



Brussels, 4 June 2025

Meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, 16-17 June 2025

Note EQF AG 68-3

Note on the follow-up on Peer Learning event: “Inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and training in NQFs referenced to the EQF” 8-9 April 2025, Warsaw, Poland

The Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on “Inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and training in NQFs referenced to the EQF” took place on 8-9 April 2025 in Warsaw, Poland. The PLA report and the background note are presented in Annex A and B.

The outcomes of the PLA are relevant for the Skills Portability Initiative, as announced in the Union of Skills Communication¹, to improve the understanding, comparability, trust, acceptance of skills and qualifications across the EU, regardless of where and how they are acquired.

The PLA showed that the work on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is essential to increase transparency and trust of all qualifications, including qualifications from outside the formal system, and contributes to the creation of a comprehensive European qualifications map, which is relevant in a rapidly changing world of work and education and training.

While the EQF by design covers all types and all levels of qualifications, many countries in the earlier years of their NQF implementation prioritised the inclusion of qualifications from the formal education and training system over those awarded outside it. Expanding the scope of NQFs to include qualifications awarded outside formal education and training can enhance transparency of all types of learning and skills, promote mobility, and improve permeability and lifelong learning.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en

The EQF AG is invited to:

Discuss the findings of the PLA on the barriers and enablers for inclusion of qualifications outside formal education and training into NQFs

Reflect on future steps enhancing the relevance of NQFs in Europe in relation to qualifications outside formal education and training.

Annex A: Report of PLA



Peer Learning Activity **“Inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and training** **in NQFs referenced to the EQF”**

8-9 April 2025, Warsaw, Poland

Summary report

1. Introduction

On 8-9 April 2025, a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) was held in Warsaw, Poland, focusing on the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training in NQFs (National Qualifications Frameworks) referenced to the EQF (European Qualifications Framework). The PLA was hosted by the European Commission, in cooperation with Cedefop and three Polish institutions: Educational Research Institute, Central Examination Board and the Ministry of National Education.

The PLA gathered 36 participants from 21 countries as well as representatives from the ETF, EACEA, ESU, Eurashe and LLLP.

PLA objectives

The PLA aimed to foster discussion and deepen understanding of how qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system can be incorporated into NQFs. The event explored different practices and experiences across EQF countries, highlighting how different national systems approach the inclusion of such qualifications and which are the benefits and challenges related to it.

The event featured country examples from Sweden, the Netherlands, Estonia, Italy, and from host country Poland. The second day featured interactive workshops, joint discussions, as well as a panel discussion on lessons learned and a way forward. Additionally, the PLA included a field visit to a recently established Centre of Vocational Excellence in Grodzisk Mazowiecki.

Purpose of this report

The report summarises the discussions that took place during the PLA. The purpose of the report is to support the work of the Commission and participants in the PLA in disseminating the results of the activities of the PLA to national stakeholders.

The report is structured according to the main topics of the PLA and draws on a range of presentations and workshops covered during the PLA. The PLA agenda is included in Annex 1.

2. Setting the scene

The PLA participants were welcomed by Piotr Bartosiak (Ministry of National Education), Lech Boguta (Ministry of National Education) and Koen Nomden (DG EMPL).

The PLA took place shortly after the European Commission adopted the Communication on the Union of Skills, which announced the development of a Skills Portability Initiative. This initiative aims to unlock more opportunities for workers and businesses to fully benefit from the potential of the single market.

In this context, the need for qualifications to be recognised and trusted across Europe, regardless of where and how they have been acquired, is more pressing than ever – particularly given the current labour and skills shortages across the EU. The EQF plays a crucial role as a common reference framework to enhance the transparency, comparability, and portability of qualifications across Europe. It is designed to accommodate qualifications of all levels and types.

This PLA builds on a first PLA, held in Vienna in 2018, on the same topic – the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training into NQFs. Since then, many more EQF countries have taken steps to open their frameworks to such qualifications. These developments – alongside a broader transformation in the landscape of qualifications and credentials, including micro-credentials and digital credentials - have triggered a revisit and deepening of this discussion.

Findings from the NQF survey on the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education

Zelda Azzarà (Cedefop) presented preliminary findings from the 2024 NQF survey. Out of the 41 countries participating in the EQF process, 37 have referenced their NQFs to EQF, including all EU Member States. Among EU and EFTA countries, 21 are considered to have NQFs at operational stage. Over time, consecutive surveys show that NQFs have evolved in several ways, by broadening the range of recognised awarding bodies, by expanding the scope of systems and types and size of qualifications included and by allowing for additional approaches to acquire qualifications (e.g. validation of non-formal and informal learning).

The survey results also reveal both commonalities and differences across countries regarding the types of qualifications awarded outside formal education that are eligible for inclusion and how they are defined:

- Qualifications non-regulated by the education ministry and other ministries responsible for awarding qualifications;
- Qualifications offered by private providers – sometimes referred to as private qualifications or market qualifications. They may be developed and awarded by a wide range of different bodies: private education and training providers, labour market stakeholders (companies, trade unions, sectoral organisations, chambers), NGOs, civil society organisations (e.g. youth organisations, voluntary organisations). At the same time, they can also be offered by public providers.
- The most common type of NQF qualifications awarded outside formal education and training are professional qualifications (sometimes the terms vocational or occupational qualifications are also used).

- Some countries refer to them as supplementary or sectoral qualifications while overall, few countries use the specific term ‘non-formal qualifications’.

According to the preliminary findings for 2024, 18 EU Member States have NQFs that are open to or include qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. Of these, 15 currently include such qualifications. Among those 15, ten countries use a single national database to display these qualifications, four maintain multiple databases, and one country has no dedicated database.

Since 2022, significant developments have been reported in two thirds of the countries above mentioned 18 countries. Many of them reported an increase in the number of included qualifications.

The presentation was complemented by several country examples, including practices in Ireland, Denmark, France and Belgium (Flemish Community). In Denmark, for example, a two-phase process for the inclusion of non-formal qualifications into the NQF was established in 2019 and evaluated in 2022. Under this process, providers apply to the Danish Accreditation Institution. The procedure takes approximately three months, is valid for four years and does not confer any formal rights.

