

GREECE

European inventory on NQF 2016

Introduction and context

During recent years, Greece has suffered a multifaceted and deep economic crisis, its most apparent form being the debt crisis. Under this pressure, the country has introduced and is implementing challenging fiscal adjustment measures, resulting in a long and cumulative reduction of GDP. Unemployment in Greece has almost reached a 30%, and is much higher among young people. Despite this difficult economic and social situation, Greece has committed to profound reforms which are crucial for the country within the European context. Education and vocational training issues are a central component of these reforms.

Greece has developed a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning, the Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF), aiming at a coherent and comprehensive system of qualifications from all parts and levels of education and training. The QF for higher education (HE) is a part of the overarching NQF. The developments build on the Act on Lifelong Learning (3879/10) ⁽¹⁾, that introduced levels and the learning outcomes concept as essential elements of qualifications and awards. The act provided the basis for a more coherent and integrated approach to lifelong learning, as coordination of relevant issues is now under the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

The framework is awaiting formal adoption. A draft presidential decree on HQF has been prepared and submitted to the Minister for Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

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 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

⁽¹⁾ Law 3879/2010 on the development of lifelong learning and other provision.
http://www.edulll.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/nomos_-3879_2010.pdf

remains low and has tended to stagnate over time: it stood at 3.0% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 10.7% (European Commission, 2015) 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. Reforms in vocational education and training (VET), underpinned by legislation (2013) ⁽²⁾ and (2014) ⁽³⁾, have been embedded in the HQF. Within the context of developing and updating the HQF ⁽⁴⁾ in line with recent social and economic developments, the HQF aims to:

- (a) improve transparency of quality procedures regarding qualifications and qualification titles;
- (b) enhance horizontal mobility (within and outside the country), as well as vertical mobility (showing pathways that a person can follow to move from one level to another);
- (c) support lifelong learning.

An objective for 2014-15 was to consolidate the HQF as the main lever for reforming the Greek education system.

Levels and use of learning outcomes

An eight-level structure has been proposed for the HQF, reflecting the existing formal education and training system in Greece. 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

⁽²⁾ Law 4186/2013 on restructuring of secondary education and other provisions, <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100472/120536/F1637832161/GRC100472%20Grk.pdf>

⁽³⁾ By Law 4283/2014 on the establishment and function of the council of national policy for education and other provisions, the classification of vocational titles was legislated. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100582/120713/F1116751819/GRC100582%20Grk.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ This section draws on input from a note by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (the designated national coordination point for EQF): *Latest developments of the Hellenic qualifications framework: response to the EQF advisory group, 2015* [unpublished]. <http://www.esos.gr/arthra/47414/ta-8-epipeda-toy-ethnikoy-plaisiyo-prosonton>

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.

Following European education policies, since 2006 Greece has developed – by Ministerial Decree 110998/8-5-2006 ⁽⁵⁾ – a methodology for analysing occupational profiles (standards) incorporating the learning outcomes approach ⁽⁶⁾. This was an early effort to create a methodology for modularising VET curricula and part of a broader strategy aiming at upgrading VET. It was also seen as a precondition for setting up a system for validating informal and non-formal learning and for accrediting training programmes. The decision was taken to shift from task (used in the past) to function, as it has been argued that function provides a broader perception for the content of the outcomes. Authorities developed 202 job profiles based on learning outcomes; updating and renewing outcomes in occupational profiles is a necessity, according to labour market research, surveys, and evaluation of existing curricula. This is a major task for all stakeholders, most importantly for social partners.

Working groups were formed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs to draft learning 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 Law 4186/2013 on restructuring secondary education ⁽⁷⁾. Higher education qualifications are included in the HQF and general descriptors have been developed. Evaluation of higher education institutions has been completed ⁽⁸⁾ and self-certification against the framework of qualifications of the European higher education area is in progress.

The shift to learning outcomes represents 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. One anticipated benefit of the HQF is to promote open dialogue and collaboration

⁽⁵⁾ Common Ministerial Decision No 110998/19-04-2006 (Official Journal issue 566/B’02-05-2006) on the accreditation of occupational profiles.

⁽⁶⁾ See: Dželalija Mile (2015). *Methodology for the design and development of learning outcomes*.

⁽⁷⁾ Law 4186/2013 on restructuring of secondary education and other provisions, <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100472/120536/F1637832161/GR C100472%20Grk.pdf>

⁽⁸⁾ In June 2016, the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency finished evaluation of 36 higher education institutions.

among a wide range of stakeholders; it will also help clarify and reinforce the relationship between education and training and the labour market.

Stakeholder involvement and institutional arrangements

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is the competent authority, responsible for coordinating and monitoring the HQF. 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, link the HQF to EQF, as well as put the HQF and procedures for validation of learning outcomes into practice and assure quality in lifelong learning. EOPPEP operates as the national coordination point (NCP) for EQF and is the awarding body in relation to one qualification type in the framework (vocational training diploma – level 5). EOPPEP cooperates with the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAAA) on quality issues in higher education.

