

# GREECE

## European inventory on NQF 2014

### Introduction

Greece has developed its NQF for lifelong learning (Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF)), aiming at a coherent and comprehensive system of qualifications from all parts and levels of education and training. Development has focused on the range of qualifications awarded in the formal system so far, but in a long-term perspective, the plan is to accommodate non-formal and informal learning also. The framework was adopted by the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs (July 2013). A draft presidential decree on HQF has been prepared.

The Act on Lifelong Learning (Act 3879/10) came into force in 2010, introducing development of the HQF and the learning outcomes concept as essential elements of awards. The Act provided the basis for a more coherent and integrated approach as coordination of all issues of lifelong learning is now under the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) was set up in 2011 to develop and put the HQF into practice, supervised by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

### Main policy objectives

Apart from responding to the European qualifications framework (EQF) initiative, HQF work is directly linked to the country's efforts to develop a framework for improving lifelong learning policies and practices, which will allow for recognition and certification of all kinds of education and training. Compared to other European Union (EU) countries, participation of adults in lifelong learning in Greece is among the lowest (only 2.9% in 2012) (European Commission, 2013) and systematic and coherent policies have largely been lacking. Strengthening the learning outcomes dimension in all parts of education and training is considered a precondition for moving towards lifelong learning. This will not only provide the basis for a more transparent and open qualification system, it will also allow individuals to have their learning validated and recognised throughout their lives. The Act on Lifelong Learning (3879/10) was an important milestone in these developments. Further, recent reforms especially in vocational education and training (VET), underpinned by legislation (2013), have been embedded in

the HQF. The HQF is also a tool to increase transparency and strengthen overall coordination of education and training.

The HQF addresses the following challenges and needs to:

- (a) increase coherence and consistency of the national qualification system and reduce fragmentation of current subsystems;
- (b) improve access and progression possibilities, eliminate dead ends and foster lifelong learning opportunities;
- (c) develop coherent approaches and procedures to certification and quality assurance;
- (d) have a solid basis for developing recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The short-term objective is to develop coherent national certification procedures covering both initial vocational education and training (IVET) (there is an existing system) and continuous vocational education and training (CVET) to support consistency and portability of qualifications.

In the medium term the following objectives will be pursued to:

- (a) improve transparency and currency of qualifications through clear learning outcomes descriptions;
- (b) develop procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning;
- (c) improve access, progression and recognition possibilities;
- (d) improve quality and portability of qualifications in general.

Although perceived foremost as a communication and transparency tool, its future and long-term reforming role to support development and revision of qualifications and quality assurance arrangements is acknowledged.

## Stakeholder involvement

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is the competent authority. EOPPEP was established to develop the HQF and its referencing to EQF, as well as put the HQF and procedures for validation of learning outcomes into practice and assure quality in lifelong learning.

To support EOPPEP in development of the HQF, an advisory committee was established, comprising representatives from public administration, educational institutions, social partners and external experts. Further, working groups were set up to analyse qualification types in the HQF and develop type specifications, core structural elements of HQF levels, with participation of representatives of competent ministries, the Manpower Employment Organisation and higher education sector.

For referencing the HQF to EQF, a referencing committee was established involving representatives from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the higher education sector (universities/technological educational institutions), social partners, the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency and international experts.

One benefit of the HQF is seen to be that it will promote open dialogue and collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders, and that it will help clarify and reinforce the relationship between education and training and the labour market.

## Framework implementation

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is responsible for HQF implementation, with EOPPEP as the main actor. The framework is not yet operational. A draft presidential decree on HQF has been prepared, which will clarify many operational aspects.

Inclusion of qualifications in the framework is defined through qualification type specifications. They include title, level, awarding body, summary descriptor, volume of learning, purpose, education sector, learning outcomes, employment relevance and progression possibilities. Allocation procedures have been defined, but they still need to be tested in practice. The framework needs to be populated with qualifications based on learning outcomes. This is work in progress.

In current reform of general education and VET under the 2013 Act 4186/2013 on restructuring of secondary education and other provisions, the HQF is referred to as a powerful tool. The shift towards learning outcomes-based provision also represents a significant change, with HQF development a major driver.

An objective for the period 2014-15 is to consolidate the HQF as the main lever for restructuring the Greek education system.

## Level descriptors and learning outcomes

At this stage, an eight-level structure has been proposed for the HQF, reflecting the existing formal education and training system in Greece. EQF level descriptors were taken as a starting point and further developed according to national needs. Levels are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Work on level descriptors for HQF and on a qualifications framework for higher

education has taken place separately, but the final objective is to have a comprehensive framework, covering all levels and types of qualifications.

