

NQF state of play

 **Romania 2020**

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Overview

Stage of development: [Operational stage](#)

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:

Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to qualifications obtained through validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Government decision 918/2013 on the approval of the NQF (2013) (in Romanian) Government decision 132/2018 amending and supplementing GD No 918/2013 on the approval of the NQF (2018) and harmonised with the 2017 EQF recommendation (in Romanian)

NQF/EQF website:

[Website](#)

Qualifications register/database:

[National register of professional qualifications](#)

[National register of qualifications for higher education](#)

Introduction and context

Relatively low government investment in education and training (3.2% in 2018) ([1]) particularly affects pre-university education; there is a need for system modernisation, increased quality, equity, and efficiency. School reform has included the introduction of a competence-based curriculum in primary and secondary education, and training of teachers to use it. While declining, the percentage of pupils who leave education and training early is still high (15.3% in 2019) ([2]), with large disparities between urban and rural areas. An early warning mechanism is being developed to tackle this issue and the availability of second chance programmes has been improving. Integrating the Roma population into education and onto the labour market remains a challenge. The rate of tertiary education attainment is low (25.8% in 2019, compared to 40.3% EU average) ([3]), coupled with a high rate of emigration. The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates was 76.1% in 2019, below the EU average of 80.9% ([4]) and skill shortages remain a challenge; efforts are needed to increase the labour-market relevance of higher education and VET. Participation in VET at upper secondary level is relatively high (56.2% in 2017) (European Commission, 2019). An increasing number of students are enrolled on the dual VET pathway launched in 2017/18, leading to an NQF/EQF level 3 qualification, and efforts are being made to expand this (Cedefop and Refernet, 2020). Very few adults participate in lifelong learning (1.3% in 2019) ([5]), despite a need for upskilling and reskilling. Legislative measures to establish community lifelong learning centres were adopted in 2017, but implementation is slow (European Commission, 2019).

The Romanian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (ROQF) was adopted in 2013 by Government Decision No 918/2013 (further amended in 2015 and 2018), in response to the EQF initiative, aiming to increase transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications. It closely follows the eight-level structure of the EQF and covers the whole spectrum of nationally recognised qualifications regardless of learning context, including those acquired through validation of non-formal learning. The framework builds on reforms in VET and development of competence-based qualifications since the 1990s. Parallel work in higher education resulted in the development of a national qualifications framework for higher education (QFHE) in line with the Bologna process, self-certified to QF-EHEA in 2011, and now a constitutive part of the comprehensive ROQF. The National Qualifications

Authority (NQA) was established in 2011 by merging previous bodies responsible for qualifications and was tasked with the development and implementation of the comprehensive ROQF. The NQA is the national contact point for the EQF (EQF-NCP) and, since 2018, it has also been the National Europass Centre.

The ROQF is now operational. Implementation work has focused on developing qualifications registers, clarifying procedures and methodologies for inclusion of qualifications in the registers, and updating the legal basis. The framework was slightly revised following the adoption of the 2017 Council recommendation on the EQF for lifelong learning. As of 1 January 2019, it is required that all qualification documents and supplements, and all qualification registers, include a reference to the corresponding NQF level. The ROQF is believed to have an increasing influence on the review of qualifications, curricula, and qualification, occupational and training standards.

The ROQF was referenced to the EQF in April 2018.

Policy objectives

The ROQF aims to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications, to support mobility both in education and training and on the labour market. It is also seen as a tool to support national reforms and modernisation of education and training. It opens up the possibility to address several issues, such as coherence and progression in the education system, use of validation of non-formal learning, adult participation in lifelong learning, and transitions between education and work. For instance, NQF/EQF level 1 has recently been used to support upskilling of low-qualified adults: a six-month apprenticeship programme (not yet available) was created, and occupational standards and a training offer are being prepared (European Commission, 2019)

The ROQF is linked to a number of policy strategies in education, training and employment. One of the action lines of the Strategy for VET (2016-20) ([6]) called for the update of tools for describing occupations and qualifications, curricula and curricular auxiliaries according to NQF qualification levels, for better interconnection among subsystems, for increased mobility in VET, and increased relevance for the labour market. Developing the ROQF and better coordination between stakeholders was highlighted as a cross-cutting action contributing to two of the strategic pillars of the National strategy for lifelong learning 2015-20 ([7]): Pillar 2, increasing quality and relevance, and Pillar 3, partnerships. The national sustainable development strategy *Horizons 2013-2020-2030* ([8]) also makes reference to the ROQF.

