

NQF state of play



Greece 2018

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Introduction and context

Greece has one of the lowest percentages of students who leave education and training early in the EU (6.0% in 2017, compared to the 10.6% EU average). However, spending on education is not sufficient as it was severely affected by the crisis. There are disparities in student performance and in the early school leaving rate, linked to socioeconomic background and migrant status. Integration of refugee children in mainstream education has been challenging, especially on the islands where most refugee children still lack access to education, but significant efforts have been made by the Greek government in this respect. The Greek population lacks basic digital skills (46% in 2017) and the country remains in 25th position within the EU. While the rate of tertiary attainment at 43.7% in 2017 exceeds the EU average of 39.9%, only 55.8% of recent tertiary graduates have a job, compared to 84.9 % across the EU, and the mismatches between qualifications and positions held in employment are frequent. There is also a strong outflow of highly skilled university graduates.

In order to strengthen the provision of vocational education and training, the apprenticeship system was expanded. Greece introduced an optional fourth apprenticeship year for upper secondary VET graduates, which gives access to EQF level 5 qualifications. Following the 2016 national strategic framework to improve the quality of VET and apprenticeships ([1]) the apprenticeship year of vocational upper secondary school (*Epagelmatiko Lykeio* – EPAL) was regulated and the quality framework for VET curricula and apprenticeships was set. From October 2017, following an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs ([2]), *A new beginning for EPAL*, basic skills-enhancing measures, socio-psychological support and integration actions were piloted as further support to first grade EPAL students. Nevertheless, ensuring the attractiveness of VET and raising participation in adult learning remained a challenge (European Commission, 2018).

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 Greek authority responsible for the accreditation of higher education programmes (HQAAA) ([3]), uses, as evaluation criteria, the learning outcomes approach and expected competences in

accordance with the national qualifications framework for higher education ([4]). In the Greek legal framework, the main types of HE qualification are connected to NQF levels ([5]).

The NQF developments build on the Act on lifelong learning (3879/10) ([6]), which 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. The NQF also forms an integrated part of the overall national qualification system, including links to the relevant legislation in different policy areas, such as the National strategic plan for the improvement of vocational education and training and of apprenticeship, issued in April 2016 ([7]).

The presidential decree – under development – will further strengthen the legal basis of the NQF. The draft has been submitted to the Minister for Education, Research and Religious Affairs for formal adoption, which is still pending.

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 and learning more generally. The aim of HQF is to create a coherent and comprehensive system of classification of all qualifications obtained from formal, non-formal education and informal learning in Greece to aid transparency and comparability of qualifications and promote mobility of learners and workers. This will be done gradually. In the first phase, the objective is the classification of qualifications within the formal education system of the country. At a later stage a classification system will be developed for qualifications acquired through non-formal education and informal learning (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

Compared to other EU countries, participation of adults in lifelong learning in Greece remains low and has tended to stagnate over time: it stood at 4.5% in 2017, compared to an EU average of 10.9% (European Commission, 2018) and systematic and coherent policies have largely been lacking. The 2015 National reform programme ([8]) recognised that Greece was still in need of a long-term strategic vision for improving access to lifelong learning. 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. Within the context of developing and updating the HQF ([9]) in line with recent social and economic developments, the HQF aims to:

- a. improve transparency of quality procedures for qualifications and qualification titles;
- b. increase 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.

HQF is a communication and transparency framework, but is also intended to be reforming. In recent years it has become a main level for

reforming the Greek education system. For example, the vocational upper secondary school degree of level 5 – post-secondary cycle (one year of apprenticeship class after three years of vocational upper secondary school of level 4) – has been regulated with relevant laws. ([10])

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

An eight-level structure has been developed 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 final objective is to have a comprehensive framework, covering all levels and types of qualification. HQAAA is responsible for elaborating the QF for HE, based on HQF qualification types and level descriptors, developed by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). 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 ([11]) – a methodology for analysing occupational profiles (standards) incorporating the learning outcomes approach ([12]). This was an early effort to create a methodology for modularising VET curricula and part of a broader strategy aimed 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. The relevant legislative framework is under development.

Working groups were formed under the auspices of the ministry of education to draft learning outcomes of qualifications provided in subsystems of formal education, and to suggest their allocation to the eight levels of the HQF. Reforms in general education and VET were initiated under Law 4186/2013 ([13]) on restructuring secondary education ([14]). Higher education qualifications are included in the HQF register and general descriptors of HE programmes have been developed in cooperation with higher education institutions. Evaluation of higher education institutions has been completed ([15]) and self-certification

against the framework of qualifications of the European higher education area is in progress ([16]).

