

NQF state of play



Sweden 2022

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Overview

Stage of development: [Operational stage](#)

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:

The NQF includes all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, along with qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Ordinance (2015:545) on qualifications framework for lifelong learning, including the general framework (in force since October 2015) and the application procedure (in force since January 2016).
[\(in Swedish\)](#)

NQF/EQF website:

[Website](#)

Qualifications register/database:

[Database of qualifications](#)

Introduction and context

1.1. Policy context

Although, the overall level of education in Sweden is good, the country's main goal is excellent and equal education for all students. Student performance is increasingly linked to socioeconomic background and disparities also exist between native and foreign-born students. To combat this trend, the government is proposing major reforms to improve equity in schools. In 2021, the rate of tertiary education attainment was one of the highest in the EU (49.3% of people aged 25-34, compared to the EU average of 41.2%), while the rate of employment of recent graduates is also high at all qualification levels. In 2020, participation in initial vocational education and training (VET) was significantly lower (35.6%) than the EU average (48.7%) (European Commission. DG Education Youth Sport and Culture, 2022). At post-secondary level, 74.1 % of learners follow a vocational pathway ([1]).

Adult learning continues to be a high priority (European Commission. DG Education Youth Sport and Culture, 2022). In October 2022, following close consultation with the social partners, the government launched the student finance for transition and retraining reform. Adults will gain better opportunities for labour mobility and skills development throughout their working life. The labour law has been adapted to allow for a greater flexibility, but also increased security for the employee ([2]) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022) ([3]).

1.2. NQF legal basis

The Ordinance providing the legal basis of the SeQF came into force on 1 October 2015 ([4]). The Ordinance defines the SeQF levels for all qualifications that have their learning outcomes regulated by law and/or ordinance. It also introduces a procedure for inclusion of other qualifications.

Policy objectives

Since the beginning of the process to develop the SeQF in 2009, and its inception in 2015, the SeQF has been considered as a tool for recognising qualifications awarded outside the formal education system. Linking qualifications that does not have learning outcomes regulated by national legislation and are awarded outside formal education and training to the SeQF is seen as crucial for increasing the overall transparency of qualifications in Sweden.

According to the internal strategic document (Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan/MYH, 2021) of the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (*Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan*, MYH), the SeQF is increasingly seen as playing a role in supporting better cooperation between the education and training system and the labour market; for instance, by creating a common language for different actors and facilitate skills supply and matching. The SeQF also functions as a supporting mechanism to increase mobility in the labour market, ease transition from education to the labour market and vice versa and promote validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). Another aim is to stimulate industry sectors to level qualifications to the SeQF, increasing the number of qualifications obtained through validation and improving the recognition of VNFIL among labour market stakeholders (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

3.1. NQF structure and level descriptors

The SeQF is based on an eight-level learning outcomes-based structure where each level is described through knowledge (*kunskap*), skills (*färdigheter*) and autonomy and responsibility (*ansvar och självständighet*) ([5]). The explicit objective has been to develop a set of descriptors as closely aligned with the EQF as possible. While the influence of the original EQF descriptors is apparent, the level of detail has been increased.

3.2. NQF scope and coverage

The SeQF is a comprehensive framework including all qualifications in the formal education system that have learning outcomes regulated by law and/or ordinance. It also comprises qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, such as those from sectoral organisations, labour market trainers, sports associations, and providers of liberal adult education. Their number is continuously growing (at an increased rate); as of February 2022, 56 such qualifications are levelled to the SeQF, representing a significant increase since 2020 when eight were levelled (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Sweden has developed a separate qualifications framework for higher education and self-certification to the QF-EHEA has been carried out. SeQF levels 6 to 8 now include the three levels from the qualification's framework for higher education. They are also open to non-academic qualifications.