Strengthening the learning outcomes approach is seen as an important dimension of current reforms in primary, secondary and tertiary education. A system for occupational profiles (standards) has already been developed and is currently under implementation, seen as a precondition for setting up a system for validating non-formal learning. Additionally, these profiles will be used to review curricula in both IVET and CVET and for accreditation of training programmes. The new curricula currently being developed are based on the learning outcomes approach.

These developments are supported by a methodological guide for referencing learning outcomes to HQF levels and promoting common understanding of the basic terms. They will also render procedures transparent and promote quality assurance, while assigning qualifications to HQF levels. A common template for description of qualifications has been prepared.

Working groups were formed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs to draft outcomes of qualifications provided in subsystems of formal education and suggest their allocation to the eight levels of the HQF.

In general education and VET, reforms are initiated under the 2013 Act 4186/2013 on restructuring secondary education and other provisions.

Higher education qualifications are included in the HQF and general descriptors have been developed. Evaluation of higher education institutions has been completed and the self-certification process against the qualifications framework-European higher education area is in progress.

The shift to learning outcomes is a significant change in the Greek system, which until now has relied on an 'input' approach. The outcomes-based HQF is expected to support design of future outcomes-based qualifications.

## Validating non-formal and informal learning and links to the NQF <sup>(1)</sup>

In Greece, there is no comprehensive strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Legislation governing the HQF states that the national framework should be aimed at recognising and correlating learning outcomes in all types of formal, non-formal and informal learning. In Greek legislation,

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<sup>(1)</sup> This section draws mainly on input from European Commission et al., 2014.

definition of 'non-formal' differs from the Council recommendation definition and refers mainly to IVET provision.

EOPPEP, which is also responsible for the HQF, is developing a national integrated system for validation under the action 'development of a national system for certification of outputs of non-formal and informal learning' within the operational programme 'human resources development'. This system should indicate how non-formal and informal learning can be introduced into the HQF. Work on the HQF is focusing on formal qualifications; the next stage will include referencing qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning. In April 2014, there was a public consultation meeting with social partners to start discussing validation and accreditation issues.

Under the validation framework, professionals that do not hold a formally-recognised qualification/title will be able to apply to EOPPEP for certification directly, regardless of the way they have developed their professional capacities (see European Commission et al., 2014). At the moment, this is only possible for professionals in private security services and for certification in specific technical occupations (plumbers, technical works machinery operators, liquid and gas fuel installation and welding). The procedure involves theoretical and practical exams and is based on the standards set out in the respective occupational profiles (*Epaggelmatika perigrammata*). Validation of non-formal and informal learning has been in place in Greece since 2006 for adult trainers of non-formal learning certifying their teaching competence qualification. The certification scheme is based on the accredited occupational profile of an adult trainer developed in consultation with social partners and stakeholders (the profile is renewed every five years and was last revised in 2011). Under new legislation, certification procedures are currently open to all interested parties fulfilling prescribed eligibility criteria. The updated system foresees three paths:

- (a) direct certification upon conditions and criteria;
- (b) participation in an evaluation process and then certification;
- (c) enrolment in training programmes and subsequent certification. This certification system has been upgraded in line with the EU recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

It is expected that development of the HQF and occupational standards using a learning outcomes approach will ease validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece.

## Referencing to the EQF

The referencing to the EQF process is ongoing, in dialogue with the EQF advisory group. EOPPEP is responsible for referencing the HQF to the EQF, under supervision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Greece delivered a referencing report describing all levels of the national education and training system, the development process of the HQF and on how the HQF and adjoining development processes and responsibilities meet the 10 referencing criteria, as follows: the referencing process started in September 2013 when the first meeting of EOPPEP's referencing committee was held. In December 2013, a draft referencing report was presented by EOPPEP at the meeting of the EQF advisory group in Brussels, followed by a consultation meeting with the social partners and major stakeholders in January 2014. A final presentation was held in March 2014.

Table 1 **Level correspondence between the HQF and the EQF**

HQF	EQF
Level 8	Level 8
Level 7	Level 7
Level 6	Level 6
Level 5	Level 5
Level 4	Level 4
Level 3	Level 3
Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 1

Source: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and EOPPEP, 2014.

## Important lessons and future plans

On the whole, the HQF is expected to have an impact on education. It is expected to provoke reforms of education and training and improve links to the labour market, and bring issues of lifelong learning, validation, informal learning, and quality assurance to the general public's attention. Since one explicit aim of the HQF is to support lifelong learning, it is expected the development and

implementation process will open up possibilities for transitions and progression along flexible pathways within the system. Such flexibility will increase when the HQF at a later stage includes qualifications acquired via non-formal learning.

Involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in HQF development and implementation is seen as crucial, but also a challenge. All subsystems of formal education and training are included via the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, but linking the two current development processes, NQF for lifelong learning and qualification framework developments in higher education, is a challenge.

