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Project EQF-Ref

Czech Republic - National Case Study On the Implementation of the EQF and on the Preparation of the National Referencing Report

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Contents:

1. Introduction.....	3
2. NQF Development and Implementation	3
3. EQF Implementation	4
3.1. General information	4
3.2. Experiences and available results.....	4
3.3. Information related to the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF developed by the EQF Advisory Group	5
Criterion 1.....	6
Criterion 2.....	7
Criterion 3.....	8
Criterion 4.....	9
Criterion 5.....	10
Criterion 6.....	11
Criterion 7.....	12
Criterion 8.....	12
Criterion 9.....	13
Criterion 10.....	14
Criteria 1 – 10; Summary of opinions.....	14
3.4 Referencing Report.....	14
3.4.1. Structure and content of the EQF referencing report.....	15
3.4.2. Extent of the EQF referencing report (number of pages)	16
3.4.3. Degree of details in the EQF referencing report	16
3.4.4. EHEA experiences in the Czech Republic	17
3.4.5. Official decision of the CR.....	17
3.5 Organisation of the process for preparing the referencing report	17
3.5.1. Challenges of the referencing process	17
3.5.2. Organisation of international cooperation	18
3.5.3. Organisation of feedback to the national referencing reports on European level	18
3.5.4. Kind of support provided by the EC and/or to the national coordination point.....	19
3.5.5. EHEA organisation experiences in the CR	19
3.5.6. Official decision of the CR.....	19
References:.....	20
Annex – Transcription of Interviews:	21
Questionnaire No. 1 – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT)	21
Questionnaire No. 2 – The Czech Association of Energy Sector Employers (CSZE)	28
Questionnaire No. 3 – T Rexima.....	34
Questionnaire No. 4 – Centre for Higher Education Studies (CSVS)	41
Questionnaire No. 5 – Regional Authority of the Ústí Region) and secondary technical school/CZESHA (Union of School Associations)	47

1. Introduction

This national case study on the implementation of the EQF and the development of the national referencing report in the Czech Republic was prepared as an output of the LLP LdV project EQF-Ref. The study was drafted by the NUOV team according to a structure that was discussed at the first project meeting in Vienna in February 2009. The study is based on interviews, comments and opinions of many experts to whom the team would like to thank very much. Without these valuable inputs, the study would not have been possible.

A comparative/evaluation report will be written, using the national case studies of participating countries as sources.

2. NQF Development and Implementation

The Czech Republic drafted its own national LLL strategy concurrently with the formation of EQF and other instruments of the European Lifelong Learning Strategy concept. The ongoing VET and tertiary education reform were kept in line with the European requirements laid down in the Lisbon Strategy (2000) and set out by the Copenhagen and Bologna processes.

An overarching National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been developed in the Czech Republic since 2005. A transparent system of qualifications (NQS) is being created, which will provide comprehensible information about various types of qualifications from all subsystems of education and training to employers, schools and those interested in education. The Act on the Verification and Recognition of Results of Further Education (2006) is of fundamental importance to the legislative incorporation of the NQF and NQS.

The core of the NQS is a publicly accessible register (repertoire) of all complete and partial qualifications and their qualification and assessment standards.

At the level of tertiary education the decision to develop a National Qualifications Framework for tertiary education was taken by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) in 2005. The part of the NQF concerned with the tertiary sector will be designed and developed under Q-RAM project funded from the Structural Funds as well.¹

¹ The Development of the National Qualifications Frameworks in Europe (Cedefop 2009)

3. EQF Implementation

3.1. General information

The National Coordination Point (EQF Coordination Centre – EQF CC) will play a key role in the process of referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF. The steering committee for referencing was set up in 2009. A draft report is expected to be prepared by 2010 and the final report by 2011. The MSMT is the responsible body that approves all proposals, decisions and documents prepared by the NCP. ²

Timetable of the referencing process³

Process phase	Date / estimate date
Designation of NCP	Q1 2009
Setting up of referencing committee	Q1 2009
Start of referencing process (relating qualifications systems to EQF – 2010 deadline)	Q1 2009
Involvement of international experts or exchange with other countries	Yes, project LLP-LdV SECCOMPAT, EQF-Ref, NCP-VET-CO
Draft report ready for discussion within EQF AG	Q3 2010
Final referencing report	Q1 2011

3.2. Experiences and available results

Compliance with the European Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic is very good, even though Czech systems are by no means forcibly adapted to conform to development on the European level. However, their development is influenced to a considerable extent by careful monitoring of the situation in Europe, and thus confirms and conforms to the prevalent EU trends. ⁴

² The Development of the National Qualifications Frameworks in Europe (Cedefop 2009)

³ Referencing roadmap (EC Questionnaire 2009)

⁴ Report on the Preparation for Introducing the European Qualifications Framework in the Czech Republic (NUOV 2009)

The development of qualification standards registered in the NQS started in 2005 (the project NSK, see below) and is still in progress (the project NSK2, which started in 2009); so far we have processed qualifications up to the ISCED 3 level (EQF 3, partially also EQF 2), the qualifications at higher levels will follow.

We have set 8 qualification levels for the National Qualifications Framework, same as in the EQF.

The descriptors for partial and complete qualifications (qualification and assessment standards) have been chosen with the aim to refer the learning outcomes identified for individual NQF qualifications levels, corresponding to the knowledge, skills and competences required, to the descriptors of the EQF reference levels. For more details about the process of NQF and NQS formation and about the pilot implementation of the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, please visit www.nsk.nuov.cz a www.nsk.univ.cz.

Two pilot projects aimed at developing and partially implementing the NQF and NQS were implemented in the Czech Republic from 2005 to 2008. These projects were the *NSK (on the NQF and NQS)* and *UNIV (on the RNFIL)* system projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT), and were funded with support from the ESF. Both of these projects significantly enforce the role of the social partners (especially employers) and their influence on the qualifications structure as well as the contents and implementation of educational programmes leading to attaining qualifications and promote the integration of IVET and CVET.

3.3. Information related to the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF developed by the EQF Advisory Group

The following summary of opinions regarding the criteria and procedures for referencing is based on six interviews conducted with representatives of various stakeholders (MSMT, NUOV, research centre for higher education, regional government, private consultation/educational company, employers' association).

There can be noted a surprising level of unanimity between all the respondents. The opinion of NUOV and MSMT experts was used as a main base for the following answers regarding the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF. For full transcription of interviews see the Annex.

Criterion 1

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.

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

Act No. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results laid down the requirement to constitute the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the National Qualifications System (NQS) of the Czech Republic and other related institutional elements with competencies set out by law and/or associated executive regulations (National Council for Qualifications, sector groups of social partners for the development and retention of descriptors of partial and complete qualifications registered in the NQS, bodies authorised to approve qualifications and procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the authorisation of authorised entities, i.e. entities authorised to award qualifications etc.).

The full and unabridged wording of Act 179/2006 Coll., the Lifelong Learning Strategy and other program documents regarding the initial and continuing education can be found at <http://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/on-further-education-and-lifelong-learning>.

The competences and duties of MSMT, NUOV, National Council for Qualifications and various working and advisory groups are clearly defined.

The formation of NCP was approved by MSMT in July 2008.

Despite preceding the actual referencing process, all activities described above conform to the European requirements for referencing national qualifications to EQF, laying good foundations to the criteria implementation process in the Czech Republic. Criterion 1 in particular is almost fulfilled, even though the gradual formation of the institutional framework is still in progress (see below).

Related documents:

Qualifications levels in the National Qualifications Framework – Characteristics and Relationship to the European Qualifications Framework, NÚOV, MŠMT 2009

Act No. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

In April 2009, NÚOV published the *Report on Preparation for EQF Implementation in the Czech Republic*. The report was discussed at informal meetings with educational experts so that it could be submitted to a review hearing at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The report describes in

detail all NQF-related activities (in particular its core elements, the National Qualifications System and the National Occupations System) and the related elements of the institutional framework. The report also includes an overview of bodies involved in the referencing process, and their organisational structure, competences and activities, whether general or specific, which are related to the referencing process. It was not decided how to complete and launch the practical implementation of the report, which is why the official structure of tasks and competences of the whole project has not been put into public domain so far.

C. Opinion of respondents

The gradual formation of the institutional framework (structures, mechanisms and instruments) required for the transition from the concept of formal education to the lifelong learning concept appears adequate.

Criterion 2

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.

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

The National Qualifications Framework envisaged the referencing of its levels to the EQF from its very formation in 2005. The approved partial qualifications, i.e their qualification and assessment standards, are derived from the competences required from an applicant at a corresponding examination and include a reference to a corresponding qualification level in the NQF and the EQF.

