Qualifications meta-frameworks:
A report supporting the development of Gulf Cooperation Council’s Gulf Qualifications Framework (GQF)

May 2013
# Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Meta-qualifications frameworks 4
3. European Qualifications Framework (EQF) 6
   3.1 EQF membership 6
   3.2 Establishment 6
   3.3 Objectives 7
   3.4 Benefits of the EQF 8
   3.5 Main elements of the EQF 9
   3.6 Links to other qualifications framework 10
   3.7 Implementation 11
4. Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) 13
   4.1 QF-EHEA membership 13
   4.2 Establishment 13
   4.3 Objectives 13
   4.4 Benefits of the QF-EHEA 15
   4.5 Main elements of the QF-EHEA 15
   4.6 Links to other qualifications frameworks 17
   4.7 Implementation 17
5. ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework 20
   5.1 ASEAN RQF membership 20
   5.2 Establishment 21
   5.3 Benefits of the ASEAN RQF 23
6. Appendices 24
1. Introduction

On behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the National Qualifications Authority is leading the development of a meta-qualifications framework for the Gulf region, known as the Gulf Qualifications Framework or GQF.

The six Gulf nations that make up the GCC region (UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar) have considerable global influence but small populations. They all share similar socio-economic challenges and visions. They need to continue to work together in many ways to ensure that their influence in the global economy is maximised. To enable this to happen, increased mobility of labour is required to ensure that the most qualified people can support the collaborative development of the GCC region. Therefore, the context for a meta-framework of qualifications for the region is ideal.

The Gulf Qualifications Framework (GQF) will work like other meta-frameworks. The GQF will enable GCC countries to relate their national qualifications and systems to a common reference framework. It will have reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do.

The purpose of this report is to provide detailed information about three meta-frameworks: European Qualifications Framework (EQF), European Higher Education Area (EHEA/Bologna) Framework and the emerging ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework. This research aims to:

- inform the development of the Gulf Qualifications Framework, in particular its vision, mission, objectives, integrated structure framework and implementation approach

- assist those drafting the Abu Dhabi Qualifications Excellence Declaration that will set out the vision, objectives and terms of participation for the Gulf Qualifications Framework.
2. Meta-qualifications frameworks

Learning and training have advanced in the workplace because of the knowledge economy and increasing speed of implementation of technology. Workplaces are becoming more sophisticated and incubators of new learning and innovation. In many instances, old economy institutions of education and training are not able to keep up with the fast changing technologies and moving knowledge, skills and aspects of competence that are happening in the modern world of work. As a result, a new paradigm has been developing to try to connect education and training systems and institutions closer to the needs of the workplace.

In light of extraordinary global changes underway, many countries have or are looking to improve, or in some cases reform, their education and training systems. Where needed, they look to improve and introduce policies, processes and systems that aim to increase the interrelationship and relevance of education and training to the labour market. Most recent developments have been the introduction of national and international qualifications frameworks as a central comparative tool for organising and managing qualifications, with many interrelating qualification outcomes linked with occupational requirements.

The result is a strong international trend towards the use of qualifications frameworks. Many countries have already introduced national qualifications frameworks, including all of the UK countries, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as a lead mechanism to reform their education and training systems and enhance international competitiveness of available skills in their countries. In all, more than 138 countries are considering, developing or implementing qualifications frameworks.¹

Countries linking their national qualifications internationally benefit from greater potential for international recognition of national qualifications, the facilitation of the mobility of labour and students, the liberalisation of trade in education and training, and the greater transparency of national qualifications systems.² Most of the EU countries have developed national frameworks or are in the process of doing so to link national qualification levels to levels in the region’s meta-qualifications frameworks (i.e. QF-EHEA and the EQF). Other regions in the world currently developing a meta-qualifications framework include the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, South-east Asia and the South African Development Community.

As these frameworks typically apply across countries in a region, it is worth clarifying the meaning of a ‘meta-framework’ and a ‘regional framework’. According to the International Labour Organisation³:

- **a meta-framework** is a means of enabling one framework of qualifications to relate to others and subsequently for one qualification to relate to others that are normally located in another framework

- **a regional framework** is a meta-framework that consists of a set of agreed principles, practices, procedures and standardised terminology intended to ensure effective comparability of qualifications and credits across countries in a region.

Particularly given the cost implications for countries, qualifications frameworks are typically available as a voluntary reference point.⁴ In addition, they do not aim to dictate how countries structure and prioritise their education and training policies, structures and institutions.⁵
This report will discuss three international referencing systems that represent both a meta-framework and a regional qualifications framework:

- The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** provides an ‘interchange’ enabling the alignment of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. It is an eight (8) level framework from Level 1 (basic) to Level 8 (advanced) encompassing higher education, vocational education and training, general education and adult education.

- The **Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)** forms the basis of a common understanding of the ‘cycles’ of study in higher education and the qualifications associated with these cycles. The three degree cycles are Cycle 1 (Bachelor 1), Cycle 2 (Master) and Cycle 3 (Doctorate). There is also a short cycle qualification which is a qualification within or linked to the first cycle.

- The **ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework** involves 10 countries that are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Most of these countries have developed or are developing national qualifications frameworks. A project is currently underway that will draft the design of the ASEAN RQA for stakeholder comment.

Given the significant amount of information about these frameworks, particularly the EQF and QF-EHEA, and the complexity of some of this information, the contents in the following sections are mainly extracts drawn from a range of relevant sources.
3. European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

3.1 EQF membership

3.1.1 There are 36 countries taking part in the EQF cooperation. These countries include the 27 EU Member States, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey. By the end of 2012, 16 countries had completed their referencing to the EQF and most of the remaining countries are expected to complete their referencing process during 2013.6

3.1.2 However, there were major differences in starting positions when the EQF was adopted in 2008. Although most Member States (MS) were involved in the EQF project prior to 2008, the status of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) varied between countries. Some countries had frameworks in place or had experience with the learning outcome approach, and other countries did not.7

As at 2012:8

- 29 countries are developing or have developed comprehensive NQFs covering all types and levels of qualifications.

- 27 countries have proposed or decided on an eight-level framework. Other countries have NQFs with either five, seven, nine, 10 or 12 levels

- eight (8) countries are developing or have developed partial NQFs covering a limited range of qualifications or consisting of separate frameworks operating apart from each other. For example, Czech Republic, England/Northern Ireland and Switzerland have separate frameworks for VET qualifications.

- only four countries have fully operational frameworks (Ireland, France, Malta and the UK) and another 10 countries are entering an early implementation stage.