3.3. Use of learning outcomes

The learning outcomes perspective (*resultat av lärande/läranderesultat*) is an important, and largely incorporated, feature of Swedish education and training. The core curricula for compulsory education have been revised, further strengthening, and refining the learning-outcomes-based approach. Universities follow national regulations on examinations, requiring the use of learning outcomes, though how these learning outcomes are interpreted by individual institutions varies. While the term 'learning outcomes' is only gradually coming into general use, the underpinning principles are well known and broadly accepted. The setting

up of the SeQF has contributed to the overall shift to learning outcomes and clarified the importance of the concept to stakeholders outside traditional, formal education and training. Learning outcomes are also considered by MYH as an important instrument to ease work on validation and make assessment clearer. In the longer term, this may prove of particular importance, potentially supporting dialogue between education and the labour market (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

To ease the process of applying for qualifications outside the formal education system to be levelled in the framework, MYH is developing support for the writing of learning outcomes. This is required for transparency between different stakeholders and to provide good examples of the value of including qualifications awarded outside formal education and training in the SeQF. MYH has published a manual for the design of qualifications, including guidelines on how to write learning outcomes; a revised handbook is under development (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

3.4. Quality assurance arrangements

All qualifications from the formal education system are externally quality audited by national authorities. Some of the applied quality assurance criteria are in line with those in the EQF recommendation ([6]).

According to the procedures and criteria for the inclusion and levelling to the SeQF of qualifications outside the formal education system, it is a pre-requisite for the applying provider to have a quality system that includes quality assurance of the qualification. Positive decisions are valid for ten years; during that period MYH should carry out at least one external quality audit. The purpose of the audit is to check that the quality system is still functioning and to check that the qualification upholds the decided level. Awareness of the SeQF is increasing among those involved with the quality assurance of non-formal qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for the SeQF. It is supported by the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan, MYH) ([7]) as EQF NCP with the responsibility implement the SeQF in cooperation with social partners, relevant authorities, providers of education and training and learners.

MYH was set up in 2009 to manage the new strand of higher vocational education in Sweden; it has a clear position on the role of non-academic qualifications at levels 5 and 6. MYH also has an extensive network in various industries and sectors in Sweden. Approximately two full time equivalents are used for the day-to-day work on the SeQF, while one is used for the development of the qualifications database on a project basis. Responsibilities are shared among five permanent employees. The amount of work depends on the priorities set and the number of applications for levelling. MYH received approximately EUR 315 000 (3.6 MSEK) from the government to develop the qualifications database (Section 7.4), while MYH, as the EQF NCP is also funded through an Erasmus+ project (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022). A set of procedures and criteria has been developed for the inclusion and levelling of qualifications awarded outside the formal education system to the SeQF. An advisory council (*Rådet för den nationella referensramen för kvalifikationer*) assists MYH to level these qualifications to SeQF ([8]). It consists of the chair and up to 14 members from various organisations of interest and government agencies. The members are appointed for a three-year period and will meet at least four times a year depending on the number of applications received. The meetings are chaired by the head of the unit for skills and lifelong learning at MYH.

The Swedish National Agency for Education ([9]) is the central administrative authority for the public-school system, and for adult education. The agency prepares knowledge requirements, regulations, general recommendations, and national tests. It is also responsible for official statistics in this education sector and conducts follow-ups and evaluations. As a reference centre for vocational education, the agency supports education providers, employers, and other organisations in their efforts to improve the quality of upper secondary vocational education.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority ([10]) is an independent

government agency. It evaluates the quality of higher education and research and is responsible for official statistics about higher education. Higher education institutions and the Higher Education Authority have a shared responsibility for quality assurance in higher education.

There is continuing dialogue between social partners, national agencies, and sectors within the national skills councils for each vocational programme. Within this dialogue the sectors have informed the National Agency for Education about their work on designing qualifications that partly corresponds to upper secondary diploma (IVET) and how the validation models developed by the sectors may be of interest when further developing validation tools used in upper secondary education. These informal discussions provide input for further agency consideration (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

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

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

In January 2023, a new ordinance for validation came into force ([11]). The ordinance provides a common framework for validation by linking validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) to the SeQF, stating that the purpose of validation is to obtain a qualification or part of a qualification that is levelled to the SeQF or to gain access to an education programme that can lead to such a qualification. The ordinance provides a common definition of validation and states that a validation process should include an in-depth mapping of prior learning and an assessment to determine if the individual has achieved the qualifications intended learning outcomes ([12]). Since 2020, a government grant has been supporting validation of vocational skills ([13]). This grant is available for social partners who, in collaboration, want to develop new or adapt existing qualifications and validation models.

