Basic information

2006/0163(COD) COD - Ordinary legislative procedure (ex-codecision procedure) Recommendation	Procedure completed
European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning **Subject** 4.15.06 Professional qualifications, recognition of qualifications 4.40.01 European area for education, training and lifelong learning 4.40.07 Recognition of diplomas, equivalence of studies and training	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	MANTOVANI Mario (PPE-DE)	26/10/2006

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	DEL CASTILLO VERA Pilar (PPE-DE)	23/11/2006
CULT Culture and Education (Associated committee)	GAĽA Milan (PPE-DE)	18/12/2006
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	PRETS Christa (PSE)	17/01/2007

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	2762	2006-11-13
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	2848	2008-02-14
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	2829	2007-11-15

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Education, Youth, Sport and Culture	-- --
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	-- --

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
05/09/2006	Legislative proposal published	COM(2006)0479	Summary
12/10/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 1st reading		
13/11/2006	Debate in Council		
18/01/2007	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
07/06/2007	Vote in committee, 1st reading		Summary
19/06/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading	A6-0245/2007	
23/10/2007	Debate in Parliament		
24/10/2007	Decision by Parliament, 1st reading	T6-0463/2007	Summary
24/10/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/02/2008	Act adopted by Council after Parliament's 1st reading		
23/04/2008	Final act signed		
23/04/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		
06/05/2008	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/0163(COD)
Procedure type	COD - Ordinary legislative procedure (ex-codecision procedure)
Procedure subtype	Legislation
Legislative instrument	Recommendation
Legal basis	EC Treaty (after Amsterdam) EC 150-p4 EC Treaty (after Amsterdam) EC 149-p4
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/6/41319

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE384.540	22/02/2007	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE384.473	08/05/2007	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE386.487	08/05/2007	
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A6-0245/2007	19/06/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T6-0463/2007	24/10/2007	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Draft final act	03662/2007/LEX	23/04/2008	

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	COM(2006)0479	05/09/2006	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2006)1093	05/09/2006	
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2006)1094	05/09/2006	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2007)6028	21/11/2007	
Follow-up document	COM(2013)0897	19/12/2013	Summary
Commission document (COM)	COM(2016)0383	10/06/2016	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofR	Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0335/2006	13/02/2007	
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0806/2007	30/05/2007	

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
National parliaments	IPEX	
European Commission	EUR-Lex	
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

EP/Council Recommendation 2008/0506(01)
OJ C 111 06.05.2008, p. 0001 Summary

Corrigendum to final act 32017H0615(01)
OJ C 189 15.06.2017, p. 0015 Summary

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

2006/0163(COD) - 22/05/2017 - Corrigendum to final act

ACT: Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and **repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008** on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

BACKGROUND: the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 establishing the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (see the summary of the final act dated 23.4.2008) created a common frame of reference that includes 8 reference levels expressed as learning outcomes with increasing levels of proficiency. **These levels serve as a translation device between different national systems and levels of certification**.

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) aims to improve the transparency, comparability and transferability of qualifications awarded.

This Recommendation aims, in general, to contribute to the **modernisation of education and training systems and to the improvement of employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners**. It also aims at better linking formal, non-formal and informal learning and supporting the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings.

Review the framework proposed in 2008: the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 laid down common principles governing quality assurance in higher education and vocational education and training. These principles respected the principle of subsidiarity. However, an implementation report of the 2013 EQF indicated that further development of the EQF should take place in order to enhance the transparency and comparability of qualifications. The new framework therefore aims to make the certifications clearer and easier to compare.

- **The issue of recognition of migrants' skills:** while the Union's *acquis* on legal immigration and asylum provides for equal treatment with EU nationals, higher levels of overqualification and underemployment persist among third-country nationals with higher education. Cooperation between the Union and third countries on the transparency of qualifications can therefore contribute to the integration of migrants into the Union's labour markets;

- **Subsidiarity and importance of the adopted terms of reference:** this recommendation (2017) **does not replace or define any national framework or system of certification**. It seeks to strengthen the EQF as a common frame of reference comprising **8 levels expressed as learning outcomes** and serving as a **translation mechanism between the different frameworks or certification systems and their levels**. In view of its non-binding nature, the Recommendation is in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in that it supports and complements the action of the Member States by facilitating cooperation between them in order to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of certifications awarded.

