

REFERENCING THE ROMANIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK



MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI NAȚIONALE

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Foreword

This report provides information on the Romanian Qualifications Framework (ROQF), explains its implementation and the referencing process in order to show the compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for Lifelong Learning.

The referencing report marks a new important step in the implementation of quality assurance aiming to support the growth and development of a knowledge society, helping to create a European network of national qualifications systems, which has EQF as a reference framework. A first objective of this process is making possible to compare the qualification levels of different countries, considering the EQF grid description based on learning outcomes.

The purpose of the ROQF is to assure both the transparency of qualifications framework but in the same time to promote mobility of people among European countries and to offer them the best opportunities on the labour market, as it is recommended within the documents issued by the European Commission and by the Council (*COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*)

Another objective of our Report is to certify that Romania has created a functional framework for qualifications, which is fully comparable with the frameworks of other European countries and recognised as such both at national and international level.

1. Background and introduction

The Romanian National Qualifications Framework was formally adopted in November 2013, by Government Decision. However, actions were taken long before that in view of adopting a national qualifications framework.

The first step in order to build the Romanian Qualifications Framework was taken in February 2005 through the ‘*Tripartite Agreement on the National Framework of Qualifications*’ signed by the Romanian Government, the representatives of the employees at national level and trade unions confederations. The signing parties agreed to collaborate and contribute to the establishment in Romania of a coherent national system of qualifications, both applicable to initial vocational training as well as in continuing vocational training. The Tripartite Agreement concerning the ROQF signed on 23.02.2005 was the main document governing the ROQF. It was supplemented with an annex containing the description of the theoretical framework in accordance with the developments related to the EQF through the GD no. 522/2003 approving the Methodological Norms for the application of Government Ordinance no. 129/2000 on adult training setting five levels of qualification: four levels of qualification for secondary non tertiary level and one level for the higher education. The occupational standards, subsequently developed, contained a reference to these levels.

During the following years, Romania made some progress in identifying strategic priorities and areas of action in the field of lifelong learning, such as the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and the orientation of education and training to the development of transversal competences at any age. On the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, Romania implemented a system for recognition and validation of skills/competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning contexts.

The Law on National Education, adopted in 2011 also referred to the EQF and ROQF. Art. 340, (2) states: "*The National Qualifications Authority develops the National Qualifications Framework based on the European Qualifications Framework, manages the National Qualifications Register and the National Qualifications Register of Training Providers.*" Thus, in 2011 the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) was established, having among its tasks the development of the NQF. NQA is a public institution with legal personality, under the coordination of the Ministry of National Education and has among its responsibilities to establish, update and implement the National Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Register. The NQA also acts a National Coordination Point for EQF.

Moreover, the Order of the Minister of National Education, no. 5703/2011 regulated the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and approved the establishment of a Register of Higher Education Qualifications (RHEQ). In 2014 this Order was repealed and Order no. 5204/2014 of the Minister of National Education became effective, for a more efficient reference to the EQF and a better correspondence between qualifications obtained in order to harmonize higher education system with the labour market needs.

In 2011 the *National Self-Certification Report* was drafted – *Verification of compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Romania become one of the top 10*

countries that have done the referencing process in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna process and the commitments made by the education ministers in Bergen (2005) and Leuven (2009). The purpose of that referencing process was to ensure consistency, compatibility and comparability of international qualifications and titles acquired in higher education in Romania.

After completing this important step, NQA has initiated debates and set a working group for developing the Romanian Qualification Framework for lifelong learning. Even more, the working group elaborated between March and November 2011 a legislative proposal regarding the ROQF, which was sent for approval to the Ministry of National Education (the Ministry of Education)¹.

In 2013, the Romanian Government adopted the Government Decision no. 918/2013 related to the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework. The draft law as well as the steps of the referencing process were discussed at working meetings attended by: representatives of the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (the Ministry of Labour)², higher education institutions, the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, the National Center for Assessment and Evaluation, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Centre for Equivalence and Recognition of Diplomas (NCERD), employers, organizations, trade unions and professional associations.

Following the EQF structure, the ROQF sets the Romanian qualifications into the 8 levels, covering the full scale of qualifications, from basic (certificate of completion of compulsory education) to the most advanced ones (level 8, PhD diploma). Qualifications acquired both, in the formal, non-formal and informal learning system, are included in the framework.

The eight levels of the ROQF are described in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence), which are defined by what the learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of the learning process.

Annex 2 of the Government Decision 918/2013 sets the correspondence between the levels of the ROQF, the type of education and training programs in Romania through which can be acquired the skill levels and reference levels of the EQF.

In 2014, the Order of the Minister of National Education no. 3973/2014 was adopted (entered into force in July 2014) with respect to the equivalence of the levels of qualification valid prior to entering into force of the National Qualifications Framework of 2013 and the qualification levels set by the National Qualifications Framework.

Information in table 1 presents the placement of diplomas and certifications by level of education and qualification.

¹ In 2017 the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (formally named the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) became the Ministry of National Education following reorganization. For reasons of clarity, the current names of the ministries are used in this report.

² In 2017 the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly became the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice following reorganization. For reasons of clarity, the current names of the ministries are used in this report.

Table 1 Qualification levels assigned to qualification types

ROQF	Qualification types	EQF
8	Doctoral degree (<i>Diploma de doctor</i>) (third cycle of higher education) Certificate for postdoctoral studies (<i>Atestat de studii postdoctorale</i>) (postdoctoral studies)	8
7	Master degree (<i>Diploma de master</i>) and Diploma supplement (second cycle of higher education) Bachelor's degree/Architect diploma (<i>Diploma de licență / Diploma de architect</i>) and Diploma supplement (first and second cycle combined higher education study programmes)	7
6	Bachelor's degree/Engineering diploma / Urbanism diploma (<i>Diploma de licență / Diploma de inginer / Diploma de urbanist</i>) and Diploma supplement (first cycle of higher education) Certificate of professional* competence (<i>Certificat de atestare a competențelor profesionale</i>) (postgraduate studies) Graduation certificate (<i>Certificat de absolvire</i>) (postgraduate studies)	6
5	Short cycle higher education certificate (<i>Diploma de absolvire/calificare</i>) and Certificate supplement (short cycle higher education) Post-secondary certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive supplement (post-secondary non-higher tertiary education)	5
4	Upper secondary school-leaving certificate (<i>Diploma de Bacalaureat</i>) (general, technological or vocational education, four years of study) VET certificate level 4 (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive supplement (technological / vocational high-school) VET certificate level 4 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare/absolvire</i>) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace)	4
3	VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional* competence (<i>Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competențe profesionale</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (accredited training centre) VET certificate level 3 / Certificate of professional* competence (<i>Certificat de competențe profesionale</i>) (authorised assessment centre) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare/absolvire</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (education unit / technological/vocational high school) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (education unit / vocational training programme organised in dual system) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (education unit / professional* education lasting at least 3 years)	3
2	VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare</i>) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace)	2

ROQF	Qualification types	EQF
	<p>VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional* competence (<i>Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competențe profesionale</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (accredited training centre)</p> <p>VET certificate level 2 / Certificate of professional* competence (<i>Certificat de competențe profesionale</i>) (authorised assessment centre)</p> <p>VET certificate level 2 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (<i>Certificat de calificare/absolvire</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / training programme)</p>	
1	<p>Certificate of professional* competence (<i>Certificat de competențe profesionale</i>) (authorised assessment centre)</p> <p>Graduation certificate (<i>Certificat de absolvire</i>) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / training programme)</p> <p>Graduation Diploma (<i>Diplomă de absolvire</i>) (basic education unit), 8 years</p>	1

Source: National Qualifications Authority, 2016

(*) The term 'professional' denotes vocational and technological training aimed for the labour market.

