

NQF state of play



Greece 2022

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Overview

Stage of development: Activation stage

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:

The NQF includes all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Law on development of lifelong learning and other provisions
(3879/2010)
[\(in Greek\)](#)

Law 4763/2020 on the National system of VET and LLL

NQF/EQF website:

[Website](#)

Qualifications register/database:

[Greek qualifications register](#)

Introduction and context

1.1. Policy context

In 2021, education investment in the country was 4.5 %, 0.5 percentage points below the EU-27 average. Greece has the third lowest rate (3.2 %) of early leavers from education and training in the EU. Approximately 50 % of disadvantaged learners are low achievers, which explains the country's intentions to address the quality and equity of education. In 2021, the rate of tertiary education attainment (for those aged 25–34) was well above the EU average (44.2 % versus 41.2 %). In 2020, participation in upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) (31.9 %) was significantly lower than the EU average (48.7 %) (European Commission. DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2022). At post-secondary (non-tertiary) level, vocational pathways are learners' only option ([1]).

In December 2020, Law 4763/2020 reforming VET was adopted ([2]). The law established a national system for VET and lifelong learning encompassing EQF/HQF levels 3, 4 and 5. Its main objective is to make VET learners' first choice, raising its attractiveness (European Commission. DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2020). The law introduced the 2-year vocational training school (*Επαγγελματικές Σχολή Κατάρτισης*, ESK) programmes, leading to qualifications at HQF level 3, and levelled qualifications from vocational schools (EPAS), which are under the responsibility of public employment services, from HQF level 4 to level 3 ([3]). It also established permeability arrangements from VET to higher education, by giving graduates of a vocational training institute (*Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης* (IEK)) or the post-upper-secondary year of apprenticeship (at level 5) the opportunity to access higher education programmes, following success in the entry exams. The law increased the engagement of social partners, aiming to boost VET's labour market relevance. The HQF continues to play an important role in supporting the implementation of education policies such as the introduction of the learning outcomes approach into education and training, and the development of occupational profiles (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

1.2. NQF legal basis

Law 3879/2010 on the development of lifelong learning prepared the ground for developing the HQF, and introduced levels and the concept of

learning outcomes as essential elements of qualifications and awards ([4]). Law 4763/2020 (see Section) formalised all operational aspects of the HQF and strengthened its legal basis, firmly establishing its role within the education system. It explicitly described all level descriptors, identified the learning outcomes approach as the main tool for levelling qualifications to the HQF and stated that all levelled qualification should be included in the NQF register (see Section).

Policy objectives

According to Law 3879/2010, work on the HQF is directly linked to the country's efforts to promote lifelong learning policies and practices, improve the transparency and comparability of qualifications, allow recognition and certification of all kinds of education and training, and enhance horizontal and vertical permeability. Law 4763/2020 highlighted achieving transparency and comparability of qualifications as the main aim of the HQF, and reaffirmed the importance of the abovementioned objectives. It focused on reducing barriers, and strengthening bridges and cooperation between education sectors and institutions. Including qualifications from non-formal and informal learning was also explicitly stated as a policy objective.

The HQF functions mainly as a communication and transparency framework but it is also intended to be reforming. Another main function of the framework is supporting the horizontal and vertical mobility of learners and employees (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

3.1. NQF structure and level descriptors

The HQF has eight learning-outcomes-based qualification levels, reflecting the existing formal education and training system in Greece. Levels are defined in terms of knowledge (factual and theoretical), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (autonomy and responsibility). Work on level descriptors for the HQF and on the qualifications framework for higher education has taken place separately (bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorates are levelled to the HQF) ([5]). The inclusion of qualifications in the framework is based on qualification type specifications. The specifications include title of award, level, awarding body, summary descriptor, volume of learning, purpose, education sector, learning outcomes, employment relevance and progression possibilities. Qualification types from all formal education sectors have been assigned to HQF levels.

3.2. NQF scope and coverage

The HQF is comprehensive, including qualifications from all sectors of formal education and training (general and vocational education, post-secondary vocational training and higher education). Having developed qualification types, which are key elements of the framework, the country is now placing in them individual learning-outcomes-based qualifications. Since 2020, 276 higher education qualifications have been included in the HQF. As of 2022, there are approximately 1 000 qualifications levelled to the HQF (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022). Law 4763/2020 aims for qualifications awarded outside formal education and training to be levelled to the HQF.

