

## Compilation of SWOT analysis results of NQFs

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Short summary:

The NQFs chosen for this deliverable are selected and analysed with the SWOT analysis. This deliverable documents the SWOT-analysis in terms of the results from WP 2, the employability grid. Based on the analysis results recommendations will be drafted within deliverable 11 how the NQFs could be enhanced and refined in order to make work processes transparent. Furthermore limitations of the work process approach will be identified and discussed.

The description of strengths and weaknesses as well as threats and opportunities is also essential for building up a typology of the NQFs in question. For this reason, the basis of the SWOT-analysis can also be found in the final report of deliverable 9. On the other hand the SWOT-analysis is the basis for the discussion of limitations regarding the work process orientation as referencing criterion delivered in deliverable 11.

Deliverable 10 contains the SWOT analysis of NQFs in Austria, Romania, France, Italy, Malta, Greece, Netherlands, Spain, and Germany. The SWOT analysis was conducted on the basis of information which the partner countries provided about the NQFs (already existing or in development) and via extraction of information with regards to strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities on the basis of the template below. The information was collected in two rounds of investigation – the first one focussing on the NQFs as such whereas the second round connecting the structures of the NQFs with the concept of the core work objective. Both sources were integrated into this final report of deliverable 10, though laying a focus on the more specific, last mentioned part of the information. Via feedback loop the partners were invited to make corrections or provide further detailed information. Beyond that, the partner meetings gave the chance to discuss implications originating in the results of the SWOT analysis.

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## (1) Austria

As the Austrian NQF is strongly linked to the development of the EQF, its strengths and weaknesses have to be seen as corresponding with the ones of the EQF. This correspondence results in a strong orientation towards learning outcomes which can be considered to be a strength. Further strengths can be found in the broad involvement of stakeholders which results in a broad acceptance of the framework. This broad involvement also includes a top-down as well as a bottom up approach.

The broad involvement can also be seen as a weakness of the Austrian NQF as it leads to a rise of complexity of the discussion process. As the Austrian NQF is closely linked to the development of the EQF, the EQF's unclear definitions of its descriptors can also be considered to be a weakness of the Austrian NQF.

There is a set of opportunities which is linked with the development of the Austrian NQF: A weakness of the EQF, namely the constraint of levels 6 and 8 to the academic sector, is avoided by the Austrian NQF by developing two separate strands. A further opportunity is based in the attempt to integrate non-formal and informal learning into the framework. Last but not least there are opportunities which could also be named as challenges. Especially deepening the learning outcomes approach will include a balancing process of outcome orientation and input factors as well as discussion processes between the different subsectors of the Austrian education system.

Threats are to be situated in the voluntary character of the Austrian implementation process which could naturally lead to a weaker binding force. Beyond that, the legal status of NQF is still unclear.

|                 | Helpful  | Harmful  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Internal Origin | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__increasing importance of orientation towards learning outcomes and the implementation of corresponding instruments</li> <li>__ a top-down and bottom-up approach guarantees a coherent framework</li> <li>__broad stakeholder involvement, therefore strong relations of NQF to the world of work</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__corresponding to weaknesses of EQF</li> <li>__clear classification of existing qualifications is difficult because EQF- descriptors are underdetermined</li> <li>__broad stakeholder involvement, therefore high complexity of the process.</li> </ul> |
| External Origin | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__levels 6 to 8 being divided into a 'Bologna-strand' and into a 'non-Bologna-strand' to avoid misbalances between academic and non-academic field</li> <li>__integration of non-formal and informal learning into the NQF.</li> <li>__deepening learning outcomes approach by balancing outcome orientation and input factors and by implementing a coherent system across different subsystems</li> </ul> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ Classification in the NQF is voluntary</li> <li>__ unclear legal status of NQF</li> </ul>  |

## (2) Romania

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Speaking about strengths, the Romanian framework for Higher Education NQFHE is highly compatible with its European counterpart and with the EQF. That results in a very similar formulation of goals and definition of qualifications. Its officially accorded methodology of elaboration lead to a wide acceptance by the academic environment. The definition of qualifications is based on learning outcomes and shows links to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits. It features an interface in order to link up universities, current and future students and employers. The whole process is supported by a self-certification report that was elaborated in 2011 and by a new Law of National Education which stipulates the elaboration and the implementation of the NQFHE and the NQF in accordance with the EQF.