MYH has the task of following and supporting the development work on validation nationally and regionally. The agency is also required to support the economic sectors with developing, and quality assuring, models for validation (Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan/MYH, 2017). MYH's internal strategic document (Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan/MYH, 2021) sees the SeQF as a tool that promotes VNFIL and recognition of formal and non-formal qualifications. MYH also aims to increase the interest of industry sectors in levelling different qualifications. This will increase the number of qualifications that can be obtained through validation and help give the results of validation national legitimacy in the labour market.

To support the further development of sectoral validation, MYH has run an ESF-funded project since 2018 called BOSS ([14]) (operational and strategic collaboration in sectoral validation) to help about 20 sectors to develop and quality assure their models in a network where they can all learn from each other. The starting point for the project's activities is the SeQF, and Standard and guidelines for sectoral validation ([15]). When the sectors formulate qualifications in accordance with the SeQF, the learning outcomes for a specific qualification become clear and can be validated and recognised via industry sector models ([16]). There are

important synergies between these tools (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). The project will come to an end in April 2023 ([17]).

Since October 2020, MYH and partners from Finland and Iceland has carried out an Erasmus+ funded project on non-formal qualifications and validation arrangements in the Nordic countries. The aim of the project is to examine how non-formal qualifications are levelled in national qualifications frameworks and if those qualifications can be awarded through validation procedures. The foreseen output of the project is both policy recommendations and support tools aimed at stakeholders designing non-formal qualifications and validation procedures ([18]).

5.2. Credit system

There is no uniform credit system linked with the SeQF and no credit system for qualifications that are levelled through the application procedure that MYH is responsible for. For qualifications awarded through formal education there are three credit systems: the ECTS for higher education, HVE-credits for higher vocational education and a credit system for upper-secondary education (including IVET qualifications). Both initial and higher VET, being course based, are in line with the VET recommendation.

5.3. Recognition of foreign qualifications

The Enic-Naric office (within the Swedish Council for Higher Education) has developed a web function making it possible to search for equivalence of foreign qualifications within the Swedish system. A reference to the appropriate SeQF/EQF-level is attached ([19]) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

5.4. Promoting lifelong learning

The SeQF facilitates lifelong learning by contributing to making the learning that takes place under the auspices of various organisations visible by including non-formal qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022). In their internal strategy MYH place importance on contributing with expertise and knowledge of how the SeQF can be used and implemented in the regional work with strategic skills supply (Myndigheten for Yrkeshögskolan/MYH, 2021).

NQF implementation and impact

6.1. Stage of implementation

The SeQF has reached the operational stage operating as a map of, and reference, to all nationally recognised qualifications. Implementation structures and main working methods and instruments are in place. SeQF provides a reference point for assessment and validation of non-formal and informal training, a platform for cooperation of stakeholder across education, training, and employment and supports quality assurance mechanisms for the design, registration, renewal, and the award of qualifications. Work is still needed with regards to indication of levels on some of the qualification documents and support to for teachers, trainers and guidance and counselling staff.

6.2. Indicating EQF/NQF levels

Indicating SeQF/EQF levels on qualifications has been a rather slow process. SeQF and EQF levels are indicated on qualifications from higher vocational education (levels 5 and 6), on qualifications awarded outside formal education (levels 3 to 6) and on certificates from folk high school (levels 2 and 4). SeQF/ EQF levels are indicated on some higher education qualifications (levels 6 to 8), and on the relevant diploma supplements. SeQF/EQF levels are also indicated on Europass supplements for vocational diploma at higher vocational education. SeQF/EQF levels are indicated on qualifications included in the database; it is planned to be indicated on all qualifications that will be included.