Related documents:

Qualification and assessment standards of partial qualifications (www.narodni-kvalifikace)

Methodology for the Formation of Qualification Standards for Partial Qualifications (NUOV 2005)

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

After the completion of the first stage of the NQF creation, NUOV has prepared and submitted a comprehensive report in July 2009 to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for its perusal and comments. The report is called *Qualification Levels in National Qualifications Framework – Characteristics and Relationship to the European Qualifications Framework*. The report identifies the NQF qualifications levels and defines the basic types of existing and upcoming national qualifications.

As of this date (October 2009) the MSMT governing board (the highest approving organ of the ministry) approved the descriptors corresponding to the NQF / EQF levels 1 to 4; the remaining NQF / EQF levels (5-8) will be defined by the end of the year 2009.

C. Opinion of respondents

The general approach selected with respect to this criterion and the discussion of the presented solution appears adequate. There exists a clear and demonstrable reference between the NQF and the EQF.

Criterion 3

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.

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

The focus on competence-based and outcome-oriented approach has been and will continue to be the basic approach used for description of VET qualifications and its corresponding levels.

The competence-based approach to qualifications is used also in connection with tertiary qualifications (to define study programme curricula). Most universities use ECTS, while the ECVET, was not used even experimentally in the Czech Republic. There exists a usability study for the application of the ECVET in the Czech Republic, which has revealed that a possible ECVET implementation should not be hindered by any major technical problems, since the standards for both the partial and complete VET qualifications are based on the outcome-oriented approach and incorporate the methods used to evaluate the accomplished learning outcomes. ECVET studies and the SWOT analysis for ECVET implementation can be found at <http://www.nuov.cz/pak/evropsky-system-kreditu-pro-odborne-vzdelavani-a-pripravu>.

Related documents

Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Czech Republic

Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of Education System of the Czech Republic 2007

National Reform Program (National Lisbon Program 2005-2008)

National Program for the Development of Education in the CR (White Paper)

Act No. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

Discussions continue on the difference in formulation of qualifications levels corresponding to VET and lower qualification levels (EQF 1-4) and of tertiary qualification levels (EQF 5-8). We have yet to decide whether the recognition of the results of non-formal and informal learning will apply also to tertiary qualifications levels or whether they will apply only to VET and lower qualifications (and which ones, i.e. whether also to regulated/licensed professions and activities). There has been no official decision about a possible introduction of ECVET.

C. Opinion of respondents

Also in this case, the gradual development and introduction of the NQF and other instruments, procedures and structures of the institutional framework for transition to the LLL appear to be the preferable solution. It is important to make all decisions and measures based on a broad consensus of all stakeholders involved during all stages of the process.

Criterion 4

The procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

We believe that the qualifications are transparent as is the method for their incorporation into the NQF and NQS. The first stage of the formation of qualifications and their incorporation in the NQF/NQS took place in 2005-2008 (in the project NSK). The project NSK now continues as NSK2 for qualifications at the EQF level 4. The project management was assigned to NUOV.

The qualification standards are created in cooperation with sector councils, i.e. with all major stakeholders involved, including employers. When ready, the standards are presented for comments and discussion to the authorising bodies, i.e. relevant ministries, and to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which must verify whether they are compatible with the National System of Occupations (NSO). Finally, the pre-approved qualification standards are submitted to the MSMT for final approval. Only then they can be published through the NSK information system at www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz.

Obviously, the approval process is fairly complex and the qualification standards must often be modified and adapted to the needs of the stakeholders involved. However, the process is transparent enough owing to clearly divided competences and all relevant stakeholders have their say in the

process. The MSMT acts as the overarching public authority as set in the Act No. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results.

Related documents:

Act No. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results

Documents for the Operational Program Education for Competitiveness

Lifelong Learning Strategy of the CR

Qualification and assessment standards for partial qualifications

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

Descriptors for qualification levels 5 – 8 EQF will be created under the National Qualifications Framework for tertiary education (Q-RAM) project.

The project aims to create an overarching qualification framework to cover the outputs of tertiary education at universities and tertiary technical schools. The qualification framework will identify national descriptions to define the expected outputs at various tertiary education levels (DiS., Bc., Mgr., Ph.D.) both in the most general terms and in more detail at individual areas of education.

C. Opinion of respondents

It is particularly important to make the process of incorporating qualifications as transparent as possible and to involve the employers in a broad and wide discussion of the solutions on offer.

Criterion 5

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 (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

The quality is assured both with regard to the acceptance criteria applicable to educational and training programs (input) and with regard to the process and the outcomes of education. The former include the approval of national core curricula (framework educational programmes) and school curricula (school educational programmes) by the relevant authorities, the accreditation of universities and tertiary technical schools, or the monitoring of admission procedures and final exams by accreditation committees, while the latter includes the evaluation of school and teaching conducted by the Czech School Inspectorate and other national authorities, the self-evaluation of

schools, evaluation of students and teachers or the assessment provided by prospective employers. There are many other individual safeguards and indicators currently in place in the Czech Republic, which provide the function of quality-assurance system. The elements include the system of consultation processes, accreditations, the standardised comprehensive final (apprenticeship) exam, the nascent standard Maturita exam and others.

The quality assurance system is regularly modified or amended in conformity with the progress of the reform process and in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, adapting to the new information both as shared on a peer-to-peer basis and as provided through formal instruction from official authorities.

At the same time, there also exists a National Network for Quality and a nation-wide project focusing on a meaningful and effective self-evaluation of schools.

Other measures will include the creation of standards for lecturers. A pilot project called AIVD focuses on a creation of standards for lecturers of further education. The NSK2 project will cover the creation of standards for evaluators of partial qualification exams, the basic terms and conditions of which have already been incorporated in the qualification and assessment standards of partial qualifications.

Related documents:

Lifelong Learning Strategy

Qualification and assessment standards for partial qualifications

C. Opinion of respondents

We believe that this network of formal and informal quality assurance is sufficient to administrate and give support to education providers and partners, and that it covers all relevant activities and important evaluation criteria.

The chief objective of our efforts in the area of continuing education is to ensure that partial qualification exams gain good reputation among the general public, in particular with respect to the standard of education required to pass such an exam (as is the case of Cambridge Certificates in English as a second language, for example).

Criterion 6

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

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

The quality of education is assured through a cooperation of all segments and components of the system of education and the stakeholders involved both with respect to the administration of the system of education, with respect to the provision of education and training, and with respect to the use and application of the outcomes of education (cf. under Criterion 5).

C. Opinion of respondents

Quality can only be assured through a consensus of all stakeholders involved and not through an enforced obedience. Each stakeholder must be held responsible for the quality of his work to all his partners and collaborators and the outcomes of his work must be derived from cooperation with all his partners and collaborators.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

NUOV may play a key role in this regard, as it participates in several international projects, which enable sharing experience and information at the international level while promoting the Czech Qualifications Framework and System.

C. Opinion of respondents

We can accede to this criterion provided the exact terms and conditions will be specified in more detail. It is not quite clear from this criterion what kind of experts would be involved (teachers? sociologists? psychologists? economists?) and what kind of work experience they should have (experience in direct education or experience in administration and/or drafting policies?). It is also not quite obvious how they should be involved and what their competences should be (would their role be only advisory?). It would be necessary to ensure that the various viewpoints be represented proportionally, including the technical, historical, educational, psychological, economic and other viewpoints.

Criterion 8

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.

A. Steps Taken to Implement the Criterion in the CR

To confirm the NQF referencing to the EQF by competent bodies:

The MSMT has approved the document “Qualification Levels in the National Qualifications Frameworks - Characteristics and Relationship to the European Qualifications Framework“, which defines the characteristics of qualification levels in the Czech Republic corresponding to 1 – 4 EQF. By the end of this year, the Ministry should approve qualification levels 5 – 8 EQF, which are being designed by the project Q-RAM. The proposal has already been discussed by several working groups and by the National Council for Qualifications.

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

Quite probably, the report will be drawn up by the working group of the NUOV EQF Coordination Centre (EQF CC). The report will be discussed with the EQF CC advisory group and other stakeholders, including the promoters of the Q-Ram project as creators of the qualifications framework for tertiary education.

C. Opinion of respondents

We can accede to this criterion as it is useful with regard to the availability of the data in public domain. At the same time, this is a secondary criterion and should be preceded by the completion of the referencing process. The national comprehensive report will act as the evidence of the process and as the source of information for other countries.

