEA. Furthermore, it would be interesting to learn more about the difficulties in meeting the ESG\(^3\) (currently there is no Slovakian ENQA membership). In addition, the report does not clearly describe to which extent students and learners were involved in the referencing process.

- General education: Participants expressed scepticism towards the existence of a separate track of ‘zero grade of a primary school’ for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

- On a more general note (without particular reference to Slovakia), participants noted that the group should make sure that the submission of an EQF Referencing Report is distinct from a ‘state of play’ presentation. Presentation to and discussion within the EQF AG should serve as quality assurance of the report. The ‘state of play’ process is considered as very important, but it should not be called the submission of a Referencing Report.

COM acknowledged the substantial progress and achievement made by Slovakia within a limited period of time. COM added that the feedback received to the report and presentation should serve as an encouragement to Slovakia, to continue the work they have successfully started and to come back to the EQF AG when the referencing report providing the transparency and clarity that is needed to satisfy all referencing criteria.

5. **UPDATE INFORMATION ON MALTESE REFERENCING REPORT**

Malta presented the third update of their EQF Referencing Report. Malta originally referenced its NQF to the EQF in 2009, with updates taking place in 2010 and 2012. The updated Referencing Report also involved a review by several international experts.

The main aim of the updated Report is to have a more user-friendly document which can be easily used nationally by education training providers, learners and employers, as well as by international professionals and entities. Furthermore, this updated version of the

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\(^3\) European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
The report takes into consideration the various changes that took place within the Maltese educational sphere over the past few years. These changes include the insertion into the NQF of two new levels (Introductory Levels A and B), the introduction of parameters for the accreditation of work-based learning (WBL), and the change of contact hours from 6.25 hours to 5 hours per credit.

The presentation concluded with an outline of the challenges ahead, which include: the need to develop and promote a more ‘modular concept’ of qualifications; the need to develop accreditation and quality assurance parameters for digital/online learning; achieving better and more widespread permeability of students' educational streams; the acceptance and use by employers for recruitment of individuals with Introductory Levels A and B qualifications on the MQF (Malta Qualifications Framework); developing a QA framework and accreditation process for WBL; better integration of non-formal learning within mainstream formal education routes.

Comments and questions (reactions from IE, FR, HR, UK, Cedefop, Council of Europe, ETF):

- The group welcomed the presentation of this updated EQF Referencing Report, which highlighted several novelties, such as the insertion of Introductory Levels A and B.
- Participants pointed out that it is difficult to understand, for an international audience, why learning outcomes and ‘knowledge, skills and competence’ are described as two different concepts.
- Permeability/progression: The report mentions challenges in relation to permeability, in particular between general education and vocational streams. Credits are used for a wide range of MQF levels, with ECTS and ECVET being used interchangeably. Can this be used to transfer between different sectors of learning, and if yes, is it successful?
- Validation: The report indicates that the introduction of validation arrangements would require the development of separate standards for validation. If this were the case, this would be contrary to what the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning suggests.
- Referencing to the Transnational Qualifications Framework for Small States of the Commonwealth (TQF): Participants were interested in learning the implications of the referencing of the MQF to the TQF, given that it seems to be built on different principles than learning outcomes.
- Participants noted that an earlier draft version of the report still referred to an ongoing referencing of the MQF to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), which had apparently however been discarded.
- Participants were furthermore interested in receiving more information on the following aspects: how students (student unions) were involved in the process; how information on the MQF is diffused/promoted to the general public (e.g. parents); how HEIs implement the learning outcomes approach; how HEIs recognise credit achieved through non-formal learning; how the concept of accrediting work-based learning will be implemented.
- Several participants requested to receive more information on the definitions of ‘qualification’ and ‘award’, and whether they coincide with the definitions of ‘full qualification’ and ‘partial qualification’.
COM thanked Malta for having provided a third update of its referencing report. It invited other EQF AG members to do the same if relevant. It invited Malta to provide an updated version of the report for publication on the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications Portal.

6. **Lessons Learnt from the Joint Technical Working Groups with AUS, NZ, HK**

COM provided a recap of the technical work, the approach to which was endorsed by the EQF AG in April 2014, to explore the possibilities for ‘aligning’ third-country NQFs with the EQF. COM then presented the lessons learnt from the three pilot projects conducted with Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong (cf. Note AG33-3, ppt), underlining that Note AG33-3 describes the Commission’s perspective rather than that of all parties involved in the technical working groups.

**Comments and questions** (reactions from BE, DE, IE, FR, LU, NL, FI, UK, NO, Cedefop, Council of Europe, ETF):

*Reflection on the lessons learned from the three pilot projects*

- Participants appreciated the outcomes of the pilot projects, which have produced valuable insight into the possibilities for external cooperation with third country NQFs and the related processes.
- Cooperation with national, regional or meta frameworks: Participants expressed the need to discuss in more detail the fundamental options for cooperation with third countries. If cooperation with regional frameworks is envisaged, the EQF AG would need to learn more about such regional frameworks.
- Participants pointed out that from the four parties involved in the three pilot projects, the EQF was the only one without a clear strategy for external cooperation.
- Terminological issues would need to be clarified (e.g. ‘alignment’ vs. ‘technical comparison’).
- Third countries’ expectations and background: Experience from the pilot projects has shown that third countries’ expectations towards external cooperation should be taken into account, e.g. whether they are related to recognition, commercially-related, or else. A given country’s historical background might also play a role (e.g. Commonwealth).
- The lessons learned should also be taken as an opportunity to reflect on the potential for improvement of the EQF (e.g. with regard to the ‘competence’ pillar, or the ambiguity regarding the term ‘qualification’).