The reforms that were initiated with Law 4186/2013 brought about developments in curriculum reform on the basis of learning outcomes. These developments have intensified over the last two years, starting from the post-secondary year/apprenticeship class. The ministry of education cooperated with the Finnish organisation OMNIA (2016/17) under an EU structural reform support services joint project for the implementation of the national strategic framework for the upgrading of VET and apprenticeship ([17]) in Greece. One of the project deliverables was the training of counsellors and teachers to reform curricula based on learning outcomes. In 2017, a ministerial decision on a quality framework for VET curricula was adopted ([18]). The content of the decision included the definition of learning outcomes, the connection with occupational profiles, and issues regarding the design of VET curricula. Other ministerial decisions ([19]) ([20]) taken were related to the curricula of the apprenticeship classes, based on learning outcomes, the apprenticeship certification scheme ([21]) and assessment of apprenticeship courses ([22]). Currently the development of vocational education curricula (400 subjects) based on learning outcomes is a major task to be undertaken by the Institute for Educational Policy ([23]).

The shift to learning outcomes represents a significant change in the Greek system, which, until now, has mainly relied on an 'input' approach. The outcomes-based HQF is expected to support design of outcomes-based qualifications. One anticipated benefit of the HQF is to promote open dialogue and collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders; it will also help clarify and reinforce the relationship between education and training and the labour market.

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The ministry of education 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 HQAAA ([24]) on quality issues in higher education and is the EQAVET national reference point (NRP), so there is coordination of the respective activities of the two national points regarding the quality subjects that arise from the implementation of NQF. The work programme of the national coordination point (NCP) 2018-20 will include an integrated communication strategy developed among EOPPEP and quality assurance agencies such as HQAAA.

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 and implementing the HQF. The members of the advisory committee were appointed by the ministry of education, 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 new advisory committee will be formalised by the Greek ministry of education. Till then, the main work of HQF's implementation is done by EOPPEP.

An independent administrative authority, the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE), has been established ([25]) and is responsible for quality assurance both in general and vocational education. It is fully operational (qualifications at levels 1, 2, 3, 4) and is working closely with the ministry of education.

Involvement of social partners is very important for the framework. Their representatives are members of the governing board of EOPPEP, the Central Examination Board for the Certification of Vocational Training (KEEPEK) ([26]) responsible for the accreditation of post-secondary IVET,

as well as of the committees for the development of occupational profiles/VET curricula. Social partners also take part in the new National Apprentice Coordination Body (ESOM), an advisory body on apprenticeship issues established by Law of 26 February 2018 ([27]). ESOM can cooperate with chambers, foundations and research organisations and other bodies to fulfil its purpose.

The National Council of Education (ESYP) has been reformed into the National Council for Education and Human Resources Development (ESEKAAD) ([28]). ESEKAAD now includes many representatives closely involved with VET issues. Its mandate has been extended to the overall link between education and the labour market ([29]).

A significant number of private education bodies have engaged with EOPPEP and expressed interest in the inclusion of their awards (from formal or non-formal education) in the framework. A dialogue has also started with the Greek recognition and equivalence committees and competent authorities ([30]) on the role and contribution of the framework to the recognition and equivalence of awarded qualifications.

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

[31]

There has been slow progress in Greece in developing a framework for validation that can encompass non-formal and informal learning gained through work experience. A national system for the certification of outputs started development in 2016, expected to boost employment, but progress has not been quick. In 2018, this system remains one of the strategic objectives of EOPPEP. Once it is in place, certification of learning outcomes/outputs will follow criteria and processes that will ensure that the certified learning outcomes will lead to qualifications that correspond to the requirements of the relevant occupational profiles (*Epaggelmatiko perigramma*).

During the past two years, continuing vocational education and training (CVET) has been the policy priority making the biggest progress. A regulatory framework has been developed for the operation of lifelong learning centres (*Kentra dia viou mathisis* (KDBM)), which offer continuous vocational training, general adult education, vocational guidance and lifelong counselling.

According to Law 4186/2013, the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning of the ministry of education is responsible for licencing and monitoring institutes of vocational training (IEK) and EOPPEP is responsible for accreditation of their training programmes, to boost quality assurance and enable progression pathways. During 2018, around 40 IEK programmes were accredited, by decision of EOPPEP's Board of Directors.