The scope and the level of detail presented in the report will depend on the particular conditions specific to each country involved in the process.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

<http://www.eqf-reference-nqf.net/>

C. Opinion of respondents

A common web platform could be useful for a fast comparison of qualifications levels and for sharing links to other information sources.

Criterion 10

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.

B. Proposal for the Criterion Implementation in the Czech Republic

The national Europass centre takes this criterion into account. The method used to include the reference in qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents is being discussed at the European level as well. The inclusion of a reference to the relevant EQF level in all Europass documents does not appear difficult, provided that all relevant measures have been duly approved.

C. Opinion of respondents

This criterion is also secondary. Its implementation should be relatively simple and may start as soon as the referencing process has been successfully completed.

Criteria 1 – 10; Summary of opinions

There can be stated generally that all respondents agree with the set of criteria and procedures. Respondents find the criteria sufficient in scope and number. The set is a result of thorough discussion and therefore should be accepted. No other criteria were suggested.

Their rather general nature can result in differences in understanding by different countries and/or parties. This possible misunderstanding can be seen in this study in comments on the criteria 5 and 6, i.e. criteria relating to quality assurance. These two criteria were the only sources of objections and reservation among some respondents.

Some interviewees find very positive that both frameworks (the EQF and the EHEA framework) have been converging gradually.

1.4 Referencing Report

As regards the Czech national referencing report, there have been no accomplished activities, nor have been made any decisions. The following opinions are strictly based on expectations and personal views of respondents.

3.4.1. Structure and content of the EQF referencing report

Formats as well contents of the existing self-certification reports could serve as examples of good practice for additional countries. Their content can be made more general and be summarised as follows:

1. Summary in which the main purpose and message of the report is expressed.
2. According to the national context – the development and characteristics of the NQF, national body responsible for NQF, coordination/steering structure, committee, working, advisory groups etc.
3. Contextual information
 - a. Description of the national educational systems
 - b. Admission requirements to all levels
 - c. Progression in the system – which paths are open and which are “blind”.
 - d. How the quality assurance is maintained (bodies responsible for quality assurance and how they operate)
 - e. Are there systems of credits –ECVET, ECTS – which levels? Other systems and can they be recalculated into the former/new ones?
 - f. Description of qualifications system(s) – how qualifications are described, classified, how qualifications can be acquired, recognised and validated (incl. formal and informal/non-formal learning)
4. Verification of/Compatibility with the referencing (self-certification) criteria.
5. Conclusion(s)
6. Appendices
 - a. Full text of national descriptors
 - b. Comparison of the Dublin descriptors of QF-EHEA (HE part only, i.e. levels 5-8 in EQF) and EQF descriptors with the award-type descriptors in the National Framework of Qualifications
 - c. Glossary, list of abbreviations
7. Copy of a referencing (self-certifying) letter (?).

The description of verification of the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF should form the key part of the report.

The report could also include the possible influence/impact of the EQF implementation in the Czech Republic.

3.4.2. Extent of the EQF referencing report (number of pages)

From the point of view of the HE expert:

It is difficult to state a number of recommended pages because of the differences between countries. The existing referencing and self-certification reports differ significantly. For HE the self-certification/referencing report should be an entrance ticket to EHEA. This means it should serve the purposes of e.g. recognition as well. This in turn means well described information. I would suggest not stating the exact number of pages, however, I would insist of an executive summary/table or other layout expressing briefly mentioning typical qualifications at each level of the NQF and the corresponding level of the EQF/cycle of QF-EHEA (I would recommend both schemes to be mentioned)

From the point of view of the NUOV and MSMT experts:

The referencing report should not be too long; the number of pages could start at around 30 pages, of which around half should verify the criteria and procedures.

It is reasonable to expect that the actual number of pages will be larger though, probably around 50 to 80 pages.

3.4.3. Degree of details in the EQF referencing report

(Including the degree of details and extent of the information that would be accepted from other countries provided in their EQF referencing report)

HE expert:

See above – the report should serve these following purposes; understanding the system and qualifications, be helpful to credential evaluators and create basis for LLL recognition. For these reasons the level of information should provide details and explain specificities of the national system.

NUOV and MSMT experts:

The same rules (recommendations) should be applied to all countries.

We would like to suggest/recommend that the referencing report should above all provide a coherent and well concise/transparent overview (“big picture”) of the country’s situation with some necessary details such as descriptors of qualifications levels and a table that refers levels of the NQF to the EQF. All other details could be described in annexes or referred to through hyperlinks, which should not be limited by number.

3.4.4. EHEA experiences in the Czech Republic

(What were the experiences in your country with the design of the national referencing report for the European Higher Education Area?)

There are no experiences in this regard in the Czech Republic. The views expressed in this report reflect opinion of a member of the Bologna Process' Follow up group.

3.4.5. Official decision of the CR

(Have you/has your country already (officially) decided how to create the national EQF referencing report?)

At the level of higher education/tertiary education it is not the case.

A brief working version of the report should be prepared by the EQF CC at the beginning of 2010. The report will be elaborated and discussed among relevant stakeholders and presented to international experts for reviewing and to the MSMT for approval.

3.5 Organisation of the process for preparing the referencing report

As regards organisation of the process for preparing the Czech national referencing report, there have been no accomplished activities, nor have decisions been taken. The following opinions are strictly based on expectations and personal views of respondents.

3.5.1. Challenges of the referencing process

(Challenges that can be identified in this process and ways to address/overcome them)

HE expert:

The national report should facilitate understanding and credibility of the national qualifications system/framework. It is important that the report is fair and open. It has to be evidence based. All relevant stakeholders (educational staff, employers, quality assurance representatives, recognition representatives, students, etc.) should participate also in the referencing process – not to feel ownership for the NQF only, but also for the international consequences. The responsibility for the report lies on the shoulders of the national authority.

The frameworks cannot be static. They are dynamic instruments serving the development of the education systems. Therefore it is important to create a dynamic framework which provides the basis for further improvements and developments. These trends have to be reflected in the report as well.

MSMT, NUOV experts:

The biggest challenge seems to be insufficient amount of time and staffing. It is very difficult to produce a broadly discussed report in such limiting conditions and on time. For these reasons, there seems to be impossible to present the report first to international experts and then to the MSMT. Parallel examination by both parties (international experts and MSMT) could solve this problem. Potential changes incorporated by MSMT during the period of approval could pose as risk factors, because of limited time to discuss them with all relevant stakeholders that commented the draft earlier in the process.

3.5.2. Organisation of international cooperation

(Should a “pool of expert” be developed? Should countries do the EQF referencing process together? Should “networks” be established?)

HE expert:

The national referencing report has to have credibility internationally, i.e. it has to be validated internationally. Participation of international experts is essential. There should be an international pool of experts/database of experts from which the states could choose, ideally from both –EU (EQF) and Bologna (QF-EHEA) structures. Cooperation of Flanders and the Netherlands shows that the regional cooperation is useful.

MSMT, NUOV experts:

Cooperation and networking is very desirable, but without changes in the referencing timetable it is too late to create ones. The present strictly set deadlines should be substituted by more flexible periods of time that allow pilot testing and verification, as is the case of the ECVET implementation.

3.5.3. Organisation of feedback to the national referencing reports on European level

(Who should give feedback and in what way? How should it be taken into account on national level?)

All experts agree that feedback on the European level should exist.

What might serve as an effective instrument for feedback could be a working group of EQF AG formed by representatives of all the Member States, preferably representatives of NCPs. This group could discuss the development of the referencing reports in the countries and the report’s structure, content and extend.

3.5.4. Kind of support provided by the EC and/or to the national coordination point

(Related to contents and not to financial issues)

HE expert:

See the question B above. There should be a common methodology, training, database of experts from which the states could choose. For the part of tertiary/higher education (levels 5-8) the cooperation between the EU-EQF and Bologna-QF-EHEA structures should be ensured.

MSMT, NUOV experts:

First of all, the EC should initiate a change in the proposed implementation timetable, i.e. postpone the deadline for finishing the reference process.

Then, a network of NCPs should be methodologically supported in the following areas:

- mutual communication
- collecting and promoting examples of good (and bad?) practices in areas of referencing, reports' content and structure and administration of national NQFs internet platforms/portals
- communication with EQF AG and its working groups.

3.5.5. EHEA organisation experiences in the CR

(What were the experiences with the organisation of the process for preparing the national EHEA referencing report?)

There are no experiences in this regard in the Czech Republic.

3.5.6. Official decision of the CR

(Have you/has your country already (officially) decided how to arrange the process for preparing the EQF referencing report?)