CONTENT: the Recommendation proposes a series of actions to be carried out at different levels which can be summarised as follows:

- as regards the **Member States**, it recommends:

- using the EQF to **reference national certification frameworks or systems** and comparing all types and levels of certification in the Union that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems, in particular by referencing their qualification levels to levels of the EQF set out in **Annex II** and by using the criteria set out in **Annex III**;

- reviewing and updating, using the criteria set out in Annex III, the referencing of the levels of the national certification frameworks or systems to the levels of the EQF set out in Annex II;

- ensuring that qualifications with an EQF level are in accordance with the common principles for quality assurance set out in Annex IV;

- **promoting linkages between credit systems and national certification frameworks** or systems and linking them to national certification frameworks or systems. These common principles will not lead to an automatic recognition of qualifications;

- taking steps to ensure that all new certification documents issued by the competent authorities (certificates, diplomas, certificate or diploma supplements) and/or registers of qualifications contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level;

- improve transparency on the EQF criteria and encourage social partners, public employment services, education providers (...) to use the EQF to support the comparison of qualifications and the transparency of learning outcomes.

- as regards **the Commission in cooperation with the Member States and stakeholders within the EQF advisory group**, it recommends:

- supporting the consistent application of the EQF in all Member States;

- supporting the development, on a voluntary basis, of procedures for **the levelling of international qualifications**;

- exploring the possibilities of defining and applying criteria and procedures that allow for the **comparison**, in accordance with international agreements, of national and regional **qualifications frameworks of third countries with the EQF**.

- as regards **the Commission**, it recommends:

- ensuring that the implementation of the Recommendation is supported by actions financed under relevant Union programmes;

- ensuring effective implementation of the EQF by maintaining and fully supporting the EQF Advisory Group established in 2009;

- reviewing and evaluating the measures taken in the light of this recommendation and reporting to the Council, by 2022, on the experience gained and lessons to be learned for the future, including the review and revision of this recommendation.

Annexes: the Recommendation also contains a series of annexes containing the following elements:

- **Annex I:** definitions relevant to the qualifications framework;
- **Annex II:** Descriptors defining the required levels of the EQF with a specific level of knowledge, skills and competences acquired for each reference level described in terms of the learner's "responsibility and autonomy" criteria;
- **Annex III:** Criteria and procedures for matching national certification frameworks or systems with the EQF;
- **Annex IV:** Principles for quality assurance of qualifications in national qualifications frameworks or systems and mapped to the EQF;
- **Annex V:** Principles governing credit system systems linked to national qualifications frameworks or systems, mapped to the EQF;
- **Annex VI:** elements necessary for the electronic publication of information on the certifications corresponding to each level of the EQF.

Repeal: the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 is hereby repealed.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

2006/0163(COD) - 19/12/2013 - Follow-up document

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.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

2006/0163(COD) - 15/11/2007

The Council reached political agreement on a draft Recommendation concerning the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

To recall, in November 2006, pending the European Parliament's opinion, the Council had already agreed a general approach on the Commission proposal. In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty and the joint declaration on practical arrangements for the codecision procedure, a series of informal meetings were subsequently held between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission, with a view to reaching an agreement on this dossier at first reading.

A set of compromise amendments was agreed upon between the three institutions and was duly approved by the European Parliament at its plenary part-session in October 2007. The Council today confirmed its agreement on the amendments adopted by Parliament at first reading.

Formal adoption of the act will take place once the text has been finalised in all the official languages.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

2006/0163(COD) - 05/09/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish a “European Qualifications Framework” for lifelong learning.

