

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

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The Commission presents an evaluation of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for Lifelong Learning.

Purpose of the report: the report presents the EQF experience so far and discusses possible implications for the future. It looks at whether the recommendation in its current form can cope with new challenges caused by rapid socio-economic and technological changes, and if it fosters **flexible learning**.

Challenges include the increasing number of qualifications offered by private providers, more international qualifications, and the recent emergence of **Massive Open Online Courses** (MOOCs), which have the potential to reach many students. This evaluation, together with [the Europass](#) and [the EQAVET](#) evaluations and the [progress report on quality assurance in higher education](#), will help identify challenges for and possible improvements to the European Area of Skills and Qualifications.

What is the EQF? The European Qualifications Framework promotes lifelong learning and improves learner and worker mobility, employability and social integration by **creating a European reference framework for qualifications systems**. The EQF makes it easier to compare and recognise the qualifications of millions of graduates looking for further learning opportunities or entering the labour market across Europe each year.

The EQF introduced eight European reference levels defined in terms of learning outcomes and able to capture all types and levels of qualifications. It is stimulating national governments to make recognising qualifications easier and more transparent: 36 countries voluntarily participate in the EQF (28 EU Member States, five candidate countries, and Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

Main conclusions : findings confirm that the EQF is widely accepted as a reference point for:

- developing qualifications frameworks,
- implementing the learning outcomes approach, and
- enhancing the transparency and recognition of skills and competences.

It could be **central within a future European Area of Skills and Qualifications**. However, implementation delays have created a sense of urgency. The EU should make it possible for learners and workers to make their **skills more visible** no matter where they acquired them. It must make the EQF fully operational as soon as possible.

Based on the evaluation results, the Commission suggests considering a series of measures to enhance the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the EQF:

- Accelerate **EQF referencing and developing national qualifications frameworks**: all countries should develop strong NQFs that are understood and used by stakeholders.
- Strengthen the **role and impact** of qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes at national and European levels: governments should commit to using the learning outcomes approach in all education and training sub-systems.
- Enhance transparent and **coherent** EQF referencing, taking into account the changing nature of qualifications systems.

- Strengthen the link between European quality assurance and qualifications frameworks.
- Improve communication on the EQF, to better reach out to learners, workers and other stakeholders and inform them about the EQF's benefits: countries should set up national qualification databases/ registers and connect these to the EQF portal which should be linked with the European portal on learning opportunities (Ploteus) and ESCO.
- Make better use of the EQF in policies and tools for mobility and lifelong learning, such as credit transfer and recognition.