Note: The term VET generically includes both the vocational and technological education and training (TVET) routes - available in the national education system, offering qualifications for level 2-5 EQF) and the education and training offered by training providers in contexts other than the formal education system, for adult learning, also for qualifications levels 2-5 EQF, preparing the learners for occupations and entering the labour market.

The Referencing process was developed in accordance with the Commission recommendations, including the 10 criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as per Annex III of the Recommendation of May 2017, in order to be able to compare the qualifications level with the national one and to have a clear image of the compatibility but respecting the diversity and the specific of the national qualifications system. In defining and describing the qualifications tools specific to the national qualifications system were used, which are based on learning outcomes expressed by knowledge, skills and competences. The efforts of the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) were concentrated on aligning the ROQF to the EQF recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council, namely to use EQF as a reference tool. NQA thought that this approach allows for a better and easier correlation between the two frameworks – EQF and ROQF and will eliminate any interpretation generating confusion.

The operational objective of the Report is to provide essential data on the conceptual and institutional basis leading to the establishment of the national framework closely linked with the European reference framework.

To summarize the objectives of the referencing process and of the Referencing Report, we may state that they contribute to the development of a qualifications culture built upon the following principles: Quality – Transparency – Transferability – Progression.

2. The Romanian Education System and qualification referenced to ROQF

In Romania, education is considered a national priority, the educational system being protected by the Constitution and by organic laws (the National Education Law - Law no. 1/2011), specialized laws, governmental decisions and orders of the Ministry of Education.

Access to free education is guaranteed by Article 32 in the Romanian Constitution. Education is regulated and enforced by the Ministry of Education through the Law no. 1/2011, with subsequent amendments. These legislative acts laid the foundation for the reform of the Romanian education system and allowed for increasing its competitiveness compared to the educational systems of the highly developed countries of the world.

The education system, which includes both public and private institutions, has a level-based structure, ensuring the coherence and continuity of instruction, taking into consideration the age and individual peculiarities.

At a national level, the educational system is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education's decision making – which is the regulatory authority in the field. Regionally, the Ministry is represented by County School Inspectorate and the Bucharest School Inspectorate – decentralized public service, with legal personality.

The pre-university educational system includes traditional education alongside alternative educations their organization is based on the regulations approved by the Ministry of Education, and the accreditation and evaluation is ensured by the body designated for this purpose - RAQAPE. In Romania there are currently six alternative forms of education covered by: “Waldorf” pedagogy, “Montessori” pedagogy, “Step by Step” program, curative pedagogy, Freinet pedagogy and Jena plan. The educational alternatives are integrated into public or private schools, as required by the law.

The Romanian government ensures for all the citizens the equal right of access to all levels and forms of education and higher education and lifelong learning without any form of discrimination (Law no. 1/2011).

Table 2. The national educational system

	Age	Grade / period	Educational levels				Educational levels according to ISCED 11	NQF/ EQF Level of qualification
	>19	min 3 years	PhD – Third cycle				8	8
		1-2 years	Master – Second cycle				7	7
		5-6 years	Bachelor – First and second cycle*				7	7
		3-4 years	Bachelor – First cycle				6	6
		2-3 years	Higher education (short period)				5	5
		1-3 years	Post-secondary education (Non tertiary education)				4	5
Compulsory education	19	XIII	Upper secondary education	High school education, upper cycle	Technological High School		3	4
	18	XII			Theoretical High School Art, Sports, Theological High School			
	17	XI			Vocational training stage – 720 hours		Vocational/ professional education (3 years)	3
	16	X		High school education, lower cycle				
	15	IX						
	14	VIII		Lower secondary education	Gymnasium **			2
	13	VII						
	12	VI						
	11	V						
	10	IV						
	9	III	Primary School				1	
	8	II						
	7	I						
	6	Preparatory class						
5	Higher	Pre-school education (3-6 years)			Early childhood education	0		
4	Middle							
3	Lower							
< 3		Ante-preschool education (0-3 years)						
< 2								
< 1								

*Professions regulated by rules, guidelines or best practices in Europe, where a higher education study program lasts between 5 and 6 years, consisting of the first cycle and second cycle of university studies as well as for long-term higher education graduates from the period before the application of the three Bologna cycles, according to art. 153 of the Education Law no. 1/ 2011

** Secondary school graduation will result in being framed in level 1 of qualification as a result of the modification of Annex 2 of GD 918/2013 on the approval of the National Qualifications Framework – draft currently under government ownership.

2.1. Basic education

General compulsory education consists of primary school, lower secondary education and the first two years of upper secondary education, covering 10 grades.

The primary level of education is composed by preparatory class and grades I-IV. Most elementary schools are public; statistics show that less than 2 percent of elementary school students attend private school. In 2012, the preparatory class was introduced at primary level, in accordance with the Law of National Education 1/2011 to bridge kindergarten and primary school, facilitating adaptation and integration of children in schools. Preparatory class school programs focus on skills training to specific school subjects, introducing skills is one of the novelties in the primary school cycle.

Primary school is taught by only one teacher for the first five years, rather than having a different teacher for each subject. There are exceptions such as foreign language and computer courses. The Romanian curriculum is known as highly academic and performing. The courses taught in primary school consist of multiple math and Romanian language classes as well as history, geography, science, art, foreign languages, civic education, religion, art, and physical education.

Lower secondary education or Gymnasium includes grades V to VIII. The syllabus is extended to a range of subjects depending on the type of school (i.e. with focus on languages, on TIC, etc.) and the students have a different teacher for each subject. Additional counselling may be provided by a special counsellor (*consilier pe probleme de educație* — counsellor on educational issues) or by a school psychologist.

ROQF level

The syllabus comprising the first 8 grades of compulsory formal education is referenced at level 1 of the ROQF.

2.2. Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education comprises:

- *High school*, covers 4 or 5 grades with two compulsory year (IX and X grade – part of compulsory education) and two/three non-compulsory (XI and XII/XIII grade). This level of education includes three main fields:

- Theoretical comprising science and humanities profiles;
- Technological comprising three profiles: technical, national resources and environmental protection and services;

- Vocational covering the following profiles: pedagogical, sports, military, art, theology.

- Technical and vocational education and training courses, 3 years of study.

Graduates of the 10th grade of the technological or vocational education, who decide to leave the educational system at the end of compulsory education, have the possibility to complete a professional training stage in a company. This practical training stage is subject to the certification examination, giving access to qualification level 3 according to the National Qualifications Framework.

High school level is referenced at level 4 ROQF, and technical and vocational education and training covers levels 2 and 3 of the ROQF. See examples in Annex 3.

2.3. Post secondary education

Post-secondary education is partially subsidized by the state and lasts 1-3 years according to the complexity of the qualification. Post secondary programmes give access to qualifications for secondary education graduates, with or without baccalaureate diploma.

According to the Law no. 1/2011, secondary and post-secondary education and training is organized for qualifications registered in the List of qualifications (*Nomenclatorul calificărilor profesionale pentru care este asigurată pregătirea profesională prin învățământ preuniversitar* - <http://www.tvet.ro/Anexe/x/hg%20866%20din%2013.08.2008.pdf/>) National Qualifications Register, established by the Ministry of Education through the National Qualifications Authority and approved by Decision of Romanian Government.

Graduates of post-secondary education, who graduate the professional qualification certification examination, receive professional qualification certificate, according to the level established by the Romanian National Qualifications Framework and a Descriptive Supplement of the certificate in Europass format.

Post secondary non-tertiary education is referenced at level 5 of the ROQF.

2.4. Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Vocational Education and Training (VET) – in Romania VET is covering both initial and continuing training.

Initial vocational education and training, part of the national education system of the Ministry of Education, is provided through technological high school, technical and vocational education and training programmes with the duration of 3 years, practical stages after the X grade of high school.

Qualifications provided through the initial system of VET from the MESR are described through training standards. The training standard is specific for initial VET provided by the MESR and is the document, which specifies the units of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences) of a qualification covering one or more occupations.