An advisory committee, comprising representatives from public administration, the education and academic community, social partners and external consultants, was established to support EOPPEP in developing the HQF. The members of the advisory committee were appointed by the Minister for Education, Research and Religious Affairs, by social partners, by the National Centre for Public and Local Administration and by Cedefop. Greece is planning to reform the HQF advisory committee which will be consulted for further development.

A steering committee for referencing the HQF to EQF was also established: this involved representatives from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the higher education sector (universities/technological educational institutions), social partners, the HQAAA and international experts. The ministry is also planning to proceed with the next steps, forming a steering committee that will include relevant actors.

A new body, the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE), has been established and is responsible for quality assurance both in general and vocational education. It is fully operational (levels 1, 2, 3, 4) and is working closely with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways ⁽⁹⁾

There is no comprehensive strategy in Greece for validation of non-formal and informal learning, though a national system for the certification of outputs is currently in development ⁽¹⁰⁾. This system aims at certifying qualifications that are expected to boost employment. The presidential decrees (PDs) required to put the system in place are currently drafted in line with the Article 19 of Law 4115/2013 ⁽¹¹⁾; it is anticipated that they will be legislated during 2016. Once the PDs are issued, certification will be implemented according to criteria and processes that will ensure that the qualifications correspond to the requirements of the relevant certified occupational profiles (*Epaggelmatiko Perigramma*). The national system will allow all interested individuals to certify their qualifications, regardless of the learning pathway.

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 new certification system for adult trainers of non-formal learning was designed by EOPPEP and was finalised in 2012 with the contribution of the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning; the goal at the moment is to implement it fully. At the same time it was decided to extend the existing register of adult trainers of non-formal learning ⁽¹²⁾ to include those trainers that have certified educational proficiency ⁽¹³⁾. Under new legislation ⁽¹⁴⁾,

⁽⁹⁾ This section draws mainly on input from the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission et al., forthcoming).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Certification of 'outputs' refers to the certification of graduates of initial vocational training and continuing vocational training, certification of qualifications and falls under the responsibility of EOPPEP (Paragraph 2 of Article 17 of Law 4186/2013 on restructuring of secondary education and other provisions, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100472/120536/F1637832161/GR_C100472%20Grk.pdf).

⁽¹¹⁾ Law 4115/2013 providing for the organisation and function of the Institute of Youth and Lifelong Learning and of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Career Guidance, and other provisions. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100402/120427/F54687558/GRC_100402%20Grk.pdf

⁽¹²⁾ Some 11 500 trainers enrolled in EOPPEP's register of adult trainers have been certified and have become eligible for tuition in non-formal learning programmes.

⁽¹³⁾ Law 4115/2013.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Law 4386/2016 (Article 67) on rules for research and other provisions.

certification procedures are currently open to all interested parties fulfilling prescribed eligibility criteria. The updated system foresees three pathways:

- (a) direct certification of conditions and criteria;
- (b) participation in an assessment process, and then certification;
- (c) enrolment in training programmes and subsequent certification.

Although these are significant steps for the country, validation of non-formal and informal learning is not yet as developed in Greece as in other EU countries. Even though informal and non-formal learning is gaining importance, such learning is not adequately valued and recognised in society.

NQF implementation

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is responsible for HQF implementation, with EOPPEP as the main actor. The framework is an early operational stage. A draft presidential decree entitled *Terms of formulation and implementation of the HQF – Referencing to the EQF* has been prepared and submitted to the Minister for Education, Research and Religious Affairs. For the HQF to become fully operational, important legal measures need to be taken, for instance the legislative framework of the HQF and the legal framework for the validation of non-formal education and informal learning.

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. Having already developed qualifications types, which are a key element in the framework, the country is now placing in each one the individual (named) qualifications expressed in learning outcomes. For example, in level 7 of the HQF, there is the type 'master degree' ⁽¹⁵⁾. EOPPEP has also established a qualifications register ⁽¹⁶⁾, which already

⁽¹⁵⁾ (a) Master degree (MSc) in renewable energy systems. Department of Mechanical Engineering. Faculty of Applied Technology. Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Western Greece;

(b) Master degree in science and technology of food and human consumption. Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. Faculty of Food, Biotechnology and Development. Agricultural University of Athens;

(c) Master Degree in techno-economic management and security of digital systems. Directions: techno-economic management of digital systems/digital systems security. Department of Digital Systems. School of information and communication technologies. University of Piraeus.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Greek qualification register: <http://proson.eoppep.gr>

includes 674 individualised qualifications of the formal educational system expressed in learning outcomes. This has been done in cooperation with the respective educational institutions. HQF (EQF) levels are being indicated on new certificates; 205 certificate supplements have been issued so far with reference to HQF and EQF levels and levels are also being indicated on certificate and diploma supplements (issued by the various HE institutions).