3.2 Establishment

3.2.1 The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning document by the European Union includes a summary of the establishment of the EQF:9

The development of the European Qualifications Framework started in 2004 in response to requests from the Member States, the social partners and other stakeholders for a common reference to increase the transparency of qualifications. The Commission, with the support of an EQF Expert Group, produced a blueprint proposing an eight-level framework based on learning outcomes aiming to facilitate the transparency and portability of qualifications and to support lifelong learning. The Commission published this blueprint for consultation across Europe during the second half of 2005.
The responses to the consultation demonstrated widespread support among European stakeholders for the Commission proposal but also requested a number of clarifications and simplification. In response, the Commission amended the proposal, drawing on the input of experts from all the 32 countries involved as well as the European social partners. The revised text was then adopted by the Commission as a proposal on 6 September 2006. The European Parliament and Council successfully negotiated the proposal during 2007, leading to the EQF’s formal adoption in February 2008.

3.2.2 Further details about key developments leading up to the adoption of the EQF are specified in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008/C 111/01). See Appendix 1 for these developments. Note: The Council refers to the Council of the European Union.

3.2.3 The Recommendation invites Member States to:

- relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010
- indicate the EQF level at each qualification by 2012
- use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning
- promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education and training
- designate a national coordination point.

The full Recommendation can be found at:

3.3 Objectives

The EQF is a voluntary initiative, based on mutual trust among the participating countries. The objective of the EQF as stated in the Clause 12 of Recommendation of 23 April 2008 is to:

- create a common reference framework which should serve as a translation device between different qualifications systems and their levels, whether for general and higher education or for vocational education and training. This will improve the transparency, comparability and portability of citizens’ qualifications issued in accordance with the practice in the different Member States. Each level of qualification should, in principle, be attainable by way of a variety of educational and career paths. The European Qualifications Framework should, moreover, enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common European reference point and thus show the relationship between international sectoral qualifications and national qualifications systems. This Recommendation therefore contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners. Transparent quality assurance principles and information exchange will support its implementation by helping to build mutual trust.
In summary, this means:

- the EQF is a common European reference system which will link different countries’ national qualifications systems and frameworks together. In practice, it will function as a translation device making qualifications more readable. This will help learners and workers wishing to move between countries or change jobs or move between educational institutions at home.\textsuperscript{13}

### 3.4 Benefits of the EQF

This closer relationship between countries’ qualifications systems will have many beneficiaries:\textsuperscript{14}

#### 3.4.1 The EQF will support **greater mobility of learners and workers**. It will make it easier for learners to describe their broad level of competence to recruiters in other countries. This will help employers interpret the qualifications of applicants and so support labour market mobility in Europe. At a very practical level, from 2012 all new qualifications should bear a reference to the appropriate EQF level. The EQF will thus complement and reinforce existing European mobility instruments such as Europass, Erasmus, and ECTS.

#### 3.4.2 The EQF should benefit individuals by **increasing access to, and participation in, lifelong learning**. By establishing a common reference point, the EQF will indicate how learning outcomes may by combined from different settings, for example formal study or work, and from different countries, and can thus contribute to reducing barriers between education and training providers e.g. between higher education and vocational education and training, which may operate in isolation from each other. This will promote progression so that learners do not have to repeat learning for example.

#### 3.4.3 The EQF can **support individuals with extensive experience from work or other fields of activity** by facilitating validation of non-formal and informal learning. The focus on learning outcomes will make it easier to assess whether learning outcomes acquired in these settings are equivalent in content and relevance to formal qualifications. In addition, shifting the focus to **learning outcomes** supports a better match between the needs of the labour market (for knowledge, skills and competences) and education and training provision as well as facilitates the transfer and use of qualifications across different countries and education and training systems.\textsuperscript{15}

#### 3.4.4 The EQF will support individual users as well as providers of education and training by **increasing transparency of qualifications awarded outside the national systems**, for example by sectors and multinational companies. The adoption of a common reference framework based on **learning outcomes** will facilitate the comparison and (potential) linking together of traditional qualifications awarded by national authorities and qualifications awarded by other stakeholders. The EQF will thus help sectors and individuals take advantage of this growing internationalisation of qualifications.
3.5 Main elements of the EQF

3.5.1 The EQF consists of **eight level descriptors** indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications (see these Descriptors in Appendix 2). These reference levels describe what a learner knows, understands and is able to do. Levels of national qualifications will be placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8). This will enable a much easier comparison between national qualifications and should also mean that people do not have to repeat their learning if they move to another country. This approach shifts the focus from the traditional system which emphasises 'learning inputs', such as the length of a learning experience, or type of institution. It also encourages lifelong learning by promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

3.5.2 There are many different possibilities for structuring and constituting the results of learning processes. Following discussions between technical experts from all countries involved in the development of the EQF it was agreed to use the distinction between **knowledge, skills and competence (KSC) as basis of the framework**, because it is the most established way for categorising learning outcomes. The KSC differentiation of learning outcomes helps to clearly construct descriptors and to more easily classify the levels of qualifications.

3.5.3 As an instrument for the promotion of lifelong learning, the EQF **encompasses general and adult education, vocational education and training as well as higher education**. The eight levels cover the entire span of qualifications from those achieved at the end of compulsory education to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional or vocational education and training. Each level should in principle be attainable by way of a variety of education and career paths.

3.5.4 The **criteria and procedures** that countries use to reference their national qualifications levels to the appropriate levels of the EQF aim to ensure that the information and documentation published by the participating countries on their referencing process is validated by the competent authorities, relevant, transparent, capable of being compared and trustworthy. These are as follows:

- The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.

- There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.

- The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.

- The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
• The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines.

• The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.

• The referencing process shall involve international experts.

• The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.

• The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of Member States (countries) that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

• Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

3.5.5 Member States are encouraged to promote and apply the principles of quality assurance, which include both higher and vocational education and training:22

• Quality assurance policies and procedures should underpin all levels of the European Qualifications Framework.

• Quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions.

• Quality assurance should include regular evaluation of institutions, their programmes or their quality assurance systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies.

• External monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review.

• Quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes.