6.3. NQF dissemination

MYH has been disseminating information about the framework to increase its visibility. In their internal strategy document, it is stated that SeQF communication is a fundamental part of the work to support and promote the development of the framework (Myndigheten for Yrkeshögskolan/MYH, 2021). They are developing a communications strategy, that is linked with the launch of their national qualifications database. The agency has developed support material for industry organisations developing qualifications for the purpose of validation ([20]). A revised handbook for developing non-formal qualifications and learning outcomes is under development (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

6.4. Qualifications databases and registers

Sweden does not yet have a comprehensive database for all national qualifications; instead, several different databases are in place. MYH is developing a comprehensive database targeting social partners, labour market actors, training providers, validation providers, and guidance professionals that will present all qualifications levelled to the SeQF, both from the formal education and training system as well as non-formal qualifications ([21]). The database is initially developed in Swedish (in the future it will also be available also in English), including the 56 non-formal qualifications that are already levelled in the SeQF by MYH. 3 100 formal qualifications from higher vocational education were added to the database; qualifications from other education sectors will be gradually added. Support material for how to formulate learning outcomes for the qualifications is described in the learning outcomes handbook. The information in the national qualifications database is available through an open API hosted on the country's data portal ([22]), making information about different qualifications easier for the public to find. The database is also connected to Europass and QDR/QMS is used to make it interoperable with the European Learning Model (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Information on education programmes that lead to formal qualifications are presented in other databases, but do not meet the criteria set by the EQF recommendation ([23]). There is a specific portal with information on education, including search tools for education paths and providers throughout the formal education system ([24]).

6.5. Awareness and use of the NQF

There has been no survey of the awareness and use of the SeQF, but through their work MYH has observed that awareness is increasing. Especially the increase in the number of non-formal qualifications included in the SeQF is evidence that awareness and use of the framework is increasing among labour market stakeholders and quality assurance bodies. The SeQF is well known to the agency's cooperation partners and other governmental agencies. The public and specifically students have more limited knowledge, although it is higher among students in higher vocational education. The recognition authorities and bodies use SeQF in some cases as a guidance instrument (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

6.6. Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

There has been no evaluation of the SeQF, though MYH continuously monitors its work to identify development areas and possible improvements for the implementation of SeQF.

6.7. Impact of the NQF

The newly implemented ordinance on validation has strengthened and formalised the link between validation of non-formal and informal learning and the SeQF, also offering the possibility to individuals to acquire a formal qualification. Additionally, the SeQF has considerably influenced the validation processes implemented by sector industry organisations (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022). This is seen in the increased interest for having the non-formal and informal qualifications levelled to the SeQF (Section 6.1). The framework has also an increasing impact on transparency and comparability of qualifications, and it is a key factor for skills matching. Its use by the different national agencies has led to the framework having some impact on the dialogue and cooperation across education and training sectors, and the labour market. The SeQF has had limited impact within formal education (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Referencing to the EQF

The SeQF was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in June 2016, but the finalised referencing report has not yet been published (Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan/MYH, 2016).

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Important lessons and future plans

The greatest added value of the comprehensive SeQF is the learning outcomes providing a common language and making the content of qualifications easier to understand and compare, both within education and training, and between different labour market sectors and stakeholders.

The sectors that, with the support of MYH, have designed qualifications for levelling to SeQF, have better opportunities to communicate different competence requirements for different vocations with education providers. They also can develop relevant validation models that, among other things, aid staff recruitment and the opportunity to create clear career paths.

Regarding parity of esteem between different types of education and training and qualifications, opening SeQF levels 6 to 8 to non-academic qualifications is a step to the right direction. For the SeQF to be able to contribute to reducing barriers between education sectors, the relationship between higher education and other education sectors should be further clarified through continuous dialogue. Possibilities for transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes across education sectors are available. However, there is room for improvement when it comes to implementation. Dialogue continues between MYH and the Association of Higher Education Institutions ([25]) about how a degree from higher VET can be credited into higher education. A pilot is underway where students from higher VET can gain access to programs in higher education ([26]).

A main challenge related to the communication of the SeQF. There is limited awareness among stakeholders and especially end-users. MYH expects that the new database will contribute to raising awareness, promoting the use and enhancing the impact of the SeQF. To increase awareness of the SeQF, MYH will (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022):

- a. continue developing their new website ([27]) and other communication/out-reach activities;
- b. include all qualifications in the newly launched qualifications database;
- c. implement a comprehensive quality plan for SeQF as a whole.

MYH will also continue capacity building activities and supporting providers of non-formal qualifications, as well as the development and implementation of external quality assurance of the levelled non-formal qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2022).