Legislative provision for a new type of diploma at level 5 of the HQF and EQF has recently been prepared. This relates to the development of two-year, post-secondary vocational training programmes (KEE) ([32]) provided by universities, in 10 specialisations as of September 2018. The curriculum will provide specialised knowledge and skills for highly qualified technicians. Access to these programmes is foreseen just for upper secondary school leaving (EPAL) graduates (Cedefop, 2018b). According to Law 4485/2017 and Law 4521/2018, these training programmes lead to level 5 qualifications: they are not described as short cycle HE programmes and their qualification type descriptors have not

yet been developed. These programmes will be accredited by HE directly (the council of each university will submit them to the ministry of education for final approval). The criteria for EPAL graduate enrolment to the programmes will be decided by each council; in addition to the final degree grade, their working experience and other social criteria will be considered

An example of validation of non-formal learning in Greece started since 2014, with adult trainers in non-formal learning. These trainers need to have certified educational competence/proficiency to train in non-formal learning programmes funded by public resources ([33]). More specifically, enrolment for the examinations means meeting certain criteria regarding educational attainment or proven professional experience. 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 ([34]).

Currently, a sectoral focus is in place for the certification of private security personnel.

Progress has been made on the upskilling pathways recommendation ([35]) in terms of offering opportunities for basic skills training to low-skilled adults. A *memorandum* of cooperation is planned to be signed between EOPPEP (the validation authority) and the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) which is the Greek public employment service (PES). Stakeholders have come together on occasions during the first half of 2018 to develop their dialogue on upskilling pathways and validation; this dialogue is set to continue during 2019.

On a final note, the apprenticeship year attached to IVET (*Mathiteia* IEK) has been initiated and a quality framework has been developed ([36]).

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. A cultural shift would also be required in favour of learning outcomes, to support steps towards recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

NQF implementation and impact

The ministry of education is responsible for HQF implementation, with EOPPEP as the main actor. The framework is at 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 to strengthen its legal basis. This is an important step in moving into a full operational stage. The legal framework for the validation of non-formal education and informal learning also need to be finalised and approved.

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 qualification types, which is 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' ([37]). EOPPEP has also established a qualifications register ([38]), which already includes 724 qualifications of the formal education system expressed in learning outcomes; it is linked to the European Commission's portal on learning opportunities and qualifications ([39]). This has been done in cooperation with the respective education institutions. The register has been used as a pilot project to link the learning outcomes of the qualifications to the relevant ESCO pillar ([40]).

HQF (EQF) levels are being indicated on new certificates and diploma supplements, for instance issued by the various HE institutions ([41]); 205 certificate supplements have been issued so far with reference to HQF and EQF levels, mostly for IEK diplomas and EPAL apprenticeship class degrees ([42]).

The main challenge preventing the indication of NQF and EQF levels on new certificates is the reluctance of awarding bodies (universities and other higher education institutions) to include this kind of information on their diploma supplements (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). In terms of levelling, the qualifications that raise specific challenges are related to level 5. Qualifications from tertiary but not higher education coexist with qualifications in vocational training and this has become a subject of reflection among the interested parties).

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 (Cedefop, 2018a). EOPPEP is the statutory body for the development and implementation of the HQF and the referencing with the EQF, under the supervision of the ministry of education.

Important lessons and future plans

The HQF is expected to have an important impact on education and training: 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 register in accordance with compatibility requirements of both the EQF portal and European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations portal (ESCO). An integrated communication strategy has been designed by the Hellenic EQF NCP and has been updated annually to increase the use and visibility of the framework. A creative design has also been produced with infographics to strengthen the identity and branding of the framework.

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, including non-formal qualifications and the rest of higher education qualifications to HQF levels 6-8, as well as 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 updated evaluation of HQF implementation and its impact in the Greek education system will take place during 2018-20. The conclusions will help the reforms already planned by the ministry of education. The updated roadmap for 2018/19 (EOPPEP, 2016) includes the development of methodology (by EOPPEP) for classifying qualifications (knowledge, skills and competences) acquired through non-formal education in the HQF. Upon EOPPEP's authorisation, the awarding bodies will gain access to the qualifications register with a view to updating the qualifications they award and adding new ones. An upgraded version of HQF is expected.

Restructuring of secondary education and upgrade of the apprenticeship system ([43]) is introducing 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.