Initial VET is also ensured through apprenticeship programmes, regulated by the Ministry of Labour.

Continuing VET in Romania is covering vocational programs organized by the authorised training providers in accordance with the regulatory framework for adult learning, comprising programs for achieving a qualification and programs for specialisation in a particular area.

ROQF level

Initial Technical and professional education is referenced at levels 2 and 3 of the ROQF.

Continuous vocational training is referenced at levels 2-4 of the ROQF.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education is referenced at level 5 of the ROQF.

2.5. Higher education

The higher education system in Romania has a three-cycle structure, complying with the Bologna system: Bachelor, Master and PhD

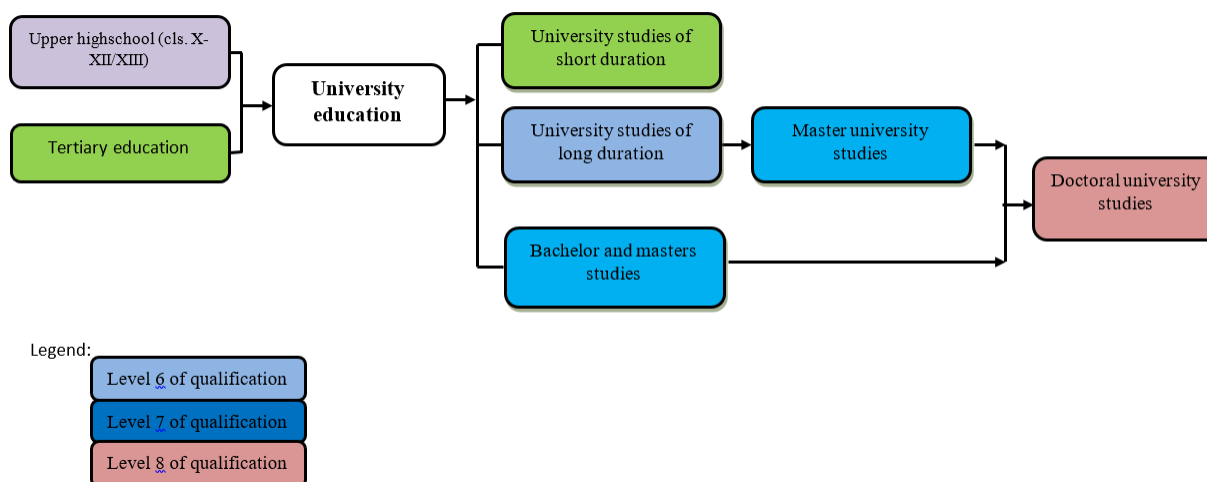


Figure 2.51 Three-cycle structure of the higher education system in Romania

Besides the three study cycles, *the National Education Law* in force since February 2011 provides for the post-university continuing training and personal development studies which lead to certification of specific professional competences acquired by trainees during the respective study programs.

2.5.1. Bachelor's degree

The **Bachelor** study programmes may be provided as full-time, part-time or distance learning education. They usually cover a workload corresponding to a minimum of 180 ECTS (3-year study programs), may reach in some fields of study a maximum of 240 ECTS (4-year of study programs), correspond to first cycle programs in the QF/EHEA and can be referenced to EQF/NQF level 6.

The qualification titles and awards granted after successful completion of a first cycle study programs are the following ones: “*diploma de licență*” (bachelor diploma), “*diploma de inginer*”

(engineer diploma), “*diploma de licență de doctor-medic*” (medical doctor diploma) or “*diploma de urbanist*” (urban planner diploma) and specifies the respective field of study.

ROQF level

The Bachelor diploma/ syllabus is referenced at level 6 of the ROQF.

2.5.2. Master's degree

The **Master's degree** study programmes may be provided as full-time or part-time, have 1 or 2 years duration, cover a workload of minimum 60 and maximum 120 ECTS and can be referenced to the QF/EHEA as offering second cycle qualifications and to the EQF/NQF as level 7 qualifications. The diploma awarded upon successful completion of a Master's study programs and presentation of dissertation is the Master's diploma and it comprises all necessary information to describe the study programs, including the learning mode; diplomas are issued with a Diploma Supplement, free of charge, drafted in Romanian and an international language.

For professions regulated by European legislation, recommendations or good practices, the first and second cycles of higher education may be provided within one study program with 5-6 year duration, fulltime mode. In this case, the graduation diplomas are equivalent to the Master's degree ones.

ROQF level

The Masters diploma/syllabus is referenced at level 7 of the ROQF.

2.5.3. PhD degree

PhD studies may be provided only as full-time programs by accredited doctoral schools. There are two types of doctorate: the scientific doctorate and the professional doctorate (in the fields of arts and sport). The successful completion of doctoral studies leads to a PhD diploma or a third cycle diploma in the QF/EHEA corresponding to a level 8 qualification in the EQF/NQF. The diploma certifying the award of the doctoral degree indicates specifically the disciplinary or the inter-disciplinary field for the scientific PhD or the professional field for the professional PhD.

ROQF level

The PhD diploma/ syllabus is referenced at level 8 of the ROQF.

2.5.4. The Romanian National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education

The involvement of employers, professional associations, sectoral committees and other stakeholders in the description of qualifications in higher education proved to be an effective means to disseminate the distinctive labour market value of the diplomas awarded after completion of first and second cycle studies. The mission to further disseminate the information related to the differentiation of higher education qualifications is now strongly supported by the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education – NRQHE, <http://site.anc.edu.ro/registru-national/> – an electronic platform which offers for free comprehensive description of the learning outcomes for each study programme provided by Romanian universities.

The Romanian National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education:

- improves the quality of higher education system;
- supports the description, in a unitary mode, of the higher education qualifications;
- ensures the transparency of the qualifications at national and European level;
- facilitates students' mobility by supporting the implementation of the Europass instruments.

The National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS) is part of the National Qualifications Register (RNC) together with the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE) and is a tool to determine the qualifications structure provides national recognition and international compatibility and comparability of qualifications acquired through higher education system.

The registration of qualifications in RNCIS is based on a two-step procedure (validation and registration of qualification), following a solid methodology implemented by the NQA.

The qualifications registered in RNCIS are based on qualification/ occupational standards for education and vocational training, for ROQF levels 6, 7, 8, ensuring the correlation between the skills and learning outcomes acquired in education with the competences related to occupations listed in the Romanian Classification of Occupations. (Annex 1)

According to Order no. 5204/2014 for approving the Methodology for entry and registration of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education, ANC manages the flow of documents for the enrolment qualifications RNCIS.

The National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education comprise all the professional qualifications obtained in the initial education system and ensures the transparency and unity of qualifications in education (Annex 2).

3. Referencing process in Romania

Requirements for referencing process:

The aim of the referencing process is to refer the ROQF to the EQF. The national referencing process should represent a national process where national stakeholders and relevant authorities agree on the comparison between national qualifications levels and the EQF levels.

To guide the process of referencing, the EQF Advisory Group outlined a set of ten referencing criteria and procedures, ensuring that it is well understood and trusted by stakeholders in participating countries.

The 10 Criteria for the Referencing Process:

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.
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 EQF.
3. The National Framework or qualifications 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.
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.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications Framework or system are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines.
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.
8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national 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.
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.
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.

Referencing process in Romania – self assessment:

3.1. Criterion 1 - Responsibilities and legal competence of national authorities

The ROQF and the Referencing Report are being developed under the responsibility of the National Qualifications Authority, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, with the participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the National Qualifications Authority, the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (NCTVETD), National Centre for Equivalence and Recognition of Diplomas (NCERD), the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (RAQAPE), the Romanian National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RAQAHE), World Bank – Romania, the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), the National Trade Union Block (NTUB), the Romanian National Association of Sectoral Committees (RNASC).

The Working Group members had several meetings to discuss the regulation on the National Qualifications Framework, levels of the ROQF, the description of the learning outcomes, and the steps in drawing the referencing report.