3.2.1. Use of learning outcomes

The shift to learning outcomes represents a significant change in the Greek system from an 'input' approach to an outcome-oriented focus. The outcome-based HQF supports the design of outcome-based qualifications, thus moving towards a more transparent qualifications system. Law 4763/2020 made the use of the learning outcomes approach a prerequisite for any qualification to be included in the HQF. However, with a traditional input-oriented education system, designing and implementing competence-based qualifications will be a challenge. For

more than 15 years, consistent effort has been made by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (*Εθνικός Οργανισμός Πιστοποίησης Προσόντων και Επαγγελματικού Προσανατολισμού* ([EOPPEP](#))) to promote the use of learning outcomes; for instance, in 2015, EOPPEP developed and published guidelines on how to define, design and assess learning outcomes (Dželalija, 2015) ([\[6\]](#)). However, the term learning outcomes is still not commonly used in Greece ([\[7\]](#)) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

The country has launched a process of introducing learning-outcomes-based curricula in primary and secondary general education. In 2021, the Institute of Educational Policy developed 166 new curricula for pre-primary, primary and upper secondary general education ([\[8\]](#)). They are to be piloted in the school year 2022/2023, and their full implementation will gradually start in 2024/2025.

In 2022, new learning-outcomes-based curricula were being developed in vocational education, and they are expected to be in use in the school year 2025/2026 ([\[9\]](#)). In the 2022/2023 school year, the first [ESK programmes](#) started to operate. In line with Law 4763/2020, their training standards follow the learning outcomes approach. However, the introduction of the learning outcomes approach in VET started earlier. [Law 4186/2013](#) stated that VET, including apprenticeship programmes, should have clearly formulated learning outcomes, analysed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Subsequent ministerial decisions on enhancing the quality of VET curricula ([\[10\]](#)) supported the use of learning outcomes in VET.

Based on the 2006 methodology for developing occupational profiles (standards), EOPPEP, in cooperation with social partners, created and accredited 206 occupational profiles based on learning outcomes ([\[11\]](#)). Updating and renewing outcomes in occupational profiles is a necessity, according to labour market research, surveys and evaluation of existing curricula. The Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Workers (*Ινστιτούτο Εργασίας ΓΣΕΕ*), through a 4-year project that was completed in 2021, has created a new methodology for the development and updating of occupational profiles and related framework programmes. Based on this methodology, it also developed 30 occupational profiles (25 new and 5 updated) and a databank of relevant exam questions (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2023).

In higher education, the [Hellenic Authority for Higher Education](#) uses, as evaluation criteria, the learning outcomes approach and expected

competences in accordance with the national qualifications framework for higher education. Higher education qualifications are included in the HQF register, and general descriptors of higher education programmes have been developed in cooperation with higher education institutions.

3.3. Quality assurance arrangements

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education has completed its evaluations of higher education institutions ([12]), and self-certification against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area is in progress ([13]). EOPPEP cooperates with the authority on quality issues in higher education. Another independent administrative authority, the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education, has been established ([14]), and is responsible for quality assurance in both general and vocational education (qualifications at levels 1–4).

EOPPEP is also the national reference point for European quality assurance in vocational education and training, ensuring direct coordination regarding quality issues related to the implementation of the HQF.

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The education ministry, in collaboration with EOPPEP, is in charge of overall coordination and has oversight of the HQF. Since 2011, EOPPEP, supervised by the ministry, has been responsible for the development and implementation of the HQF, and for putting into practice procedures for validating learning outcomes and assuring quality in lifelong learning. EOPPEP has been designated as the EQF national coordination point (EQF-NCP). The HQF unit, operating under the Qualifications Certification Department of EOPPEP, is responsible for the implementation and day-to-day running of the HQF. HQF actions are often co-funded by the EU (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Stakeholder involvement has been apparent since the HQF referencing process ([15]). The involvement of social partners is important in the day-to-day implementation of the framework, and this involvement is ensured because the partners are represented on the governing boards of EOPPEP – the Central Examination Board for the Certification of Vocational Training (*Κεντρική Επιτροπή Εξετάσεων Πιστοποίησης για την Επαγγελματική Κατάρτιση*) ([16]), responsible for the accreditation of post-secondary initial VET – and of the committees for the development of occupational profiles/VET curricula.