According to the referencing report (Ministry of Education and NQA, 2018), the process of referencing the ROQF to the EQF has contributed to the development of a qualifications culture, built on the principles of quality, transparency, transferability and progression.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

The ROQF comprises eight qualification levels that can be acquired in education and training, in initial and continuing vocational education and training (IVET and CVET), apprenticeship, general education and higher education, and by validation of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning contexts. National level descriptors are identical to EQF level descriptors. They are defined in terms of three categories of learning outcomes: knowledge (theoretical and/or factual); skills, divided into cognitive skills (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical skills (manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments); and responsibility and autonomy ([9]).

There is commitment to, and visible preoccupation with, strengthening the learning outcomes approach as part of the national reform programme. The VET sector is at the forefront, responding directly to social and economic needs. Initial vocational and technical qualifications have been developed since 2003 based on training standards with units of learning outcomes, in turn based on occupational standards ([10]). Vocational training standards have been developed in collaboration with the social partners, validated by sectoral committees, and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research. The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training offers methodological support. New curricula have been designed. Occupational standards are used in continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and are based on elements of competence to be proved at the workplace. The standards are approved by the National Qualifications Authority, after validation by sectoral committees (Cedefop, 2019). The new occupational standards include a curriculum unique to each occupation listed in the classification of occupations. Implementation of the learning outcomes approach in adult education is at an early stage, partly due to a diversified institutional landscape with different types of institutions, programmes and organisational arrangements. Within the project National coordinators for the implementation of the European agenda for adult learning ([11]), NQA developed a guide for writing learning outcomes in cooperation with education and labour market stakeholders, and carried out dissemination activities.

In higher education, qualifications are linked to the European credit transfer system (ECTS), which is compulsory for all higher education

institutions in Romania. Study programmes are based on occupational standards, which aim to express learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. According to a Cedefop study, there is a challenge in using competence-based models in designing curricula, learning resources and assessment tools (Cedefop, 2016). A methodological framework for developing study programmes based on learning outcomes, to be used mainly by universities, is planned to be developed in 2021 in the frame of an ESF-funded project ([\[12\]](#)) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The involvement of stakeholders in the development of the NQF is underpinned by the National Education Law No 1/2011 ([13]). The NQF itself was adopted through Government Decision No 918/2013, subsequently amended by Government Decision No 567/2015 and Government Decision No 132/2018 ([14]). The main body responsible for developing and implementing the comprehensive ROQF is the National Qualifications Authority, NQA (*Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari*, ANC). It is the national coordination point (NCP) for EQF and, since 2018, it is also the national Europass centre. NQA was established in June 2011, under the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Research, bringing together the National Council for Adult Vocational Training, in charge of CVET qualifications, and the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment, responsible for higher education qualifications. The NQA proposes elements of national policies and strategies, develops and updates methodologies for NQF implementation, and develops instruments for monitoring and evaluating the NQF. It is responsible for the national qualifications registers and for ensuring compatibility of the national qualifications system with European and international qualifications policies and tools. The bodies responsible for general education and initial VET are, respectively, the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

Quality assurance in education and training, for which the NQF is seen as a relevant tool, is coordinated through the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education. These are responsible for accreditation of education providers and programmes in higher education and, respectively, in general education and initial VET. The NQA is responsible for quality assurance in non-formal and informal learning, through the National Accreditation Centre, which authorises assessment centres for competences obtained by ways other than formal. The National Group for Quality Assurance is an inter-institutional structure that ensures coordination of quality assurance in vocational education and training. Sectoral committees play an important role in the development and quality assurance of VET qualifications.

The clear governance structure for the development of the NQF, the strong role of NQA as initiator of legislation, and a good human resource capacity are positive aspects. However, approval and implementation of legislative proposals may be slow.

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

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A legislative framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Romania dates back to 2004 ([16]) when the process of assessment and certification of professional competences obtained in ways other than formal was first defined and described. The National Education Law No 1/2011 ([17]) reaffirmed the role of validation in lifelong learning policies, defined as 'the process of assessment and certification of informal and non-formal learning'. The National strategy for lifelong learning (2015-20) ([18]) provided a direction for developing validation mechanisms and addressing issues related to financial incentives, information, counselling and access to validation, especially for disadvantaged groups. The action plan for the implementation of the strategy included measures related to the recognition of prior learning, including the recognition of competences acquired abroad.