Taking into account the Romanian context, the working group elaborated the classification and description of qualifications, according to a set of criteria designed to the different levels of education and training.

In order to have a clear and transparent correspondence to the EQF, the group matched the qualifications' levels and diplomas available prior to the time of entry into force of the National Qualifications Framework to those provided in the National Qualifications Framework.

The draft of the referencing report was submitted to the consultation of the international experts and the final Report is published on the website of the National Qualifications Authority – www.anc.edu.ro.

The Ministry of Education is organized and is functioning according to the law as a specialized body of the central public administration, with the responsibility to develop and implement educational policy at national level.

The Ministry of Labour is organized and is functioning as a specialized body of the central public administration, with the synthesis and coordination role to implement the strategies and policies of the Government in the labour, family, social protection and the elderly fields.

The National Qualifications Authority is responsible for the referencing process and its role is clearly determined and published.

In accordance with the legislation on adult training and the legislation on the national education, NQA acts as the National Coordination Point for EQF.

The National Qualifications Authority is registered as a competent authority from 2011 for Services and from 2013 for Professional Qualifications.

To fulfil this obligation, Romania achieved through a joint effort, of the authorities participating in this cooperation mechanism, in accordance with regulatory requirements of the European Legislative Act and relevant national legislation, the approval of the GEO no. 49/2009, the framework for provision of services as well as of the GD no. 931/2010 for establishing the

coordinators for the Internal Market Information System – IMI, thus approving the rules and procedures of administrative cooperation through this platform.

The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (NCTVETD) is a specialized body under the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, as a public institution with legal personality established by the Government Decision No. 855/1998. NCTVETD was established with the aim of continuing reform of vocational education and training (TVET) that began with the assistance of the European Union through the Phare Program VET RO 9405. Through subsequent amendments of the establishment act, the institution diversified its tasks concerning the development of vocational and technical education.

National Center for Equivalence and Recognition of Diplomas (NCERD) was created on 1st of December 1995 under the Agreement no. 95 - PECO-SOC-0019 concluded with the European Commission as part of the Socrates National Agency. NCERD was created using GD no. 49/1999. It currently operates as a direction in the Ministry of Education.

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (RAQAPE) is a public institution of national interest working under The Romanian Ministry of Education, with legal personality and own budget, working in compliance with the Law no.87/2006 on quality of education.

The Romanian National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RAQAHE) - was established in 2005 and is an autonomous public institution, of national interest, whose main mission is the external evaluation of the Romanian higher education's quality, at the level of study programs, as well as from the institutional point of view. As of September 2009, RAQAHE is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA and is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education - EQAR.

The National Trade Union Block (NTUB) – founded in 1991, is one of the largest national trade union centre in Romania, having more than 320 000 members. It consists of 40 professional federations representing the rights and interests of workers in: machine building, transportation, local councils, construction and building materials, post and telecommunications, printing, electronics, automation and defence industry, culture, energy, textiles, health, public administration, agriculture, finance, banking, mining and geology, and sports. In terms of national coverage, NTUB has offices in all counties. NTUB is affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation and the International Trade Union Confederation. It is represented in the European Economic and Social Committee and it is a member of the Romanian Economic and Social Council. It has representatives in all social dialogue bodies at national and local levels.

Sectoral committees are public institutions, specific to the economy sectors according to NACE codes, organized under the Law no. 132/1999 and Law no. 268/2009 with subsequent amendments in their own field of activity. Each activity field can have one sectoral committee.

The Romanian National Association of Sectoral Committees (RNASC) is an association made up by bipartite public utility organizations, employers and professional federations with national representation.

3.2. Criterion 2 - Links between the qualifications frameworks' level descriptors

Government Decision no. 918/2013 regarding the approval of the National Qualification Framework, which entered into force in December 2013, sets a clear and demonstrable link between the 8 qualification levels in the national system and the 8 qualification levels in the European system: "Art.1. (2) The NQF sets 8 levels of qualification that can be acquired through the formal education system and training in Romania and by recognition of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning contexts, in lifelong learning perspective.

Art. 2. (2) It is approved the correlation between the National Qualifications Framework levels, the type of education and training programs in Romania which are the ways of achieving the European Qualifications Frameworks' qualification levels and reference levels, provided in the Annex No. 2 of the GD no. 918/2013."

Table 3 Correspondence between ROQF and EQF levels

ROQF	EQF
Level 8	Level 8
Level 7	Level 7
Level 6	Level 6
Level 5	Level 5
Level 4	Level 4
Level 3	Level 3
Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 1

3.3. Criterion 3 - Learning outcomes as a basis for the framework including validation

The National Qualification Framework describes the outcomes relevant to each of the 8 levels. (see Annex No. 1 of the GD no. 918/2013).

In initial vocational and technical education provided by the Ministry of Education, qualifications have been developed since 2003, based on (professional) training standards. These standards currently contain units of learning outcomes, with transferable credits allocated and defined based on ECVET system (based on workload) and the EQF Recommendations. Occupational standards were developed in collaboration with the social partners and have been validated by sectoral committees, while representing the base for the implementation of the ECVET system.

Within higher education, qualifications are linked to the credit structure of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which is compulsory for all the study programmes of the higher education institutions in Romania to apply. According to the Order issued by the Ministry of Education no. 3170/04.02.2015, occupational standards, that are at the basis of study programmes, aim at establishing, clearly defining learning outcomes so as to indicate what knowledge, skills, abilities are acquired and what a person knows and can do at the end of a learning process. Thus, learning outcomes represent what a person understands, knows and is able to do on completion of a learning process, and in that legal context, learning outcomes are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competence acquired during formal, non formal and informal contexts.

The learning outcomes units must be formulated so that the evaluation thereof be clear and comply to the evaluation criteria set by the legislations in force.

As a result of successfully passing the assessment of learning outcomes (certification exam), a diploma or certificate is awarded, clearly containing the number of transferable credits. The document proving the training and learning outcomes that a person has achieved is using the Europass or Youthpass format.

Order no. 468/2004 of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour regulates the validation of competences acquired in contexts other than formal, as further amended and supplemented, and is conducted by the assessment centres established and regulated by the legislation in force.

Romania also ratified in 1998 the Lisbon Convention, on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. The National Qualifications Authority is in charge with the coordination of the authorization process of the assessment centres and keeps the National register of professional qualifications assessment centres. Thus, the National Accreditation Centre, within the National Qualifications Authority, authorizes the assessment centres and assessment bodies. There were requests for authorization especially for these occupations/ qualifications: commercial worker, blacksmith-fixer, earthmoving machinery machinist, mechanic, bricklayer/ mason/ plasterer, waiter, and cook.

All assessment and certification centres are registered in the National Register of Centres of evaluation and certification of professional skills that can be found on the NQA website:

http://www.anc.edu.ro/?page_id=1120 (last accessed on January 23, 2018).

3.4. Criterion 4 - Transparency in inclusion and placement of qualifications to the ROQF

In Romania, the National Register for Qualifications represent a set of specific registers used for vocational and technical education and training, for lifelong learning and apprenticeship systems.

The List of Professional Qualifications - <http://www.tvet.ro/Anexe/x/hg%20866%20din%2013.08.2008.pdf> - is a regulatory document, which states the professional qualifications available in pre-university sector, together with the duration of study programmes. Government Decision no. 866/2008, as amended and supplemented, approves these qualifications.

According to the Government Decision no. 918/2013 related to the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework, the role of Romanian National Qualification Authority is to establish the National Qualifications Register, containing a list of all qualifications that can be achieved through the national qualifications system, correlated with the provisions of the EQF formal, non-formal and informal.

The National Qualifications Register has two components: the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education and the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education.

