THE FRENCH NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

THE REFERENCEMENT PROCESS TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
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Qualifications in France
Three types of qualifications

- Qualifications awarded by the State and placed under the responsibility of ministries (education, higher education, employment, agriculture, health,...) – around 15000 degrees-
- Qualifications awarded by private and public educational institutions having received an agreement of the national body in charge and registered in a national list (CNCP) – around 1500 diplomas-
- Qualifications awarded by professional sectors having received an agreement from social partners, - around 500 certificates

The process

- Different for each type of qualification but having more or less the same steps
- Needs analysis
- Drafting a new programme leading to a qualification
- Consultation of employers and social partners (a French specificity) to verify the opportunity of the qualification (mainly for ministries and third sector)
- Decision of implementation
The organisation: 4 categories of institutions in charge of qualifications

- The CPC (Consultative Professional Commissions) for secondary diplomas awarded by ministries
- The National Commissions for HE (CNESER), engineers’ diplomas (CTI) or for Business Schools
- The CNCP for qualifications awarded by private or public institutions without reference to a State degree
- The Commissions for employment (CPNE) for certificates awarded by sectors

An overall organisation

- The CNCP: Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle
  - Official body placed under the responsibility of the Prime Minister
  - 2 Commissions: a plenary Commission - 16 representatives of ministries, 10 social partners, 3 representatives of Chambers of Commerce, 3 of Regions and 11 experts - (orientation and decisions)
    and a specialised Commission - 10 representatives of ministries and 10 social partners (technical advice on qualifications)
- A national common reference, the RNCP: Repertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles presenting on a website, on a common format all qualifications awarded in France
The French framework

Two nomenclatures (1967 and 1969)

- Identification of 5 levels
- Based for the first one on the hierarchy of qualifications
- With a first try for the second to establish a link with the level of activity
Levels

- V  First level of vocational qualification (CAP – BEP)
- IV  Level Baccalauréat
- III  Level Technician degree
- II  Level Bachelor or equivalent
- I  Level Master/Engineer degree

The referencing process to the EQF and its consequences on the French Qualifications Framework
The 10 Referencing Criteria

It is required to demonstrate:

- The responsibility and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process (Nº1)
- That there is a clear and demonstrable link between the national qualifications framework and the level descriptors of EQF (Nº2)
- That national frameworks and their qualifications are based on learning outcomes (Nº3)
- That the processes for including qualifications in NQFs are transparent (Nº4)
- That national quality assurance systems refer to NQFs (Nº5)

- Agreement of Quality Assurance bodies (Nº6)
- Involvement of international experts (Nº7)
- Certification by the competent national body (bodies) of referencing of the national framework with the EQF (Nº8)
- Registered in the official EQF platform public listing of countries having completed the referencing process (Nº9)
- Clear reference to the EQF level on all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents (Nº10)
Criteria for referencing to the EQF

 Criterion 1: All documents linked to the NQF are discussed by competent bodies or institutions and published in the « Journal Officiel ».

 Criterion 2:
- A clear correspondence between descriptors of the EQF and descriptors of the NQF has been set up.
- However, as the French Qualifications Framework is based on the traditional framework, difficulties have been met in classifying some qualifications which were between two levels. A provisional decision has been taken by actors in charge of the referencing process to guarantee the relevant level.

 Criterion 3
- Validation of non formal and informal learning is practiced since years, and especially since 2002 with a law making compulsory validation of experiential learning for all qualifications registered in the Repertoire. Partial or full qualifications can be awarded by this way.

 Criterion 4
- Registration in the Repertoire is based on an official document published in the “Journal Officiel”.
- Decision criteria are public. Educational institutions may appeal to the administrative court.
Criteria 5 and 6
- Quality assurance procedures in HE refer to EQF.
- Regarding qualifications not presented by the ministries, the accreditation process of the CNCP is usually considered as a quality assurance procedure.
- The positioning decision in NQF is of the responsibility of the CNCP.
- The attachment of a qualification to a level needs an agreement from Quality Assurance Agencies when existing for this qualification.

Criterion 7
- Two international experts have been involved in the referencing process.

Criterion 9
- The referencing report is sent to the EQF Advisory Group after the official presentation.

Criterion 10
- All qualifications awarded will mention the level in NQF and the level in EQF.
- The diploma or certificate supplement is part of the file registered in the RNCP.
First consequences

- The 5 levels are not covering the whole spectrum of the French qualifications
- The Bologna process obliges to establish a distinction between Master and Doctorate and to identify 4 levels for HE (3+1)
- Discussions on the introduction of approaches based on learning outcomes
- Links with credit systems.

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<tr>
<th>French Qualification Frame</th>
<th>Nomenclature 1969</th>
<th>Grille CEC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I - Grade de Doctorat</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>I - grade de Master</td>
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<td>II – Grade de Licence</td>
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CONCLUSION

Why a NQF? (1)

- The answer of a country to create an environment facilitating national and international mobility, from one sector to another, from companies or activities;
- To reinforce the links between the educational system and labour market, to make it more reactive to the needs;
- To modernise qualifications and their assessment;
- To facilitate validation of non formal and informal learning.
Why a NQF? (2)

- To present a general vision of the educational system including and articulating all options and making possible continuity and progression, reducing ruptures and dead-ends
- Integrating current reforms (for instance Bologna process in HE)
- To contribute to the quality of the system

What is a NQF

- A tool classifying all qualifications (transparency)
- According to a unique set of relevant criteria in a country (descriptors)
- Contributing at the identification of coherent levels of knowledge, skills and competences (each level has a single definition)
- Making possible continuity and progression (LLL)
- Guaranteeing quality of qualifications
What is not a NQF

- A copy of the EQF
- A tool:
  - Classifying employments
  - Assessing people
  - Creating a hierarchy of programmes
  - For social negotiations

What could we wait from a NQF?

- Not only the production of a national grid
- But a wide reflection:
  - On education and training system and its relationships with the labour market
  - On the shift from « inputs » to « learning outcomes »
  - A learner centred approach
  - On the recognition of non formal and informal learning
  - On building lifelong learning pathways with milestones (based on the accumulation of credits?)
The conditions to meet

- There is no NQF possible without questioning the whole educational system from the conception of qualifications to the awarding process
- Necessity to adopt a common language which is more than the adoption of the same vocabulary, integrating a conceptual dimension
- Necessity to adopt a shared definition of levels and descriptors
- Necessity to take into account the shift from programmes and contents to learning outcomes; from arrangements to learners
- The articulation between HE and other sub-systems remains a challenge (especially at EQF levels 5 and 6)
- The NQF must be conceived as dynamic and forecast

The expected positive effects

- For individuals:
  - Help for advice and counselling for pupils and students
  - Favour successful learning pathways for all
  - Favour progressive professional pathways

- For companies and sectors:
  - HR management

- For the society:
  - Better adequacy between education and training and labour market
  - Better international readability in a context of globalisation
Thank you for your attention