If yes, what are the plans or intentions how to organise the process for preparing the referencing report?)

The Czech NCP (EQF CC) will play the key role in the process of preparing EQF referencing report. Preparation of the report is set in the plan of EQF CC activities in 2010. The report will be discussed in various groups of specialists. The final version will be submitted to the MSMT for approval.

References:

The Act no. 179/2006 on the Verification and Recognition of Results of Further Education, Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport , 5.5.2006,

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Projekt NSK, *Metodika tvorby hodnotících standardů pro dílčí kvalifikace (The Methodology of the Development of Assessment Standards for Partial Qualifications)*, NÚOV 2007

Annex – Transcription of Interviews:

Anonymous questionnaires

about criteria and procedures for referencing national (here: Czech) qualifications levels to the EQF

Summary of Responses

Part I

Questions about 10 criteria/procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory group

Explanation of recorded answers:

Each criterion is viewed from three different viewpoints, i.e.

1. **What steps have already been taken in this area**, or what experiences are there in the Czech Republic to fulfil this criterion, including any available documents?
2. **What is the proposed method of fulfilling this criterion in the Czech Republic**, if any, or what decision is going to be made?
3. **What is the expert's personal view and opinion regarding the criterion** and how should it be interpreted and addressed?

Questionnaire No. 1 – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT)

Please indicate your department and position (without stating your name) (e.g. representative of an employer/employee association, ministry of education, etc.).

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) - representative of the department for continuing education

Criterion 1

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.

1. Yes.

The roles and responsibilities of NUOV, MSMT and the National Qualifications Council (NRK) have been clearly defined. The establishment of the NRK was approved by the management in July of the previous year. The NRK working group is a part of the NCP and shall play a crucial role in the referencing process.

Documents: Qualification Levels in the Czech Republic
 National Coordination Centre
 Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results

2. The document on qualification levels in the Czech Republic is now going through comment procedure, and shall be discussed at a MSMT board meeting in the near future. Upon approval, the approved levels 1-4 of the NQF (1-4 of the EQF) shall be published at the MSMT and NUOV websites.

NQF levels 5-8 are still being discussed. We have prepared a national project focusing on this issue.

3. I believe it is a correct and logical criterion, since it is important to define the roles of the relevant national bodies. Mutual discussion between the parties involved is extremely important for the success of the entire process.

Criterion 2

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.

1. The newly established National Qualifications Framework took into account the referencing to the EQF since its establishment in 2005. The number of qualification levels is identical to that in the EQF. The approved partial qualifications, i.e. qualification and evaluation standards based on competences an applicant must demonstrate during an examination, already include the proposed reference to the appropriate NQF level.

Documents: Qualification and Evaluation Standards for Partial Qualifications (www.narodni-kvalifikace)
 Framework educational programmes
 (Standard Definition Methodology?)

2. The Czech Republic shall comply with this criterion.

3. I believe there is a clearly identifiable link between the NQF and EQF levels.

Criterion 3

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.

1. The National Qualifications Framework is based on learning results, i.e. all partial qualifications described and approved during the NQF project are based on competences.

Such qualifications may be recognized and validated by testing regardless on the manner in which they were obtained. Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results serves as the basic framework for the procedure.

Currently, credit system is only used in tertiary education in the Czech Republic, not in (secondary) vocational and technical education.

Documents: Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic
Long-Term Plan for Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic, 2007
National Reform Program (National Lisbon Program, 2005-2008)
National Education Development Program for the Czech Republic (“White Book”)
Act No. 179/2006
documents related to the Operational Program “Education for Competitiveness” (especially the UNIV project)

2.

3. The above documents show that the Czech Republic is heading towards recognizing non-formal education and informal learning, a trend which the MSMT supports and finds meaningful (*DV department?*)

It needs to be emphasized that quality should be evaluated by output, not by input, in accordance with European trends.

Criterion 4

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.

1. Yes, both qualifications and their classification within the NQF are transparent. The first stage of designing qualifications and their classification within a register was a part of the NQF (1) project, which took place in 2005-2008. The NQF project now continues as NQF 2 for qualifications on the EQF 4 level, with NUOV in charge of the project.

Sector councils (i.e. representatives of various parties involved, including employers) participate in the design of qualification standards. The standards are then discussed with the authorization body (i.e. the relevant ministry), and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MPSV) subsequently confirms that the qualifications concerned are compatible with the NQF. The qualification standards are finally approved by the MSMT. Only then can they be published in the NQF information system at www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz. From this description, it is obvious that throughout the process, qualification standards are being constantly modified, changed and re-written based on the parties' requirements. It is a relatively complicated process, which however guarantees that all relevant parties are involved. Competences are clearly defined, with the MSMT acting as the umbrella authority, as prescribed by law.

Documents: Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results
 OPVK documents
 Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic
 Qualification and Evaluation Standards for Partial Qualifications

2. EQF qualification levels 5-8 shall be addressed in the Q-Ram project.

3. I believe that transparency is extremely important. The involvement of employers is crucial for the project's success, since their trust in the system shall ensure its functioning.

I believe that the law defines the competences of all parties involved sufficiently.

Criterion 5

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 (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

1. Even though the system vocational education and training (VET) does not explicitly include a national quality assurance system, there is a number of elements and measures compliant with the quality indicator

requirements, which actually form such a system. These include accreditation systems, a new unified final examination, the emerging standard Maturita exam, etc.

Documents: Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic
Qualification and Evaluation Standards for Partial Qualifications

2. Further measures shall include the creation of standards for instructors. The AIVD pilot project focused on the creation of standards for instructors in DV. The NQF 2 project also includes the creation standards for test evaluators for partial qualification candidates; the principal terms have already been defined in the qualification and evaluation standards for partial qualifications.

3. Essentially, new quality assurance measures focus on the quality of output (which is as it should be); even the NQF has been following this requirement. The above trend and any activities related to it should be further developed, but I do not think any other formal system is necessary, since it could be restrictive. In initial education, quality is being assured and supported by the new standard final examination. It is our goal that the examination acquire good reputation among the general public, so that the certificate obtained is a true sign of quality (similar to the Cambridge Certificates for English as a second language).

Criterion 6

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

1. There is currently no body with such a title. Its role, especially its supervisory aspect, is being fulfilled by the Czech School Inspectorate (as regards quality assurance at primary and secondary schools, including vocational schools). The Inspectorate also gives its opinion on all important documents regarding qualifications, through a comment procedure.

Documents:

2.

3. In my opinion, a new formal body is not required; no further formalization is necessary. The processes have been set up correctly, and the competences of various players have been clearly defined, which in itself is an important quality assurance element. The NQF processes are sufficiently transparent.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

1.

2. NUOV plays a key role in this respect. It participates in several international projects, ensuring an exchange of experience on the international level, and presenting our qualification framework.

3. I believe it is a necessary requirement which shall improve the trust in various national qualifications frameworks.

Criterion 8

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.

1. The MSMT is the competent national body for referencing qualification levels.

2. The proposal shall be discussed by the National Qualifications Council.

Upon its approval by a competent body, the report shall be published on the NUOV website.

3. I believe that the publication of the report is important.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

- Please check the initial version of the EQF web platform by CEDEFOP: Referencing National Qualifications to the EQF: <http://www.eqf-reference-nqf.net/>

3. The internet platform may be useful for a quick comparison of qualification levels and for obtaining links to other sources of information.

Criterion 10

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.

1.

2. Yes. Including a reference to the appropriate EQF level by way of the NQF in all new qualification documents will not be a problem.

3. I believe that reference to the appropriate EQF level should be automatically included in Europass supplements. It would defy the entire purpose of the EQF tool and its other criteria if it were not so.

Criteria 1-10

In principle, I agree with all the criteria, although Criterion 9 does not concern the individual countries directly.

Questionnaire No. 2 – The Czech Association of Energy Sector Employers (CSZE)

Please indicate your department and position (without stating your name) (e.g. representative of an employer/employee association, ministry of education, etc.).

Representative of the Czech Association of Energy Sector Employers

Criterion 1

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.

1. The responsibilities and legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process have been clearly determined, but users are not as aware of them as would be desirable. In particular, communication between various national bodies requires much improvement. Even though the system has been set up properly, the cooperation between the MSMT and MPSV begs improvement.

Documents are available online but since their knowledge is not a priority, awareness of their existence is low.

2. The Czech Republic has decided to fulfil this criterion and is working towards this goal.

3. I agree with the principle; I am not aware of a better solution.

I believe that the EU has created a solid foundation structure, which can be further developed and expanded (snowball principle). In this respect, it is extremely important to publish and disseminate good practice examples, which may serve as inspirations for others.