The establishment in 2014 of a dedicated structure for validation within the the National Centre for Accreditation (NQA) has contributed to improving validation system coordination. The centre is responsible for authorising professional competence assessment centres and practitioners in validation of non-formal and informal learning of adults; evaluation and certifying of assessors and evaluators; and monitoring the performance of assessment centres and of individual assessors. The focus in recent years was on increasing the quality of the validation process and regulating the selection of staff involved in validation services ([19]).

Current work on the national qualifications framework and registers, including the adoption of legislation on the National register of professional qualifications in education, the National register of professional qualifications, and the National register of qualifications in higher education ([20]) is expected to impact favourably on the development of validation services. The legislative basis for the ROQF states that qualifications obtained through non-formal and informal education will be included in the framework using ROQF level descriptors. The current methodology allows competence certificates to be obtained through validation of non-formal and informal learning up to ROQF level 3 ([21]).

The current non-formal system in Romania operates parallel to the formal system, and the bridge between the two is still under development. It is not possible to obtain formal qualifications (full or partial) through validation of non-formal and informal learning. Validation is linked with occupational standards that relate only to CVET qualifications in the ROQF. These are not the same as the training standards used for certification in formal education and training.

Vocational skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning can be evaluated following requests from individual beneficiaries made to the relevant professional competence assessment centres. According to data provided by the NQA, the number of accredited assessment centres and beneficiaries that gained certificates through validation has fallen in recent years, and the national coverage of assessment centres remains a challenge. However, the quality of services provided has been strengthened as a result of quality assurance mechanisms implemented recently. According to the NQA database, there are approximately 30 active assessment centres, mainly in services, construction and social protection (data from 2018). The higher concentration of assessment centres in these sectors is the result of the sectors' interest and their specific agenda around validation.

Development of community lifelong learning centres has been foreseen in legislation ([22]). It aims to carry out analysis of education and training needs at a local level; increase access to non-formal and informal learning and to validation of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning through second chance programmes and certification of skills and competences; and promote partnerships with the labour market. The methodology for their establishment has been proposed for public debate, but has not yet been approved; many stakeholders believe that they may increase access to validation services of specific disadvantaged groups, especially in rural and isolated communities.

NQF implementation and impact

The ROQF is well embedded in national legislation and linked to policy strategies in education, training and employment ([23]). It has been revised following the updated 2017 Council recommendation on the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning ([24]) and is considered to have reached an operational stage (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). It covers qualifications from all education and training sectors, including those acquired through validation of non-formal and informal learning in accredited assessment centres.

The ROQF for lifelong learning includes the framework for higher education adopted in 2011. In 2014 a ministerial order ([25]) regulated the equivalence between the five qualification levels available prior to 2013 (four levels for secondary non-tertiary qualifications and one level for higher education) and the eight levels of the ROQF. The 2013 government decision on approval of the NQF was amended in July 2015, clarifying the correspondence between the NQF/EQF levels, qualifications issued and the type of education and training programmes that lead to qualifications at each level, as well as access requirements for each NQF level. A further amendment in 2018 requires, as of 1 January 2019, indication of the NQF level on all qualifications and qualification supplements, as well as all qualification databases. Other existing regulations refer to the inclusion of NQF levels on qualification documents and registers in the different sectors ([26]). NQF and EQF levels are taken into account in the recognition of foreign qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Inclusion of qualifications from general education, higher education and vocational education and training was given priority. The national register of qualifications in higher education (NRQHE) was first introduced in legislation in 2011; it currently includes around 4500 qualifications (September, 2020) at NQF levels 6, 7 and 8. The methodology for placing higher education qualifications in the register, amended in 2014 and 2017, is based on a two-step procedure: validation and registration of qualifications. Since 2018, it has been mandatory for registered qualifications to be described in learning outcomes and to be related to at least one representative occupation from the Romanian classification of occupations. This aims to ensure the links between skills and learning outcomes acquired in education and competences on the labour market. A national register for postgraduate programmes has also been put in

place, covering programmes for continuous professional development, specialisation, and programmes for adults; 142 such programmes, assigned to NQF level 6, had been included by September 2020. In VET, the focus has been on developing training standards in line with occupational standards and labour market needs, and the procedure for their approval. The national register of professional qualifications in education, comprising qualifications from initial VET, was established in January 2018 ([27]) and subsequently incorporated into the national register of professional qualifications (NRPQ), approved by Government Decision No 917/2018. Methodology for developing, updating and managing the NRPQ was approved in 2019 ([28]). The NRPQ covers all nationally recognised vocational qualifications corresponding to NQF levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, obtained in education and vocational training, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, including adult education. It currently includes around 200 qualifications at levels 3 to 5 (September 2020).