3.6 Links to other qualifications framework

3.6.1 Clause 9 of The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008/C 111/01) states the EQF is to be compatible with the framework for the European Higher Education Area and cycle descriptors agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education in 45 European countries at their meeting in Bergen on 19 and 20 May 2005 within the framework of the Bologna process.
3.6.2 The European Commission explains the relationship between the EQF and QF-EHEA:\[23\]

- The two frameworks have similarities and overlapping areas: both are meta-frameworks, cover a broad scope of learning and are designed to improve transparency with regard to qualifications within Europe. They are both associated with quality assurance and use the concept of ‘best’ fit to determine levels. Both also have clear aspirations to support lifelong learning and labour mobility.

- Differences can be observed with regarded to their aims and the descriptors used. The QF-EHEA intends to harmonise systems (by introducing common degrees i.e. three-cycles degree system) whereas the EQF intends to function as a translation device to make relationships between qualifications and different systems clearer.

- Linking the two meta-frameworks by drawing the higher levels of the EQF directly on the EHEA descriptors avoids the development of two isolated frameworks. Thus, the learning outcomes of certain EQF levels (Levels 5 to 8) correspond to the cycle descriptors of the QF-EHEA. Although different descriptors are used, both frameworks have a common view of the dimensions of progression regarding knowledge, skills (application) and professional conduct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QF-EHEA</th>
<th>EQF levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Cycle</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Cycle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Cycle</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short cycle within the first cycle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Implementation

3.7.1 The European Parliament’s Committee on Education and Culture commissioned a study on the State of play of the European Qualifications implementation that identified several success factors as well as serious challenges affecting the full implementation of the EQF:\[24\]

Key challenges identified were:

- insufficient and incomplete implementation of the learning outcomes approach in many countries

- difficulties to engage stakeholders outside the formal education sector and more specifically, final beneficiaries (social partners and citizens)

- until this moment insufficient attention has been given to underpin qualifications frameworks and systems with transparent procedures for assuring the quality

- lack of established validation procedures for non-formal and informal learning.
The study recommended further actions to continue the mandate of the EQF after April 2013 including the EQF becoming less an education agenda and more a labour market agenda. Two of these actions are a more intense dialogue between education and labour market stakeholders and building learning outcomes based quality assurance systems for all education sectors and investigating the possibly of one QA system.

3.7.2 The 2008 Recommendation set targets of Member States referencing the national qualifications system to the EQF by 2010 and indicating the EQF level at each qualification by 2012. However:

- most countries did not finalise their reference report within the given deadline but are expected to do so within the next two years
- most countries have not started working on procedures to reference to the appropriate EQF level at each new qualification and Europass document, even those that already finalised their referencing report. This is a concern, since this second step enforces the EQF to touch in the ground of the Member States.

3.7.3 An EQF Advisory Group has been set up to ensure the overall coherence and transparency of the implementation of the EQF. It consists of representatives of all 32 Education and Training 2010 countries, the social partners, the European Higher Education Area (Council of Europe) and other stakeholders. Specifically through specific sub-groups, it deals with issues such as quality assurance related to the EQF, sectoral qualifications and frameworks and is providing guidance materials and tools e.g. manuals facilitating the implementation of the EQF.

3.7.4 In each country, there is an EQF National Coordination Point (NCP) designated to be the single national contact for all issues related to the EQF.
4. Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)

4.1 QF-EHEA membership

4.1.1 There are now 47 participating countries. These countries must be party to the European Cultural Convention which is designed to foster among the nationals of all members, and of such other European States as may accede thereto, the study of the languages, history and civilization of the others and of the civilization which is common to all of them.

4.1.2 Countries must declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their systems of higher education i.e. its competent public authorities need to commit to and implement the values, goals and key policies of the EHEA.

4.1.3 Countries seeking to become a member of the EHEA must complete the EHEA accession questionnaire, which is summarised in Appendix 3. The questionnaire aims to provide a basis for the Ministers of the EHEA – advised by the Bologna Follow-up Group – to decide whether an applicant country broadly satisfies the criteria for membership of the EHEA, with a special emphasis on competent public authorities.

4.2 Establishment

4.2.1 In 1998, the education ministers of Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom started the Bologna Process by signing the Sorbonne Declaration concerning the harmonisation of higher education degree systems in Europe. Education ministers of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration in June 1999. The declaration sought to create a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that would ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe.

4.2.2 The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education held in May 2005 led to the adoption of the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, known as the QF-EHEA. See Appendix 4 for other key developments leading up to the adoption of the QF-EHEA.

4.3 Objectives

4.3.1 Objectives of the QF-EHEA in the Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 are as follows:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.
• Establishment of a system of credits - such as in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by receiving universities concerned.

• Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to students (access to study and training opportunities and to related services) and teachers, researchers and administrative staff (recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights).

• Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.

• Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, interinstitutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

4.3.2 The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009 called for a quality higher education and set the following four main goals for the present decade:32

• Finalising the structural reform and deepening its implementation through a consistent understanding and use of the developed tools

• Implementing quality higher education, connected with research and lifelong learning and promoting employability

• Making the social dimension become a reality by ensuring that the student body entering and completing higher education reflects the diverse student body of Europe’s populations

• Ensuring that at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have had a study or training period abroad.

This Communiqué outlined 10 higher education priorities for the decade up to 202033:

• Social dimension: equitable access and completion

• Lifelong learning

• Employability

• Student-centred learning and the teaching mission of higher education

• Education, research and innovation

• International openness

• Mobility

• Data collection

• Multidimensional transparency tools

• Funding.

Each of these priorities are explained in Appendix 5.
4.3.3 Ministers attending the 2012 Ministerial Conference and Third Bologna Policy Forum in Bucharest (Romania) in April 2012 stated three key priorities in the Bucharest Communiqué that build on priorities in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009: Mobility, employability and quality, and the importance of higher education for Europe's capacity to deal with the economic crisis and to contribute to growth and jobs. Ministers also committed to making automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees a long-term goal of the European Higher Education Area.34

4.4 Benefits of the QF-EHEA

4.4.1 The QF-EHEA is a mechanism to relate national frameworks to each other to enable:

- **international transparency** to ensure that qualifications can be easily read and compared across borders without a simplifying architecture for mutual understanding

- **international recognition of qualifications** to provide a common understanding of the outcomes represented by qualifications for the purposes of employment and access to continuing education

- **international mobility of learners and graduates** so learners can have greater confidence that the outcomes of study abroad will contribute to a qualification sought in their home country. A framework will also be of particular help in supporting the development and recognition of joint degrees from more than one country.35

4.4.2 The QF-EHEA is also a powerful brand that aims to reform university governance, strengthen university leadership and management, promote interdisciplinary, emphasise social and cultural engagement, and stimulate entrepreneurship.36

4.5 Main elements of the QF-EHEA37

4.5.1 Three degree cycles:

- Cycle 1 (Bachelor), Cycle 2 (Master) and Cycle 3 (Doctorate) as well as a short cycle (a qualification within or linked to the first cycle).

- Generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences (known as the ‘Dublin Descriptors”) that are general statements of the typical achievement of learners who have been awarded a qualification on successful completion of a cycle (see Appendix 6).

- Credit ranges: First cycle (180-240 ECTS credits), second cycle (90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle) and third cycle (not specified).

4.5.2 The **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)** is a learner-based system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning outcomes as well as student mobility. ECTS credits are based on workload students need in order to achieve learning outcomes (defined as what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning).38
4.5.3 The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a document produced by national institutions that is attached to a higher education diploma. It is now referred to as the Europass Diploma Supplement. It aims to improve international “transparency” and to facilitate the academic and professional recognition of qualifications. It was developed jointly as an initiative of the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. It does not replace the higher education diploma itself. It provides a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It also gives information on the national education system and the qualifications owner’s access to further studies and professional status.39 See examples of Europass Diploma Supplements at: http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/european-skills-passport/diploma-supplement/examples

4.5.4 The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area developed for the use of higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies working in the EHEA cover key areas relating to quality and standards. They provide a source of assistance and guidance to both higher education institutions in developing their own quality assurance systems and agencies undertaking external quality assurance. They also contribute to a common frame of reference, which can be used by institutions and agencies alike. It is not the intention that these standards and guidelines should dictate practice or be interpreted as prescriptive or unchangeable.40

4.5.5 The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) is a register of agencies that substantially comply with a common set of principles for quality assurance laid down in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. The register is web-based and freely accessible for everyone.41 The register currently has 28 listed agencies from 13 countries.42

4.5.6 The Bergen Communiqué 2005 states “we … call upon all national authorities and other stakeholders to recognise joint degrees awarded in two or more countries in the EHEA.43 Joint study programmes provide an instrument for giving students the chance to gain academic and cultural experience abroad and institutions of higher education an opportunity to co-operate. The introduction/Recognition of study programmes may require Governments to amend their legislation and may prove difficult in regulated occupations.44 Thirty-five (35) countries reported in 2012 that legislation allows both the establishment of joint programmes and the award of joint degrees. In five (5) countries, the share of institutions involved in joint programmes and awarding joint degrees is between 75% and 100%. The most popular fields of study are mathematics and sciences, engineering and technologies, and economics and business.45

Participating countries follow a self-certification process to link its national qualifications framework to the QF-EHEA. This “trust building” process involves national frameworks and their associated quality assurance arrangements satisfying a series of criteria and procedures, including:46

- the designation of competent bodies responsible for the maintenance of the Framework by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education;

- a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the Bologna Framework.
the existence of national quality assurance systems for higher education consistent with
the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by Ministers in the
Bologna Process

• the national framework, and any alignment with the Bologna Framework, referenced in
all Diploma Supplements.

4.6 Links to other qualifications frameworks

4.6.1 The two meta-frameworks, QF-EHEA and EQF, have been developed through two different,
but coordinated processes and with some differences in their objectives. Nevertheless, each
is compatible with the other. See Section 3.6 in the EQF section of this report for more
information.

4.6.2 National qualifications frameworks are regarded as another tool for greater transparency
in the EHEA. They describe and clearly express the differences between qualifications in all
cycles and levels of education. NQFs are expected to refer to the EHEA framework’s three-
cycle structure and use generic descriptors based on learning outcomes, competences and
credits.

4.7 Implementation

The London Communiqué 2007 stated that all member countries were expected to develop
national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with the EHEA/Bologna Framework
by 2010. However, due to the long time needed to carry out the change towards learning
outcomes-based programmes and qualifications, as well as carrying out self-assessment
procedures with the involvement of foreign experts, the 2010 deadline proved to be
unrealistic. The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009 extended the deadline to 2012.

Only nine (9) countries have indicated that they have completed all steps to developing a
national qualifications framework compatible with the QF-EHEA: Belgium, Denmark,
Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom
(England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland). See Appendix 7 for these steps.

4.7.1 As shown in the following map, in just over half of the countries (26 countries), the share of
students studying in programmes corresponding to the Bologna two-cycle system is more
than 90%, and between 70-89% in 13 countries. In some countries like Andorra, Spain,
Australia and Germany, the share of students enrolled in programmes corresponding to the
Bologna two-cycle system is relatively low either because of:

• legislative changes stipulating a transfer to Bologna structures were adopted relatively
late or

• the deadlines to set the reforms in practice were set relatively late. In these countries,
implementation of practical reforms has thus started relatively recently and it will take
some years for the students enrolled under the previous system to graduate.
Share of students studying in programmes corresponding to the Bologna two-cycle system

The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) (consisting of representatives from different member countries, the European Commission and eight advisory members) is the body responsible for implementing Bologna reforms and making progress in all priority areas.

The main types of BFUG sub-structures are:

- working groups (which fulfil a complex task within the 2012-2015 Work Plan)
- ad-hoc working groups (not permanent structures but smaller working groups established by the working groups)
- networks (established by the BFUG/BRUG Board or working groups for a long term cooperation between a large number of partners)
- seminars/conferences.
4.7.3 There are four main working groups, with their main tasks outlined in the BFUG Work Plan 2012-2015:\(^{52}\):

- Working Group on qualifications frameworks, recognition, quality and transparency – ‘Structural Reforms’ Working Group
- Working Group on reporting on the Bologna Process implementation
- Working Group on the social dimension of lifelong learning
- Working Group on mobility and internationalisation.