In order to ensure a transparent process for entering and registering a new qualification in RNCIS and to harmonize qualifications with the new requirements of the labour market and with European requirements, the Methodology of registration of qualifications concerning Higher Education in RNCIS, was approved and implemented, on the basis of Ministry of Education and Scientific Research Order no. 5204/2014. The provisions of this order are focussing on ensuring autonomy and linking the local national educational process with the European one.

Transparency is a fundamental requirement; the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent. The qualifications are recognized and correlated with the existing occupations and thus the coherence of qualifications and degrees offered is ensured, together with the mobility on the labour market.

Registration of qualifications in RNCIS is mandatory for authorization/ accreditation of study programmes offered by the higher education institutions empowered by law, in order to demonstrate the connection with occupations and the needs of the social and economic sector.

Only the qualifications based on study programmes developed in compliance with the qualification/ occupational standards for vocational education and training for levels 6, 7, 8 of ROQF can be registered in RNCIS.

The National Qualifications Authority maintains a constant dialogue with the institutions involved in the national qualifications system and is in consultation with all competent bodies with respect to the harmonization of higher education qualifications with the needs of the social and economic sector, the correspondence of qualifications with the ROQF and the development of a curriculum based on the professional skills and competences required by the labour market.

Each qualification registered in RNCIS is defined in terms of learning outcomes (using learning outcomes to describe a qualification shall become mandatory starting 2018) and its

registration is subject to the existence of at least one representative occupation in the Romanian Classification of Occupations or in ISCO-08 Classification relating to the respective qualification.

The methodology for registration of qualifications in RNCIS is periodically updated and revised in order to reflect the national and European framework developments. (see Annex 1) (this may solve some of the questions I raised before but then this annex should be mentioned earlier)

The registration process consists of two stages, the validation based on a file submitted and reviewed based on the methodology applicable and then the registration of the respective qualification in the Register.

The qualifications registered in RNCIS have a 5-year validity period, correlated with the validity of the study programmes and the qualification / occupational standards, upon expiry of the validity period they must be reviewed and updated in accordance with the developments of the scientific and technical developments as well as the requirements of the social and economic sector.

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education adopted the Order no. 3023/2018 regarding the professional training standards control and their registration with the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE) - <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gi3domjvgq4a/ordinul-nr-3023-2018-privind-controlul-standardelor-de-pregatire-profesionala-si-inregistrarea-acestora-in-registrul-national-al-calificarilor-profesionale-din-educatie-rncpe>. (see Annex 2)

The Decision regarding the National Qualifications Register is currently pending approval. In order to have a unitary register of qualifications, all the current methodologies in force shall be unified by the end of 2018, once the Government Decision approving all the components of the National Qualifications Register shall be in force and applicable.

3.5. Criterion 5 - The national quality assurance system for education and training

Quality assurance system in Romania was legally implemented by Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 and approved by Law no. 87/2006 on quality assurance in education and is applicable for all secondary (including initial vocational education and training) and higher education levels. Since then, two institutions were established which are acting as responsible for quality assurance in Pre-university Education (Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education – RAQAPE, Rom. ARACIP) and in Higher Education (Romanian National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – RAQAHE, Rom. ARACIS).

According to Art. no. 355 of the National Education Law:

(1) The national system that ensures the quality of permanent education includes the system that ensures the quality of pre-university education, the system that ensures the quality of higher education, the system that ensures the quality in the initial professional training and the system that ensures the quality in the continuing professional training.

(2) The National Group for Quality Assurance (NGQA) that is an informal structure, which functions as a National Reference Point for the assurance of quality of the education and vocational training, shall coordinate the harmonization of the system of quality assurance in education, the initial professional training and continuing professional training at national level with each other.

In 2014, NQA has sent to the Romanian Government a proposal regarding the approval of the methodology for implementing the principles of quality assurance in education and training of adults.

Referring to the ROQF, in the document of 2014 the following remarks were made:

- Quality assurance in education and training can be done in partnership. In case of partnerships between accredited pre-university/university institutions and authorized/accredited training providers, principles and responsibilities for quality assurance apply to all the members of the partnership.
- Training providers mentioned above are responsible for the practical activities and educational institutions are responsible for ensuring the quality of all activities undertaken within the partnership, through the existing quality assurance department.
- For assuring the quality of the programs for the levels 1, 2 and 3 of the ROQF it is necessary that the training providers and the programs to be authorized by the authorized county commissions, according to the law.
- For assuring the quality of the programs for the levels 4 and 5 of the ROQF, pre-university education, it is necessary the 1 year provisional authorization of the training providers, followed by accreditation of the relevant institutions - the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education - RAQAPE.
- For assuring the quality of the programs mentioned above, training providers must sign partnerships with accredited education providers in the field, in order to conduct together training courses, case when it is not necessary accreditation of training providers.

- For assuring the quality of the programs for the levels 5, 6 and 7 of the ROQF, university education, training providers must sign partnerships with accredited education providers in the field, in order to conduct together training courses.
- Notwithstanding the provisions of the above paragraph, adult training providers can be individually accredited by the Romanian National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and carry out programs of study for training of adults.
- The methodology for ensuring partnerships in adult training field is elaborated by the National Qualifications Authority and it is published on the institution's website.
- In order to authorize training providers to organize training programs completed with qualification or graduation certificates nationally recognized, the evidence of how quality assurance is achieved is represented either through partnership agreements or by accreditation obtained from institutions responsible in the field.
- Certification of competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning can be made only for programs/occupations corresponding maximum Level 3 of the ROQF. Recognition of competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning takes place in assessment centres provisionally authorized/accredited, according to the competencies set out in the occupational standards, as well as the provisions of the authorizing methodologies.
- Recognition of all competences specific to an occupation, acquired in other ways than the formal ones, through the issuance of a qualification certificate, is performed by an authorized training provider, after passing a competences assessment exam held before a committee appointed by the authorizing county commission.
- Certification by the assessment centers of the competences acquired in non-formal learning is achieved for the occupations corresponding to the levels 1, 2 and 3 of the ROQF.
- Certification of competences acquired in non-formal learning is accomplished by assessment centres for the programs/occupations corresponding to the levels 4 and 5 of the ROQF, and requires that minim 50% of competences acquired in formal learning.

Certification of competences acquired in non-formal learning permits the recognition of practical competences based on the experience of graduates/participants. Currently the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice is working on the draft of Government Decision for quality assurance in lifelong learning, which is going to be subject to public debate. According the GEO no. 96/2016 the Ministry of Labour is responsible with the vocational education and training of adults.

3.6. Criterion 6 - Quality assurance bodies

The referencing report express the agreement of all the quality assurance bodies in Romania – The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (RAQAPE), National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RAQAHE), National Qualifications Authority (NQA) and National Accreditation Centre (NCA).

Quality assurance actors:

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (ARACIP) is a public institution working under the Ministry of Education. Its main responsibilities are to accomplish the external evaluation of quality of education offered by pre-university schools and by other educational organizations; also, to accomplish the authorization, the accreditation and the recurrent evaluation for pre-university school units.

It was set up by Emergency Ordinance no 75/2005; the Agency is responsible for the external evaluation of the quality of education provided by pre-university education institutions and by other education providers, as well as for the authorization, accreditation and regular evaluation of pre-university education institutions. The same ordinance provided for the setting up of the **National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)** whose mission is to perform external evaluation of the quality of education provided by higher education institutions and by other providers of initial and continuing education and training programs specific to higher education. Quality assurance in education is learning outcomes-oriented.

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) is an autonomous institution that has as main mission, according to the law, assessing the quality of the study programmes, study domains and Higher Education Institutions as well as contributing, together with the Higher Education institutions, to a continuous enhancement of quality. Another aim of the agency is to contribute to the development of an institutional culture of higher education quality. The institutional evaluation is conducted by peer review based on the evaluation documentation prepared by the higher education provider under review, ensuring transparency and efficiency of the process.

The National Group for Quality Assurance (GNAC) in vocational education and training was constituted at national level in 2006, in compliance with the recommendations of ENQA – VET, in order to promote and develop specific instruments for quality assurance in vocational education and training.

