

## A SERBIAN NQF: PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

1. This paper outlines a proposal for a Serbian National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It contains proposals on:

- the nature of qualifications to be included;
- the functions that need to be performed;
- which bodies would perform the functions.

[Passages in square brackets give the rationale for certain proposals, where these may be unclear or open to debate]

2. In the Serbian context, the principal *aims* of an NQF are to:

- make clear to the public the various levels of qualification, with the aim of increasing recognition of the qualifications available;
- present a realistic way in which adults may gain recognized qualifications;
- establish clear responsibilities for the quality assurance of qualifications;
- establish a context for the updating of qualifications, and procedures for doing this, including the involvement of social partners;
- allow compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

3. This paper focuses on *long term* proposals. If it is agreed, proposals will be brought forward for interim arrangements, using existing powers and institutions, and for the programme of work necessary to bring about the longer term situation.

### **Qualifications to be included**

A Serbian NQF would recognize two types of award:

- *Diplomas*. These will be available only through the school system. Diplomas will be designed with the needs of young people in mind and will deliver a full, rounded education as well as being recognized as a preparation for jobs of particular kinds. They will demand a certain length of programme and will contain a balance of practical, technical and general skills and knowledge, including nationally agreed training standards. Diplomas will be supported by a curriculum, and by a range of assessments which are designed nationally. Exemptions from some elements of the Diploma may be granted if students can show that they already have attained the skills or knowledge required through earlier participation in recognized Diploma programmes.
- *Certificates*. These will be available through accredited public and private providers, including schools licensed to deliver them. Only adults aged [25] and over will be able to enter for them. Certificates will mark an individual's competence in an occupation, represented by nationally agreed training standards, but unlike Diplomas will not necessarily contain general skills and knowledge. Assessment procedures will be agreed at national level. Each Certificate will have a recommended minimum training period, but students may take longer or shorter periods of training provided that they can satisfy the assessments.

[The division between Diplomas and Certificates is intended to make a clear distinction between school programmes designed to promote educational as well as occupational goals, more focussed adult programmes designed to accredit occupational ability only. It is expected that Diplomas will have more status than Certificates. The restriction preventing young people under a certain age from taking Certificates is intended to steer them towards Diplomas.]

3. Both Diplomas and Certificates will be assigned to a series of levels. The levels will consist of a mixture of job competence, depth of understanding and preparation for further training. *Diplomas* will contain a balance of all three. *Certificates* will tend to focus on job competence.

[Descriptions of levels to be proposed after Focus Group]

4. The Serbian NQF, and the procedures given below, will not cover University education, but in public presentations the University levels will usually be shown, adding a further 3 levels to the framework.

[It will be helpful to have the full framework shown, but the procedures for specifying standards, quality assurance *etc.* described for a Serbian NQF will not be appropriate for Universities. The *Bologna* process involves 3 University levels, and a fourth (short-cycle within the first cycle) can also be used.]

5. Each qualification will have a *title* showing clearly:

- which occupation it relates to;
- its level
- whether it is a Diploma or a Certificate

For example: *Level 3 Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. Level 2 Certificate in Bakery.*

### **Functions**

6. The following functions need to be performed to establish and maintain a Serbian NQF.

#### Establish levels and types of qualification.

A clear description of the levels is needed, so that decisions can be taken to place different qualifications at the appropriate level, and to enable comparison with the EQF. If set types of qualification are to be distinguished (as is proposed), then these too need to be clearly defined.

#### Determine which level and type to assign a qualification.

Decisions need to be made about how to classify any particular qualification, and as a consequence what its title will be.

#### Develop and maintain a sectoral classification

It is customary in Serbia to classify qualifications by broad sector, both in the school system and in the official 'nomenclature'. This will be helpful in presenting qualifications to the public and for involving social partners in discussion. This classification may need to be adapted from time to time, and some decisions about difficult cases will need to be made (*cf.* mecatronics).

#### Elaborate training standards

The training standards to which both Diplomas and Certificates will lead need to be carefully formulated, and social partners consulted about them.