4.7.4 For further information about the status of the QF-EHEA go to the European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report:

5. ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework

5.1 ASEAN RQF membership

Ten (10) countries that are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are currently participating in the ASEAN regional qualifications framework: Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, South Korea, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam. The table below shows the stages of the development of an NQF (if any) for most of the countries in the map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>QA Authority/body</th>
<th>QA Framework</th>
<th>NQF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Brunei DarulSalam Accreditation National Council (1980)</td>
<td>Accreditation and recognition of programmes and institutions (admission, employment, approval of programmes and professional registration)</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Accreditation Committee of Cambodia 2003</td>
<td>Accreditation of degree conferring institution. Compulsory. Provisional and full accreditation</td>
<td>No formal framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Badan Akreditasi Nasional- Perguruan Tinggi (BANPT) (National Accreditation Authority for Higher Education)</td>
<td>Mainly programme and limited institutional accreditation. Compulsory.</td>
<td>None, but support for the concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Malaysian Qualifications Agency (merger between LAN and QAD)</td>
<td>Programme accreditation and institutional audits</td>
<td>Malaysian Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Commission on Higher Education/ Federation of Accreditation Agencies - several voluntary agencies-PAASCU, AACUP</td>
<td>Programme and Institutional Accreditation. Voluntary</td>
<td>Philippines National Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Higher Education Quality Assurance Section, Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Institutional Audit-Internal and external service. Quality Assurance Framework. Compulsory</td>
<td>VET only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Commission on Higher Education. Office for National Education on Standards and Assessments (ONESQA)</td>
<td>IQA-9 quality components External QA-7 quality standards</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>General Dept. for Testing and Accred, Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Programme and Institutional Accreditation</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Member countries

QA Authority, QA Framework and status of NQF development of member countries
5.2 Establishment

5.2.1 ASEAN-Cooperation on Education - Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)\textsuperscript{55}

ASEAN leaders set new directions for regional collaboration in December 2005. Ministers agreed to promoting ‘ASEANness’, strengthening ASEAN identity through education, building human resources in the field of education, and strengthening ASEAN University networking.

5.2.2 ASEAN-Australian Development Cooperation Program (AADCP), Enhancing Skills Recognition Systems in ASEAN Project\textsuperscript{56}

The *Enhancing Skills Recognition Systems in ASEAN Project* involved piloting a subregional approach for a qualifications framework by sharing common occupation competency standards. The initial stage identified uneven development of national skills frameworks across the newer ASEAN member countries as a major barrier to achieving an ASEAN wide skills recognition system. Through 2006 the project was extended to establish a sub-regional skills recognition framework specifically for the CLMV group of countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam) plus Thailand. This part of the project trialled a short-cut method for developing national qualifications frameworks, a regional qualifications framework and regional and national competency standards in five occupations.

The project to complete this work involved two phases:

- The project team in collaboration with the working groups established draft competencies for five occupations. These were drawn from existing sets of competencies already in place in other ASEAN countries or elsewhere in the region.

- Occupational experts were recruited from ASEAN countries that had already made good progress towards establishing national occupation competencies. The experts working with the project team and technical review groups in each country drafted a set of competencies for each occupation, via a workshop, on regional sets of competencies for the occupations of welder, air conditioning technician, poultry farm work, tour guide and concreter. The pilot trial demonstrated that this process works and suits the CLMB/T sub-region.

A key output from the project was a sub-regional qualifications framework designed for the CLMV plus Thailand group of countries. The framework is complementary to national frameworks already in place in some of the ASEAN countries.

5.2.3 ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN)\textsuperscript{57}

The aims of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration-ASEAN Quality Assurance Roundtable Meeting 6-8 July 2008 were to promote and share good practices of QA; collaborate in capacity building; share information to facilitate recognition; and develop a regional QA framework. The roundtable meeting led to the establishment of an Executive Committee within the current secretariat at Malaysian Qualifications Authority; agreed themes and activities hosted by each member country; support for bilateral collaborations; and commitment to a long run-foundation for a regional framework.
5.2.4 Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks for ASEAN Project

The ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) endorsed the Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks for ASEAN Project in 2010. The project aims to harmonise regulatory arrangements between participating countries, which underpin the recognition of qualifications and quality of assurance of education provision through the development of mutually comparable national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) based on a common reference framework (CRF). The project involves two phases:

- **Phase 1** was implemented in three phases: policy concept paper, regional forum and national consultation workshops. A multi-country project steering committee provided technical oversight to the project. Activities were completed in 2011 with the final report summarising the project outcomes including key recommendations to the features of a regional qualifications framework (RQF) outlined in the concept paper; the extent to which the participating countries have developed or are implementing NQFs and associated quality assurance processes; and the next steps in developing a RQF within the ASEAN. Note: the final report is not publicly available.

- **Phase 2** (underway) is being implemented over four (4) stages:
  - Preparation of a policy concept paper by an expert consultant that provides options for a CRF based on data gathered in Phase 1.
  - Convening of an ASEAN Task Force on NQFs comprising relevant government officials for each ASEAN country, with possible participation of appropriate international organisations.
  - Collaboration with the ASEAN Task Force (through the use of Google Docs or other means such as the AANZFTA website facility which allow for the effective canvassing of ideas and issues). During this time the consultant will continue to respond to questions and provide advice by email to countries seeking to implement NQFs/common reference frameworks.
  - Convening of the ASEAN Task Force to endorse the CRF and to workshop implementation issues in an ASEAN developing country in order to highlight the implementation challenges being encountered and to encourage cross-ASEAN sharing and learning to support developing member countries. The workshop will have a strong focus on meeting the professional development needs of participants for the development and/or enhancement of a NQF.

See the full terms of reference for this phase of the project in Appendix 8.

5.2.5 Workshop Towards Developing an ASEAN Common Reference Framework, Bangkok, Thailand, 30 to 31 October 2012

The workshop held as part of the AANZFTA-funded project found general consensus regarding the importance of a common reference framework for the purposes of transparency as well as learner and labour mobility. ASEAN Member States also affirmed that NQFs and RQFs are excellent tools to assist individual economies and are only useful if
used and linked to a Quality Assurance system or framework. It was decided that the next steps for the project would include the drafting of the ASEAN RQF design and its circulation for comment to stakeholders.

UNESCO believes that it can make a concrete contribution to this RQF development process through two key instruments in the making:

- International guidelines on quality assurance for the recognition of qualifications, which are based on learning outcomes
- A set of world reference levels which will facilitate the international comparison and recognition of TVET qualifications.

5.3 Benefits of the ASEAN RQF

5.3.1 Benefits identified for countries participating in the ASEAN RQF are as follows:

- Quality assurance frameworks, systems and bodies at national and regional levels
- Promote the ASEAN identity
- Bilateral, multilateral and institutional cooperation and collaborations
- Globalised competence-based approach based on learning outcomes
- Internationalationisation initiatives to support curriculum development and recognition
- Confidence in the higher education system, including greater understanding of national higher education systems and policies
- Contribute to improved productivity, economic development and poverty reduction
- Regional calls for initiatives towards harmonisation
- Greater mobility of teachers, graduates and students (credit transfers arrangements)
- Assist students in understanding pathways between the different qualifications
- QA officers’ internships and network as well as national assessors for the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN)
- Assist employers by making clear what skills a potential employee with a particular qualification should have.