The presentation concluded by outlining several arguments in favour of opening up NQFs to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. These include improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications, strengthening trust and quality assurance, enhancing the permeability of education and training systems, supporting learner progression and lifelong learning, fostering cooperation among stakeholders, and reinforcing the link between education systems and labour market needs.

3. Country cases

Sweden

Carina Lindén (Ministry of Education and Research) and Anna Kahlson (National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, MYH) presented Sweden’s long-term experiences of including qualifications outside formal education.

The Swedish Qualifications Framework (SeQF) was designed as a tool for including qualifications awarded outside the formal education system from the outset, to strive towards an open and inclusive framework, including all types of qualifications, regardless of the provider. The key mission has been to create a framework that inspires confidence.

The legislation related to the SeQF came into force in 2015, with the regulation related to the application for levelling qualifications in the SeQF coming into effect in 2016. In 2023, a new validation ordinance came into force, effectively linking validation of non-formal and informal learning with the qualifications framework.

Procedure for inclusion of qualifications

The procedure for levelling non-formal qualifications is regulated in the SeQF ordinance. The application is made through an online form on the MYH webpage, which requires a description of the stakeholder involvement in the content and relevance of the qualification alongside a confirmation that the quality assurance of the qualification is included in the internal quality management system. A description of the methods used for learner assessment also needs to be added. The content of the qualification should be described in three categories (learning outcomes): knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy.

There is no limitation in terms of the minimum size of a qualification, although it was noted that an indication of size helps in assessing a qualification request.

Cost and validity of the levelling decision

The application requires payment of a fee of approximately EUR 1500. A level decision is valid for ten years, during which time at least one external audit should be conducted by MYH.

Number of non-formal qualifications included

After a slow start in 2016, the number of non-formal qualifications levelled through this procedure has meanwhile increased to 120. They are included in the Swedish national qualifications database (<https://www.myh.se/kvalifikationer>). Levelled qualifications span from SeQF level 2 to 6, but are mainly concentrated on levels 4 and 5.

Examples of good practice include qualifications in waste management and recycling. Due to a lack of formal qualifications pathways to work in this sector, the SeQF has been used to create career and upskilling pathways within the sector. A second presented example, in the construction and mining sector, is the shotfirer certificate at level 5, which has since been awarded to approximately 700 individuals after a short 48-hour training.

Opportunities and challenges

The interest in levelling non-formal qualifications to the SeQF has increased among stakeholders since the implementation of the application process in 2016, with sector industry organisations and social partners seeing a clear benefit in using the SeQF. Nevertheless, general awareness of the SeQF remains low, and outreach is difficult (also limited by existing resources and priorities).

The experience so far shows that the process requires more time and capacity to develop qualifications (or adapt existing ones) in line with the requirements for levelling than anticipated. The provision of expertise and a government grant for qualifications and validation models have boosted the number of applications.

An external evaluation of the SeQF is underway in 2025 to obtain insights for continued development after the first ten years of the framework.

The Netherlands

Friederike Jansen (CINOP) presented the Dutch approach. The Netherlands Qualifications Framework (NLQF) functions as the comprehensive national framework for qualification comparison within the Netherlands. While operational since 2012, the NLQF received statutory status only recently (through a parliamentary act), on January 1st, 2025.

While formal (i.e. government-regulated) qualifications have been pre-allocated to the framework, non-formal qualifications (i.e. those operating outside ministerial regulation) may be included upon application. The NLQF thus primarily targets the 14,000 providers that operate in the significant private education and training market. CINOP as the Dutch EQF NCP coordinates the inclusion of non-formal qualifications into the NLQF.

In particular in the context of labour market shortages, more frequent labour market transitions and a growing share of private and non-formal offerings, there is a perceived need to increase the transparency and comparability of qualifications and their levels. In particular, qualification titles are not usually regulated in the Netherlands, which can create misunderstandings in the lifelong learning landscape.

It was specifically noted that the NLQF level indication is not intended as a ‘quality label’ of a qualification. The NLQF level indication does not entail any admission or progression rights for further education or training in the formal education and training system.

Procedure for inclusion of qualifications

The procedure is conducted in two steps and requires submission of online forms and supporting documents. The first step is a ‘validity’ or quality check of the applicant organisation, to verify its legal entity, continuity, approach to quality assurance (in general and for assessment procedures) and ownership of the qualification in question. The assessment includes a consultation by two independent auditors and an advice given by an independent quality committee.

The second step is the levelling of the qualification, which consists of three components: the comparison with NLQF descriptors, the assessment of labour market relevance or substantial number of study load hours (e.g. 400) and method of assessment used. This step includes a report by two independent education experts and advice given by an independent levelling committee. The final decision is taken by the Programme Council, based on the committee’s advice.

The procedure takes approximately 13 weeks, with five cycles for level allocation taking place annually. CINOP expects to receive 60-65 applications for the levelling of qualifications in 2025.

Cost and validity of the levelling decision

The application requires the payment of a fee of between EUR 3,400 and 4,800 (depending on whether the validity check requires an audit). A positive decision on levelling of a qualification is valid for a period of six years.

Number of non-formal qualifications included

The new NLQF legislation prescribes that as of January 2025, all formal qualifications and levelled non-formal qualifications need to display their NLQF/EQF levels, with non-formal qualifications recorded in the NLQF register (<https://www.nlqf.nl/register>). As of early April 2025, 279 non-formal qualifications from 99 different providers had been included in the NLQF.

Opportunities and challenges

Effective communication and marketing of the NLQF remains a key challenge. Although the NLQF is increasingly known and occasionally used in job vacancies, many stakeholders still do not fully understand what the NLQF is and how they can benefit them.

With the demand for inclusion in the NLQF steadily increasing, the staffing capacity required to handle these demands is limited, presenting a significant challenge. Further key challenges ahead include the link with micro-credentials and the possible implementation of individual learning accounts (ILA).

Estonia

Küllü All (Ministry of Education and Research) presented the Estonian approach. The Estonian Qualifications Framework (EstQF) is an overarching framework, its mission is to ensure the links between formal, non-formal and informal learning. The EstQF has included non-formal qualifications from the outset of NQF development, in the form of sectoral qualifications, which are linked to the formal system.

