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European Inventory of National Qualifications Frameworks 2022 – Luxembourg

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1. Introduction

This report is part of the European inventory of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs). Since 2009, Cedefop has carried out a systematic mapping and analysis of NQF developments in countries participating in the European qualifications framework (EQF) process. These reviews, done in close cooperation with the EQF Advisory Group, the European Commission and ETF, have directly supported the development of operational and sustainable NQFs. The report offers a detailed description of the structure and scope of the Luxembourg NQF, its objectives, functions and institutional arrangements, as well as data on the framework's implementation and impact to broader policy areas.

The Luxembourg NQF (*Cadre Luxembourgeois de qualifications*, CLQ) was referenced to the EQF and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2012. It is structured in eight levels and includes all types of formal education and training. The CLQ uses knowledge, skills, and general competence as level descriptors, and it is in the activation stage.

2. National context

2.1 Policy context

In 2020, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was the same as the EU average (5%). The country has a high rate of participation in early childhood education and care, whereas the percentage of learners leaving education and training is below EU average (9.3% in 2021 compared to the EU average of 9.7%). Upper secondary VET is a popular choice as 61.6% of learners at this level attend such programmes. Tertiary education attainment is among the highest in the EU (62.2% in 2021 compared to the EU average of 41.2%). In 2021, participation in adult learning was significantly higher than the EU average (17.9% and 10.8% respectively) (European Commission. DG Education Youth Sport and Culture, 2022).

2.2 NQF legal basis

As a response to the EQF recommendation, the work on NQF started in 2009. It was based on an initial government go-ahead and continued in the following years. The formal adoption of the CLQ as a lifelong learning tool is still under discussion at political level and by different stakeholders. The CLQ is legally embedded in the [Regulation of 17 February 2017 on the recognition of professional qualifications](#).

3. NQF objectives and functions

The development and implementation of the CLQ is seen as an opportunity to make the existing education and training levels as well as the links between them explicit and transparent. The initial scope of the framework, acting as a non-binding and guiding framework for stakeholders, individuals, education and training providers and the labour market, has not changed (INFPC, 2019).

The learning-outcomes-based CLQ level descriptors function as a reference point for curriculum development; they intend to improve overall consistency of education and training provision. An important element is the geographic location of the country, which hosts many workers mainly from Belgium, Germany and France. The development of the CLQ is seen as a way to assist comparison and recognition. The high immigration rate and the large number of foreign workers make it necessary to pay attention to the coherence between the country's framework and those of the neighbouring countries (Cedefop, 2020a; 2020b).

4. Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

CLQ has an eight-level reference structure. While the number of levels corresponds to the EQF, the descriptors reflect the national tradition and context. At each level, descriptors are differentiated according to knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes (*connaissances, aptitudes, attitudes*). While the level of detail is higher, the relationship to the EQF can be clearly identified. This is, for example, the case for the third column (attitude) which is based on the principles of responsibility, autonomy and context ⁽¹⁾ as per EQF ⁽²⁾.

4.2 NQF scope and coverage

The CLQ includes all levels and types of qualifications from formal education (VET, general education, higher education). Some qualifications in Luxembourg posed challenges in terms of levelling. The vocational aptitude diploma (*Diplôme*

(1) Attitudes refer to 'personal and social dispositions in work or study situations and for professional or personal development. Personal abilities are characterised by an autonomous, responsible disposition that allows critical consideration of one's own actions and the actions of other people; they also define the scope of a person's own development through either study or practice.' (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014).