PROPOSED ACT: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT: the need for a continuous renewal of skills and knowledge is crucial for the EU to remain competitive. Lifelong learning is, however, complicated by a lack of co-operation between education and training providers. This lack of communication between the various educational authorities makes it hard to move within the European labour market. It also makes it difficult for those working in the EU to pursue genuine lifelong learning. Yet, lifelong learning is essential to transforming Europe into the most competitive and knowledge based society by the year 2010.

The purpose of this Recommendation is the establishment of a “European Qualifications Framework” (EQF). Its primary objective is to act as a neutral reference point for comparing qualifications across different education and training systems. It will act as a tool to strengthen co-operation and mutual trust between the various educational authorities. Ultimately, it will facilitate translation between, and comparison of, qualifications awarded by national authorities.

Concretely speaking, “transparency of qualifications” can be defined as: the degree to which the value of qualifications can be identified and compared on the labour market, in education and training and in a wider social setting. The EQF will allow individuals to judge the relative value of qualifications; allow them to pursue lifelong learning; facilitate employers’ ability to judge the profile and relevance of qualifications and allow education and training providers to compare the content of their own offers to those of other providers. As such it can help act as a quality assurance for both education and training.

There are eight proposed reference levels. These cover the entire span of qualifications from those achieved at the end of compulsory education and training to those awarded at the highest level of academic, professional and vocational education and training. The proposed levels, listed in Annex, are as follows:

- **Level 1:** basic general knowledge; basic skills for completing simple tasks.
- **Level 2:** basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study; basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information to solve tasks and routine problems.
- **Level 3:** knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts; a range of cognitive and practical skills to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, material and information.
- **Level 4:** factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study; a range of cognitive and practical skills needed to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study.
- **Level 5:** comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge; a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills needed to develop creative solutions to abstract problems.
- **Level 6:** advanced knowledge, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles; advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovations, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study.
- **Level 7:** highly specialised knowledge, being at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study; critical awareness of knowledge; specialised problem-solving skills needed in research and/or innovation and ability to integrate knowledge from different fields.
- **Level 8:** knowledge at the most advance frontier; the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques; knowledge of techniques to solve critical problems in research and innovation – ability to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.

The Recommendation also states that Member States should use the EQF as a reference tool to compare qualification levels used in different qualifications systems, relate their qualifications systems to the EQF by linking qualifications levels to the corresponding EQF levels and, where

appropriate, develop a national qualifications framework. Any new qualifications and “Europass” documents should contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level. However, in situations covered by Directive 2005/36/EC *on the recognition of professional qualifications* (for a summary of the Directive see COD/2002/0061), the reference levels will not apply.

In other provisions, the Recommendation suggests that Member States use a learning outcomes based approach to defining qualifications. Learner-outcome meaning what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. It is also recommended that Member States designate a national EQF centre to support and co-ordinate the relationship between the national qualifications system and the EQF; to establish an EQF advisory group ensuring overall coherence and to monitor the implementation of the EQF.

Decisions on whether or not to use the EQF must be based on a commitment to quality assurance. Introducing systems for quality assurance at all relevant levels of education and training – and in relation to the co-operation process itself, is crucial to developing mutual trust. The implementation of the EQF must therefore take account of the European Parliament and Council Recommendation *on further European co-operation in quality assurance in higher education*.

On a final point, the proposal recommends that national qualifications systems be related to the EQF by 2009 and that new qualifications and Europass documents contain a reference to the EQF level by 2011.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

2006/0163(COD) - 24/10/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Mario **MANTOVANI** (EPP-ED, IT) and made several amendments to the Commission’s proposal. The principal ones are as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** Member States should use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of the different qualifications systems and to promote both lifelong learning and equal opportunities in the knowledge-based society, as well as the further integration of the European labour market, while respecting the rich diversity of national education systems;

- **Recommendation 2:** Member States should relate their national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010, (rather than 2011 as proposed by the Commission) in particular by referencing in a transparent manner their qualification levels to the levels set out in Annex II, and, where considered appropriate, by developing national qualifications frameworks in accordance with national legislation and practice;