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

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

Although the development of a Greek framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning started in 2016, progress has been slow ([17]). In 2022–2023, development of this system remains one of the strategic objectives of EOPPEP.

A good example of the validation of non-formal learning since 2014 has been adult trainers, who need to have certified educational competence/proficiency to train in non-formal learning programmes funded by public resources ([18]). More specifically, enrolment for the examinations means meeting certain criteria regarding educational attainment or proven professional experience. The updated system sets out three pathways:

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

Even though informal and non-formal learning are gaining importance, they are not adequately valued and recognised in society. A cultural shift in favour of learning outcomes is required to support steps towards the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Law 4763/2020 aims to strengthen the certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning in the country, and the active participation of social partners in the design and implementation of lifelong learning.

5.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications

One of the responsibilities of EOPPEP is to recognise foreign secondary and post-secondary VET qualifications (EQF levels 2–5). If the recognition/equivalence procedure leads to a vocational education qualification that has been referenced to the HQF/EQF, then the level is indicated in the recognition document awarded to the individual (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

A dialogue has also started with the Greek recognition and equivalence

competent authorities ([19]) on the HQF's role in and contribution to the recognition and equivalence of awarded qualifications.

5.3. Promoting lifelong learning

Continuing VET has been a policy priority in recent years. A regulatory framework has been developed for the operation of lifelong learning centres, which offer continuing vocational training, general adult education, vocational guidance and lifelong counselling.

Progress has also been made on the upskilling pathways recommendation, in terms of offering opportunities for basic skills training to low-skilled adults. In 2022, the labour and education ministries have coordinated strategic actions and implementation plans for the certification of individuals, upgrading the role of universities in providing lifelong learning. According to Law 4921/2022, certification of individuals' non-formally acquired learning outcomes should not only be a trusted source of information for employers looking to recruit personnel, but, where possible, be functionally and institutionally linked with professional responsibilities and labour rights (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2023).

NQF implementation and impact

6.1. Stage of implementation

The HQF is at the activation stage. Its establishment in education and training has been supported by several developments in education and training legislation in recent years. Law 4763/2020 is a very important step in moving into the operational stage. The first stage in the development of the HQF has focused on qualifications awarded within formal education and training, while opening up the framework is the next step in the process.

6.2. Indicating EQF/NQF levels

HQF and EQF levels are indicated on vocational training diplomas (IEK diplomas) and vocational post-secondary school 'degrees' (apprenticeship class) (both at HQF level 5), and on VET Europass certificates and higher education diploma supplements. HQF and EQF levels are also indicated on qualifications in the NQF register (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022). More than 300 certificate supplements with reference to HQF and EQF levels have been issued so far, mostly for IEK diplomas and vocational upper secondary school (*Επαγγελματικά Λύκεια*) apprenticeship class degrees ([20]).

6.3. NQF dissemination

EOPPEP has designed an integrated communication strategy, which is updated annually to increase the use and visibility of the framework. In 2018, the strategy included a broad range of communication channels ([21]), but due to the COVID-19 pandemic most plans were paused. To address this challenge, EOPPEP sent informational material to all education and training providers, and key stakeholders such as social partners and chambers, aiming to promote the visibility and use of the HQF, and forge closer communication.

In 2021, EOPPEP designed a comprehensive set of communication and dissemination activities, targeting jobseekers and study seekers, social partners, researchers, employers, teachers and trainers, parents, unemployed people and career guidance practitioners; the activities will be co-financed by EU grants. The main aim of the strategy is to enhance the transparency and comparability of qualifications through the HQF and the HQF registry. As EOPPEP operates as an umbrella organisation for

other European networks (Europass, the European quality assurance in vocational education and training initiative, and Euroguidance), a major communication channel will be networking; this will also happen with municipalities, career services, and education and training providers. The country will use events such as job fairs, career days and seminars to disseminate information about the HQF/EQF, Europass and Euroguidance to expert stakeholders and the public. Expert stakeholders, such as policymakers, social partners, and education and training providers, will also be reached through online and in-person meetings, and a conference. An advertising campaign will aim to raise awareness of the HQF/EQF, Europass and the Euroguidance network. Printed and digital promotional material such as leaflets, e-books and other materials about the three networks will be developed, and a corporate website will be created (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