GNAC is an inter-institutional coordination structure with the role of applying in a coherent way the European and national measures for quality assurance in vocational education and training.

Attributions of the National Group for Quality Assurance:

- facilitates inter-institutional coordination from an integrated approach of vocational training system; GNAC members are the representatives of the main institutions with responsibilities in ensuring the quality of education and training;
- formulates proposals and recommendations on quality assurance in vocational training;
- informs relevant stakeholders on the EQAVET Network activities;
- provides national support for implementing the program of the EQAVET network;

- supports the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET in the national context;
- informs stakeholders of the benefits of using the principles, criteria and quality indicators proposed by the EQAVET;
- supports cooperation (including through peer learning activities, peer review and benchmarking) among training providers at national and European level.

In 2011, following the coming into effect of the Law on National Education – the legal framework for establishing the NQA, the composition of NGQA becomes the following:

- The National Qualifications Authority;
- The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education;
- The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (NCTVETD);
- The National Centre for Staff training in Pre-university Education;
- The Ministry of Education;
- The Ministry of Labour.

The National Qualifications Authority (NQA) coordinates and ensures quality in adults training, including through the development and application of methodologies, standards and specific procedures, in collaboration with interested institutions

Learning outcomes or qualifications acquired upon graduation of a study level are recognized at national level if they had been obtained in institutions accredited by RAQAPE, for pre-university education, or RAQAHE, for higher education. Accreditation of these institutions entitles them to issue diplomas, certificates and other study documents recognized by Ministry of Education.

For initial training undertaken through the formal educational system, the NCDTVET, subordinated to Ministry of National Education, coordinates the TVET schools accredited to provide qualifications recognized at national level. Concerning recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, so far this is possible only for adult training, managed by NQA.

The National Accreditation Centre (NAC) - The National Authority for Qualifications is the institution that coordinates the work of assessment and certification of professional skills on a national level, obtained through other mean than formal ones. Under Article 342 of the Education Law no. 1/2001, amended by Ordinance No. 49/26.06.2014 and NQA board decision of 5 August 2014, the National Accreditation Centre (NAC) was founded as a structure within NQA, , financed from own revenues and grants from the state budget, through the NQA budget.

In the referencing process, there were involved relevant national bodies, stakeholders, experts, teachers, and training providers, social partners and so on.

3.7. Criterion 7 - International experts

In order to reference the Romanian NQF to the EQF the European Commission, through the Education, Culture and Audio-visual Agency, funded the project EQF_NCP - European Qualifications Framework - National Coordination Points.

Initially, according to the project, in the referencing process, there were involved foreign partners. As the project ended in December 2013 and the Decision of the Romanian Government concerning the National Qualification Framework was approved and published on November 27, 2013, the possibility of finding foreign experts in due time did not exist.

Even so, the Romanian Qualification Framework was submitted to the opinion and comments of three international experts:

Eduardo Coba Arango – Spain

He has a degree in Telecommunications Engineering from the Technical University of Madrid (1989). He started his professional career in 1991 in the private engineering sector, subsequently joining the Civil Service as a Group A civil servant in 1993. Since then he has held various positions of responsibility in different education authorities, relating to quality, planning, statistics, research, innovation, training and quality of teachers, qualifications frameworks, accreditation of teaching etc. He has been Director of the Institute of Teacher Education, Educational Research and Innovation (IFIIE), Director of the Centre for Educational Research and Documentation (CIDE), General Coordinator of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), Deputy Secretary of Studies University Council, among other charges, and is currently Advisor to the Director General Vocational Training Ministry of Education.

He has participated and coordinated several projects, published several articles and books, and has given numerous courses on subjects related to education and improving its quality.

Elido Bandelj - Slovenia

Mr. Bandelj has a diploma in Science and Technology – University of Ljubljana.

His activity in the educational field began in 1982, as a teacher at the Secondary technical school Koper, being involved, beside of the teaching process, in curricula and learning materials development. Furthermore, between 1990 and 2002 he has held the position of Headmaster of secondary school, focusing on developing the work in the field of education. In 2003, he became State secretary within the Ministry of Education. He has also been very active in the development of the education system in Slovenia, on the professional as well as on the legislative side. He is also the Director of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Member of the EQF Advisory Group, Member of the ACVT and Member of the ETF Governing Board.

Mimi Daneva - Bulgaria

Mrs. Daneva is Chief Expert - International and European Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Education, Youth, and Science of Bulgaria. She has 5 years of experience as university teacher, 3 years of experience as higher education expert, and 7 years of experience as a coordinator and a team member in elaborating the Bulgarian NQF and the Bulgarian referencing report. She is also a member of the EQF AG since its establishing and a member of the network of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks in the EHEA.

Volker Gehmlich - Germany

Prof. Volker Gehmlich is Professor of Business Management at the Hochschule Osnabrück – University of Applied Sciences, Germany since 1972. His national and international activities include the involvement in education and training programmes of several directorates of the European Union in various functions as well as the work as Bologna Promoter and National Contact Point for ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. He worked in the Technical Assistance Office of the COMETT-Programme (1987-1995), is a member of the Working Group of both the European and German Qualifications Frameworks (EQF), member of the Management Committee and higher education expert to the Business Subject Area of the Project “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe” as well as consultant in the design of new international universities, faculties and study-programmes. His research activities and publications focus on internationalisation, skill needs, mobility, credits systems, lifelong learning, qualification frameworks, university-enterprise partnership and supply chain. In 2000 he was awarded the “Prize for excellence in international cooperation of higher education” by the German Minister for Education and Research and in 2012 the “ERASMUS Individual Prize” by the DAAD.

The comments of the international experts presented in Annex 6 of the report include both the initial comments made to the referencing report and the comments made to the revised form of the report. The suggestions and comments received from the international experts, as well as comments and suggestions made during EQF AG meetings, were taken into account in reviewing the content of the report.

3.8. Criterion 8 - Referencing report

The report addresses each of the ten criteria and procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group and the National Qualifications Authority and National Association of Sectoral Committees certify the content thereof. The content of the report is based on the EQF referencing criteria and the criteria for self-certification to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. This combined report answers the criteria, provides information on the process of developing a national qualifications framework in Romania and the education system the framework reflects.

3.9. Criterion 9 - Publishing the referencing report

After harmonization of the final version of the referencing of the ROQF to the EQF, the National Qualification Authority will announce the completion of the process and will send the document to the EQF Advisory Group. Furthermore, the Romanian representative at the EQF Advisory Group will present the report.

The final report is to be made available on the web, on a special website as well as on the official EQF platform managed by the European Commission.

3.10. Criterion 10 - Qualification Certificates and Diplomas

All the relevant authorities, ministries and stakeholders will cooperate in order to facilitate the reference between ROQF to EQF.

All new qualification certificates, degrees, diplomas and Europass documents will contain a clear reference to the relevant ROQF level and a link to the corresponding EQF level.

A reference to the ROQF and EQF levels was added to certificates and certificate supplements in general upper secondary education, vocational education and training and adult education and training.

A reference to the ROQF and EQF levels was added to the diploma supplements for higher education degrees.

4. Future developments and challenges

The National Qualifications Authority has made all the necessary efforts in supporting the harmonization of the Romanian legislation with the European Decisions and Recommendations.

Thus, the Government Decision no. 918/2013 for approving the Romanian Qualifications Framework is in process of amendment due to the new Recommendation of the European Council of May 2017, which replaced the term “competence” with “responsibility and autonomy” in the EQF level descriptors. The legislation regarding the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS) has been regularly updated.