- **Recommendation 3:** Member States should adopt measures, as appropriate, so that, by 2012, (rather than 2011 as the Commission had proposed) all new qualification certificates, diplomas and “Europass” documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level;

- **Recommendations 4:** Member States should use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning in accordance with the common European principles agreed in the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004, paying particular attention to those citizens most likely to be subject to unemployment or insecure forms of employment, for whom such an approach could help increase participation in lifelong learning and access to the labour market;

- **Recommendation 5:** Member States should promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education and training set out in Annex III when relating higher education and vocational education and training qualifications within national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework;

- **Recommendation 6:** Member States should designate ▌national coordination points, linked to the particular structures and requirements of the Member States, to support and, in conjunction with other relevant national authorities, to guide the relationship between the national qualifications system and the European Qualifications Framework, in order to promote the quality and transparency of that relationship.

Parliament substituted “national coordination points” are to be substituted for “national centres”.

The list of the Commission’s Intentions was also amended:

- Parliament stressed the exchange of good practice and testing - inter alia through voluntary peer review and pilot projects under Community programmes, launching information and consultation exercises with social dialogue committees - and developing support and guidance material;

- the Commission should establish, within one year of the adoption of the Recommendation, a European Qualifications Framework advisory group (composed of representatives of Member States and involving the European social partners) responsible for providing overall coherence and promoting transparency of the process of relating qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework;

- it should assess and evaluate, in cooperation with the Member States and after consulting the stakeholders concerned, the action taken in response to this Recommendation, including the remit and duration of the advisory group, and report, five years after its adoption, to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, the possible review and revision of the Recommendation;

- a new Intention 4 states that the Commission should promote close links between the European Qualifications Framework and existing or future European systems for credit transfer and accumulation in higher education and vocational education and training, in order to improve citizens' mobility and facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes

Lastly, some amendments are made to the Annexes. A list of definitions was inserted as Annex I.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

2006/0163(COD) - 23/04/2008 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish a “European Qualifications Framework” for lifelong learning.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

CONTENT: having reached agreement at first reading, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework.

The objective of this Recommendation is to create a common reference framework which will serve as a translation device between different qualifications systems and their levels, whether for general and higher education or for vocational education and training. This will improve the transparency, comparability and portability of citizens' qualifications issued in accordance with the practice in the different Member States. Each level of qualification should, in principle, be attainable by way of a variety of educational and career paths. The European Qualifications Framework will, moreover, enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common European reference point and thus show the relationship between international sectoral qualifications and national qualifications systems.

The Recommendation therefore contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners. Transparent quality assurance principles and information exchange will support its implementation, by helping to build mutual trust.

A series of non-binding recommendations are addressed to Member States, inter alia:

- they should use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of the different qualifications systems;
- relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010;
- adopt measures, as appropriate, so that, by 2012, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and ‘Europass’ documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level;
- use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning paying particular attention to those citizens most likely to be subject to unemployment or insecure forms of employment;
- promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education and training set out in Annex III of the Recommendation;
- designate national coordination points linked to the particular structures and requirements of the Member States in order to support and, in conjunction with other relevant national authorities, guide the relationship between national qualifications systems and the European Qualifications Framework.

Parliament and Council endorse the Commission’s intentions to:

- support Member States in carrying out the above tasks, in particular by facilitating cooperation, exchanging good practice and testing and developing support and guidance material;
- establish, by 23 April 2009, a European Qualifications Framework advisory group;
- evaluate the action taken in response to the Recommendation, including the remit and duration of the advisory group, and, by 23 April 2013, report on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, the possible revision of the Recommendation;
- promote close links between the European Qualifications Framework and existing or future European systems for credit transfer and accumulation in higher education and vocational education and training, in order to improve citizens' mobility and facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the Recommendation includes three Annexes, the first contains useful definitions. The second contains descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Each of the levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications. The third sets out common principles for quality assurance in higher education and vocational education and training in the context of the European Qualifications Framework.