EOPPEP has also tried to foster quality assurance in defining, describing and assessing learning outcomes. These actions include the creation of the methodology for the design and development of learning outcomes (see Section), and consultative and information activities to create a common understanding of the learning outcomes approach (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022). For instance, guidelines have been disseminated to education providers offering qualification at HQF level 5 and above, and to the main representatives of the social partners and key stakeholders ([22]).

6.4. Qualifications databases and registers

The [HQF register](#), developed in cooperation with the respective education institutions, includes more than 1 000 learning-outcomes-based qualifications from the formal education system. The register does not include VET (HQF levels 2–4) and general education (HQF level 4) qualifications that are no longer awarded, the ESK qualification or the integrated master's qualification. Many higher education qualifications are not yet included in the register, as the awarding institutions are not yet convinced of the advantages of the HQF/EQF (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

The HQF register aims to make it easier for Greek and European citizens to find information on qualification types and individual qualifications levelled to the HQF, fostering mobility at national and European levels. Information on qualifications is available in Greek and English. The register targets jobseekers and study seekers, social partners, researchers, employers, teachers and trainers, parents, unemployed people and career guidance practitioners. Users can find information on

the title of each qualification, and its EQF level, field of study and awarding body, as well as a description of the qualification and a link to it. Awarding education institutions are responsible for updating the information on their qualifications. The HQF Unit has established communication channels with awarding bodies; when the latter issue new qualifications, they send the necessary data to the HQF Unit. Furthermore, awarding institutions should respect specific criteria when drafting learning outcomes description for the database; the criteria are included in the 2015 methodology for the design and development of learning outcomes, commissioned by EOPPEP (EU, Europass and EOPPEP, 2016).

The HQF register connects to the Europass platform via the qualifications dataset register, connecting to the European employment services and the learning opportunities of the Hellenic Euroguidance database. The register has been used as a pilot project to link the learning outcomes of the qualifications to the relevant European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations pillar ([23]).

6.5. Awareness and use of the NQF

A small-scale study (see Section) evaluating the HQF showed that awareness of the framework is high among end users and expert stakeholders. Furthermore, the interest that a significant number of private education institutions expressed in levelling their awards to the HQF indicates that non-formal education and training providers are aware of the HQF (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Legislative documents widely use the HQF levels in describing qualifications, demonstrating that the HQF is institutionally well embedded. The guidance directorate of EOPPEP refers to the HQF/EQF in events such as training for counselling practitioners, and career days for students and parents. The HQF is also used by EOPPEP in the procedure for recognising foreign secondary and post-secondary VET qualifications at EQF levels 2–5 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

6.6. Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

In 2017, a small-scale study was conducted to evaluate the impact of the HQF and its referencing to the EQF ([24]). It served as a pilot for a nationwide research study regarding the recognition/impact of the NQF and EQF within Greek society, which is scheduled to take place in 2023. Although the sample used was small and not representative enough, the study revealed positive indications of awareness of the HQF among

education and training providers, and end users. Most respondents also held favourable opinions on the usefulness of qualifications frameworks in general, and on presenting the knowledge, skills and competences of employees.

6.7. Impact of the NQF

The HQF has started to have an impact on the transparency and comparability of qualifications, especially regarding VET qualifications at levels 3–5. The HQF register and the indication of HQF levels on specific VET qualifications (see Section) have supported this effort.

The main impact of the HQF has been in promoting the use of learning outcomes by gradually nurturing a cultural shift in that direction. An important milestone in this process was the adoption of Law 4763/2020, which made the use of the learning outcomes a prerequisite for qualifications to be levelled to the HQF. This has triggered a curricular reform as the country develops learning-outcomes-based curricula for pre-primary, primary and secondary programmes. Law 4763/2020 also indicates that the HQF has influenced VET reforms and fostered increased permeability between VET and higher education. The country considers HQF an instrument for raising VET's attractiveness and credibility, but this remains a challenging aim.