However, there are a number of challenges affecting the development of the ASEAN RQF. There is still significant work to be done across the countries regarding the promotion of the purpose and functions of a common reference framework. Some countries do not have a NQF or a legal basis to begin with, and lack knowledge as to how referencing occurs and what referencing is. Similar to other regional qualifications frameworks, the ASEAN RQF must be a simple and inclusive framework and ensure ownership and stakeholder involvement. Cost is another issue.
6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Background to the introduction of the EQF

Appendix 2: Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Appendix 3: QF-EHEA accession questionnaire

Appendix 4: The Bologna Process: from Sorbonne to Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 1999-2009

Appendix 5: Higher education priorities for the QF-EHEA

Appendix 6: Dublin Descriptors of the QF-EHEA

Appendix 7: Steps involved in development a national qualifications framework to ensure compatibility with the QF-EHEA

Appendix 8: Terms of Reference for Consulting Opportunity for Concept Paper and Options for an ASEAN Common Reference Framework (CRF) under the AANZFTA ECWP Project on Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks – Phase II
Appendix 1: Background to the introduction of the EQF


6.1.1 The Lisbon European Council concluded in 2000 that increased transparency of qualifications should be one of the main components necessary to adapt education and training systems in the Community to the demands of the knowledge society. Furthermore, the Barcelona European Council in 2002 called for closer cooperation in the university sector and improvement of transparency and recognition methods in the area of vocational education and training. (Clause 2)

6.1.2 The Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning invited the Commission, in close cooperation with the Council and Member States, to develop a framework for the recognition of qualifications for both education and training, building on the achievements of the Bologna process and promoting similar action in the area of vocational training. (Clause 3)

6.1.3 The joint reports of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the ‘Education and Training 2010’ work programme, adopted in 2004 and 2006, stressed the need to develop a European Qualifications Framework. (Clause 4)

6.1.4 In the context of the Copenhagen process, the conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 15 November 2004 on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training gave priority to the development of an open and flexible European Qualifications Framework, founded on transparency and mutual trust, which should stand as a common reference covering both education and training. (Clause 5)

6.1.5 The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes should be promoted in accordance with Council conclusions on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning of 28 May 2004. (Clause 6)

6.1.6 The Brussels European Councils of March 2005 and March 2006 underlined the importance of adopting a European Qualifications Framework. (Clause 7)


6.1.8 This Recommendation [of the 23 April 2008 establishing the EQF] is compatible with the framework for the European Higher Education Area and cycle descriptors agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education in 45 European countries at their meeting in Bergen on 19 and 20 May 2005 within the framework of the Bologna process. (Clause 9)

6.1.9 The Council conclusions on quality assurance in vocational education and training of 23 and 24 May 2004, Recommendation 2006/143/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (3) and the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen contain common principles for quality assurance which should underpin the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework. (Clause 10)
6.1.10 This Recommendation [of the 23 April 2008 establishing the EQF] is without prejudice to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, which confers rights and obligations on both the relevant national authority and the migrant. Reference to the European Qualifications Framework levels on qualifications should not affect access to the labour market where professional qualifications have been recognised in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC. (Clause 11)

Appendix 2: Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic general knowledge</td>
<td>Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study</td>
<td>Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a field of work or study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study</td>
<td>Comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</td>
<td>Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study</td>
<td>Comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</td>
<td>Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 10</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change</td>
<td>Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.
### Appendix 3: QF-EHEA accession questionnaire

#### Section I: Overview of National Higher Education System

1. Describe the national higher education system:
   - Main regulatory documents
   - Governance arrangements - main regulatory bodies, their competencies and interactions
   - Institutional structure underpinning the national education system (the number of types of institutions, student enrolment and academic structure).

2. Higher education strategies currently being pursued.

3. Partnership arrangements underpinning the system, and any specificity of the national higher education system that needs highlighting.

4. Main challenges that the national higher education system is facing.

5. Why does the country want to join the EHEA.

#### Section II: Structural reforms

1. Higher education degree system/qualification framework, and how it relates to the overarching framework of the qualifications of the QF-EHEA as well as how the development of a NQF improves the employability of higher education students (including policies and priorities for doing this)

2. National quality assurance agreements:
   - Internal – QA arrangements of higher education institutions, or plans and timetables if not in place.
   - External – QA arrangements for external quality assurances normally conducted by quality assurance agencies (authorities must comply with the [European Standards and Guidelines](https://www.yourwebsite.com) adopted by the Ministers in 2005).

3. The fair recognition of foreign qualifications is a perquisite for academic mobility and the fundamental principle of the [Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention](https://www.yourwebsite.com). If the country has not yet ratified the convention, it must indicate its plans and timetable for doing so. Regardless of whether the country has ratified the convention or outline actions, plans, priorities and timetable for the recognition of foreign qualifications. Also, describe the current state of the implementation of the Diploma Supplement and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and plans, priorities and timetable for further developments.

#### Section III: Other Key Areas

**Academic mobility**

Describe place of academic mobility (i.e. the mobility of higher education staff and students) in higher education policy, including plans regarding the objective adopted by EHEA Ministers in 2009 of attaining 20% mobile graduates in the EHEA by 2020. Also describe:

- financial incentives (e.g. scholarships, grants and loans) offered to staff and students wishing to go abroad and incentives offered to foreign staff and students
- specific impediments to mobility as well as plans to overcome them.
### Social dimension of higher education

Main achievements in strengthening the social dimensions of higher education (i.e. the student body at all levels should reflect the diversity of the population) as well as the main challenges for strengthening it further, including priorities, plans and timelines. The description should comprise:

- an outline of the social composition of the student body, including an overview of possible under-represented groups
- any national targets for access and completion in higher education of students from under-represented groups
- current data collection in this area as well as plans and timeline for further improving such data collection.

### Section IV. Values and Fundamental Principles

#### Academic freedom and institutional autonomy

Legal provisions concerning academic freedom and institutional autonomy and how these fundamental values are ensured in practice. Reference should be made to [Magna Charta Universitatum](#).

#### Public responsibility for higher education

How public responsibility for higher education is organised and put in place in a country's higher education system, including a description of:

- role and responsibilities of various actors
- main challenges in this area
- plans, priorities and timetable for meeting these challenges.