(2) EQF level [descriptors](#) are available.

d'aptitude professionnelle, DAP) that can be acquired through apprenticeships has been assigned to the CLQ/EQF level 3, and the master craftsman qualification ⁽³⁾ to CLQ/EQF level 5 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). This is different in the frameworks of the German-speaking countries where these types of qualification were referenced to EQF levels 4 and 6 respectively (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

Table 1. **Luxembourg qualifications framework (CLQ)**

NQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (Phd) (<i>Doctorat</i>) Certificate following specific training course in medicine (<i>Diplôme de formation spécifique en médecine générale</i>)	8
7	Master diploma (<i>Master</i>)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (<i>Bachelor</i>)	6
5	Master craftsman diploma (<i>Brevet de maîtrise</i>) Advanced technician diploma (<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur</i>) Specialised advanced technician diploma (<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur spécialisé</i>)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (<i>Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires</i>) Technical secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires techniques</i>) Technician diploma (<i>Diplôme de technicien</i>)	4
3	Vocational aptitude diploma (<i>Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle – DAP</i>) Certificate attesting completion of middle-cycle technical secondary education (<i>Certificat de réussite du cycle moyen de l'enseignement secondaire technique</i>) Certificate attesting completion of five years secondary education (<i>Certificat de réussite de 5 années d'enseignement secondaire</i>)	3
2	Vocational capability certificate (<i>Certificat de capacité professionnelle – CCP</i>)	2

⁽³⁾ The master craftsman qualification (*brevet de maîtrise*; ISCED 453, EQF 5) entitles holders to establish themselves in the craft industry as self-employed and to train apprentices. The qualification confers the title of master craftsman in the particular trade. The master craftsman qualification does not give any access right for higher education; progression opportunities depend on the certificate gained at secondary level (INFPC, 2019).

NQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
1	Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle, technical secondary education (<i>Certificat de réussite du cycle inférieur de l'enseignement secondaire technique</i>)	1

Source: [Law 231/2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications](#). Official Journal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, No 4263, 18.11.2016. Ministry of Higher Education and research and Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (2014).

4.3 Use of learning outcomes

The use of learning outcomes (compétences) in education and training varies between subsectors; it is most advanced in compulsory and vocational training. Competences for primary education are formulated in the *socle de compétences* (skills base) ⁽⁴⁾; whereas for secondary and VET education competences are elaborated in the *acquis d'apprentissage* (Cedefop, 2016).

A gradual development of a learning-outcomes or competence-based approach in VET has taken place, as the competence-based approach had a prominent position in the Law on VET reform, 2008 ⁽⁵⁾ and the amended Law on VET reform, 2019 ([Reform Law on Vocational Education and Training](#)). In IVET, all qualifications and programmes have been described using learning outcomes and can be accessed via the [register](#) of the education ministry.

Secondary VET programmes are developed in cooperation with chambers, based on an occupational ⁽⁶⁾ and a training profile ⁽⁷⁾. The training profile (INFPC, 2019):

- (a) defines the learning outcomes for each competence and regroups them by learning domain;
- (b) organises the learning domains and outcomes in modules and credits;
- (c) determines the content of the different modules of the curriculum.

Further work on standards and training profiles based on explicit learning outcomes will support coherence between qualifications and CLQ levels.

⁽⁴⁾ The *socle de compétences* defines a set of key competences referring to subject-independent competences and should be seen as the 'core set' of competences (KeyCoNet, 2013).

⁽⁵⁾ The law aimed to modernise initial and continuing VET. The main point was to reorientate IVET towards a modular and competence-oriented structure. It defines competences as the totality of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary in order to practise an occupation.

⁽⁶⁾ An occupational profile lists the areas of activity as well as the activities and tasks of future occupations after two to three years of workplace experience (INFPC, 2019).

⁽⁷⁾ A training profile is based on the occupational profile by areas of competence: occupational and general competences (INFPC, 2019).

Higher education is organised in courses lasting one semester; each course is composed by assessable modules with allocated credit points (European credit transfer and accumulation system). These courses are increasingly defined and described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are included in the new [Law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg](#), which lays down that each programme requires specific objectives, based on the acquisition of certain knowledge, competences and transversal skills. Further, the obligation to define learning outcomes is also included in the [2010 Grand-Ducal decree on the organisation of short-cycle programmes and related student graduation](#).