#### Validate training standards

Final decisions need to be made about whether training standards reflect the demands of the labour market, and when they need to be revised.

#### Develop curricula

Clearly curricula which lead to the standards need to be developed at some place in the system.

#### Establish assessment requirements

Some procedures need to be approved for establishing that students have satisfactorily achieved the training standards.

### Accredit organizations able to deliver qualifications

Decisions need to be taken about which organizations can accept students for programmes leading to recognized qualifications, and issue successful students with Diplomas or Certificates. Certain conditions for accreditation will be required to be met.

### Monitor accredited organizations

Measures will be needed to ensure that accredited organizations continue to meet the conditions of accreditation.

### Maintain a register of people who gain qualifications

Students will lose their papers from time to time, and there may be disputes about who has, and who has not, achieved a qualification. There needs to be a system for replacing or checking Diplomas and Certificates.

### Investigate appeals

Students may appeal that they have been unfairly refused a Diploma or a Certificate. There needs to be an authority to whom they can appeal and who they can expect to investigate the matter fairly.

### Promote the NQF

There is little point in establishing an NQF if the general public and employers do not know about it, and understand its principles. Additionally international discussions about the comparability between a Serbian NQF and other European frameworks can be expected.

## ***Responsibilities of different bodies***

7. We now consider which body will perform which function. The proposals involve some differences between the arrangements for Diplomas (delivered only by schools) and Certificates (which may be delivered by other training organizations, many funded by the National Employment Service, but there could also be training organizations which offer privately funded training or employers who want to train workers to recognized Certificates).

8. The proposals attempt, where possible, to follow existing responsibilities. However the formation of a new body is proposed. This is the Serbian Qualifications Authority (SQA), which would have the functions shown in the table, below. A short discussion about the nature of this body is in the Annex.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Responsible Organizations</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Establish levels and types of qualification.	Would be done by legislation	We can expect that the levels and their descriptions will not change frequently over time. Establishing them in law gives authority and permanence.
Determine which level and type to assign a qualification.	The SQA would be responsible for interpreting the levels in the law, and assigning a title to the qualification.	A single authority doing this would ensure that there were similar procedures for Diplomas and Certificates, so that equivalences and proper differences can be fairly maintained.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Responsible Organizations</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Develop and maintain a sectoral classification	The SQA would do this. Both Diplomas and Certificates would be placed within the same sectoral classification.	The sectoral classification may need to change over time, and there will be a few unclear cases. It is important that Diplomas and Certificates related to the same or similar occupations are placed in the same grouping.
Elaborate Training Standards	The VET Centre would do this. Standards relevant to Certificates would be a subset of those for Diplomas, focussed on the strict occupational requirements.	Experts from the social partners and teams of teachers would be involved in the elaboration of standards. General methodology would be agreed with the SQA.
Validate Standards	Final decisions on whether standards are adequate would be taken by the SQA.	The SQA would be expected to convene panels of social partners to validate standards. These might develop into more permanent sectoral committees.
Develop curricula	The Curriculum Department of the Institute for Educational Development (IED) would do this for Diplomas. Providers of adult training would do this for Certificates. The SQA would not approve curricula.	It will not be appropriate or economic for there to be centrally devised curricula for adult training (Certificates). Instead of approving curricula of each adult provider, the SQA will exercise control for Certificates through its accreditation and assessment requirements.
Establish assessment requirements	For Diplomas, the VET Centre, under general guidance from the SQA. For Certificates, providers would normally propose an assessment scheme to the SQA for approval.	The SQA would publish general guidelines on assessment. Though some detailed assessment schemes might be developed for Certificates in priority occupations, normally adult providers would have to make a proposal which was consistent with the SQA's guidance.
Accredit organizations able to offer certificates	The MoES for schools. For other providers the SQA would accredit, though it would delegate this function to the National Employment Service in the case of providers that they fund.	The SQA would publish accreditation criteria for organizations other than schools. Amongst these would be a requirement to show their capability in developing proper curricula.
Monitor accredited organizations	As above.	The SQA will need to agree procedures with the NES including a reasonable cycle for monitoring. The SQA will itself need to monitor any providers who are neither schools nor funded by the NES.