Criterion 2

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.

1. Descriptors within the Czech NQF have been set up in a way which makes it possible to link them back to the EQF.

Documents: Qualification Levels in the Czech Republic (NUOV, 2009)
Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results

2. The criterion shall be fulfilled but is still subject to negotiations and discussion; there is a difference of opinion, especially between the education and employer sphere. A more thorough promotion of the issue is necessary, both within the education system and among social partners.

3. For a number of reasons, qualifications in different countries under current conditions are not the same, and therefore not fully comparable. Different countries often have different approaches to education, and their general curriculum is also different. This makes achieving compatibility difficult. Therefore, it is extremely important to work on the continuous improvement and unification of common terminology. This is one of the fundamental problems.

I believe that the EU's efforts are correct and useful, but should be better promoted, supported, explained and disseminated among end users. The media should pay greater attention to the issue; it would also be useful to organize discussion workshops that would receive greater publicity, in order to make people better prepared and informed.

Criterion 3

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.

1. The development of the NQF in the Czech Republic started in 2005, as a part of the NSK project. Qualification and evaluation standards are being described by learning outcomes. The Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results allows the recognition of non-formal and informal education. The pilot validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning (NIL) was a part of the UNIV project, the subsequent stage of which has already been prepared.

Credit systems have no tradition within the Czech VET system; their introduction is currently being considered. Vocational schools have the chance to establish international cooperation, which has further increased their interest in introducing a credit system (and ECVET).

Documents: Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results

2. Yes, as well as possible. The CR has already fulfilled this criterion as regards the NQF and NIL recognition, but there are no documents available on the credit system.

3. It is a good idea in general; however, comparing qualifications in specific cases is difficult or unfeasible, especially due to a number of specific amendments and regulations, and also due to differences in technological equipment or differing technological systems.

LLP LdV projects play an important role in this respect, pointing out these problems and trying to find solutions. A more extensive cooperation on the European level is inevitable.

Criterion 4

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.

1. The system has already been set up in the Czech Republic and a transparent method of describing qualifications and their inclusion in the NQF are currently being created.

Documents: Qualification and evaluation standards have been published at www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz (each qualification is described in each qualification standard by listing the required competences and in each evaluation standard by listing the criteria for verifying each competence).

2.

3. The system has already been set up. It is important for the system to remain open; i.e. it must be monitored by a group of experts (e.g. by the relevant sector council), in order for the standards to remain up-to-date and relevant. It is necessary to maintain and deepen the cooperation between the education system and the labour market. Sector councils play an important and irreplaceable role in this respect.

Criterion 5

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 (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

1. In principle, the system exists, but has not been as explicitly defined as in other countries, due to historical development specific for each country. Comparison is therefore difficult.

Only well-educated professionals are able to produce quality products able to compete on the international market. The need for such professionals is therefore ever-present in society.

Quality of education is also linked to the quality of QS and ES, with a unified final examination, which is currently being introduced, the emerging teaching standards, etc.

No documents or templates are available.

Criterion 6

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

1.

2.

3. The objective is achieving a state where quality is a given. In my opinion, the establishment of a quality assurance body does not ensure higher quality, but threatens to turn quality assurance into a mere formality.

I believe that such a criterion can only be fulfilled formally.

From the employer perspective, the fact that a certain subject survives on the market ensures its quality: those who do not offer quality do not survive.

ISO quality certificates are important because they offer guidance (defining best practice) to others (e.g. schools who have not achieved it).

Other forms of monitoring quality: inspections (Czech School Inspectorate); evaluation of schools by founders; publication of information on the success of a school's graduates, etc.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

1.

2.

3. I believe the principle to be sound. Such cooperation is necessary if we wish to unite Europe.

I assume that the participation of international experts would help in evaluating qualifications, schools etc. This applies partially to students who study abroad; it is a useful instrument, but schools need better incentives (a simple commendation for such an initiative, instead of stressful inspections, would often suffice).

It is good that within LdV, more funds are being allocated to mobility projects.

Skill contests are an excellent method of comparing VET on the international level (Euroskills etc.).

Criterion 8

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.

1. Yes, the (draft) report is currently under completion. The referencing process is being discussed.

Document: Report on the Preparation for Introducing the EQF in the CR (NUOV, 2009)

2. The report shall be completed by the national EQF Coordination Centre.

3. I believe that criteria should be fixed, defining clearly who is to be in charge of the process. It is necessary to preserve continuity and stability; changes in leadership (similar to those happening with the ReferNet in the CR) are not beneficial for the matter at hand.

The report should be brief and well organized, focusing on important points.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

- Please check the initial version of the EQF web platform by CEDEFOP: Referencing National Qualifications to the EQF: <http://www.eqf-reference-ngf.net/>

1.

2.

3. It is a good idea, in my opinion, to collect all relevant information in one place. The tool should be put into full operation as soon as possible, with the possibility of additional modifications and improvements. It is important to provide the initial impulse, with additional information added gradually, furthering subsequent development.

I would recommend moderation in the amount of information listed, so as to prevent information overload. Information should remain well organized, easily intelligible and verifiable.

Criterion 10

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.

1.

2.

3. This criterion applies to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The Czech Republic has adopted the referencing process, and should therefore comply with the above criterion.

I do not see it as a major problem. The largest obstacle is perhaps certain inertia of thought and customs. If the systems are well set up, people will become accustomed to them over time.

Criteria 1-10

- Do you agree with the above set of criteria?
- Is there any criterion missing? Are any of the criteria superfluous or inapplicable?

I agree with the above set of criteria. There is already a certain consensus in the matter.

I have no reservations and I cannot think of anything that would be missing or superfluous.

Questionnaire No. 3 – TREXIMA

Please indicate your department and position (without stating your name) (e.g. representative of an employer/employee association, ministry of education, etc.).

TREXIMA's activities focus on the labour sector. We provide professional consultancy in the field of human resources, labour rationalization and measurement. We carry out statistical surveys regarding average wages. Our company operates as a major partner in public projects, focusing on human resources development (participation in the design of the National Qualifications Framework), qualifications (cooperation in the development of the National Qualifications Framework), and labour market analyses.

Criterion 1

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.

1. The competences of the fourteen ministries have been defined in Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results. About a year ago, a proposal for the creation of the EQF Coordination Centre was presented, which consists of three sections: NUOV Working Groups, Advisory Groups, and EQF Working Groups of the National Qualifications Framework.

Documents: Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results

2.

3. This is an important criterion. The roles of all parties involved must be clearly defined, with the necessity to create a list of all parties involved. The list must be readily available (preferably on the MSMT website), and should enumerate the relevant department divisions (authorizing bodies), as well as list contact information of specific responsible persons, in order to get to all necessary information by the most straightforward path possible.

Criterion 2

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.

1. There *is* a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the NQF and the level descriptors in the NQF. Qualification levels had already been discussed during the formation of the National Occupations System (with identical levels as in the NQF); there is also a clear link to ISCED and KKOV (Classification of Core Study Fields).

Documents:

2.

3. I believe it would be extremely useful to set a simplified version of the NQF methodology for communication with the general public. Such a communication material should be clearly understandable, and should include practical examples (functioning as a sort of an instruction manual). The EQF should be popularized among the wider expert public in a similar way (by means of a flyer containing a simple description of the basic principles).

The National Qualifications Framework may serve as an example of such an approach: beside the complicated, detailed description, there is also a simplified, clearly intelligible description for end users.

Criterion 3

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.

1. The NQF is based on the principle of learning outcomes.

Although the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning has been formally set up and implemented, it does not function quite as intended. The general public does not view non-formal and informal learning as equal or equivalent to formal education. Formal education has had a strong position and a long-standing tradition in the Czech lands since the late 18th century; therefore, the notion still persists that a proper qualification can only be obtained in a school. Such views affect both society and corporate educational systems, which also employ traditional methods. Therefore, it is still necessary to promote the EQF and NQF principles, which emphasize actual learning results regardless of the method by which they were obtained, and acknowledge that certification by an authorized body is equivalent to that obtained within a formal education system as regards the person's success on the labour market.

In case of tertiary technical education and university educating, the issue rather more complicated. The higher education has a more general nature, providing a solid theoretical basis to its graduates, who only develop their professional skills in real-life practice. The link to the labour market is somewhat looser in case of higher education; this should be partially improved by a framework linking structure, such as the

upcoming qualifications framework for tertiary education. The link of a qualification obtained on this level to the labour market may be defined differently than is the case of lower qualification levels; however, the link needs to be created. It is clear that there must be only one NQF.