Referencing to the EQF

The HQF was referenced to the EQF in 2015 but has not yet been self-certified against the QF for EHEA. EOPPEP is responsible for referencing to the EQF, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Important lessons and future plans

The HQF is expected to have an important impact on education: there has been increased attention to validation of non-formal and informal learning, improvement of the transparency and quality of the Greek qualification system, and reconstruction of the qualifications registry in accordance with compatibility requirements of both the EQF portal and European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations portal.

Involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in HQF development and implementation is seen as crucial, but remains a challenge. Other challenges include referencing international sectoral qualifications to the HQF, identifying and referencing qualifications awarded for specific economic sectors, such as agriculture, shipping and tourism, and 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 offers entrance through national examinations, in accordance with the constitution.

An update of the evaluation of the education system and of the implementation of the HQF is scheduled for 2016-18 as specific activities are planned. Greek authorities, jointly with the OECD and EC, will review the OECD's evaluation report on the Greek education system by 2016 (Law 4336/2015 ⁽¹⁷⁾). The conclusions will help the reforms already planned by the Ministry of

⁽¹⁷⁾ Law 4336/2015 on provisions regarding pensions:
<http://www.iep.edu.gr/index.php/el/>

Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The impact of HQF in the education system will be a major part of this evaluation. The updated roadmap for 2016-18 includes establishment of labour market needs diagnosis already included in the final draft of the Greek strategic framework for VET, establishment of a quality framework for developing vocational education curricula (already approved by the Institute for Education Policy (IEP) legalisation of the national quality assurance framework for lifelong learning ‘π3’⁽¹⁸⁾, and building up a system for upgrading/updating VET curricula, which will aid the development of new/renewed occupational profiles, curricula based on learning outcomes.

Restructuring of secondary education and upgrade of the apprenticeship system⁽¹⁹⁾ introduces a learning outcomes approach in curriculum design and development. Although the institutional framework and the building capacity of the public bodies underline a significant shift to a learning outcomes approach in all levels and subsystems of learning, common understanding and application of learning outcomes is not yet established; developing necessary methodologies, procedures and standards remains a major challenge.

Further source of information

EOPPEP is the designated EQF NCP: <http://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/>
[accessed 15.7.2016]

Greek national qualifications framework (HQF)

NQF levels	VET	General education	Higher education	EQF levels
8			Doctorate (<i>didaktoriko diploma</i>). (Universities)	8

⁽¹⁸⁾ ‘π3’ is the Greek acronym for the national quality assurance framework for lifelong learning. It denotes ‘quality, always and everywhere’.

<http://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/el/quality-assurance/national-framework-for-quality-assurance-in-lifelong-learning>

⁽¹⁹⁾ Law 4186/2013 on restructuring of secondary education and other provisions: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100472/120536/F1637832161/GR_C100472%20Grk.pdf

NQF levels	VET	General education	Higher education	EQF levels
7			Master degree (<i>metaptychiako diploma eidikefsis</i>) (Universities/technological education institutions (TEI)-higher education)	7
6			Bachelor degree (<i>ptychio</i>) (Universities/TEI-higher education)	6
5	<p>Vocational upper secondary school 'degree' (**) (vocational upper secondary school 'degree'/certificate and apprenticeship class) (**) (<i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-EPAL</i>)</p> <p>Vocational training diploma (Initial vocational training) (post-secondary level) (<i>diploma epaggelmatikis eidikotitas</i>) (vocational training institute) (<i>institutouto epaggelmatikis katartisis, IEK</i>)</p> <p>Vocational training diploma (*) (<i>diploma epaggelmatikis katartisis epipedou metadefterovathmias epaggelmatikis katartisis, IEK</i>) (post-secondary level)</p> <p>Post-secondary and not higher education diploma or 'degree' (**) (<i>diploma/ptychio anoteras scholis</i>)</p>			5
4	<p>Vocational school (<i>epaggelmatikes sxoles</i>) (EPAS) certificate (post-lower secondary level) (<i>ptychio EPAS</i>)</p> <p>Vocational upper secondary school (<i>epaggelmatika lykeia</i>) (EPAL) 'degree' (**) (<i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-EPAL</i>)</p> <p>EPAL certificate (<i>apolitirio epaggelmatikou lykeiou-EPAL</i>)</p>	General upper secondary school certificate (<i>apolytirio lykeiou</i>)		4
3	<p>Vocational training school (SEK) certificate (post-lower secondary level) (<i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-SEK</i>)</p>			3

NQF levels	VET	General education	Higher education	EQF levels
	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>)		2
1		Primary school certificate (compulsory) (<i>apolytirio dimotikou</i>)		1

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

(**) The word 'degree', whenever used within quotation marks, signifies that it is a direct translation from the terminology in Greek as it appears in the Greek legislation (*ptychio*). In Greek, the word *ptychio* is used for titles of study from different education levels (higher, secondary, etc.). It is not to be confused with its usage in the English language, whereby the word degree refers to higher education title of study, i.e. bachelor degree.

Source: Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and EOPPEP, 2015.

List of abbreviations

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

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[URLs accessed 22.11.2016]

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http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/2015/monitor15-vol-2_en.pdf

European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (forthcoming). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016: country report Greece*.