The EstQF consists of four sub-frameworks for general education, VET, higher education and occupational qualifications with sub-framework specific descriptors and relevant quality assurance systems. The EstQF is also characterised by a strong involvement of social partners and sectoral councils (14 councils and more than 100 professional qualification awarding bodies).

The new 2025 Adult Education Act establishes the definitions and conditions for micro-qualifications, which will be registered in EHIS (Estonian Education Information System). Micro-qualifications have a volume of 5 to 30 credit points. Universities and universities of applied sciences may call a micro-qualification a micro-degree if higher education-level subjects constitute at least half of the curriculum.

Procedure for inclusion of qualifications

The EstQF includes all state recognised qualifications which meet two criteria: they are defined in terms of learning outcomes-based qualifications standards, and they are awarded by nationally accredited institutions.

Applications for inclusion are reviewed and validated by sectoral councils or curriculum committees in the Ministry of Education.

Cost of levelling qualifications

There are no registration fees for publicly recognised qualifications.

Number of non-formal qualifications included

Qualifications are registered in the national database managed by the Ministry of Education (www.ehis.ee) and Kutsekoda (Estonian Qualifications Authority, www.kutsekoda.ee). While the Estonian Education Infosystem (EHIS) includes all formal education qualifications, the

professional qualifications register (<https://www.kutseregister.ee>) covers all professional qualifications.

As of April 2025, the register included 537 valid occupational qualifications standards for 90 sub-fields. Qualifications range from EstQF level 2 (e.g. assistant gardener, logger) to EstQF level 8 (e.g. chartered civil engineer, chartered architect).

Estonia is currently preparing for a reform of the professions system with the new Professions Act 2026, which will entail the inclusion of competence profiles and micro-qualifications into the register of professional qualifications.

Challenges

One of the key ongoing challenges is maintaining consistency in levelling and quality assurance. For smaller providers in particular, the process means a significant administrative burden. Another key challenge refers to the integration of micro-credentials and informal learning.

Italy

Michela Bastianelli (Inapp) presented the new Italian Decree for the identification, validation, and certification of competencies related to non-formal qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (adopted as Decreto ministeriale n. 115 del 9 luglio 2024). It forms part of the national System for the Certification of Competences (NSCC), which was established in 2013.

Through the new decree, and within the Italian strategy for lifelong learning, a wide range of different (by purposes, contexts, and target groups) public and private non-formal learning pathways are integrated in the NSCC, based on learning outcomes and NSCC standards, and in complementarity with formal qualifications. Examples of such qualifications pathways include continuous training for workers (developed by Regions and Autonomous Provinces), trainings by the Chambers of Commerce, training programmes promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, volunteering and civil service projects, professional apprenticeships, internships as well as entrepreneurship training. Additionally, the decree introduces new certification entities for continuing VET, including Interprofessional Funds, the Chambers of Commerce, and other organisations which operate on the labour market (e.g. Sviluppo Lavoro Italia).

These developments aim to provide greater opportunities for individuals to develop their competences, and to make the portability of competences more effective. The decree furthermore underlines the role of micro-credentials in addressing skills mismatches and supports their integration into the national qualification framework (NQF). Key strategies include enhancing the training capacity of firms, and establishing so-called 'National Dual Centres for competence development' (work training centres).

The new decree represents a significant step forward towards transparency, quality and portability of qualifications, and a commitment to lifelong learning by using European and international frameworks. It seeks to enhance the value of work-based learning for better and more personalised opportunities for upskilling pathways. Work is ongoing to adopt the respective regulatory frameworks and operationalise these plans.

Poland

Lech Boguta, Maciej Tauber and Konrad Romaniuk jointly presented the inclusion of non-formal qualifications in the Polish Integrated Qualifications System (ZSK). The ZSK was established by the 2015 Act on the Integrated Qualifications System. ZSK covers all types of qualifications, both formal and non-formal, and reflects Poland's commitment to a lifelong learning perspective. The 2015 Act formalised procedures for including new qualifications (particularly market qualifications) and set quality standards. The ZSK particularly prioritises the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system, often referred to as 'market qualifications' and sector-specific qualifications.

A strong quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality of non-formal qualifications is central to ensuring the credibility of ZSK. It consists of several components, including the authorisation of awarding bodies, a periodical external monitoring of awarding bodies as well as a periodic review of qualifications.

There are four types of non-formal qualifications that may be included in the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF) – market, sectoral, craft (granted by crafts chambers) and regulated qualifications (established by separate regulations). Sectoral qualifications were first introduced into the ZSK in 2024.

Procedure for inclusion of qualifications

For market qualifications, any external entity (e.g. professional association, training provider) seeking to include such a qualification must apply to the competent ministry responsible for the professional area in question. In case of sectoral qualifications, an application may be submitted by sectoral organisations. In both cases, the application must contain a clear description of the qualification, specific learning outcomes, the proposed PQF level with justifications, and information on assessment and validation procedures. Applicants also need to provide evidence of compliance with a standardised system of external quality checks to ensure consistent and reliable assessment processes, and of ongoing involvement of relevant stakeholders.

The decision whether to include a qualification in the ZSK is based on a public consultation, a stakeholder consultation and a review of the proposed qualification's learning outcomes with the support of independent experts.

Number of non-formal qualifications included

Once approved, a qualification is officially included in the ZSK and thus becomes a nationally recognised qualification (and received a unique qualification code).

After a slow start back in 2015, the number of qualifications included has notably increased in recent years, reflecting increasing interest from professional communities and training providers. As of March 2025, a total of 197 market qualifications are in operation, provided by 114 providers.

Opportunities and challenges

Despite ongoing improvements to the ZSK, some challenges remain, in particular regrading consistent quality oversight and public awareness. Furthermore, the process to include qualifications in the system is currently considered too lengthy. This also reflects the challenge of balancing innovation with standardisation - while market qualifications should remain flexible, they must also fit within the structured PQF approach.

Study visit: Industry Skills Centre in Logistics in Grodzisk Mazowiecki

On the afternoon of the first day, participants visited the Industry Skills Centre in Logistics (Branżowe Centrum Umiejętności – BCU, <https://www.bcugrodzisk.edu.pl/>) in Grodzisk Mazowiecki.