Function	Responsible Organizations	Remarks
Maintain a register of people who gain qualifications	The MoES for Diplomas. The SQA for Certificates.	It will not be sensible to change the current arrangements for Diplomas, but there needs to be a central register for those who have obtained Certificates, since adult providers may not be permanent.
Investigate appeals	The MoES for Diplomas and Certificates.	It is customary in Serbia for serious complaints to go to Ministers. It would be expected that the Minister would ask the SQA to investigate an appeal, but they should not have the final word.
Promote the NQF	The SQA.	Of course it is to be hoped that all parties will help to promote the NQF, but the SQA should have a particular role in planning and maintaining an awareness campaign.

[Supplementary notes and discussion.

- i. Providers of adult training Certificates will operate in a market. It will not be economic for the central institutes (SQA, VET Centre, Curriculum Department) to develop profiles for Certificates in all occupations. For this reason the system proposed is that providers will apply to the SQA to offer a particular Certificate. They will be required to propose a method of assessment, using guidance on assessment which is published. Their assessment scheme will be examined by the SQA and will need to be agreed. In a few cases which are considered to be economic priorities, the VET Centre may develop assessment schemes and recommended curricula for Certificates on a national basis.
- ii. It is not proposed that the SQA would approve individual curricula for Certificates. If it did, this would be likely to be purely a paper exercise with little added value. However it is important that adult providers are known to be capable of developing curricula in a professional manner. Therefore, as part of accreditation, the SQA should be satisfied that a provider can do this – as well as having the necessary facilities and trained staff.
- iii. There might be a case for including the function of developing training standards within the responsibility of the SQA. However, this would increase its size, and would mean that it would be in a position of validating standards that it had developed itself – a possible conflict of interest. It might also prevent useful links between the generation of standards and other activities of the VET Centre.
- iv. The proposal is that NES staff should perform the role of accrediting and monitoring adult providers funded by the NES, on behalf of the SQA. Undoubtedly training will be needed for these staff, as this would be a new function. It would be possible for the SQA to do this direct, but this would mean that it would need to employ regional staff. Also there are clear links between the monitoring of contracts by the NES and accreditation, which would be lost if the functions were separated.
- v. It might be better if the SQA were to investigate appeals in the first instance, leaving a second chance of appeal to the Minister. This depends on the traditions of the country.]

**PROPOSAL FOR CONSTITUTION OF A SERBIAN QUALIFICATIONS  
AUTHORITY (SQA)**

1. The SQA would have the following functions:
  - i. Accepting a qualification into the NQF, and assigning a level and title (whether Diploma or Certificate) to it;
  - ii. Maintaining and keeping under review a sectoral classification of qualifications, and involving relevant social partners in discussions about qualifications within each defined sector;
  - iii. Agreeing a methodology for the development of training standards in the VET centre;
  - iv. Validating standards, involving social partners where appropriate;
  - v. Issuing guidance on assessment methods, and approving assessment schemes used for Certificates;
  - vi. Issuing criteria for accreditation and accrediting organizations to award Certificates. It would be able to delegate this function to the NES;
  - vii. Monitoring organizations accredited to award Certificates. It would be able to delegate this function to the NES;
  - viii. Keeping a register of individuals who had gained Certificates;
  - ix. investigating appeals when asked to do so by the Minister of Education;
  - x. promoting the NQF.
  
2. The SQA would be an government agency which would report to a board consisting of (for example):
  - 3 members appointed by the Minister of Education;
  - 3 members appointed by the Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Policy;
  - 3 members nominated by social partners.

The Board would take decisions on (i), (iv), (vi) and (ix), though it could delegate such decisions to Agency staff (and for (vi) to the NES).
  
3. The Agency would be funded by the MoES. It would be expected to charge an accreditation fee to providers of Certificates.