All registers include the mandatory elements stipulated in Annex VI of the 2017 Council recommendation on the EQF, and some optional elements (credit points or workload, external quality assurance body, source of information, links to the relevant supplements, expiry date, relationship to occupations or occupational fields). The main registers (NRPQ and NRQHE) are to be brought together under the umbrella of a unified national qualifications register ([29]).

As the referencing of the ROQF was finalised in 2018, evaluation will be approached at a later stage. The framework is thought to have an increasing impact by promoting the use of learning outcomes in designing curricula and qualifications, occupational and training standards, and the review and quality assurance of qualifications; and by facilitating contact and cooperation between stakeholders, including with those on the labour market. An ESF joint funded project ([30]) aims to increase efficiency of the qualifications system through four main objectives: revision of existing regulations on qualifications and reinforcement of the current legal basis; development of an instrument for evaluation of qualifications to increase the quality of evaluation of professional competences; increased alignment of qualifications in the national register with the national classification of occupations and the ROQF through the development and revision of 250 occupational standards; and staff development. A tool for assigning qualification levels to existing and new occupations in the national classification of occupations has been developed and is undergoing testing; it is to be used by parties interested in developing occupational standards, sectoral

committees, and other stakeholders. A methodological framework for developing learning-outcomes-based study programmes in higher education is planned to be created in 2021 within the same project (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

The framework is made visible to potential stakeholders through a variety of actions carried out by the NQA. The EU-funded project *National Europass Centre + EQF NCP 2018-20* aims to raise awareness of to the EQF/NQF among representatives of social partners, public employment services, education providers, quality assurance bodies and other public authorities through meetings, conferences and workshops discussing the developments related to the NQF and the use of learning outcomes. Currently prioritised target groups are higher education and the low-skilled.

Referencing to the EQF

Romania referenced its national qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the EQF in 2018 (Romanian Ministry of Education; NQA, 2018). The qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2011. A revision of the referencing report is not yet planned (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Important lessons and future plans

The ROQF is a comprehensive framework covering all nationally recognised qualifications awarded in general education, VET and higher education, adult education, and qualifications awarded through validation. Since its introduction in 2013 and referencing to the EQF in 2018, Romania has focused on updating the legal basis of the ROQF, developing qualification registers, clarifying procedures, and updating methodologies for inclusion of qualifications in the registers. Three qualification registers are currently operated by the NQA: one for qualifications obtained in higher education at NQF levels 6 to 8; one for postgraduate programme for specialisation, continuous professional development and adult education; and one bringing together professional qualifications at levels 1 to 5 obtained in the formal VET system and through validation of non-formal learning. The similar structure of the qualifications registers is increasing transparency in the qualification system and facilitating comparisons. A unified national register of qualifications (RNC) is envisaged, bringing together the main registers in the future.

One key challenge to ROQF implementation so far has been the introduction of the learning outcomes approach in all sectors of education and training. The need for increased quality assurance has become more apparent. Increasing efforts are being made in this regard to raise awareness and understanding of learning outcomes and to create tools for the development of learning-outcomes-based study programmes, qualification standards, and occupational standards aligned to the ROQF.

For the ROQF fully to reach its aims, it is important to have good cooperation between different stakeholders and structures. The role of the National Qualifications Authority, responsible for the comprehensive NQF as well as for adult learning and the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning, is essential in supporting coherent approaches and effective communication between stakeholders from education and training and the labour market. Increasing contact between different stakeholders, supported by NQF-related projects, has been observed. Progress has been made in linking the ROQF to developments in validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, though this is limited to qualifications up to ROQF level 3.

Through its role in responding to changing labour market needs, in supporting national qualification system transparency and quality, and

the recognition of qualifications needed to encourage mobility, the ROQF has become an important feature of the national qualifications system.