#### Cooperation among stakeholders and student participation

Main stakeholders in higher education (i.e. public authorities, higher education community and others); how these stakeholders are involved in developing higher education at present; and main challenges, including plans, priorities and timetable for addressing these challenges. Description should include:

- fundamental role of student participation, particularly the role of students in higher education governance at both institutional and system level
- whether student representatives are elected by the student body
- whether there is an independent, democratic and representative national student union open to all students.
Appendix 4: The Bologna Process: from Sorbonne to Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 1999-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility of students and teachers</td>
<td>A system of credits</td>
<td>Mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff</td>
<td>A common two-cycle degree system</td>
<td>Easily readable and comparable degrees</td>
<td>Fair recognition of Joint degrees</td>
<td>Social dimension</td>
<td>Equal access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portability of loans and grants</td>
<td>Portability of loans and grants</td>
<td>Improvement of mobility data</td>
<td>Portability of loans and grants</td>
<td>Improvement of mobility data</td>
<td>Social dimension</td>
<td>Equal access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to visa and work permits</td>
<td>National Qualifications Frameworks by 2012</td>
<td>Challenges of visa and work permits, pension systems and recognition</td>
<td>Reinforcement of the social dimension</td>
<td>Commitment to produce national action plans with effective monitoring</td>
<td>Role of higher education in LLL Partnerships to improve employability</td>
<td>LLL as a public responsibility requiring strong partnerships Call to work on employability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark of 20% by 2020 for student mobility</td>
<td>National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020</td>
<td>Continuing implementation of Bologna tools</td>
<td>Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA</td>
<td>Quality assurance at institutional, national and European level</td>
<td>European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance adopted</td>
<td>Quality assurance at institutional, national and European level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system of credits (ECTS)</td>
<td>ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS)</td>
<td>ECTS for credit accumulation</td>
<td>Need for coherent use of tools and recognition practices</td>
<td>Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)</td>
<td>Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna process adopted</td>
<td>Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation of ECTS</td>
<td>Development of recognised Joint degrees</td>
<td>Inclusion of doctoral level as third cycle</td>
<td>Prevention of credit accumulation</td>
<td>European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance adopted</td>
<td>Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna process adopted</td>
<td>Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning (LLL)</td>
<td>Alignment of national LLL policies Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</td>
<td>Flexible learning paths in higher education</td>
<td>Role of higher education in LLL Partnerships to improve employability</td>
<td>LLL as a public responsibility requiring strong partnerships Call to work on employability</td>
<td>Continuing implementation of Bologna tools</td>
<td>Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of credits</td>
<td>European cooperation in quality assurance</td>
<td>Quality assurance at institutional, national and European level</td>
<td>European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance adopted</td>
<td>Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)</td>
<td>Quality assurance at institutional, national and European level</td>
<td>European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance adopted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe of Knowledge</td>
<td>European dimensions in higher education</td>
<td>Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area</td>
<td>Links between higher education and research areas</td>
<td>International cooperation on the basis of values and sustainable development</td>
<td>Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna process adopted</td>
<td>Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorbonne Declaration</td>
<td>Bologna Declaration</td>
<td>Prague Communiqué</td>
<td>Berlin Communiqué</td>
<td>Bergen Communiqué</td>
<td>London Communiqué</td>
<td>Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Higher education priorities for the QF-EHEA

Social dimension: equitable access and completion
The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations. We therefore emphasize the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels. Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade. Efforts to achieve equity in higher education should be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system.

Lifelong learning
Widening participation shall also be achieved through lifelong learning as an integral part of our education systems. Lifelong learning is subject to the principle of public responsibility. The accessibility, quality of provision and transparency of information shall be assured. Lifelong learning involves obtaining qualifications, extending knowledge and understanding, gaining new skills and competences or enriching personal growth. Lifelong learning implies that qualifications may be obtained through flexible learning paths, including part-time studies, as well as work-based routes.

The implementation of lifelong learning policies requires strong partnerships between public authorities, higher education institutions, students, employers and employees. The European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning developed by the European University Association provides a useful input for defining such partnerships. Successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning paths. Lifelong learning will be supported by adequate organisational structures and funding. Lifelong learning encouraged by national policies should inform the practice of higher education institutions.

The development of national qualifications frameworks is an important step towards the implementation of lifelong learning. We aim at having them implemented and prepared for self-certification against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area by 2012. This will require continued coordination at the level of the EHEA and with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Within national contexts, intermediate qualifications within the first cycle can be a means of widening access to higher education.

Employability
With labour markets increasingly relying on higher skill levels and transversal competences, higher education should equip students with the advanced knowledge, skills and competences they need throughout their professional lives. Employability empowers the individual to fully seize the opportunities in changing labour markets. We aim at raising initial qualifications as well as maintaining and renewing a skilled workforce through close cooperation between governments, higher education institutions, social partners and students. This will allow institutions to be more responsive to employers’ needs and employers to better understand the educational perspective. Higher education institutions, together with governments, government agencies and employers, shall improve the provision, accessibility and quality of their careers and employment-related guidance services to students and alumni. We encourage work placements embedded in study programmes as well as on-the-job learning.

Student-centred learning and the teaching mission of higher education
We reassert the importance of the teaching mission of higher education institutions and the necessity for ongoing curricular reform geared toward the development of learning outcomes. Student-centred learning requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles. Curricular reform will thus be an ongoing process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths. Academics, in close
cooperation with student and employer representatives, will continue to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas. We ask the higher education institutions to pay particular attention to improving the teaching quality of their study programmes at all levels. This should be a priority in the further implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance.

**Education, research and innovation**

Higher education should be based at all levels on state of the art research and development thus fostering innovation and creativity in society. We recognise the potential of higher education programmes, including those based on applied science, to foster innovation. Consequently, the number of people with research competences should increase. Doctoral programmes should provide high quality disciplinary research and increasingly be complemented by interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral programmes. Moreover, public authorities and institutions of higher education will make the career development of early stage researchers more attractive.

**International openness**

We call upon European higher education institutions to further internationalise their activities and to engage in global collaboration for sustainable development. The attractiveness and openness of European higher education will be highlighted by joint European actions. Competition on a global scale will be complemented by enhanced policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership with other regions of the world, in particular through the organisation of Bologna Policy Fora, involving a variety of stakeholders.

Transnational education should be governed by the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance as applicable within the European Higher Education Area and be in line with the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education.

**Mobility**

We believe that mobility of students, early stage researchers and staff enhances the quality of programmes and excellence in research; it strengthens the academic and cultural internationalization of European higher education. Mobility is important for personal development and employability, it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area and it increases cooperation and competition between higher education institutions. Therefore, mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area. We call upon each country to increase mobility, to ensure its high quality and to diversify its types and scope. In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad.