The HQF is currently a communicative framework that promotes transparency, but with an important reform role as well; qualifications types defined in learning outcomes require a review of all qualifications in terms of learning outcomes to be included in the qualifications register; further work to modernise internal and external quality assurance systems, as well as validation of non-formal and informal learning, will be needed to enhance the reform role of the framework (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

Main sources of information

- EOPPEP (the national organisation for the certification of qualifications and vocational guidance) is the designated EQF NCP:

<http://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/>

- Greek qualifications register: <http://proson.eoppep.gr>

- Further information about the HQF and the EQF: <http://nqf.gov.gr/>

- EOPPEP (2016). Greece EQF referencing report:

https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/greek_referencing_repo...

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	Doctorate (Universities) (Διδακτορικό Δίπλωμα)	8
7	Master degree (Universities/technological educational institutions (TEI)) (Μεταπτυχιακό Δίπλωμα Ειδίκευσης)	7
6	Bachelor degree (Universities/TEI -higher education) (Πτυχίο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης)	6

Vocational post-secondary school 'degree' ()
for graduates of EPAL apprenticeship class, level
5 (post-secondary level) (Πτυχίο
Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και
Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 5 - ΕΠΑΛ)**

(**) The word 'degree' used with quotation marks is a direct translation from the Greek terminology as it appears in the 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, where degree refers to a higher education title of study, i.e. bachelor degree.

**Vocational training diploma (post-secondary
level) (vocational training institute) (Δίπλωμα
Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και
Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 5) (Ινστιτούτο
Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΙΕΚ))**

**Vocational training diploma (*) (post-secondary
level) (Δίπλωμα Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας,
Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου
Μεταδευτεροβάθμιας Επαγγελματικής
Κατάρτισης, ΙΕΚ)**

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

**Post-secondary not-tertiary education diploma
or 'degree' (**) (Δίπλωμα ή Πτυχίο Ανωτέρας
Σχολής)**

(**) The word 'degree' used with quotation marks is a direct translation from the Greek terminology as it appears in the 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, where degree refers to a higher education title of study, i.e. bachelor degree.

4	General upper secondary school leaving certificate (Απολυτήριο Γενικού Λυκείου) Vocational school (EPAS) certificate (Επαγγελματικές Σχολές (ΕΠΑΣ) - (Πτυχίο ΕΠΑΣ)) Vocational upper secondary school (EPAL) 'degree' (**) (Επαγγελματικά Λύκεια (ΕΠΑΛ) (Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 4- ΕΠΑΛ)) (**) The word 'degree' used with quotation marks is a direct translation from the Greek terminology as it appears in the 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, where degree refers to a higher education title of study, i.e. bachelor degree. EPAL certificate (Απολυτήριο Επαγγελματικού Λυκείου - ΕΠΑΛ Επιπέδου 4)	4
3	Vocational training school - certificate (post lower secondary level) (***) (Σχολές Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΣΕΚ - ΣΕΚ Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας Επιπέδου 3 - ΣΕΚ)) (***) This programme was abolished by law 4386/2016. Cohorts already enrolled at that time will be able to complete their studies and can still acquire the qualification; the last one is expected to graduate in 2018-19. IEK certificate (*) (initial vocational training-post lower secondary level) (Πιστοποιητικό Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, Επίπεδο 1- ΙΕΚ) (*) This qualification is no longer being awarded since the enactment of Law 4186/2013.	3
2	Lower secondary school certificate (3 years) (Απολυτήριο Γυμνασίου)	2

1

**Primary school certificate (6 years) (Απολυτήριο
Δημοτικού)**

1

Acronyms

ADIPPDE	Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education
CVET	continuous vocational education and training
EOPPEP	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance
EPAL	Επαγγελματικά Λύκεια [vocational upper secondary school]
EPAS	Επαγγελματικές Σχολές [vocational school]
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESEKAAD	National Council for Education and Human Resources Development
ESOM	National Apprentice Coordination Body
ESCO	European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations portal
ESYP	National Council of Education
EU	European Union
HQAAA	Αρχή διασφάλισης και πιστοποίησης της ποιότητας στην ανωτάτη εκπαίδευση [Greek authority responsible for the accreditation of higher education programmes of study]
HQF	Hellenic qualifications framework
IEK	Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης [vocational training institute]
IVET	initial vocational education and training
KDVM	Κέντρα Δια Βίου Μάθησης [lifelong learning centres]
KEE	Κέντρα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης [vocational education centres]