Main sources of information

[URLs accessed 4.4.2023]

- [Database of qualifications](#)
- [SeQF webpage](#)
- [Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education](#)

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	Degrees, third cycle, Annex 2 to Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education	8
	Degrees, third cycle, Annex to Regulation 1993:221 (Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet Förordning (2017:276)) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education	

Degrees, second cycle, Annex 2 to Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Degrees, second cycle, Annex to Regulation 1993: 221 (Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet (*))

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Degrees, second cycle, in the Annex to Regulation 2007: 1164 (Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan ())**

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Swedish Defence University.

Degrees, first cycle, Annex 2 to Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (Examina på grundnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Degrees, first cycle, Annex to Regulation 2007:1164 (Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan ())**

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Swedish Defence University.

Degrees, first cycle, Annex to Regulation 1993:221 (Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet (*))

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Advanced diploma in higher vocational education (Kvalificerad yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Qualifications Awarded outside formal education

Performing artist Market economist (Marknadsekonom) Montessori educator (Montessoripedagog) Site manager building and construction (Platschef bygg och anläggning) These are examples of such qualifications and not an exhaustive list. There is no official translation from Swedish to English.

Qualified graduate from upper secondary engineering course (Gymnasieingenjörsexamen från gymnasieskolan)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Diploma in higher vocational education (Yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Qualifications Awarded outside formal education

Authorised payroll consultants (Auktoriserad lönekonsult) Hairdresser (Frisör) Shotfirer class A (Sprängarbas Sprängkort klass A) Transport manager of waste management and recycling (Yrkesbevis Transportledare inom avfallshantering och återvinning) Certified medical massage therapist (Certifierad Medicinsk Massageterapeut) Certified Masseuse (Certifierad massör) Real Estate management (Fastighetsförvaltare) Military assistant nurse (Militär undersköterska). These are examples of such qualifications and not an exhaustive list. There is no official translation from Swedish to English.

Diploma from a national programme in upper secondary education - qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards

(Gymnasieexamen från gymnasieskolan)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Final grades from a complete national or specially designed programme (Slutbetyg från ett fullständigt nationellt eller specialutformat program i gymnasieskolan)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Diploma from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level - qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards

(Gymnasieexamen från kommunal vuxenutbildning)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Final grades from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level (Slutbetyg från gymnasial vuxenutbildning)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Certificate from the general course at upper secondary level from folk high school (Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på gymnasial nivå från folkhögskola)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Qualifications Awarded outside formal education

Cleaners (Städare) Bus mechanic (Bussmekaniker)

Licensed personal trainer (Licensierad Persnoligt

Tränare) Real Estate Caretakers (Fastighetsskötare)

Bricklayer (Murare) These are examples of such

qualifications and not an exhaustive list. There is no

official translation from Swedish to English.

3	Qualifications Awarded outside formal education Assistant – sanitation truck for waste management and recycling (Medåkare - renhållningsbil inom avfallshantering och återvinning) These are examples of such qualifications and not an exhaustive list. There is no official translation from Swedish to English.	3
2	Final grades from compulsory school (Slutbetyg från grundskolan) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education Final grades from special school at compulsory level (Slutbetyg från specialskolan) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education Final grades from municipal adult education and training at compulsory level (Slutbetyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning på grundläggande nivå) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education Certificate from upper secondary education for individuals with learning disabilities (Gymnasiesärskolebevis från gymnasiesärskolan) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education Certificate from special education for adults at upper secondary level (Gymnasiesärskolebevis från särskild utbildning för vuxna på gymnasial nivå) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education Grade from Swedish for immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (Betyg från utbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola) Category Qualifications Awarded in formal education	2

Grade from municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (Betyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Certificate from the general course at compulsory school level from folk high school (Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på grundskolenivå från folkhögskola)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

1

Final grades from compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities (Slutbetyg från grundsärskolan)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

Final grades from special education for adults at compulsory level (Slutbetyg från särskild utbildning för vuxna på grundläggande nivå)