Within each of the three cycles, opportunities for mobility shall be created in the structure of degree programmes. Joint degrees and programmes as well as mobility windows shall become more common practice. Moreover, mobility policies shall be based on a range of practical measures pertaining to the funding of mobility, recognition, available infrastructure, visa and work permit regulations. Flexible study paths and active information policies, full recognition of study achievements, study support and the full portability of grants and loans are necessary requirements. Mobility should also lead to a more balanced flow of incoming and outgoing students across the European Higher Education Area and we aim for an improved participation rate from diverse student groups.

Attractive working conditions and career paths as well as open international recruitment are necessary to attract highly qualified teachers and researchers to higher education institutions. Considering that teachers are key players, career structures should be adapted to facilitate mobility of teachers, early stage researchers and other staff; framework conditions will be established to ensure appropriate access to social security and to facilitate the portability of pensions and supplementary pension rights for mobile staff, making the best use of existing legal frameworks.

**Data collection**

Improved and enhanced data collection will help monitor progress made in the attainment of the objectives set out in the social dimension, employability and mobility agendas, as well as in other policy areas, and will serve as a basis for both stocktaking and benchmarking.
Multidimensional transparency tools

We note that there are several current initiatives designed to develop mechanisms for providing more detailed information about higher education institutions across the EHEA to make their diversity more transparent. We believe that any such mechanisms, including those helping higher education systems and institutions to identify and compare their respective strengths, should be developed in close consultation with the key stakeholders. These transparency tools need to relate closely to the principles of the Bologna Process, in particular quality assurance and recognition, which will remain our priority, and should be based on comparable data and adequate indicators to describe the diverse profiles of higher education institutions and their programmes.

Funding

Higher education institutions have gained greater autonomy along with rapidly growing expectations to be responsive to societal needs and to be accountable. Within a framework of public responsibility we confirm that public funding remains the main priority to guarantee equitable access and further sustainable development of autonomous higher education institutions. Greater attention should be paid to seeking new and diversified funding sources and methods.
Appendix 7: Steps involved in development a national qualifications framework to ensure compatibility with the QF-EHEA

There are 10 essential steps in the process of developing a national qualifications framework. Once the national qualifications framework has been developed, it should be tested and then self certified. The self certification is a process by which the competent authorities of the country concerned verify that the national qualifications framework is compatible with the overarching EHEA Framework. The self certification process should also include input from foreign experts.

Once the self certification process has been completed, self certification reports should be published so that partners in the European Higher Education Area may access them. Self certification reports submitted to the Bologna Secretariat and/or the Council of Europe may be consulted here.

10 steps in developing a national qualifications framework

1. Decision to start: Taken by the national body/minister responsible for higher education
2. Setting the agenda: The purpose of our NQF WG-Report nr. 1 (section 2.3)
3. Organising the process: Identifying stakeholders; setting up a committee/working group
4. Design Profile: Level structure, level descriptors (learning outcomes) and credit ranges
5. Consultation/national discussion and acceptance of design by stakeholders
6. Approval according to national tradition by Minister/Government/legislation
7. Administrative set-up and division of tasks of implementation between HEI, QAA and other bodies
8. Implementation at institutional/programme level and reformulation of individual study programmes to learning outcome based approach
9. Inclusion of qualifications in the NQF; accreditation or similar (cfr. Berlin Communiqué)
10. Self-certification of compatibility with the EHEA framework (alignment to Bologna cycles etc.); WG Reports; Pilot projects
Appendix 8: Terms of Reference for Consulting Opportunity for Concept Paper and Options for an ASEAN Common Reference Framework (CRF) under the AANZFTA ECWP Project on Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks – Phase II

Specifically, the Expert Consultant will undertake the following tasks:

a) Prepare a Policy Concept Paper, which will assist the ASEAN Task Force on NQF to undertake the design and development of a CRF to support the development of mutually comparable NQFs.

   - The policy concept paper is envisaged to include options for ASEAN CRF, and among others, cover the scope, purpose, principles and processes, structure in terms of learning outcomes, levels and domains, method of referencing, governance, and other elements of a common reference framework (CRF).
   - The policy concept paper will build on the outcomes of Phase I and developed in close coordination with the ASEAN Secretariat and the Project Proponent and in consultation with key public-private stakeholders, as appropriate.
   - The policy paper will also take into consideration international standards or initiatives and useful experiences at regional and subregional level on mutual recognition of qualifications.

b) Present the policy concept paper at the first workshop back-to-back with the first Meeting of the ASEAN Task Force on NQF

   - The expert consultant is expected to moderate the discussions of workshop and provide technical advise as resource person/observer during the Task Force Meeting
   - The expert consultant is expected to prepare a summary report on the key outcomes of discussion by the Task Force Meeting and incorporate the comments/suggestions/inputs of the Task Force in the revision of the draft CRF paper

c) Provide technical assistance and/or advisory support in finalizing CRF and responding to questions and provide advice by email to countries seeking to implement NQFs.

   - The expert consultant will coordinate the responses of the Task Force members after the workshop and consolidate the comments in revising the CRF policy paper.
   - The expert consultant will also identify the possible difficulties of other AMSs in adopting the CRF and provide advisory assistance as may be necessary upon receiving specific request from ASEC
   - Identify areas of further assistance and/or technical capacity within each country through the development of policy frameworks for NQFs that will improve the quality and effectiveness of qualifications systems and promote nationally and regionally consistent standards and the recognition of education outcomes.

d) Produce a final CRF paper in time for the next Task Force meeting

   - The expert consultant will coordinate the responses of the Task Force and finalize the policy paper for adoption by the Task Force
   - The expert consultant at the request of the ASEAN Secretariat, may need to facilitate the workshop on implementation issues

d) The consultant may also be invited participate as a resource person for a third workshop back-to-back with the third meeting of the Task Force which would define further works to be done for ASEAN NQF and the work program for ASEAN Task Force.
Sources


implementation. 

implementation. 


and Third Bologna Policy Forum 26-27 April 2012, Palace of the Parliament, Bucharest, 


30 European Cultural Convention, Paris, 19.XII.1954, 


Implementation Report. 

33 European Higher Education Area (2009). Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for 
http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/about/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique%20A9_April_2009.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/bologna_en.htm

35 National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. Bologna Process - A National Framework for Qualifications, 


37 The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (2010), 

policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf


Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. 


Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna Process. 