BCU projects are Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) that aim to (a) facilitate innovative and sustainable collaboration between business and VET providers across all education levels and (b) implement a concept of vocational excellence in the Polish VET system. BCUs are innovative educational institutions that combine formal and non-formal learning, focusing on sector-specific skills. They offer flexible learning pathways and various programmes aligned with labour market needs.

The key mission of the Industry Skills Centres is to integrate schools, universities and industry partners to provide practical, up-to-date training addressing regional labour market needs, thereby helping to prepare a skilled workforce for Poland's evolving economy.

The Grodzisk Mazowiecki BCU integrates:

- education and training activities closely linked with industry;
- cooperation among schools, universities and employers;
- innovation development, advisory services, and promotional activities.

With a total budget of approximately EUR 3 million (PLN 12 million), the project is led by Grodzisk County as operator of the Technical and High School Complex No. 2 in Grodzisk Mazowiecki. It involves education and business partners from the logistics sector.

Launched in 2023 under Poland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the project is being implemented in two phases:

- Phase 1: construction of a new facility attached to the VET school, procurement of state-of-the-art equipment, and creation of the institutional framework for the centre (BCU).
- Phase 2 (ongoing until June 2026): operational rollout including education and training for at least 300 individuals. This will involve both programmes for young learners, industry-specific upskilling for teachers, non-formal adult education courses and sectoral qualifications, particularly in digital and green skills.

A new sectoral qualification 'Leader Contract Logistics 5.0' is being developed as a 120-hour training programme for lower-level logistics managers. This qualification will be submitted to Poland's Integrated Qualification System (ZSK) and is grounded in forward-looking industry trends identified through a specifically developed foresight tool, the 'trends radar'.

Grodzisk Mazowiecki, located approximately 30 km southwest of Warsaw, is strategically positioned within the Warsaw metropolitan area. The region is a national hub for logistics, characterized by a highly educated population and a concentration of logistics enterprises, making it an ideal setting for a logistics-focused Centre of Vocational Excellence.

4. Interactive workshops

Three parallel interactive workshops were held focusing on three distinct themes related to the inclusion of qualification from outside formal education and training into NQFs. The key discussion points on each theme are summarised below.

Theme 1: The value of opening up NQFs for learners, employers, education and training providers

Learners

- **Increased trust in provision:** NQF-levelled qualifications can enhance the trust in non-formal education and training provision through a quality assured inclusion process, clarity and transparency on the learning outcomes related to the qualification (better awareness and visualisation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired in non-formal contexts).
- **Enhanced career development and job mobility:** NQF-levelled qualifications have the potential to lead to an enhanced recognition of skills acquired outside the formal system, to improved job mobility and thus provide a better return on investment on their learning (and more security that the time and money spent on non-formal education and training is well spent).
- **Investment in guidance and career counselling** is essential to improve learners' understanding of the qualification offer and highlight their opportunities for learning and validation through training in the non-formal system.

Employers

- **Reassurance of candidates' competences:** Transparency on the content of qualifications (through learning outcomes descriptions) and reassurance of a quality assured education and training can enhance the reassurance of a candidate's skills and competences (thereby potentially saving time and money in recruitment processes).
- **Tool for competence management and development:** NQF-levelled non-formal qualifications could be promoted as a strategic tool for competence development within a given sector (& validation of skills and competences).
- **Funding incentives:** Provision of state funding for training leading to NQF-levelled qualifications could potentially make the levelling more attractive and act as a potential incentive for employers to prioritise training leading to NQF-levelled qualifications.

Providers of non-formal qualifications

- **Incentive for enhanced qualifications design and internal QA:** Existing requirements for the inclusion of qualifications may provide an incentive to improve qualifications development (description of learning outcomes) and internal quality assurance arrangements.
- **Increased visibility of offer:** NQF inclusion can potentially increase the visibility and attractiveness of the qualifications offer and provide a competitive edge vis-à-vis other providers (that do not have their qualifications included).
- **Address challenges for smaller providers:** Extensive application procedures and application fees may act as an (unintended) deterrent to smaller providers of non-formal qualifications due to capacity limitations.

Theme 2: Procedures for including qualifications outside formal education and micro-credentials in NQFs. Quality assurance. Good and innovative practices, barriers and challenges

- **Systems' need to provide transparency:** Procedures for including qualifications should be clear and transparent. All stakeholders should have the opportunity to compare qualifications with each other.

- **Balancing solid QA with practical procedures:** It is important to strike a balance between ensuring rigorous quality assurance and avoiding overly burdensome procedures. The aim is to protect the credibility of qualifications while keeping the process manageable and accessible.
- **Integrated quality assurance:** Quality assurance arrangements should effectively combine QA of the organisation and QA of the qualification itself.
- **Avoiding excessive bureaucracy:** While clear definitions are necessary (vs. formal vs. non-formal education, qualification vs. micro-credential), they should not result in unnecessary bureaucracy that might hinder the inclusion of diverse qualifications in NQFs.
- **Public funding and levelled qualifications:** There was no consensus on whether public funding should prioritise qualifications that are included in the NQF (levelled) over those that are not (non-levelled).

Theme 3: Support to the recognition and flexible learning pathways for learners. Synergies between formal and non-formal education and training sector

Sources, tools and use of data

- **National registers of qualifications** serve as important sources of information, but connections with other data and information sources is needed. The potential use of artificial intelligence for this work should be considered.
Relevant data may be available at national or international level, but can be scattered across different bodies or project, or might not be accessible (lack of willingness to be shared).
- **Vacancy data** could be used as a proxy to identify which qualifications are in demand.
- **Visualise pathways:** to showcase how other providers have recognised non-formal learning/qualifications.
- **Addressing barriers:** Information infrastructure might be in place to connect information but qualifications are still not recognised in practice. How to incentivise formal actors to recognise qualifications from outside the formal system?

Challenges from learner perspective

- **Create learners' awareness:** to address communication gaps and lack of knowledge about levelled qualifications, avoiding that learning appears 'invisible' to the learners themselves or that they are unable to combine it towards useful pathways.
- **Create employers' awareness:** to make sure that employers know how to interpret and recognise a qualification so that learners' efforts can be valued and acknowledged.