Documents: Act No. 179/2006

2.

3. I believe that even within the tertiary qualifications framework, there should be a number of partial qualifications, supplementing and expanding the principal discipline / qualification (for example, a civil engineer requires managerial education for working in certain professions). A number of positions (perhaps up to a half) commonly require further learning after the completion of a higher education degree.

Criterion 4

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.

1. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework are transparent. The procedure has been clearly defined in Act No. 179/2006 Coll. (connection of qualifications to the needs of the labour market, i.e. a link between the National Qualifications Framework and the National Occupations System). Requirements of the labour market are used as the basis for building the qualifications system (the National Occupations System has been described in Section 6 of the Employment Act).

The system has been set up properly, but still requires practical improvement; there are still qualifications which are not linked to the labour market. *Therefore, it is extremely important to complete and further develop the NOS, so that the MPSV and employers (pursuant to the Employment Act) guarantee that the system provides up-to-date information on employee requirements, which would further improve and secure the link to the labour market.*

In general, the system has been set up well, but practical implementation is lagging behind.

Documents: Act No. 179/2006
Employment Act No. 435/2004 (Section 6)

2.

3. The most important thing about a qualification is its usefulness on a labour market. In case of the partial qualifications (PQs), an interesting bonus is that several of them may be utilized in order to form one or more complete qualifications (CQs). However, experts still espouse the notion that a PQ should always be a part of a CQ, which is actually not important in regard to the labour market's needs.

Criterion 5

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 (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

1. The Czech Republic has no national quality assurance system (*under this name*), covering all aspects and levels of education and professional training. This is not right and such a system (*explicitly described*) should definitely be established.

Currently, Czech School Inspectorate (CSI) is the most important body as regards quality assurance in vocational education and training. This is not completely appropriate, since the CSI's focus lies more in educational processes, not learning outcomes. Along with the development of the NQF, it is important to focus on the quality of authorizations, the work of authorization bodies and authorized persons. Such entities should operate under and adhere to clearly defined quality principles. The establishment of a new body or institution is not at all necessary. Instead, it is important to define the quality system principles, including the specification of responsible entities.

Documents:

2.

3. A number of partial measures have emerged recently. An important new element of quality assurance in the field of initial vocational training is the new standard final examination. The MPSV has recently completed a system project titled Quality in Continuing Vocational Training, which focused on the certification process for CVT lecturers, training programs and institutions. However, no comprehensive quality system has yet been created.

The principal focus in the description of such a system should be an evaluation of the outcomes, i.e. the process of verifying competences, not the course of training or educational input. In order to ensure the quality of examination, it is important that the authorized person (i.e. a legal entity who has obtained authorization from the authorizing body to conduct examinations pursuant to a defined standard, and to award certificates of partial qualifications based on the examination results) not only meet all the statutory requirements, but that it prepare a comprehensive project describing the examination process in detail. Such

a project would be a prerequisite for submitting an authorization application, describing in detail the applicant's concept of quality assurance and measures they intend to take to that effect.

The quality assurance system should also include principles for the evaluation of the comprehensive practical implementation of the NQF; i.e., the graduates' successful passing of the authorized person's examination; number of examinations; number of complaints regarding the verification process, etc. This obviously necessitates the existence of suitable (and simple) parameters that are yet to be defined. Authorized persons should also undergo regular training.

Criterion 6

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

1.

Documents:

2.

3. I believe that an express agreement of a quality assurance body is not necessary. The important factors for quality assurance, in my view, are the principles mentioned above in my comment on the preceding criterion, i.e. the process of verification of competences. An amendment to Act No. 179/2006, describing in detail the prerequisites for authorized persons, including the above mentioned project, is currently being drawn up. By granting authorization to the authorized person to conduct examinations, the authorization body confirms that the person has met all the prerequisites, agrees with the prescribed rules for ensuring quality of competence verification, and shall monitor and verify the adherence thereto.

The quality of the process of referencing qualifications back to the EQF shall be ensured by the complicated comment procedure that all important documents have to go through. This ensures that all parties involved (NUOV, the ministries, and labour sphere representatives); including independent observers, have the chance to voice their opinion on any proposal.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

1. International experts should be contacted and invited to participate.

2.

3. It is important to employ unbiased experts who fully comprehend the specific country's system, who have visited the country and have thoroughly familiarized themselves with all aspects of the report. They should not be persons who would approve or refuse the report (and thus the entire referencing process) for a mere formality.

Criterion 8

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.

1. The MSMT is the competent body in this case; its exclusive role in the qualifications area is defined by law.

2.

3. I believe that it is right that the MSMT plays a crucial role in the process.

As far as the report is concerned, I believe it should not be too long. Its actual length is difficult determined, but I am convinced that 50 to 60 pages should be sufficient. Our qualifications framework is relatively simple: level descriptors are identical to the EQF, as is the number of levels. Many of the basic elements have been defined by law and need not be reiterated.

As regards the report's structure, its introduction should explain the approach chosen, followed by the description of solutions used to meet the requirements of all criteria. The text itself should be concise, well organized, and transparent. A detailed substantiation of the report's truthfulness and relevance should be provided in its annexes, which should include the text of Act No. 179/2006, the NQF methodology, and possibly also the text of the Employment Act or the relevant sections thereof, as well as the methodology for the creation of the National Occupations System, which would also describe its link to the NQF.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

1.

2.

3. I believe that such a platform is important and useful. Quick and transparent comparison of qualifications is the greatest benefit the EQF offers to all parties involved (especially the employers). I see no reason why the Czech Republic could not publish its referencing report within the official EQF platform.

Criterion 10

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.

1. This is definitely an important criterion and the Czech Republic should (shall) fulfil it.

2.

3. I am not certain as to the practical implementation of this requirement, i.e. the way of handling the sudden increase of the administrative and labour demand, but I believe it should not be too great of a problem. It is still unclear what the certificate supplement should state – whether just the achieved qualification level (i.e. a partial or full qualification included in the NQF), or also the various competences constituting each qualification. For the recognition of a full or partial qualification, all prerequisites for that qualification (i.e. competences) have to be met.

Criteria 1-10

I agree with the above set of criteria and procedures, and believe that they are sufficient in scope and number. No additional criteria are required. It might be better if the structure of the criteria and procedures were slightly different, but I understand it is the result of negotiations of many parties and countries involved; it is a great accomplishment that all parties and countries have managed to agree upon such a set of criteria.

My only reservation would concern the issue of quality assurance. I would again like to point out that I do not believe the issue can be solved by establishing a new quality assurance institution. In order to establish a working quality assurance system in the Czech Republic, it is rather necessary to describe such a system and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.

Questionnaire No. 4 – Centre for Higher Education Studies (CSVS)

Please indicate your department and position (without stating your name) (e.g. representative of an employer/employee association, ministry of education, etc.).

Centre for Higher Education Studies (CSVS), (public research institution) – research worker

Criterion 1

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.

1. Even though practical experience with the referencing process are lacking, the competences of the relevant bodies have been determined and the structures have been set up.

The system has been based on a number of documents: the Competence Act, defining the roles of ministries and other public authorities; other relevant acts and regulations, such as the Education Act and Higher Education Act; framework educational programs; documents produced by the accreditation committee for tertiary education, etc.

2. The criterion shall be fulfilled, since the system has already been set up. The MSMT shall play the ultimate role in the process, since it is to approve the final decision regarding the referencing procedure.

A special working group has been established within the National Qualifications Council to address the referencing process.

3. I believe that the crucial role belongs to the MSMT; it is able to discuss the task with other ministries (m. of healthcare, defence, the interior), which are however not likely to complicate the process.

The Bologna Framework (a “self-certification” process) has not yet been implemented in the Czech Republic, but could/should be introduced during the Q-RAM project: an individual national project addressing qualification on the higher education level, funded predominantly from the ESF resources, which is currently awaiting approval. I believe that experience from other countries is very important; foreign experts with international experience in the field should review the results of the referencing (self-certification) process.

Criterion 2

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.

1. There is a definite link between the NQF qualification levels and the EQF level descriptors.

Documents: Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results
Qualification Levels in the Czech Republic (NÚOV, 2009) (Currently undergoing the comment procedure, after which it shall be presented for approval at a MSMT administration meeting)

2. The criterion shall be fulfilled.

3. I believe that the descriptors within the Bologna Framework are clearer, more precise and less general than the EQF descriptors; however, since a wide consensus of all countries is required, it is probably necessary for the EQF descriptors to be more general in nature.