The weaknesses of the NQFHE is first referring to a not sufficient compatibility with the definition from the adult learning training system. The reason for this might be found in the lack of a good communication between the institutions responsible for the the elaboration and the implementation of NQFHE and NQF. This leads to a lack of good understanding of the goals of NQFHE and NQF on the side of the relevant stakeholders.

Speaking about opportunities, the development of NQFHE could strengthen the Bologna Process. It also supports the the dialogue between the universities and employers in order to engage all stakeholders interested in the modernisation of the university study provision according to the ever changing labour market requirements. Therefore it also encourages universities to widen their training provision for non-traditional, especially mature learners.

The main threats are situated around an instable political situation which may lead to ever changing national priorities.

|                 | Helpful  | Harmful  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Internal        | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The NQFHE is compatible with EHEA and EQF;</li> <li>- The NQFHE has been designed with the same goal as the EQF has, the both frameworks have the same definition of the qualification;</li> <li>- The NQFHE has been elaborated in accordance with a methodology officially acted by order of the Minister of Education;</li> <li>- The NQFHE is accepted by the academic environment;</li> <li>- The NQFHE and its qualifications are based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits;</li> <li>- The NQFHE has an interface, the NORHE which was designed as a link between universities, current and future students and employers;</li> <li>- the NQFHE has already a self-certification report that was elaborated in time, September 2011, in accordance with the European Requirements;</li> <li>- The new Law of National Education stipulates the elaboration and the implementation of the NQFHE and the NQF in accordance with the EQF</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The definition of the qualification from the NQFHE is not fully compatible with the definition from the adult learning training system.</li> <li>- The lack of a good communication between the institutions that have in charge the elaboration and the implementation of NQFHE, respectively NQF.</li> <li>- The lack of good understanding of the goals of NQFHE and NQF within the relevant stakeholders.</li> </ul> |
| External Origin | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NQFHE is the tool which use is aiming at strengthening the Bologna Process</li> <li>- NQFHE allows the dialogue between the universities and employers in order to engage all stakeholders interested in the modernisation of the university study provision according to the ever changing labour market requirements;</li> <li>- NQFHE encourage universities to widen their training provision for non-traditional, especially mature learners</li> </ul>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The political instability that determines the change of priorities at the national level.</li> </ul>  |

(3) France

France's SWOT analysis is mainly based on the fact that its NQF – as described in deliverable 8 and 9 – is highly compatible with the EQF. This accordance is the result of a lengthy process as France has a long tradition of building up frameworks .

|                 | Helpful  | Harmful                           |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Internal Origin | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__highly compatible with the EQF</li> <li>__long tradition and experience with national frameworks</li> </ul> | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>—</p> |
| External Origin | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>—</p>   | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>—</p>    |

(4) Italy

Regarding the Italian NQF it is seen as major strengths that its development overcomes diversities and creates a common and shared language focused on learning outcomes which leads to more transparency, legibility and quality. As a consequence mobility in the European countries is supported. Specifically aiming the employability grid the work process orientation is focussed because the logic of Italians NQF will also be based on the logic of recognition of the required/needed core competences (based on the work process) to ensure that an individual is able to perform a job.

Weaknesses of the NQF are identified in the application of qualifications to the NQFs by the industry. The use of NQFs could lead to conflicts (power or policy). In regard of the employability grid, the work-orientation criterion is not so easy to consider in practice. NQF could be "real" work-objective oriented, if NQF levels perfectly fit to the needs of the industry or "in theory" work-objective oriented, if NQF levels fit only in part to the needs of the labour market.