Example of good practice

- **Use of credits:** to explore how non-formal qualifications might use credits while avoiding the creation of parallel systems or processes.

Introduction to the Irish approach

Workshop 3 included an introduction to the Irish approach by Naomi Oldenburg and Órla Barry (QQI).

They presented the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) multimodal approach to increasing visibility and transparency of pathways with a focus on the new Listed Awarding Body scheme, the green paper on access, transfer and progression and the re-development of the Irish Register of Qualifications.

The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is an inclusive and flexible framework that is established in legislation but QQI has authority to make amendments itself. QQI is both qualifications authority and quality assurance agency, validating programmes of more than 150 private providers on non-formal education. It has the authority to conduct reviews of implementation of ATP (Access, Transfer and Progression) procedures, and the legislative responsibility to maintain a register of qualifications.

A 2023 review of the ATP landscape identified pockets of good practice and committed individuals, while at the same time highlighting a lack of systematic designed approaches to pathways.

The new Listed Awarding Body scheme provides access to NFQ for more non-formal providers, particularly professional bodies.

5. Panel discussion

The panel discussion, chaired by Wojciech Stechly (Education Research Institute IBE) discussed key takeaways and suggestions for the way forward: what should be done to enhance the trust in the transparency of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, and how can potential pitfalls be avoided? Panellists included Anna Nikowska (Ministry of Funds and Regional Development, PL), Allan Bruun Pedersen (Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science), Agnieszka Szymczak (IBE, PL), Zelda Azzarà (Cedefop) and Panagiotis Chatzimichail (LLLP).

Key takeaways:

Despite varying national contexts, there was broad agreement that **closer cooperation** between education (including higher education), labour market actors (including employers), and public authorities is vital for enabling inclusive and open qualifications systems.

Experience from the Danish national level found that once **political will is established**, it can be quite easy to open up qualifications frameworks. The key driver to create this political will in that case was the need to respond to labour market demands more quickly and supply urgently needed labour force.

The value of transnational **peer learning** on this topic was underlined. Learning about the value of open and inclusive frameworks, showcased through concrete practices but also through challenges encountered, is considered crucial.

A **trade-off between smooth inclusion procedures and strong quality assurance requirements** was also discussed. Polish quality assurance requirements for the inclusion of market qualifications are very strict. As a result, they may take up to one year and more to have a qualification included in the framework. This has prompted discussions to reconsider quality assurance requirements.

The link to **micro-credentials** was also discussed. In some countries, the procedures for the inclusion of microcredentials very much aligned with the procedures for non-formal qualifications. In some systems, the boundary between where a microcredential ends and where a qualification starts is not so clear.

What could/should be done in other countries at this point?

Panellists identified a pressing need to **simplify communication and terminology** related to the inclusion of qualifications into NQFs, both towards learners, education providers, employers and other relevant stakeholders. Clear, accessible communication, with strategic clarity, about what inclusion in the NQF means – and what it does not mean – is crucial, especially where inclusion does not automatically confer any legal rights.

In parallel, **strengthening education and validation guidance** for learners was seen as essential. Learners need to be empowered to understand the relevance of lifelong learning and to build their own career paths.

The importance of **impact evaluation** was underlined. Studies assessing the effects of NQF inclusion for learners' progression and for the owners or awarding bodies of such qualifications could provide valuable evidence to guide policy development and strengthen trust in the system.

Finally, while NQFs can serve as important tools, countries should remain **realistic about their potential**. NQFs alone cannot compensate for a lack of coordination, clear policy direction or funding at national level. They should be understood as enablers within a broader ecosystem that requires sustained political commitment, cross-sectoral collaboration and learner-centred approaches.

6. Closing by the European Commission

Koen Nomden (DG EMPL) concluded this PLA by highlighting some of the key discussion points from the event:

- **Growing role of qualifications frameworks:** An upward trend is visible across countries in acknowledging the role of NQFs, particularly when they are broad in scope and designed as open and inclusive frameworks.
- **Trust and transparency and learning outcomes:** Ensuring qualifications are trusted, quality assured and transparent is essential to ensure their credibility - especially outside formal education and training systems, and to support the smooth functioning of labour markets.
- **Learning outcomes:** Clearly defined learning outcomes are central, without them, qualifications would lose their function as a reliable indicator or proxy for skills.
- **Need for clearer communication:** The concept and value of qualifications frameworks remain abstract to learners, employers and education providers. Clearer communication is needed to explain what it means for a qualification to be included in an NQF, and how this benefits individuals and the labour market.
- **Importance of data and evidence:** More data is needed on the impact of non-formal qualifications, on learner confidence, on labour market outcomes.

To close the meeting, he expressed gratitude to all participants for their active engagement, with special thanks to the Polish hosts and everyone involved in the preparation and delivery of the event.

Annex 1: Agenda



Ministry of National Education
Republic of Poland



Peer Learning Activity: “Inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and training in NQFs referenced to the EQF”

8-9 April 2025, Warsaw, Poland

8 April 2025, Tuesday Venue: Ministry of National Education, al. Szucha 25, Warsaw	
9.00 – 9.20	Registration and welcome coffee
9.30 – 10.30	Welcome and setting the scene Opening <i>Ministry of National Education (tbc) and European Commission, Koen Nomden</i> Reasons for the inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education in NQFs and the role of microcredentials – labour market and educational perspectives <i>Team Poland: Ministry of National Education, Lech Boguta, Central Examination Board, Horacy Debowski</i> Findings from the NQF survey on the inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education <i>Cedefop, Iraklis Pliakis</i>
10.30 – 13.30	Country cases on the inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and microcredentials Presentation (20 min) and discussion on cases on procedures, criteria and innovative practices - Sweden, Anna Kahlson, National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, and Carina Lindén, Ministry of Education and Research: Long-term experiences of including qualifications outside the formal education system since the start - the Netherlands, Frederike Jansen, CINOP: Labour-market co-operation with a branch, sector or company - Estonia, Külli All, Ministry of Education and Research: Professional awards and microcredentials as a form of nonformal qualifications
Coffee break in-between	