Main sources of information

- The National Qualifications Authority (*Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari* – ANC) is the EQF NCP: <http://www.anc.edu.ro>
- National register of qualifications in higher education: <http://www.anc.edu.ro/registrul-national-al-calificarilor-din-invatamantul-superior-rncis/>
- National register of professional qualifications: <http://www.anc.edu.ro/rncp/>
- National register of postgraduate programmes: http://www.anc.edu.ro/registru_rnpp/
- Romanian Ministry of Education and NQA (2018). *Referencing the Romanian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework*. <https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	Doctoral degree (third cycle of higher education) (Diploma de doctor) Certificate for postdoctoral studies - postdoctoral study programmes (Atestat de studii postdoctorale)	8
7	Master degree - second cycle of higher education (Diploma de masterat) Combined bachelor and master degree -5 to 6 years (Diploma de licenta si master)	7

6

Bachelor degree / Engineering diploma / Urbanism diploma and Diploma supplement (first cycle of higher education) (Diploma de licenta / Diploma de inginer / Diploma de urbanist)

Certificate attesting professional competence - Postgraduate programmes for professional training and continuing professional development organised by higher education institutions (Certificat de atestare a competentelor profesionale)

Graduation certificate - Postgraduate programmes for professional improvement organised by higher education institutions (Certificat de absolvire)

Graduation certificate - Professional development programmes organised by authorised training providers (Certificat de absolvire)

Graduation certificate - Postgraduate programmes for continuing education organised by higher education institutions (Certificat de absolvire)

Professional conversion diploma - Professional conversion programmes organised by higher education institutions (Diploma de conversie profesionala)

6

5

Graduation certificate - Postgraduate programmes for professional improvement organised by higher education institutions (Certificat de absolvire)

Post-secondary certificate / Qualification certificate - post-secondary non-university tertiary education) (Certificat de calificare)

5

Upper secondary school leaving certificate - general, technological or vocational high-school, four years of study and baccalaureate exam (Diploma de Bacalaureat)

VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate - technological / vocational high-school, four years of study and certification exam (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 4 / Qualification/Graduation certificate - authorised training provider - adult learning (Certificat de calificare/absolvire)

VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate - authorised training provider - adult apprenticeship programmes in the workplace (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate - authorised training provider - adult apprenticeship programmes in the workplace (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional competence - accredited assessment centre - validation of non-formal learning (Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale)

The Certificate of professional competence is awarded to adults who have undergone validation of non-formal learning against training standards or occupational standards.

VET certificate level 3 / Certificate of professional competence - authorised assessment centre - validation of non-formal learning (Certificat de competente profesionale)

The Certificate of professional competence is awarded to adults who have undergone validation of non-formal learning against training standards or occupational standards.

VET certificate level 3 / Qualification/Graduation certificate - authorised training provider - adult learning (Certificat de calificare/absolvire)

VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate - at least two years of study in technological/vocational high school and practical exam (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate - vocational training programme in dual system lasting at least three years (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate - VET programme lasting at least three years (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate - authorised training provider - adult apprenticeship programmes in the workplace (Certificat de calificare)

VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional competence - accredited assessment centre - validation of non-formal learning (Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale)

The Certificate of professional competence is awarded to adults who have undergone validation of non-formal learning against training standards or occupational standards.

VET certificate level 2 / Certificate of professional competence - authorised assessment centre - validation of non-formal learning (Certificat de competente profesionale)

The Certificate of professional competence is awarded to adults who have undergone validation of non-formal learning against training standards or occupational standards.

VET certificate level 2 / Qualification/Graduation certificate - authorised training provider - adult learning (Certificat de calificare/absolvire)

1

**Certificate of professional competence -
authorised assessment centres - validation of
non-formal learning (Certificat de competente
profesionale)**

The Certificate of professional competence is awarded to adults who have undergone validation of non-formal learning against training standards or occupational standards.

**Qualification certificate - authorised training
provider -adult learning) (Certificat de calificare)
Graduation Diploma (first eight years of
compulsory education) (Diploma de absolvire)**

1

Acronyms

CVET	continuing vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
EQF-NCP	national coordination point for EQF
IVET	initial vocational education and training
NEETs	individuals not in employment, education or training
NQA (ANC)	National Qualifications Authority (<i>Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari</i>)
NQF	national qualifications framework
NRPQ	national register of professional qualifications
NRQHE	national register of qualifications in higher education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ROQF	Romanian national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training

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Related content

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2020

Romania - European inventory of NQFs 2020

European inventory of NQF



Romania