4.4 Quality assurance arrangements

The Department for Coordination of Educational and Technological Research and Innovation (SCRIPT), operating under the authority of the education ministry, and its School Quality Development Agency (*Agence pour le Développement de la Qualité Scolaire, ADQS*) are responsible for quality assurance of school education (INFPC, 2019). External evaluation of the education system is outsourced to the University of Luxembourg. A [National observatory of school quality](#) was also created in January 2018 at the education ministry to report on the school system; it produces findings based on research and recommendations (Cedefop, 2020a).

The VET Law of 2008 that was amended in June 2019, also covers the main aspects of quality assurance. The amended law incorporates into the Labour code provisions relating to apprenticeship contracts and the internship agreements that are provided for in the 2008 law.

Quality assurance in higher education uses external evaluation, as there is no national quality assurance agency. Instead, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research has outsourced the process to foreign agencies and experts. The University of Luxembourg ⁽⁸⁾ ⁽⁹⁾, and private higher education institutions and their programmes ⁽¹⁰⁾ ⁽¹¹⁾ are evaluated by EQAR (European quality assurance register for higher education) - a foreign registered agency - every four and five years respectively. Short-cycle programmes offered by secondary schools are evaluated by an expert group nominated by the Minister of Higher Education and Research, which is an ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher

⁽⁸⁾ [Law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg](#).

⁽⁹⁾ The bachelor, master and PhD programmes offered by the University of Luxembourg, are by law automatically recognised.

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Law of 19 June 2009 on the organisation of higher education](#).

⁽¹¹⁾ Based on the evaluation, the Minister decides if they will be accredited.

Education) affiliate member. For both foreign private higher education institutions and their programmes, and for short-cycle programmes in secondary schools, only accredited programmes and institutions are officially recognised by the State.

5. Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The development and implementation of the CLQ is being coordinated by the education ministry, which also acts as the EQF national contact point (NCP), in cooperation with the higher education and research ministry. The ministries, in conjunction with the relevant bodies (Section 4.4) are responsible for the quality assurance of formal qualifications. Links with the social partners and their active involvement are ensured by this centralised situation (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014).

Although the overall framework responsibilities have not been laid down, there are clear responsibilities for qualifications at different CLQ levels. The education ministry is responsible for qualifications at levels 1 to 4, while the Ministry for Higher Education and Research for those at levels 6 to 8; at level 5 the responsibility lies with the education ministry and the Chamber of Trades for the master craftsperson's diploma (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014). Social partner involvement is a core principle in VET policy; the professional chambers⁽¹²⁾ are independent policy institutes and with the 2008 reform their role is reinforced (Cedefop, 2020a). Chambers act as partners for official consultation and are directly associated with the legislative and executive procedure.

⁽¹²⁾ The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has five professional chambers: three chambers of employers (chamber of commerce, chamber of trades, chamber of agriculture) and two chambers of employees (chamber of employees and chamber of civil servants and public-sector employees).

6. Recognition and validation of prior learning

6.1 Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

Legislation recognises an individual's right to benefit from the validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning (under some conditions) ⁽¹³⁾ ⁽¹⁴⁾. This process is known as 'validation of prior experiential learning' or *validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE) and has been operational since 2010 ⁽¹⁵⁾. VAE arrangements are in place for formal qualifications awarded through technical and vocational education, post-secondary non-tertiary education qualifications, such as master craftsperson certificates, and higher education qualifications (both short-cycle degrees and qualifications awarded by the University of Luxembourg). In higher education, qualifications at levels 6 to 8, only parts of qualifications or modules can be recognised through validation. Any type of prior experiential learning relevant to the targeted qualification, whether it is the result of formal, non-formal or informal learning activities in the education and training sector, the labour market or the third sector, can be used to apply for validation. 'Classical secondary education' is not covered by VAE.