8 April 2025, Tuesday Venue: Ministry of National Education, al. Szucha 25, Warsaw	
	- Italy, Michela Bastianelli, <i>The National Institute for Public Policy Analysis: New Italian Decree for the identification, validation, and certification of competencies related to non-formal qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies.</i> - Poland, Lech Boguta, Maciej Tauber, <i>Inclusion of qualifications awarded outside of formal education system. The role of sectoral qualifications and microcredentials. Synergies with Europass and Euroguidance, Konrad Romanuk.</i> <i>Chaired by Horacy Debowski, Central Examination Board</i>
13.30 – 14.30	Lunch break
14.30 – 17.30	Study visit: CoVe in Grodzisk Mazowiecki Presentation of one of the Centres of Vocational Excellence, located in Grodzisk Mazowiecki (<i>Branżowe Centrum Umiejętności</i>). These Centres, are new innovative educational institutions that integrate formal and non-formal learning, with a focus on specific economic sectors. At a CoVe, learners – ranging from young people to adult – can obtain a different types qualifications, encompassing both formal and non-formal education, as well as sector-specific training. Transportation to the study visit is organized by bus(es).
17.30	End of the 1 st Day

19.00 Dinner (at own expense)

9 April 2025, Wednesday Educational Research Institute – National Research Institute (IBE), ul. Górczewska 8, Warsaw	
8.45 – 9.00	Registration and welcome to the 2 nd Day
9.00 – 10.30	Interactive workshops Discussion in parallel interactive workshops on following topics: 1. The value of opening up NQFs for learners, employers, education and training providers. <i>Chair: Koen Nomden, European Commission DG EMPL</i> <i>Rapporteur: Monika Auzinger, 3s</i> 2. Procedures for including qualifications outside formal education and microcredentials in NQFs. Quality assurance. Good and innovative practices, barriers and challenges. <i>Chair: Horacy Debowski, PL</i> <i>Rapporteur: Iraklis Pliakis, Cedefop</i> 3. Support to the recognition and flexible learning pathways for learners. Synergies between formal and non-formal education and training sector. <i>Chair: Orla Barry, IE</i> <i>Rapporteur: Zelda Azzara, Cedefop</i>
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 – 11.30	Reporting from the workshops <i>Rapporteurs of the workshops present conclusion of the discussion and suggested recommendations for the EQF AG discussion</i>
11.30 – 12.40	Panel discussion on lessons learnt and way forward Panel discussion on ways to enhance the trust in and the transparency of qualifications from outside formal education and training, and also how to avoid potential pitfalls. • Anna Nikowska, Ministry of Funds and Regional Development, PL • Allan Bruun Pedersen, Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, DK • Agnieszka Szymczak, Educational Research Institute, PL • Stakeholder(s) (tbc) • Zelda Azzara, Cedefop <i>Chaired by Wojciech Stechly, Educational Research Institute – National Research Institute (IBE)</i>
12.40 – 13.00	Closing of the PLA <i>European Commission, Koen Nomden</i> <i>Team Poland</i>
13.00	End of the PLA

Annex B: Background note for the PLA



Peer Learning Activity “Inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training in NQFs referenced to the EQF”

8-9 April 2025, Warsaw, Poland

Background note

1. Objectives of the PLA

This Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training into National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) is organised by the European Commission, in cooperation with Cedefop, and with Poland as host country.

This PLA aims to foster discussion and deepen understanding of how qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system can be incorporated into NQFs. The event will explore different practices and experiences across EQF countries, highlighting how different national systems approach the inclusion of such qualifications and which are the benefits and challenges related to it.

A key focus of the PLA will be on examples from participating countries. The event will feature country cases from Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden, along insights from the host country, Poland.

2. Policy context

The world of work is evolving at a rapid pace, bringing a challenge to the EU labour market and education and training systems that need to adapt quickly – to address persistent labour shortages and untap individual potential. Against this background, fostering a culture of up- and reskilling and lifelong learning is essential – as it empowers individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge at any stage of life and in diverse ways, and requires employers and education and training providers to reach out to a larger diversity of groups.

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) serves as a common reference framework to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications across Europe. While the EQF by design covers all types and all levels of qualifications, many countries in the earlier years of their NQF implementation prioritised the inclusion of qualifications from the formal education and training system over those awarded outside it. This was confirmed by the recent EQF evaluation² which showed that EQF has further improved the transparency, comparability and portability mainly of formal qualifications within and between EQF countries.

² [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD\(2024\)141&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD(2024)141&lang=en)

The evaluation also showed that more countries have started to include qualifications awarded outside the formal education sector into their NQFs. Expanding the scope of NQFs to include qualifications awarded outside formal education and training can enhance transparency of all types of learning and skills, promote mobility, and improve permeability and lifelong learning. This shift aligns with one of the key objectives of the EQF Recommendation: to strengthen the links between formal, non-formal, and informal learning and to support the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings, thereby reinforcing the lifelong learning dimension of NQFs.

3. Qualifications awarded outside formal education and training

The EQF Recommendation³ defines ‘qualification’ as *a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards*. The definition focuses on learning outcomes and is neutral about the learning pathway through which qualifications can be acquired.

There is no single term used for qualifications outside the formal domain. In the European context, different NQFs use different terms such as non-formal qualifications, non-regulated qualifications, market qualifications or supplementary qualifications.

The Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks⁴ provides a definition for qualifications awarded outside the formal domain: *‘all those qualifications that are not part of the formal education and training system’. ‘These might be developed and awarded by labour market stakeholders, adult learning providers, and civil society organizations such as youth and youth work organizations, and voluntary organizations.’*

Cedefop (2020)⁵, refers to non-government-regulated/private qualifications as *‘not regulated by national or regional legal acts; they are designed and awarded by a range of bodies: private providers, companies, NGOs, trade unions, qualifications regulated by branches/sectors, such as a chamber of commerce or other sectoral organisations (if they are not regulated by legal acts).’*

Qualifications awarded outside formal education and training can take different forms, including micro-credentials (whether offered by public or private providers) and international qualifications. The Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability⁶ was adopted to ensure the development of high-quality micro-credentials with a transparent issuing process to build trust in what they certify and to promote their uptake. The Recommendation invites Member States to support the development of micro-credentials within non-formal and informal learning settings, and to support the integration of micro-credentials in national qualifications frameworks and systems. The Recommendation furthermore specifically states that the *‘EQF is also open to micro-credentials if and where they are first included in national qualifications frameworks’*.