*Possible online publication of the three reports*

- Participants raised no objections against publication of the reports but stressed that, the reports should clearly explaining that they are the outcome of a technical exercise. The EQF AG advised that a condition for publication should be to publish the European risks and benefits analyses for the three countries as annex to the reports as this allows readers to better understand the nature of this technical exercise.
Necessary elements to promote the international dimension of the EQF in a possible revision of the EQF Recommendation

- There was broad agreement within the group that for this topic, the ‘bigger picture’ would need to be taken into account, such as interactions with other ongoing processes (e.g. Bologna Process, trade agreements, UNESCO Global Convention, Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, European Neighbourhood Policy).
- Need for a vision for the EQF in the world: Further work on external cooperation first requires agreement on the fundamental principles, i.e. whether the EQF should remain rather closed, or whether there is a willingness to open it up to the world.
- Governance of this work: There has been no discussion so far on the role of the EQF AG in formulating such a vision; countries may have different views as to how this should take place within the framework of the Open Method of Coordination.
- Sustainability of the process: More consideration would be required on how to make the process of external cooperation sustainable and streamlined. This also refers to the aspect of resources (human and financial) devoted to this activity.
- Possibility of a sub-group: Participants suggested the creation of a sub-group to the EQF AG, to develop possible scenarios of opening up the EQF to the world (possibly also including a representative from the Bologna Process). These scenarios would then be used to have a broader discussion on the role of the EQF in the world.

COM summarised the main points of discussion, acknowledging the need for a clear strategy in this context, and emphasising that countries’ input and ideas would be highly welcome and relevant for its development. Such strategy should be set on a broader basis; it is not necessarily a strategy of the EQF only. Furthermore, other Commission Services (such as DG Grow and DG Trade) would need to be consulted. Moreover, the aspect of resources required (human and financial) must be taken into account. COM added that even a revised EQF Recommendation, if endorsed, would not automatically address or solve these open questions.

7. VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Roadmaps on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on VNFIL

COM presented the suggested document for a synthesis of national roadmaps on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (cf. Note AG33-4). The document includes a grid for documenting, and regularly updating, national information on the current situation and planned measures with respect to their national roadmaps for arrangements on VNFIL until 2018. COM underlined the voluntary nature of this process.

COM invited countries to signal their interest in presenting their state of play with regard to the implementation of the Council Recommendation on VNFIL to the EQF AG. Furthermore, COM invited the EQF AG to provide feedback to Note AG33-4, in particular regarding the usefulness of the grid provided in Table 2, to be completed with information on the national roadmaps.

COM announced that two PLAs on the topic of validation will be organised in 2016: one in January in Paris (see below), and one is planned for mid-2016 in Belgium.

Comments and questions (reactions from DK, DE, LU, AT):
• The EQF AG generally welcomed the suggested approach. There was, however, some uncertainty within the group as to whether the amount of reporting required would provide any significant value added.
• Several participants requested to receive further information on the expected structure and contents of the (voluntary) national one-off reports to be presented to the EQF AG by 2018. Participants also commented that it is difficult to keep track of the documents already provided in this context – a recap would be helpful.
• Participants requested to know whether the suggested procedure should also apply to countries, which already have a strategy in place.

The Commission concluded that the 34th meeting of the EQF AG an updated document will be presented in order to follow up the implementation of the Validation Recommendation which will service as a base for a more regular follow up towards the 2018 deadline.

Draft programme on the PLA on VNFIL and employment

France provided a brief overview of the programme for the upcoming PLA on the topic of ‘Validation of non-formal and informal learning: where individual paths and collective strategies for employment cross’, which is set to take place on 11 and 12 January 2016 in Paris (FR).

COM informed EQF AG members that invitations to the PLA will be sent out shortly; registrations will then close by 18 December 2015. Furthermore, EQF AG members were invited to address further ideas/suggestions for country cases to Yolande Fermon (FR) and Godelieve van den Brande (COM).

European Inventory 2016 on validation of non-formal and informal learning

Cedefop briefly presented the main deliverables of the 2016 update of the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (cf. ppt). Cedefop underlined that their work on the validation topic is of a more technical nature, an expert opinion, as opposed to the more political nature of the national one-off reports which countries shall (on a voluntary basis) present to the EQF AG by 2018. The 2016 update of the Inventory will be a ‘light’ update, compared to previous editions. It will comprise 35 reports (covering 32 countries4), five thematic studies, a synthesis of main findings, as well as an executive summary. Data collection will start in early 2016, with an expected publication date of end 2016. Participants were invited to provide feedback and/or suggestions for improvement. It was announced that Cedefop will organise a conference on the topic of validation in November 2016.