Category

Qualifications Awarded in formal education

1

Acronyms

EQF	European qualifications framework
MYH	National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan)
NCP	National coordination point
NQF	National qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework in the European higher education area
SeQF	Swedish qualifications framework
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

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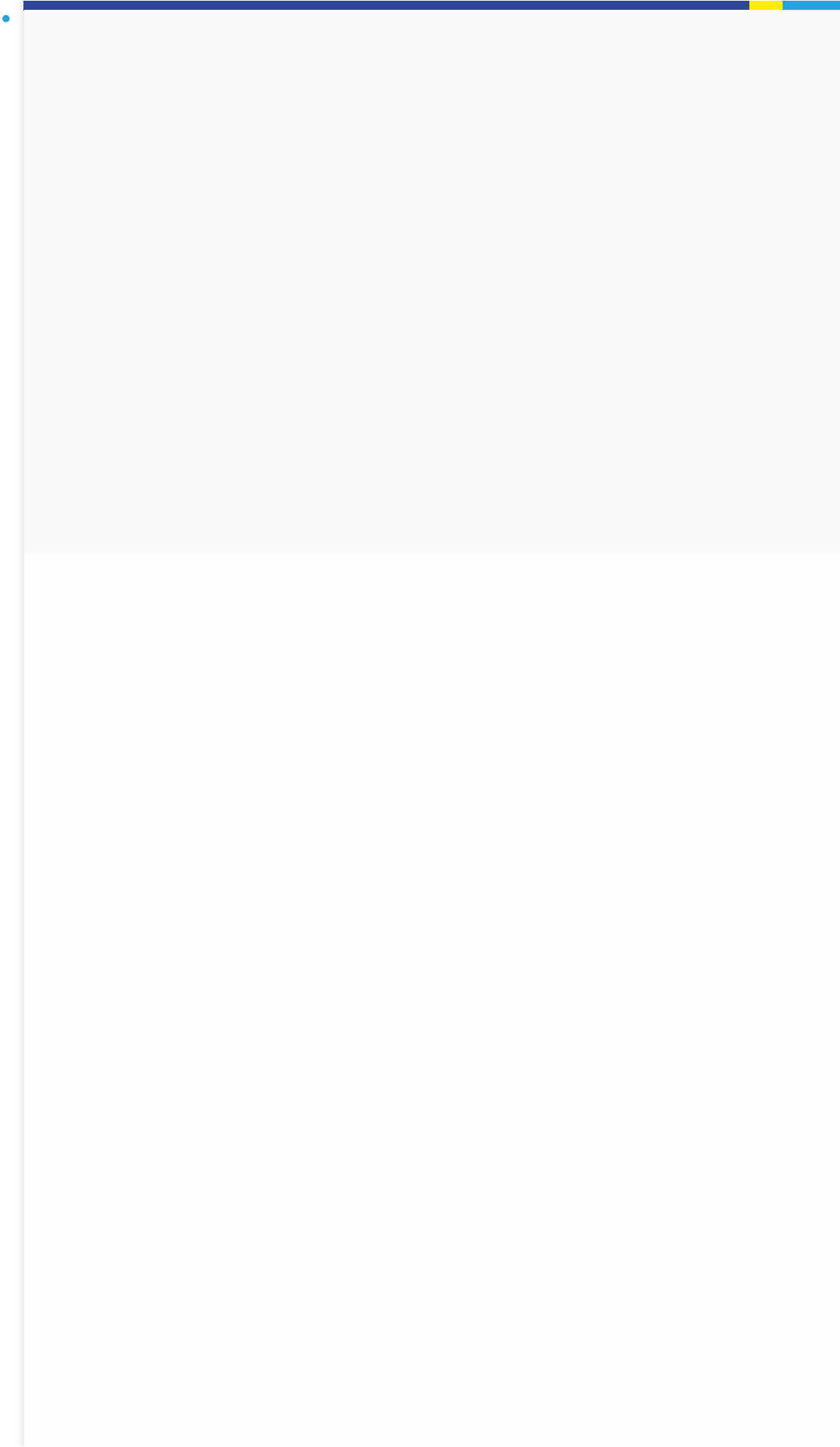
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Related content



2022

Sweden - European inventory of NQFs 2022

European inventory of NQF



Sweden