International qualifications can be considered a specific type of qualification that can be awarded outside the formal domain. The EQF Recommendation defines them as *‘a qualification awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body’*. A dedicated EQF AG Standing Group is overseeing on an agreed procedure on exchanging information and advising levelling of international qualifications in NQFs.

³ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2017_189_R_0003

⁴ UNESCO, ETF and Cedefop (2023). Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks 2022, Volume I: thematic chapters

⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/30549fd9-4c11-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0627%2802%29>

4. Reported progress in opening up NQFs to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training

In 2018, a first EQF AG PLA on the topic of inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training into NQFs was organised in Vienna.

Key discussion points from the 2018 PLA:

The PLA featured examples from the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Poland, and Germany. At that time, most of these countries except France were still in the early stages of including qualifications from outside formal education and training into their National Qualifications Frameworks.

Discussions during the PLA highlighted significant heterogeneity across national systems, particularly in terms of the structure and organisation of NQFs, as well as the procedures for including qualifications from outside formal education and training. Participants explored the benefits and challenges of balancing inclusion and trust, recognising that while more open and comprehensive systems allow for greater flexibility, they also require robust quality assurance measures to maintain coherence and credibility for users and stakeholders.

The PLA discussions also emphasised the varying motivations and objectives countries had for including such qualifications. While some focused on labour market relevance, others prioritised transparency and the stimulation of lifelong learning as key drivers. When discussing the development of procedures for including qualifications from outside the formal system, participants identified quality assurance criteria and the content of learning outcomes as the most critical elements for ensuring consistency and credibility. It was also noted that a legal basis for inclusion could help create a more stable and transparent process for integrating such qualifications into NQFs.

Stakeholder involvement emerged as a crucial factor for the acceptance and success of these qualifications. Engaging relevant stakeholders in decisions regarding the assessment of qualifications was considered key, as was ensuring that qualifications are clearly defined in terms of learning outcomes and are understandable to both end users and the labour market.

Cedefop reports considerable progress made since 2019 in including qualifications awarded outside formal education and training into NQFs. Based on data from the European inventory of NQFs in 2022⁷, more than half of the analysed EQF countries (21 of 38, thereof 16 EU Member States) had opened up their frameworks to such qualifications. The data also shows that NQF qualifications awarded outside formal education and training are diverse and vary substantially depending on the national context.

The main benefit of inclusion is seen in that labour market stakeholders and EQF end users see the inclusion qualifications outside the formal domain as a label expressing trust, while providers gain additional visibility and benefit from a higher uptake.

According to the preliminary 2024 data⁸, there are indications that the number of NQFs, which include or are open to qualifications awarded outside formal education has increased. More countries have reported that they plan to start including such qualifications or to include more of them. The landscape of NQF qualifications awarded outside formal education and training remains diverse. Countries often refer to them as qualifications non-regulated by the education ministry (e.g. Netherlands) or as qualifications awarded by other responsible ministries (e.g. Denmark). Another common characteristic of such qualifications is that they are often offered by private

⁷ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/55a83caa-c71a-11ee-95d9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁸ These data are based on information collected from the 27 EU Member States and 4 EFTA countries. The development of the NQF country-specific reports has not been finalised. Cedefop analysis will be concluded once all NQF country-specific reports have been published, thus these findings are still subject to change

providers (e.g. France, Ireland, the Netherlands). Nevertheless, qualifications awarded outside formal education and training can also be provided by public institutions (e.g. Belgium - Flemish Community, Denmark and Sweden). In terms of content and function, it is important to note that these qualifications may be relevant for the labour market context, but also in leisure and voluntary work contexts.

Through the 2024 NQF survey, countries also provided data on how many NQFs include microcredentials and international qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. Regarding microcredentials, the data collected reaffirms Cedefop's previous findings that the term is seldom used as such at national level. Nevertheless, the policy discussion on microcredentials has intensified in most Member States, while the opening-up of NQFs to microcredentials is work in progress. When it comes to international qualifications, an increased number of countries has reported that their NQFs already include or are open to international qualifications.

5. Some approaches to inclusion in NQFs

Generally, the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside the formal system follows a specific procedure for inclusion, the design and setup of which varies across countries. Commonly, the criteria considered include adherence to a learning outcomes-based approach, quality assurance of the qualification, relevance of the qualification, and its alignment with standards (e.g. occupational standards). In some cases, such as in Denmark, the inclusion process is carried out in two stages. In most instances, fees are charged to providers that want to include qualifications in the national framework (e.g. Poland, Netherlands, Denmark, Austria).

NQFs have the potential to assess the quality assurance of qualifications awarded outside formal education settings, thereby enhancing trust in qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. For systems, this means striving to strike balance between demanding administrative procedures and robust quality assurance for qualifications.

The PLA will feature country cases from Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and host country, Poland. In addition, the cases from Denmark, France and the Flemish Community of Belgium provide particularly insightful results (see boxes in the annex for more information).

6. Key questions to be discussed at the PLA

The following key questions will guide the discussions at the PLA:

- What are the requirements and procedures for their inclusion into NQFs (and to what extent do they differ from those for formal qualifications)?
- What are the quality assurance arrangements in place for these qualifications?
- What intentions and expected benefits are related to the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education into NQFs – both from a lifelong learning (re- and upskilling) and labour market perspectives?
- How to navigate challenges and potential pitfalls related to their inclusion into NQFs?
- How can the inclusion of such qualifications support flexible learning pathways and synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways?

Annex: Examples for additional insight from countries not featured at the PLA

Denmark:

In Denmark⁹, a two-phase process of including qualifications awarded outside formal education and training in the Danish NQF (DKQF), lasting approximately 3 months¹⁰, was set in 2019 and evaluated in 2022.¹¹ Providers apply for a level assessment of a qualification to the Danish Accreditation Institution. In the first phase, the institution evaluates each qualification against the following requirements:

- (a) clear description of the purpose and relevance of the qualification to the labour market and/or an area of culture or leisure;
- (b) clear description of the qualification's learning outcomes in relation to the specific DKQF level descriptors (knowledge, skills and competence);
- (c) sustainability of the education programme, in terms of the number of times that it is carried out;
- (d) description of how teaching evaluation is conducted, including student evaluation;
- (e) description of how the learning outcomes are assessed;
- (f) issuing of certificate, indicating the achieved learning outcomes, the DKQF level and the study load.