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education adopted the Order no. 3023/2018 regarding the professional training standards control and their registration with the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE) - <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gi3domjvqq4a/ordinul-nr-3023-2018-privind-controlul-standardelor-de-pregtire-profesionala-si-inregistrarea-acestora-in-registrul-national-al-calificarilor-profesionale-din-educatie-rncpe>. The structure of the register and the professional training standards registration procedure is presented in Annex [2]. Both the structure of the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education and that of the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education are in compliance with the requirements of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

One next step is to establish the National Registry of Professional Qualifications (RNCP) by Government Decision as soon as possible in 2018. The appropriate legislation regarding the approval and implementation of the National Register of Qualifications (RNC) is also pending approval by the competent authorities.

The National Qualifications Authority, as the competent body for maintaining and managing The National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education is making all the necessary efforts to constantly update and upgrade the register, in view of bridging the education offer with the labour market needs. The quality assurance mechanism for adult learning is included in the measures stipulated by the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2015-2020 and more actions shall be taken in the next years in order to implement it.

Table 4 Relevant legislation and other references

No.	Reference
1.	<p>Studiul ”Implementarea clasei pregătitoare în sistemul educațional românesc 2012-2013”, Institutul de Științe ale Educației și Centrul Municipiului București de Resurse și Asistență Educațională București (CMBRAE)</p> <p>The study "Implementation of preparatory class in Romanian educational system 2012-2013", Institute of Education Sciences and the Bucharest Resource and Educational Assistance Centre (CMBRAE)</p>
2.	"Analysis of pre-university education system in Romania in terms of statistical indicators. Educational policies based on data ", Institute of Education Sciences.
3.	Law of National Education no. 1/2011
4.	OMECTS no. 3656/ 29.03.2012, for approving the syllabus for preparatory classes and primary education level
5.	GEO No. 75/2005 regarding quality assurance of education
6.	Government Ordinance no 129/2000 on adult training, as further amended
7.	Law no. 53/2003 on Labour Code
8.	Order no. 468/2004 of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, with respect to approving the Procedure for evaluation and certification of professional competences acquired by ways other than formal
9.	Ministerial Order no. 3170/04.02.2015 – regarding the approval of the model of the Occupational Standard for education and vocational training
10.	Law no. 279/2005 on work based apprenticeship
11.	Law no. 258/2007 on students practical training
12.	Government Ordinance no. 102/1998 on continuous vocational training through educational system, as further amended
13.	Government Decision No. 855/2013 on approving the methodological norms for implementation of Law no. 279/2005 on work based apprenticeship
14.	Decision no. 501/5.253/2003 of the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family and the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research
15.	MESR Order no. 5204/2014 for approving the methodology of registration of qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education

No.	Reference
16.	Government Decision no. 918/2013 related to the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework
17.	Government Decision no. 522/2003 approving the Methodological Norms for the application of Government Ordinance no.129/2000 on adult training
18.	Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 3973/2014, regarding the correlation of the qualification levels obtained through the national education system and adult vocational training prior to entering into force of the National Qualifications Framework, with the qualification levels set by the National Qualifications Framework
19.	Law no. 87/2006 on quality assurance in education
20.	GEO no. 49/2009 on services providers and liberty of providing services in Romania
21.	Government Decision No. 855/1998 regarding the establishment of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development
22.	Government Decision no. 49/1999 regarding recognition of diplomas
23.	Government Decision no. 931/2010 for establishing the coordinators for the Internal Market Information System – IMI
24.	Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications
25.	Law no. 132/1999 regarding the establishment of the National Council for Qualifications and Professional Training of Adults
26.	Law no. 268/2009 for approving the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 28/2009 with respect to certain social protection measures
27.	Government Decision no. 918/2013 regarding the approval of the National Qualification Framework
28.	Government Decision no. 866/2008 on amending the Government Decision no. 844/2002 regarding the approval of the registers for professional qualifications for which pre-university education is ensured
29.	Ordinance No. 49/26.06.2014 on enforcing certain measures regarding education, scientific research and amending several normative acts
30.	COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning

No.	Reference
31.	Order no. 3023/2018 regarding the professional training standards control and their registration with the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE)
32.	Order no. 5686/2017 regarding the amendment of the Methodology for registration of qualifications from higher education in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS), approved by Order of the minister of national education no. 3.475/2017
33.	Law no. 172/1998 with respect to ratifying the Convention on recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, adopted in Lisbon on April 11, 1997
34.	Order 3475/2017 for approving the Methodology for registration of qualifications from higher education in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS), as further amended

Annex 1

*Translation from Romanian language
Excerpt*

The Methodology for registration of qualifications from higher education in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS), approved by Order no. 3475/2017, amended by Order no. 5686/2017

Chapter 1

General information

- 1.1 The present methodology regulates the procedure for validation and registration of qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS), respectively the registration of study programmes which are or are going to be accredited/ authorized by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) or by another quality assurance body member of The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), in accordance with the provisions of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2017/C 189/03), published in the European Union Official Journal, series C, no. 189 of June 15, 2017. "
- 1.2. By registration of qualifications in RNCIS, all learning outcomes acquired through the higher education system can be recognized and correlated with the occupation existing on the labour market, thus ensuring coherence of qualifications and titles granted.
- 1.3. Registering qualifications in RNCIS is necessary for authorization/accreditation of the study programmes offered by the higher education institutions entitled by law in order to demonstrate the connection between occupations and the requirements of the social and economic environment and the qualifications obtained.
- 1.4. The qualifications based on study programs or based on qualification/occupational standards for vocational education and training designed for the higher education levels, respectively levels 6, 7 and 8 according the National Qualification Framework (NQF) can be registered in RNCIS.

1.5. The study programmes ensure the correlation between the skills acquired in higher education and the related learning outcomes with the specific competences for the existing occupations listed in the Romanian Classification of Occupations (COR) or the International Standard Classification of Occupations ISCO-08.

1.6. The National Qualifications Authority (NQA) maintains a permanent dialogue with the institutions involved in the national qualifications system and consults all the entitled bodies with respect to:

- the correlation of higher education qualifications with the social and economic environment;
- the correspondence between the higher education qualifications and the NQF levels;
- designing a curriculum based on the professional qualifications required on the labour market.

1.7. Each qualification from RNCIS is defined in terms of learning outcomes, related to the higher qualification levels 6, 7 and 8, according the NQF.

1.8. Introducing a new qualification in RNCIS is subject to the existence of at least one representative occupation in COR or ISCO-08 intended for the respective graduate.

1.9. The information requested upon registration of the study programs, bachelor or master, in RNCIS require data proving the efficiency and effectiveness of learning through such. Such information is listed also in the Europass diploma supplement used for registration of the qualification in RNCIS or for updating the existing ones.

1.10. The terms and definitions used in the forms necessary for registration or update of the information entered in RNCIS are the same as those used in the Law of National Education no. 1/2011, as further amended and supplemented, or in ISCED -2013.

1.11. The accredited higher education institutions and those temporarily authorized must submit/update the information listed in RNCIS upon authorization/ accreditation or periodic evaluation of each study program.

1.12. The process of qualifications registration in RNCIS is conducted in two stages, by compliance with the instruction set by the National Qualifications Authority with respect to writing learning outcomes, respectively:

- validation of qualification;
- registration of qualification in RNCIS.

1.13. Learning outcomes shall be provided in compliance with the methodology of each institution, established pursuant to the instructions given by NQA with respect to preparing the methodology for writing learning outcomes for higher education institution, published on the NQA website. Starting with January 2019, the new or revised study programmes must contain the learning outcomes correlated with the demands of the labour market, in order to be registered in RNCIS.

1.14. The qualifications registered in RNCIS are valid for a period of 5 years, which is correlated with the validity period of the study programs or of the qualification/occupational standards for vocational education and training, after expiry of such period they must be revised or updated to the scientific and technical developments as well as the requirements of the social and economic environment.

1.15. The applicant is responsible and liable for all the documents mentioned in the registration process, with respect to the correctness, accuracy and compliance of the documents submitted.

**Chapter 2
Validation of qualifications**

[...]

**Chapter 3
Registration in RNCIS**

[...]