Opportunities are seen in the fact, that the learner might develop learning-competence to keep up-to-date with work requirements and that the NQF may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject. The fear of companies that NQFs could change and influence the salaries of their employees and the question of levelling polyvalent jobs (which could embrace different levels if referenced to EQF levels) are considered as threats.

|                 | Helpful  | Harmful  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Internal Origin | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__Overcome diversities and develop a common and shared language focused on learning outcomes.</li> <li>__Guarantee transparency, legibility and quality.</li> <li>__Promote mobility in the European Countries.</li> <li>__The logic adopted in the employability grid is work process oriented, and the logic of NQF will be based on the logic of recognition of the required/needed core competences (based on the work process) to ensure that an individual is able to perform a job.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ For industries it is a big problem to apply their qualifications to the NQFs.</li> <li>__If companies make use of NQFs, it could come to some conflicts (power or policy), e.g. Labour Union says somebody has a Level 3 and companies decide it is a Level 2.</li> <li>__The work-orientation criterion is not so easy to consider in practice. NQF could be "real" work-objective oriented, if NQF levels perfectly fit to the needs of the industry or "in theory" work-objective oriented, if NQF levels fit only in part to the needs of the labour market.</li> </ul> |
| External Origin | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__Enterprises very often change their work requirement. However, curricula often change only every 5 years. This means that the learner needs learning-competence to keep up-to-date with work requirements.</li> <li>__EU demands of homogenising education frameworks and improve mobility added by the lack of workforce in many sectors in Europe may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__Work orientation must be valid for NQFs, but not suitable for companies because companies fear that the levels could change and influence the salaries of their employees.</li> <li>__Levelling polyvalent jobs (which could embrace different levels if referenced to EQF levels) could be a problem.</li> </ul>   |

(5) Malta

The strengths of Malta's NQF, the MQF, is mainly based on the inclusion of compulsory, vocational and academic education. It furthermore supports training providers in designing qualifications that respond to the needs of individuals, employers and the labour market. One of its main strengths concerns its referencability to the EQF. Another one is the strong differentiation in the definition of skills. Amongst other aspects this differentiation makes the MQF more user-friendly. In connection with those aspects it is also helpful that the MQF achieved the inclusion of qualifications across compulsory, vocational and academic sectors into a single framework.

On the side of weaknesses it has to be stated that up to now only full qualifications are considered in the MQF. It is planned to change that aspect in near future. Also the referencability to single sectors is more difficult because of the fact that the MQF does not make any express reference to particular qualifications within sectors.

|                 | Helpful   | Harmful   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Internal Origin | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ inclusion of qualifications across compulsory, vocational and academic sectors into a single framework</li> <li>___ helps training providers design qualifications that respond to the needs of individuals, employers and the labour market</li> <li>___ referencability to the EQF</li> <li>___ differentiated definition of skills</li> <li>___ the provision of detail makes it more user-friendly</li> <li>___ achieved the inclusion of qualifications across compulsory, vocational and academic sectors into a single framework</li> </ul> | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ Only full qualifications considered</li> <li>___ The MQF does not make any express reference to particular qualifications within sectors</li> </ul> |
| External Origin | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>—</p>  | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>—</p>  |

(6) Greece

The levels and general descriptors of the Hellenic Qualifications Framework are not based on any kind of SWOT-analysis.

|                 |   |                        |
|-----------------|---|------------------------|
|                 | <b>Helpful</b>  | <b>Harmful</b>         |
| <b>Internal</b> | <b>Strengths</b><br>— following the implicit logic of the EQF | <b>Weaknesses</b><br>— |
| <b>External</b> | <b>Opportunities</b><br>—                                     | <b>Threats</b><br>—    |

## (7). Netherlands

In the Netherlands the main strengths of the NQF are identified in the clarification and in a better understanding of learning outcomes for companies as well as in the usage of the EQF language by making use of the EQF terminology, especially when speaking of the current VET qualifications.