Referencing to the EQF

The HQF was referenced to the EQF in 2015, and self-certification against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area is in progress. The country is planning to prepare an updated referencing report but has not yet decided when this will take place.

Important lessons and future plans

The main success factors for the HQF reaching its aims are related to the clear structure of the HQF; the use of qualification types that facilitate the grouping of qualifications into broader categories at the same level; and the HQF register, which concisely presents the qualifications in the HQF. The HQF quality assurance procedures have also set an example for training providers (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Although EOPPEP is strongly linked to social partners, the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in HQF development and implementation is seen as crucial. However, more needs to be done in this area.

A future priority is for the HQF to include qualifications awarded outside the formal/regulated system, international qualifications and the remaining higher education qualifications ([25]). EOPPEP will play an active role in the upcoming public dialogue and consultation regarding the HQF's potential inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. Including non-formal qualifications requires a specific methodology, which will be developed by EOPPEP in cooperation with education and labour market stakeholders (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020, 2022). Other priorities include:

- a. further developing synergies and links with networks, facilitating the mobility and comparability of skills and qualifications, aiming to reach and inform wider target groups;
- b. strengthening the use of learning outcomes, which EOPPEP considers an important step towards broadening the trust and confidence in VET qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

The HQF is mainly a communicative framework that promotes transparency, but it has a role in reform as well. So far, the framework has played an important role in the curriculum reforms in primary and secondary education, and helped reshape the qualification types defined in learning outcomes, thus facilitating the grouping of qualifications into broader categories at the same level (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020, 2022).

Main sources of information

[URLs accessed 5.4.2023]

- [EOPPEP](#).
- HQF [web site](#).
- HQF qualifications [register](#).
- EOPPEP (2016). *Greece EQF Referencing Report*.

National qualification framework (NQF)

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

Vocational post-secondary school ‘degree’ for graduates of a vocational upper secondary school (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 legislation (ptychio). In Greek, the word ptychio is used as the title of study at many education levels (higher, secondary, etc.). It is not to be confused with its usage in English, where ‘degree’ is the title for higher education study (e.g. bachelor’s degree).

Vocational training diploma (post-secondary level) from a 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 after the enactment of Law 4186/2013.

Post-secondary non-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 legislation (ptychio). In Greek, the word ptychio is used as the title of study at many education levels (higher, secondary, etc.). It is not to be confused with its usage in English, where ‘degree’ is the title for higher education study (e.g. bachelor’s degree).

General upper secondary school leaving certificate (Απολυτήριο Γενικού Λυκείου)

Vocational upper secondary school (EPAL) certificate (Απολυτήριο Επαγγελματικού Λυκείου - ΕΠΑΛ Επιπέδου 4)

EPAL 'degree' (Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 4 - Επαγγελματικό Λύκειο ΕΠΑΛ)

The word 'degree' used with quotation marks is a direct translation from the Greek terminology as it appears in legislation (ptychio). In Greek, the word ptychio is used as the title of study at many education levels (higher, secondary, etc.). It is not to be confused with its usage in English, where 'degree' is the title for higher education study (e.g. bachelor's degree).

Vocational school certificate (EPAS) (Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Σχολής, ΕΠΑΣ)

3	Vocational school certificate (EPAS) (Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Σχολής, ΕΠΑΣ) This programme is supervised by the public employment services. Vocational training school certificate (ESK) (post-lower-secondary level) (Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης, Επαγγελματικής Σχολής Κατάρτισης ΕΣΚ) Vocational training school certificate (SEK) (Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας Επιπέδου 3 Σχολής Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΣΕΚ)) This programme was abolished by Law 4386/2016. Cohorts already enrolled at that time could complete their studies and still acquire the qualification; the last cohort was expected to graduate in 2018/2019. IEK certificate (initial vocational training-post lower secondary level) (Πιστοποιητικό Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, Επίπεδο 1- IEK)) This qualification is no longer being awarded after 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

ΕΟΡΡΕΡ	<i>Εθνικός Οργανισμός Πιστοποίησης Προσόντων και Επαγγελματικού Προσανατολισμού</i> [National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance]
EQF	European qualifications framework
ΕΣΚ	<i>Επαγγελματική Σχολή Κατάρτισης</i> [vocational trainings school]
HQF	<i>Εθνικό Πλαίσιο Προσόντων</i> [Hellenic qualifications framework]
IEK	<i>Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης</i> [vocational training institute]
NQF	national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training