The small size of the country aids informal coordination between different validation stakeholders. Validation is a regular topic of discussion, with changes to the legislative framework on validation and improvements in the provision of orientation and guidance to validation candidates being considered. The value of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal contexts is largely accepted in Luxembourg. This is due to the high value attributed to lifelong learning and to the consensual political culture, with social partners and stakeholders involved in the validation process (Houot, 2016). Changes are expected in the coming years, creating an overarching legal framework with general principles for validation in all sectors.

⁽¹³⁾ Validation can lead to access to, or acquisition of, full or partial qualifications, provided that the candidate can supply evidence that the total length of prior experiential learning amounts to at least 5 000 hours over a minimum of three years and is effectively related to the targeted qualification.

⁽¹⁴⁾ This section draws mainly on input from Duchemin (2019).

⁽¹⁵⁾ VAE has become a known way of obtaining a formal qualification based on formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

6.2 Recognition of foreign qualifications

The [Law of 28 October 2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications](#), introduced the CLQ as the formal reference point for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside Luxembourg. Following the adoption of the law, the [ENIC-NARIC](#) has been using the framework for this task. The procedure for obtaining formal recognition of a higher education diploma acquired in another country is described on the [portal for lifelong learning](#).

7. NQF implementation and impact

7.1 Stage of implementation

The CLQ is in activation stage. Implementation structures are in place.

7.2 Indicating EQF/NQF levels

NQF and EQF levels are not yet included on certificates and diplomas. However, NQF and EQF levels are included on certificate supplements in VET, and the ministry requests the inclusion of levels on diploma supplements in higher education; they are already included in some higher education diploma supplements. Some qualifications awarded outside formal education and training also indicate NQF/EQF levels (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). NQF and EQF levels are also indicated on digital credentials uploaded to learners' wallets on Europass ⁽¹⁶⁾.

7.3 NQF dissemination

The CLQ is known to a certain number of actors in education and the labour market but disseminating the framework on a wider level and to larger target groups is the key challenge for the coming years.

7.4 Qualifications databases and registers

A comprehensive national database or register of qualifications has not yet been set up and there are no relevant developments in this regard. Currently there are two registers in place: [register with information on secondary education programmes, including VET](#) and the [register of national higher education diplomas](#).

⁽¹⁶⁾ *Source:* internal communication with the education ministry.

7.5 Awareness and use of the NQF

The framework has an important role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications and is established as the formal reference point for recognition of foreign professional qualifications. It is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes and is also used as reference point for renewal of qualifications and programmes.

7.6 Impact of the NQF

The integration into the legislative structure signalled official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full implementation.

8. Referencing to the EQF

Luxembourg referenced its qualifications levels to the EQF and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2012; a referencing report was published in 2014.

9. Reflections and plans

While a solid basis for the CLQ has been established, implementation slowed following the referencing to the EQF in 2012. This was caused by the lack of a clear legal basis and some uncertainty among stakeholders over the role to be played by the CLQ at national level. Integrating the CLQ into the legislative structure as the formal reference point for recognition of foreign professional qualifications, signals official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full implementation. Discussions on strengthening the role of CLQ as a lifelong learning tool continue, though no political decision has been taken yet. This includes the setting up of a comprehensive national database of qualifications and development of procedures for inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and training. The latter could potentially address the needs of a high number of citizens holding unofficial and non-recognised certificates and diplomas. To accomplish this, specific approaches to accreditation and quality assurance of these qualifications, and to their inclusion in the framework, are being considered (Cedefop, 2020b). Raising CLQ awareness among end users is a major challenge for the upcoming period.

Acronyms

CLQ	Cadre Luxembourgeois des qualifications, CLQ (Luxembourg qualifications framework)
DAP	<i>Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle</i> [Vocational aptitude diploma]
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance for Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework for the European higher education area
VAE	<i>validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> [validation of non-formal and informal learning]
VET	vocational education and training

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Webpages and databases

[URLs accessed 9.6.2023]

[Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth](#)

[CLQ - The Luxembourg qualifications framework](#)

[Register of secondary education programmes](#)

[Register of higher education diplomas](#)