Other challenges ahead include referencing international sectoral qualifications to the HQF, identifying and referencing qualifications awarded for specific economic sectors, such as agriculture, shipping and tourism, as well as qualifications acquired through programmes run by foreign universities, which cooperate with private institutions in Greece. There is a clear division between non-university, mostly private, institutions and the university sector, which is public, charges no fees and entrance is through national entrance examinations, in accordance with the Greek constitution. Universities have an exclusive right to award traditional higher education qualifications (master degree, bachelor degree and doctorate). Referencing higher education qualifications awarded outside traditional universities, using learning outcomes-based level descriptors, is seen as a challenge.

A project to be undertaken shortly is reconstruction of the qualifications registry, already operating in EOPPEP, in accordance with compatibility requirements and specifications of both the EQF portal and European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations portal.

Compared to many other EU countries, Greece has a weak tradition of using learning outcomes for defining and describing qualifications. Putting into effect the shift to learning outcomes and developing all necessary methodologies, procedures and standards remains a major challenge.

#### **Main sources of information**

[URLs accessed 22.7.2014]

EOPPEP is the national contact point:

<http://www.nqf.gov.gr/ΑρχικήΣελίδα/tabid/36/Default.aspx>

Table 2 Qualification types in the HQF

HQF level	VET	General education	Higher education
8			Doctorate ( <i>didaktoriko diploma</i> ). (Universities)
7			Master degree ( <i>metaptychiako diploma eidikefsis</i> ) (Universities/technological educational institutions (TEI)-higher education)
6			Bachelor degree ( <i>ptychio</i> ) (Universities/TEI-higher education)
5	Vocational upper secondary school 'degree' (**) (vocational upper secondary school 'degree'/certificate and apprenticeship class) (**) ( <i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-EPAL</i> )		
	Vocational training diploma (Initial vocational training) (post-secondary level) ( <i>diploma epaggelmatikis eidikotitas</i> (vocational training institute ( <i>institouto epaggelmatikis katartisis</i> ) (IEK))		
	Vocational training diploma (*) ( <i>diploma epaggelmatikis katartisis epipedou metadefterovathmias epaggelmatikis katartisis</i> (IEK)) (post-secondary level)		
	Post-secondary and not higher education diploma or 'degree' (**) ( <i>diploma/ptychio anoteris scholis</i> )		
4	Vocational school ( <i>epaggelmatikes sxoles</i> ) (EPAS) certificate (post lower secondary level) ( <i>ptychio EPAS</i> )	General upper secondary school certificate ( <i>apolytiro lykeiou</i> )	
	Vocational upper secondary school ( <i>epaggelmatika lykeia</i> ) (EPAL) 'degree' (**) ( <i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-EPAL</i> )		

HQF level	VET	General education	Higher education
	EPAL certificate ( <i>apolitirio epaggelmatikou lykeiou-EPAL</i> )		
3	Vocational training school (SEK) certificate (post lower secondary level) ( <i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-SEK</i> )		
	IEK certificate (*) (initial vocational training-post lower secondary level) ( <i>pistopoiitiko epagelmatikis katartisis epipedou 1– IEK epipedou 1</i> )		
2		Lower secondary school certificate (compulsory) ( <i>apolytirio gymnasiou</i> )	
1		Primary school certificate (compulsory) ( <i>apolytirio dimotikou</i> )	

(\*) This qualification is no longer awarded since enactment of Law 4186/2013.

(\*\*) It should be noted that the word 'degree' whenever used within quotation marks, signifies that it is a direct translation from the terminology in Greek as it appears in Greek legislation (*ptychio*). In Greek, the word *ptychio* is used for titles of study from different education levels (higher, secondary, etc.). It is by no means to be confused with its usage in the English language, where the word degree refers to a higher education title of study, such as a bachelor degree.

## List of abbreviations

HQF	Hellenic qualifications framework
EOPPEP	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance
EQF	European qualifications framework
EPAL	epaggelmatika lykeia [vocational upper secondary school]
EPAS	epaggelmatikes sxoles [vocational school]
EU	European Union
IEK	institutouto epagelmatikis katartisis [vocational training institute]
IVET	initial vocational education and training
CVET	continuous vocational education and training
SEK	sxoli epaggelmatikis katartisis [vocational training school ]
TEI	technological educational institutions
VET	vocational education and training

## References

[URLs accessed 22.7.2014]

Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs; EOPPEP (2014). *Greece EQF referencing report*.

[http://www.esos.gr/uploads/kcfinder/file/GREECE%20REFERENCING%20REPORT\\_January%202014.pdf](http://www.esos.gr/uploads/kcfinder/file/GREECE%20REFERENCING%20REPORT_January%202014.pdf)

European Commission (2013). *Education and training monitor 2013. Greece*.

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor_en.htm)

European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Greece*. [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/87059\\_EL.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/87059_EL.pdf)