KEEPEK	Central Examination Board for the Certification of Vocational Training
NRP	national reference point
OAED	Manpower Employment Organisation
PES	public employment service
SEK	Σχολή Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης [vocational training school]
TEI	Τεχνολογικά Επαγγελματικά Ινστιτούτα [technological educational institutions]

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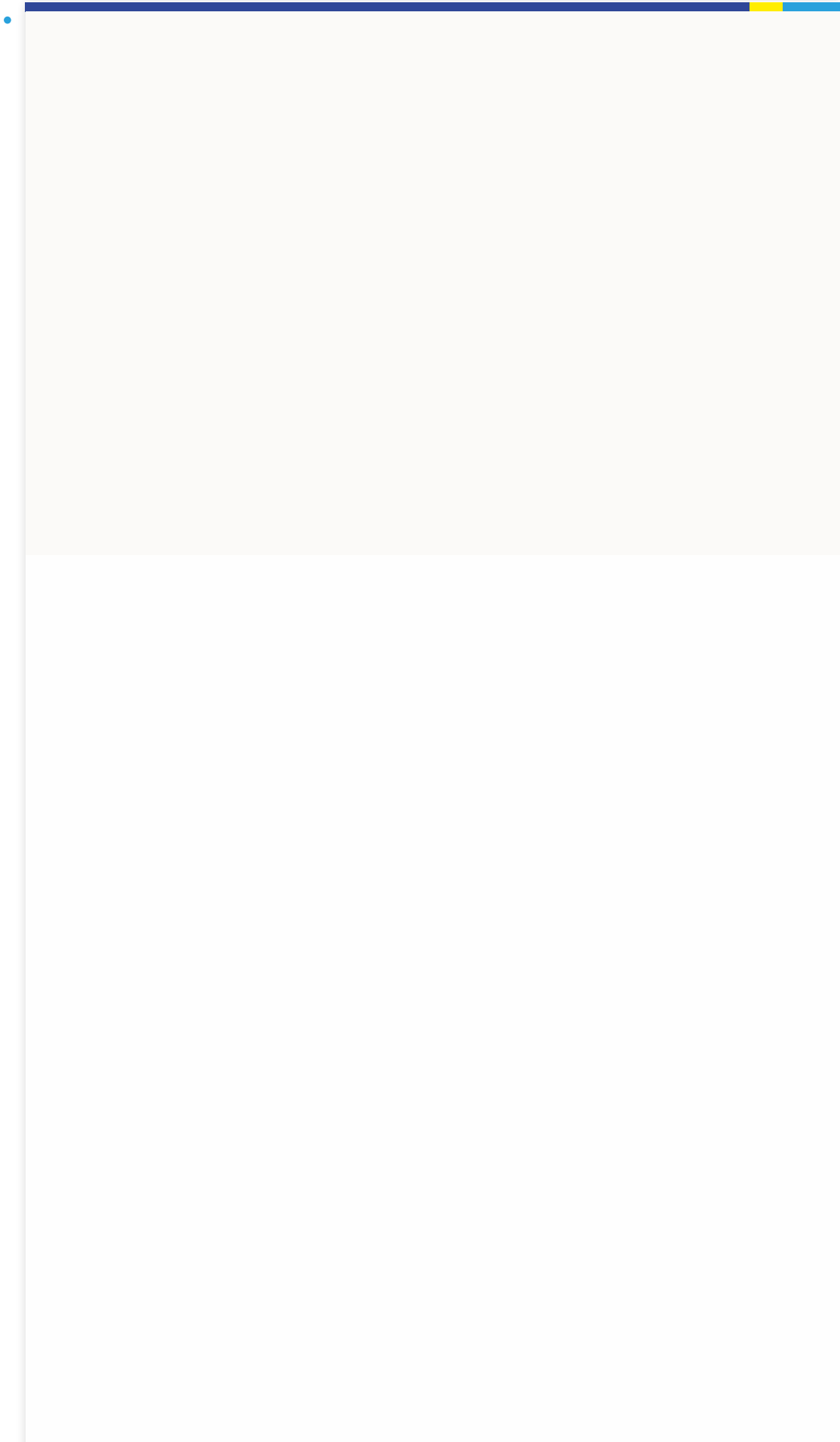
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Related content



2018

Greece - European inventory on NQF 2018

European inventory of NQF



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