In the field of tertiary education, the Czech Republic has been working toward the fulfilment of the Bologna descriptors rather than the EQF descriptors.

The Czech educational system is relatively simple and transparent, with all levels clearly defined. I am therefore convinced that referencing the qualification levels shall not be a problem.

Criterion 3

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.

1. The CR has met the criterion. The qualification and evaluation standards are based on learning outcomes. Application of Act 179 also ensures compliance with the second requirement, i.e. validation of the outcomes non-formal and informal learning. The credit system is so far utilized in tertiary education only; the profiles of university graduates include also their learning results.

Documents: Act No. 179/2006
Qualification and Evaluation Standards

2. The National Qualifications Framework has been built on the principles specified in Criterion 3 since the very beginning.

3. In my opinion, the Czech Republic has a great advantage due to the mandatory accreditation of all higher education study programs, rigorously executed by the accreditation committee. This ensures a certain comparability of the difficulty and demands of the curriculum on a given level, which is not possible in many countries.

Criterion 4

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.

1. The procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework have been created during the NQF project (with the exception of higher education qualifications). The methods are sufficiently transparent: the attainment of a certain degree is connected to the attainment of a specific qualification, or linked to the recognition of non-formal and informal education, obtained by passing an examination designed to verify all competences required by the evaluation standard for the given qualification.

Documents: Framework Educational Programs
Qualification QS, ES

2.

3. I believe that the current system of inclusion of qualifications is sufficiently transparent, since qualifications are linked to a specific educational level (for the most part).

Criterion 5

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 (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

1. The fulfilment of this criterion shall require an increased effort. All prerequisites for its fulfilment, i.e. the requirements specified in Annex 3 of the Recommendation to Introduce the EQF, are achievable under the current conditions, but require a detailed substantiation. It is a great benefit in this respect that the higher education sphere has two accreditation committees, one for higher education institutions and another for tertiary technical schools, whose criteria meet those specified in Annex 3 (e.g. the obligation of higher education institutions to perform regular self-evaluation, defined by law).

Documents:

2. The criterion shall probably be addressed within existing structures and systems.

3. I believe it will be sufficient to utilize existing new legislative measures, without needing to introduce new ones.

Criterion 6

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

1. in the Czech Republic, the role of a quality assurance authority belongs to two accreditation committees (for higher education institutions and tertiary technical schools), and to the Czech School Inspectorate. It is always necessary to obtain their consent with the referencing process.

Documents:

2.

3. in my opinion, it is not necessary to establish a new quality assurance body.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

1. International experts should participate in the referencing process and give their assessment of the report. Such a process is mandatory within the Bologna Process.

2.

3. In my opinion, the report should be presented to a group of experts with plenty of international experience, who are conversant with other European systems. The groups should verify the report's truthfulness by visiting the country for several days to meet with representatives of the public administration (including quality assurance bodies), regions and social partners, and to visit randomly selected educational institutions. The MSMT should provide funding for such a review procedure.

Criterion 8

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.

1. We have had no experience in this area. However, a document proposing the referencing of national qualifications up to EQF Level 4 is currently undergoing the comment procedure.

Document: Qualification Levels in the Czech Republic

The MSMT is the competent authority that must validate the referencing of the national framework with the EQF.

2.

3. The needs and requirements stated in this criterion are quite clear. I believe that the National Qualifications Council should commission a representative group of experts to draw up a report which shall be submitted to the comment procedure, and subsequently approved at a MSMT administration meeting.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

1.

2.

3. Such a platform shall definitely be useful, especially for a quick comparison of qualification levels to those existing in other European countries. The Czech educational system is relatively simple and transparent (in principle, the NQF qualification levels correspond to those in the EQF); therefore, the platform is not essential for the comparison of our qualifications.

Criterion 10

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.

1. The criterion shall be fulfilled following the completion of the referencing process.

The obligation to issue a certificate supplement has been specified in the Higher Education Act. Each higher education institution shall create their own supplement template (its draft to be presented to the academic council for review), but a common methodology handbook shall be created as well.

Documents:

2.

3. I believe it is not difficult to fulfil this criterion. The certificates (school reports, diplomas) clearly state the educational level their holders have achieved. It will not be a problem to add the relevant EQF level.

<u>Kritéria 1-10</u>

In principle, I agree with all of the above criteria and procedures. Sometimes the list does not distinguish clearly between criteria and measures to be taken. The criteria often differ greatly as to their scope.

It is very good that both frameworks (BR and EQF) have gradually been converging.

Questionnaire No. 5 – Regional Authority of the Usti Region) and secondary technical school/CZESHA

Please indicate your department and position (without stating your name) (e.g. representative of an employer/employee association, ministry of education, etc.).

Regional administration and public administration representative – department of education

Representative of a secondary technical school / union of school association CZESHA

Criterion 1

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.

1. The competences of the relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are fairly well determined, both on the procedural and legislative level.

There is low end user awareness, especially as regards the actual benefit, use and application of the process, i.e. its added value.

The legal background and minor legal documents are in existence.

2. In my opinion, the Czech Republic, i.e. its responsible bodies and organizations, are actively involved in the preparation and course of the process, and that they have discussed the project's scope and possible paths with all relevant partners.

3. The principle is generally sound and one cannot but agree with it. It does not focus on the present but on the future. Because of that, it is necessary to increase the effort to popularize the entire process in all of its forms, focusing most on end users. There must be some good practical examples in existence today – not necessarily from this particular process, but it would certainly be useful to utilize experience obtained from other programs focusing on the transparency and transferability of competences.

Criterion 2

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.

1. The principal conditions have been fulfilled: relevant legal norms (Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll., as amended; and Act No. 179/2006 on recognition of further education results) defining the basic terms for the NQF, whose partial qualifications are being described through the required competences, i.e. the learning outcomes.

There are also several minor legal norms under preparations or already in existence. We could also mention the Labour Code, which stipulates the duty of employers and employees to improve, maintain, strengthen and expand their qualification.

The Education Act defines the principles of the curricular reform: Based on nationwide Framework Educational Programs, schools create School Educational Programs, allowing the schools to adapt their programs to the regional conditions and needs of the local labour market, focusing at the same time on the quality of output, i.e. learning outcomes, as is the case for the new standard final examination.

2. Even though I do not foresee any problems in fulfilling this criterion, the separation of the education system and the professional sector may partially persist to this day. However, the spheres have started converging recently. In spite of that, this area still requires improvement. This can be achieved through lectures and presentations in all forms (conferences, discussion sessions, etc.).

3. The introduction of new tools such as the EQF is a long-term process. The EU countries differ in their approach to education; local terms and standards still apply in many countries. This has and will continue to have a great influence on the process. It is important to focus on the output, not on the paths taken; and to complete a description of the curriculum, so that it is transparent and legible – i.e., to apply and observe the principles of the curriculum so that it is transparent and legible. That means the application and observation of the basic principles of the EQF.

Personally, we believe that the globalization and migration of trade and services plays an important role. This will help to adopt the pragmatic path of education and awareness.

Criterion 3

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.

1. In the Czech Republic, this criterion is being addressed within the NQF 1 and NQF 2 projects (National Qualifications Framework, 1-2), the National Occupations System (NOS) and its predecessor, the integrated system of standard positions (ISSP). This means that qualifications are defined in detail by describing the required competences, using the qualification and evaluation standards pursuant to Act No. 179/2006 on

recognition of further education results (i.e. recognition of learning outcomes regardless of the method by which they were obtained). In initial vocational training, qualification requirements (competences) are applied to the Framework Education Programs and School Educational Programs. Learning outcomes (principles) are also utilized in pilot projects for the verification of acquired competences, such as the project “Quality – New Final Examination”, and especially the project “UNIV – Recognition of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Education”. Many more examples could undoubtedly be found.

Secondary education does not yet utilize the credit system. A number of schools and other entities are currently participating in various mobility programs, such as Leonardo da Vinci, with which we have had very good experience.

Act No. 179/2006 provides the legal framework for the NQF, but there is yet no legal background for introducing the credit system to secondary education.

2.

3. See our previous responses. The plan and concept are sound but there are still a number of obstacles in several areas and sectors. The conditions are difficult to compare due to differences in legal background, technological equipment, support systems, etc. Nevertheless, the process is sound, necessary, and future-oriented.

Criterion 4

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.