Once the applicant passes the first phase, the institution in cooperation with an external expert performs a thorough assessment of whether the learning outcomes of the qualification are at the DKQF level that the provider has applied for, the employed teachers hold the necessary academic qualifications, and the teaching evaluation is adequate. The requirements of the procedure were determined by the National Coordination Committee for the DKQF. The inclusion to the DKQF does not provide formal rights to the qualification (e.g. automatic recognition and transfer of credits). An assessment is valid for four years; the provider can apply for a renewal. As of November 2024, 72 applications had been received; 56 have been included to the DKQF and 3 are still in progress. Moreover, 7 applications for renewal have been successfully completed, while 2 have been rejected.

France:

In France, the registration procedure to the RNCP and the RS¹², ensures the quality and transparency of the qualification system. The registration process is the same for both registers. State-issued qualifications are automatically included in the French NQF (NPQF), in the RNCP or the RS (registration by law). Other qualifications are included following approval by the committee set up within the EQF-NCP: France Compétences (registration on demand).

⁹ In 2023, Denmark presented an addendum to their Referencing Report to the EQF Advisory Group. The primary focus of this addendum is on the inclusion of non-formal qualifications into the Danish NQF. The process of including non-formal, private qualifications into the NQF started in 2018, as part of a lifelong learning strategy that sought to achieve better integration of non-formal qualifications. The levelling and inclusion of non-formal qualifications in the NQF takes place as a two-step process. The levelling decision is valid for a period of four years.

¹⁰ This is a revenue-covered activity.

¹¹ Taken from Cedefop (forthcoming), European Inventory of National Qualifications Frameworks 2024 – Denmark.

¹² The French qualification system includes two registers: the RNCP (*Repertoire national des certifications professionnelles*), including levelled qualifications corresponding to a profession; and the Specific Register of Awards (*Répertoire spécifique des certifications et habilitations*, RS), including qualifications without levels corresponding to skills complementary to a profession, but with possible connections with the NPQF through units/blocks of competences.

Registration by law applies to diplomas and qualifications supported by a ministerial order after receiving assent from one of the 11 interministerial advisory committees and following examination by the committee within France Compétences. Registration on demand applies to qualifications issued by other public and private VET providers and labour market stakeholders, after examination by experts within France Compétences and following assent of its committee. Requests to introduce a new, to review or remove an existing qualification are submitted to the professional qualifications department within France Compétences and are examined, based on the applicable criteria, for inclusion either to the RNCP or the RS. There are nine criteria for including qualifications to the RNCP (seven mandatory and two optional) and six criteria for RS (four mandatory and two optional). Qualifications included in the RNCP should:

- (a) consist of an occupational standard (*référentiel d'activités*), a competence standard (*référentiel de compétences*) including knowledge and transversal competences, and an assessment standard (*référentiel d'évaluation*) defining the criteria and methods for assessing learning outcomes;
- (b) be structured in units/blocks of competences ⁽¹³⁾;
- (c) be classified by field of activity and allocation of an NPQF level.

The validity of the registration of RNCP/RS qualifications is maximum five years. To accelerate the matching of the offer of qualifications with skill needs in the sectors, a faster registration process applies for qualifications relating to emerging or rapidly evolving occupations, which can be registered for maximum three years. In 2023, France Compétences updated the [RNCP handbook](#) (*Vademecum*) ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Belgium – Flemish Community:

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, educational and professional qualifications should be understood as reference frameworks, which can be used by individual providers in developing an education or training programme. Educational qualifications can only be obtained via an offer in formal education. Professional qualifications can be awarded by private or public providers outside formal education and training, which are acknowledged/recognised via the procedures laid down by the Act on the Common Quality Framework. Labour market actors (sectoral and/or interprofessional social partners and public employment service) or social organisations are responsible for developing a professional qualification dossier. They are supported by AHOVOKS (EQF-NCP), which coordinates the procedure. The dossier is developed based on one or more professional competence profiles ⁽¹⁵⁾; it should indicate:

- a) the sectors involved,
- b) the title of the partial qualification(s) (if applicable),
- c) the competences provided,
- d) an analysis of the labour market/ social relevance
- e) the coherence with other dossiers or recognised professional and educational qualifications

The dossier is submitted to AHOVOKS, which performs a quality check. Then, the dossier is validated, according to specific method and criteria, by a validation committee composed by an independent chairman, two employees of AHOVOKS (responsible for the secretariat and quality

¹³ A unit/block of competences is not a distinct qualification per se, but an identified part of a vocational qualification, defined as a homogeneous and coherent set of competences contributing to carrying out a professional activity autonomously, and which can be assessed and validated.

¹⁴ Taken from Cedefop (forthcoming), European Inventory of National Qualifications Frameworks 2024 – France.

¹⁵ The profiles are retrieved by the [Competent](#) database. These profiles are drafted and used by the Flemish PES (Source: Internal communication with AHOVOKS).

assurance), two representatives of the interprofessional social partners (appointed by the Social and Economic Council of Flanders -*Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen*, SERV), one of the PES, and one appointed by the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (*Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen*, Vlaio). If the decision is positive (the committee can also reject or ask for a revision of the dossier), a classification committee determines the level of the qualification. The classification committee consists of seven representatives of employers' organisations and trade unions, appointed by the SERV, five representatives of education providers appointed by the Flemish Education Council (*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad*, Vlor), two representatives of public training providers, appointed by the PES and Vlaio and two independent classification experts from AHOVOKS. The committee applies a specific classification method. Subsequently, AHOVOKS reviews the procedure to ensure that it is quality-assured and drafts a recommendation for the Flemish Government which will recognise the professional qualification. Then the qualification will be registered in the qualification database (¹⁶).

¹⁶ A similar procedure is followed for professional qualifications for social roles.