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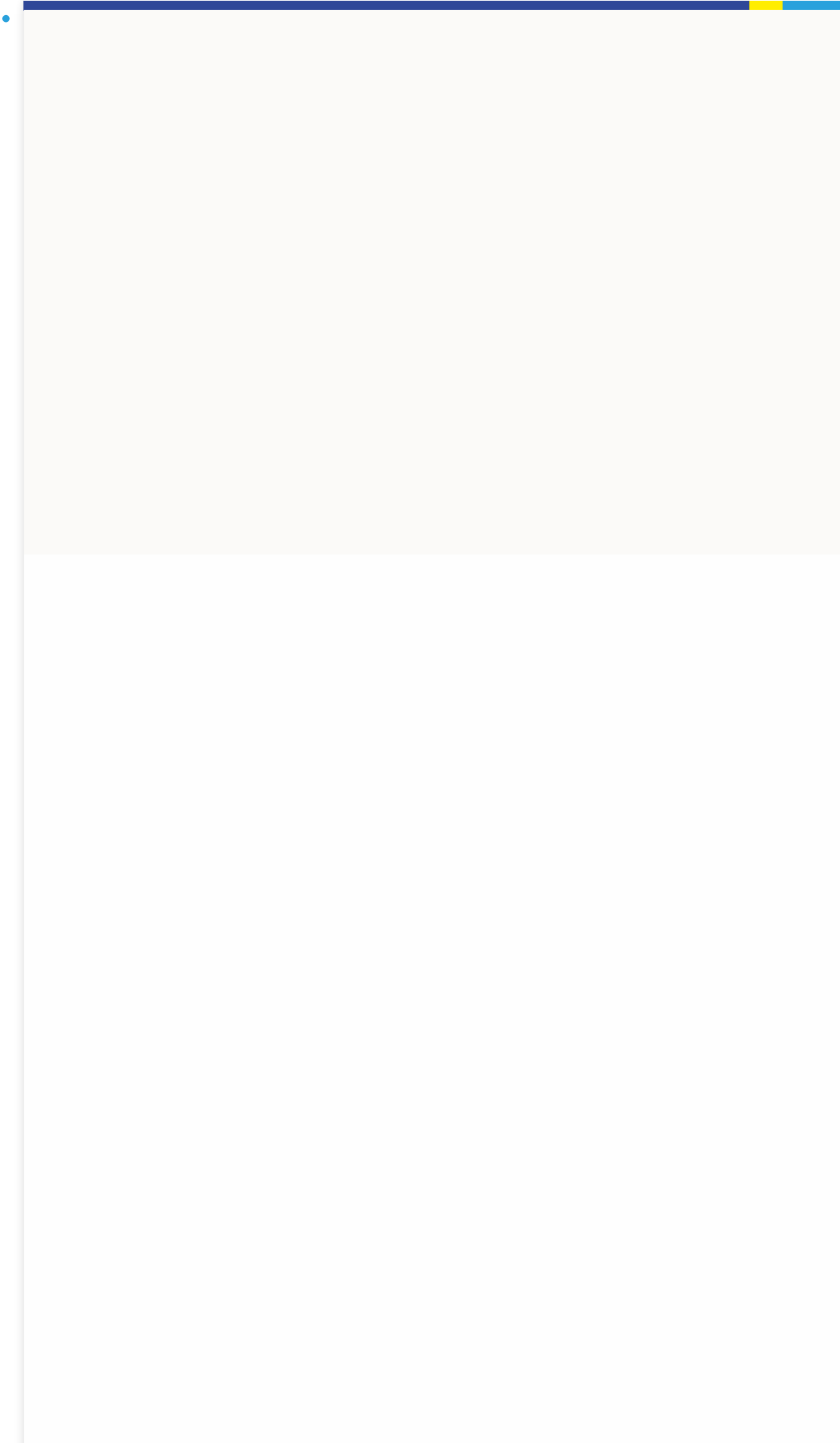
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Related content



2022

Greece - European inventory of NQFs 2022

European inventory of NQF



Greece