1. The basic principle of the NQF and NOS is the description of professions and qualifications through the required competences (i.e. learning outcomes), which are based on the needs of the labour market, and which a person wishing to obtain the relevant qualification certificate must demonstrate during an examination. This ensures the transparency of the qualifications system. In initial vocational training, transparency is ensured by Framework/School Educational Programs, developed jointly with social partners and taking into account the description of qualifications in the NQF and NOS, and by the standardized final examination, consisting of the unified national part and a school-specific part. This again ensures the comparability of learning outcomes obtained at different educational institutions.

The Usti Region has made a great start with the UNIV project, focusing on the recognition of the results of non-formal and informal learning, which also offers applicants the possibility to acquire any competences they may be lacking to obtain the desired qualification. 17 schools are currently involved in the project, and 40 schools have expressed their interest to participate.

Documents: Qualification and Evaluation Standards – published at www.narodni-kvalifikace (each qualification is described within the respective qualification standard by listing the required competences, and within the respective evaluation standard by listing the criteria for verifying the given competence).

FEP (NUOV) and SEP (schools and educational institutions).

2.

3. We believe it is necessary to strengthen the link between the FEP/SEP system and the NQF, while respecting and maintaining the general/vocational education ratio. The system must remain open, and it is necessary to retain the mutual respect between the educational system and the labour market. We should emphasize that schools are not only supposed to produce experts, but also people capable of asserting themselves in real life as such.

Sector councils should be given more leeway and better legal background, and should invite more school representatives to participate. It seems that some of the more enlightened councils are already doing so.

Criterion 5

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 (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

1. In my opinion, the current quality assurance system is sufficient and meets the above conditions.

Documents: Education Act

Act No. 179/2006

Qualification and Evaluation Standards for Partial Qualifications, linked to the NOS (standardized output of secondary education): see project Quality I – New Final Examination.

2.

3. We believe that the issuance of EUROPASS documents (certificate supplements) as an appendix to certificates of secondary education is currently working effectively. There is an ever growing demand for EUROPASS certificates. It might be just another piece of paper, but we rather believe that it is a document which allows the graduates to prove they have achieved the skills and knowledge required in their particular field.

It should be noted that a study field and an actual profession are two different things. A certain field of study gives a graduate the prerequisites for working in a certain profession; however, the practice of a certain profession has its own rules and conditions (employee training for a specific post by the employer, based on specific local conditions, etc., as well as the retaining and improvement of one's qualification). In this respect, the NQF system (ES and QS) seems to be working well.

Criterion 6

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

1.

2.

3. When discussing this issue, we believe it is important to interpret correctly the phrase “stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies”. What is a stated agreement? Who is / should be the relevant quality assurance body?

This again brings us to the distinction between qualifications and occupation, i.e. the preparation for a certain profession and the actual practice of such a profession.

As regards the formal approval of education documents (FEP / NQF = ES & QS), exertion of the competences and authority of a relevant public administration body is obvious.

However, who should be the quality assurance body in case of education and education outcomes? Is it the Czech School Inspectorate or any other controlling authority focusing on the NQF?

Should it rather be the labour market and its mechanisms?

And what about the quality management systems, such as ISO?

In principle, the issue also concerns the degree of centralized decision making, and the level of independence. CSI has altered its approach and methodology; from a mere controlling authority, it has moved toward providing support to schools and instructors. Unfortunately, the current models do not allow inter-school comparison and ranking. Special criteria / methods should be adapted / introduced to allow that.

In general, though, it is relatively easy to attain quality assurance by already existing means: the formal referencing process shall be carried out by the relevant bodies approving the FEP, ES and QS.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

1.

2.

3. In principle, the involvement of international experts is advisable; after all, the objective is the unification of all European systems. Cooperation is necessary, but it is not clear who should actually participate in such cooperation. There is already a number of European and national bodies who ensure the transferability of documents, outputs and principles. The question also is to what degree international experts should be involved in national systems.

A team of international experts monitors the frameworks and their implementation on the national level, verifying that the national systems meet the international requirements. It is a formal method which may be further strengthened and improved, both on the procedural level and as regards its output and findings (recommendations on methodology).

Mobility efforts and cooperation networks created within such programs as Leonardo da Vince are also a suitable instrument, albeit a rather informal one. Apart from value added to vocational education, it is also an informal method of evaluating the quality of schools and institutions. Schools in our region have had a wealth of positive experience with such initiatives.

Secondary school students, especially in fields ending in an apprenticeship certificate (ISCED 3C), may also participate in various international exhibitions and skill contests, and have been very successful in this respect (which also means success for their schools).

Criterion 8

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.

1. We are aware that the issue has been discussed at meetings of various advisory bodies, at national workshops and conferences.

The information concerning the referencing process within the EQF is linked to the information flow concerning the FEP and NQF.

In the Usti Region, the issue has been discussed at meetings between secondary school founders and principals.

From our perspective, this also includes the TTNET initiative, and other projects, such as UNIV / Quality I – New Final Examination, and PILOT S. All of these initiatives include information on system referencing and monitoring, credit systems, etc.

Document: Report on the Preparation for Introducing the EQF in the CR (NUOV, 2009)
Qualification Levels in the CR (NUOV, 2009)

2.

3. There is a single responsible body on the national level: the EQF Coordination Centre, which provides coordination, and guarantees a unified and transparent procedure. In my opinion, multiple bodies are not advisable.

NUOV is a suitable co-organized of activities in the referencing process.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

- Please check the initial version of the EQF web platform by CEDEFOP: Referencing National Qualifications to the EQF: <http://www.eqf-reference-nqf.net/>

1.

2.

3. We believe that all EQF activities in Europe should be monitored and coordinated by a single body, with a direct relation and responsibility to specific national bodies.

Criterion 10

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.

1. As a part of the FEP/SEP system, secondary schools have adopted measures to ensure that all relevant documents (certificates) comply with the respective legal regulations.

Within the NQF system (applying the principles set forth in Act No. 179/2006), a system of relevant certificates has been created, linked to the process of verifying ES and QS.

As regards the system of continuing education, such as retraining, continuing education of instructors, and professional competence for certain occupations (electrical engineering, welding, selected machinery, etc.), there are standards governing certification and the issuance of relevant certificates.

2.

3. As mentioned in response to Criterion 5, the issuance of EUROPASS documents (certificate supplements) has proved very effective as an accompaniment to the current certificates of secondary education, and there is a growing demand for obtaining such documents. It might be just another piece of paper, but we rather believe that it is a document which allows the graduates to prove they have achieved the skills and knowledge required in their particular field.

In principle, the issue should be addressed by the MSMT and the government, as a part of the legislative process.

The entire system also has to be adopted by social partners.

We do not see this as a big problem. The largest obstacle is perhaps certain inertia of thought and customs. If the systems are well set up, people will become accustomed to them over time.

Kritéria 1-10

- Do you agree with the above set of criteria?
- Is there any criterion missing? Are any of the criteria superfluous or inapplicable?

In principle, we agree with the above set of criteria. We believe they are not specific enough: they rather refer to certain areas and general issues regarding the referencing process, and are probably the result of a compromise. The opinions and responses largely overlap, which is not actually a negative thing.

We believe that the entire process should be approved with calm and caution. It shall be necessary to overcome a number of conservative opinions and attitudes, deeply rooted within the national systems. Conservatism is, to a certain extent, an intrinsic feature of the educational system, and should be taken into account. A patient and prudent approach is therefore advisable.

We believe that no other criteria are necessary.

The following are various observations on further areas of improvement from our perspective (i.e. the regional authority and secondary technical schools):

- a reasonable level of public education and greater promotion;
- focusing effort on everyday promotion by working directly in the educational institutions;
- focusing on the work of “career counsellors” at secondary schools (we have learned through practical experience that career counselling works better in institutions well connected to the labour market);
- improvement of the social partnership system at secondary schools;

- respecting the different positions of various types of secondary schools (at least in the relation of vocational schools vs. grammar schools). In recent years, the unfavourable demographic development has led to the increased proportion of students in grammar schools. Eight-year grammar schools should only be reserved for the most gifted students. If only below-average students remain in the upper elementary level, the quality of primary schools is bound to drop. The introduction of quotas should be considered.
- respect and create the conditions for the involvement of schools in the continuing education system (continuing professional training and retraining).

Areas of possible promotion of the EQF in the Usti Region:

- meetings of secondary school principals (ISSP, NOS, NQF)
- involvement of schools in the UNIV project, and establishment of the Usti Region Centre for Recognition of Lifelong Learning (see www.centrum-uznavani.cz)
- accreditation of schools in the NQF system (see www.centrum-uznavani.cz / www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz)
- retraining