That the entry level is not linked to the EQF is considered as major weakness of the NQF. It currently also consists only of references to the formal education.

Opportunities in near future are based on the fact that VET qualifications will be described in new formats in which NLQF/EQF descriptors will be used.

The existence of a level 4+ which is either defined for level 4 or 5 might form a threat for the future. That applies also to the fact that, the Dutch KSC description differs somewhat from the EQF description as well as the way of describing qualifications between VET and HE.

|                 | Helpful  | Harmful  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Internal Origin | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ Clarifying and better understanding of learning outcomes for companies.</li> <li>__ The current VET qualifications use the EQF language by making use of the EQF terminology, such as description of the level of autonomy and responsibility, the cooperation with others.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ The current version describes an entry level. This entry level is not linked to EQF.</li> <li>__ At the moment the NLQF consists only of references to the formal education.</li> </ul>   |
| External Origin | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ VET qualifications will be described in new formats in which NLQF/EQF descriptors will be used.</li> <li>__ At a European level a refinement of EQF-descriptors could be an instrument to describe all qualifications in the same language.</li> </ul>                             | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ There is a level 4+ described which is either defined for level 4 or 5</li> <li>__ The Dutch KSC description differs somewhat from the EQF description</li> <li>__ Differences between VET and HE in way of describing qualifications</li> </ul> |

## (8) Spain

In regard of the employability grid the possibility is seen that it could be used in adequacy with the NQF of Spain as well as with common private companies competences descriptions framework. That might also be true for Spanish SQFs as there are collective agreements via labor unionstrying officially to link SQF to NQF.

Weaknesses are identified in the length of process in which companies enter into EQF realm as the EQF-perspective might get lost in this process and controversies among companies, government and labour unions might occur.

It could be an opportunity that the EU demands may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject. Threats might exist in the current crisis of the EU and in recent political changes which transformed deeply legal basis of labour relations and collective agreements.

|                 | Helpful  | Harmful  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Internal Origin | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>__ The employability grid could be used in adequacy with the NQF of Spain as well as with common private companies competences descriptions framework which could facilitates its usage.</p> <p>__ There some new collective agreements via labor unions, although simple and currently in draft stage, trying officially to link SQF ( where employability grid is related to) to NQF.</p> | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>__ SQFs are defined through collective agreements which are a lengthy process so the pace companies enter into EQF realm, via this officially way, would be as lengthy as the agreements evolution are.</p> <p>__ SQF is trying to be linked to the NQF (reaching EQF as a consequence not as an end). In some way the EQF perspective in this process is lost by the actors involved.</p> <p>__ controversies among companies, government and labour unions in relation to NQF structure (specifically levels) and updating processes</p> <p>__ The current Spanish NQF is not yet officially published, being pending of approval for the parliament, according to IFIIE ( official public executive area in charge by Spanish NQF design and publication) information provided at the end 2011. Due to the financial crisis in Spain and government priorities, we deem this process will take much longer than initially expected in 2011.</p> |
| External Origin | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>__ EU demands may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject</p>   | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>__ crises paralysed many collective agreements processes</p> <p>__ Recent political changes have transformed deeply legal basis of labour relations and collective agreements and labour unions lost substantially their previous power of influence.</p>   |

## (9) Germany

While the relation to work is considered as strength of the German NQF, the fragmental consideration of other aspects of society could be a weakness. Opportunities are seen in the close link to qualification needs whereas the strong focus on employability could be a threat, especially when considering the employability grid.

|          | Helpful  | Harmful   |
|----------|--|---|
| Internal | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ Work relation</li> </ul>                         | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ Only fragments of work plays a role</li> <li>__ The interlinking of work &amp; society does not play a role</li> </ul> |
| External | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ Close link to qualification needs</li> </ul> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>__ Only employability is the focus</li> <li>__ That is not enough for societies</li> </ul>                                   |