Cedefop also informed the group that the revised European guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning will be published soon, probably by the end of December, and thanked the EQF AG for their feedback provided during the revision process.

Comments and questions (reactions from FR, LU, TR, ETF):

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4 Cedefop explained that they will not cover Turkey in the 2016 update, for governance reasons (related to the different mandates of Cedefop and ETF).
• Thematic report on validation in relation to the labour market (youth and health): Some participants questioned whether the health sector, with its high degree of regulation in many countries (and its links to Directive 2005/36/EC), would constitute a good example for a thematic report.
• TR raised its surprise not to be included in the 2016 Update

The Commission announced that it will work on a solution together with the Cedefop and the ETF, to ensure that that a Turkish country chapter will be included in the 2016 Inventory (actually Cedefop cannot conclude contracts in relation to work on Turkey, but the ETF can).

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE HELLENIC REFERENCING REPORT

Greece provided additional information on the Hellenic EQF Referencing Report, the first draft of which had been presented at the 22nd meeting of the EQF AG in December 2013 (cf. ppt). Greece explained that the Greek education and training system is currently undergoing profound reform, in particular in the area of VET. The development of the Hellenic Qualifications Framework (HQF) and its referencing to the EQF is considered as a key element in order to improve the transparency of the Greek qualifications system, to improve horizontal and vertical mobility, and to promote lifelong learning.

Greece in particular replied to the five questions addressed by COM, on behalf of the EQF AG, to the Greek Ministry of Education further to allegations raised by some of the Greek social partners in 2014, on a series of critical issues which would need clear presentation in the revised version of the Greek Referencing Report. These issues concern in particular the nature and occurrence of fake qualifications and how to avoid that they will be included in the HQF; the measures in place to ensure equality of treatment among public and private providers and quality assurance in the certification procedures; social dialogue and the involvement of all relevant groups of stakeholders.

The information provided suggests that the mentioned fake qualifications concerned two specific vocational schools only, both of which ceased their operations in 2006/07. This type of qualifications (‘TEE’), although part of formal vocational education, has not been included in the HQF.

Greece concluded by presenting an updated roadmap for their further work on the HQF, which foresees a presentation of the updated HQF for the year 2018.

Comments and questions (reactions from BE, IE, HR, XK, ETUC):
• The EQF AG welcomed the honest and transparent presentation made by Greece, also addressing open issues and current weaknesses of the system. The group acknowledged the substantial progress made by Greece since 2013 and welcomed the roadmap presented for the further steps to be taken in the development and implementation of the HQF. Greece was also invited to continue to provide regular updates on the state of implementation to the EQF AG, and to inform the group about significant developments.
• Further comments raised referred to the following topics: the reasons for the difficulties in establishing a social dialogue; the division of work between the different QA agencies and the possibility of a ‘quality assurance gap’ at level 3; the quality assurance of qualifications to be added to the register of qualifications; the
progress made on the recommendations stated in the latest ENQA report (e.g. on students’ participation in the evaluation of universities)

COM thanked Greece for replying to the questions originally raised in 2014 and for providing an update on the state of play of the HQF. COM concluded that the EQF AG considered that the replies to the questions were satisfactory and that Greece is now considered to have referenced the HQF to the EQF. Greece is invited to provide an updated version of the referencing report of January 2014 for publication on the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications Portal and to present an upgraded version of the HQF and its referencing to the EQF in 2018.

**PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

**Debriefing on the Peer Learning Activity on ‘Levelling master craftsperson qualifications’, 30 November – 1 December 2015, Berlin**

Due to time constraints, this item was postponed to the next EQF AG meeting in February 2016

**First outline of the Peer Learning Activity on ‘Qualifications frameworks and recognition’, 17-18 March 2016, Luxembourg**

This PLA will explore the role of the EQF and NQFs, as tools for facilitating recognition, and will focus in particular on . Luxembourg also plans to invite ENIC-NARIC representatives to the event, for a joint discussion of the topic.

9. **CONCLUSIONS AND AOB**

COM informed the EQF that the duration of the public consultation will be extended until 31 December 2015.

**Upcoming dates:**

- 11-12 January 2016, Peer Learning Activity on validation and its link to employment, Paris (FR)
- 19 January 2016, consultation meeting on the possible revision of the EQF, Brussels (BE)
- 3-4 February 2016, 34th meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, Brussels (BE)
- 17-18 March 2016, Peer Learning Activity on ‘Qualifications frameworks and recognition’, Luxembourg (LU)
- 12-14 April 2016, 35th meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, Brussels (BE)
- 2 -3 June 2016, Peer learning activity on levelling of school leaving certificates, Belfast (UK)
- 14-16 June 2016 (tbc), 36th meeting of the EQF Advisory Group

COM concluded the meeting and thanked Germany for having agreed to host this EQF AG meeting.
Annex: List of participants