**Chapter 4
Fees**

[...]

CHAPTER 5

The structure of the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS)*

* To be filled in based on the information from the qualification validation, after the validation of the qualification/ registration file, after the accreditation of such programmes by the competent institutions, based on the diploma supplement. Columns 1-7 are required fields according to European recommendations.

Table 5 RNCIS Structure

General information					Description of qualification		Qualification awarding body	Quality assurance		Other relevant information regarding the qualification			
Title of qualification	Field of education according to ISCED 2013 F	Qualification code	NQF level	EQF level	Either	Knowledge		Credit points/notional workload needed to achieve the	External quality assurance/regulatory body	Diploma/certificate and diploma/	Expiration date	Information on the provider	Relationship to occupations or occupational fields
						Skills							
						Responsibility and autonomy							

					Or	Open text field describing what the learner is expected to know, understand and able to do		learning outcomes		certificate supplement				Occupations that can be practiced on the labour market	Cod COR/ISCO08
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			

Details of the table entries according to the column number:

1. Title of qualification = to be filled in with the title of the qualification.
2. Field of education according to ISCED 2013 F = to be filled in with the name of the detailed field of education based on ISCED 2013 F (ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education).
3. Qualification code = to be filled in with the as: RO / XX / YYYY / ZZZ, where XX = NQF level (01-08), YYYY = detailed field of education based on ISCED 2013 F, ZZZ – the number of the qualification, ranging between 001 to 999.
4. NQF level = to be filled in with the appropriate level (1-8), NQF – the National Qualifications Framework.
5. EQF level = to be filled in with the appropriate EQF level (1-8), EQF – the European Qualifications Framework.
6. Description of qualification = to be filled in with the specific data for describing the qualification.
7. Qualification awarding body = to be filled in with the name of the qualification awarding body (ministry/ ministries, university, as the case may be).
8. Credits or estimated workload necessary for reaching learning outcomes = the number of credit points according to the European recommendations, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS 2015) or national regulations.
9. The external quality assurance of regulatory body = the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) or by another quality assurance body member of The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).
- 10, 11 and 12. Other relevant information regarding the qualification = to be filled in with other information regarding the qualification, related to the diploma/ certificate and the diploma/ certificate supplement, qualification expiry date.

12. Information regarding the provider = to be filled in with the link to the webpage providing information about the entity offering the qualification.

13. Occupations that can be practiced on the labour market/ COR code = to be filled in with the name of the relevant occupation, according to the Romanian Classification of Occupations (COR)/ related COR code of 6(six) digits.

[...]

Annex 2

Translation from Romanian language

Order no. 3023/2018 regarding the professional training standards control and their registration with the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE)

Pursuant to the provisions of art. 340 of the Law of National Education no. 1/2011, as further amended and supplemented, pursuant to the provisions of Government Decision no. 556/2011 regarding the organization and functioning of the National Qualifications Authority, as further amended and supplemented,

pursuant to the provisions of Government Decision no. 26/2017 regarding the organization and functioning of the Ministry of National Education, as further amended,

the minister of National Education issues the present Order.

Art. 1.

The professional training standards are approved by the National Qualifications Authority, towards insurance of their correlation with the occupational standards and the skills required by the labour market.

Art. 2.

The National Centre for Development of Technical and Professional Education and Training will send to the National Qualifications Authority the draft of professional training standard in view of conducting the control with respect to the necessity and opportunity for the proposed qualification from the point of view of its demand by the employers, as well as the correlation of the qualification with the labour market demands, from the point of view of the established professional skills and their correlation with the international ones.

Art. 3.

After the approval of the professional training standards by order of the minister of national education, the standards shall be submitted to the National Qualifications Authority, for registration with the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE), with the structure provided in the Annex herein.

Art. 4.

RNCPE shall comprise all the professional qualifications obtained in the initial education system and ensures the transparency and unity of qualifications in education by publication on the institution's website.

Art. 5.

The National Qualifications Authority and the National Centre for Development of Technical and Professional Education and Training shall fulfil the provisions herein.

Art. 6.

This order will be published in the Official Gazette, Part I.

The minister of national education,

Liviu-Marian Pop

Bucharest, January 8, 2018.

No. 3.023.

The Structure of the National Register of Professional Qualifications in Education (RNCPE)

Table 6 RNCPE Structure

General information					Description of qualification		Qualification awarding body	Quality assurance		Other relevant information regarding the qualification				
Title of qualification	Field of education according to ISCED 2013 F	Qualification code	NQF level	EQF level	Either	Knowledge		Credit points/notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes	External quality assurance/regulatory body	Diploma/certificate and diploma/certificate supplement	Expiration date	Information on the provider	Relationship to occupations or occupational fields	
						Skills								
						Responsibility and autonomy								
					Or	Open text field describing what the learner is expected to know, understand and able to do							Occupations that can be practiced on the labour market	Cod COR/ISCO08
1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	13	

Details of the table entries according to the column number:

1. Title of qualification = to be filled in with the title of the qualification.
2. Field of education according to ISCED 2013 F = to be filled in with the name of the detailed field of education based on ISCED 2013 F (ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education).

3. Qualification code = to be filled in with the as: RO / XX / YYYY / ZZZ, where XX = NQF level (01-08), YYYY = detailed field of education based on ISCED 2013 F, ZZZ – the number of the qualification, ranging between 001 to 999.
4. NQF level = to be filled in with the appropriate level (1-8), NQF – the National Qualifications Framework.
5. EQF level = to be filled in with the appropriate EQF level (1-8), EQF – the European Qualifications Framework.
6. Description of qualification = to be filled in with the specific data for describing the qualification.
7. Qualification awarding body = to be filled in with the name of the qualification awarding body (ministry/ ministries, university, as the case may be).
- 8 and 9. Quality assurance = to be filled in with specific data for describing quality assurance.
- 10, 11 and 12. Other relevant information regarding the qualification = to be filled in with other information regarding the qualification, related to the diploma/ certificate and the diploma/ certificate supplement, qualification expiry data.
12. Information regarding the provider = to be filled in with the link to the webpage providing information about the entity offering the qualification.
13. Occupations that can be practiced on the labour market/ COR code = to be filled in with the name of the relevant occupation, according to the Romanian Classification of Occupations (COR)/ related COR code of 6 (six) digits.

Annex 3

National Qualifications Framework in Romania

- Examples of qualifications -

Table 7 Example of level 3 qualification

Level 3

Example	Merchant – Vendor : level 3 qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive Supplement (initial VET) Qualification is available also for apprenticeship or adult training programs
Entry requirements:	Lower secondary education
Intended learning outcomes	Units of general learning outcomes: -ethics and professional communication -the use of basic accounting concepts -the use of accounting methods, procedures and principles -organizing the activity of economic entities -ensuring quality of goods and services -consumer protection, protection of the staff and the environment Units of specialized learning outcomes: -selling techniques -commercial techniques (preparing goods for sale)
Duration of learning	3 years training in initial VET programmes 720 training hours for adult training programs and apprenticeship
Assessment and awards (in English and Romanian)	Certification exam at the end of training (practical and written examination) Award: qualification certificate merchant – vendor (certificat de calificare comerciant vanzator)

Progression routes – connectivity	Direct access to level 4 qualification “Technician in trade activities” (available through technological high-school or adult learning programs). Progression to level 5 qualifications available: specialized technician in trade activities, technician in international trade, commercial agent.
Labour market	Jobs available on the labour market: merchant, trade worker
Quality assurance	Design of qualifications and curricula is quality assured through predefined procedures for: -planning (identification of needs for a specific qualification) -implementing (elaboration of qualification on the basis of descriptor levels, learning outcomes and according to unitary guidelines) -evaluation and revision (validity period and provisions for revision available) Involvement and responsibility of business world in process of design and revision is ensured in all stages.
Legal basis; curricula	Qualification standard is approved by Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research Order no. 4121/13.06.2016. Qualification standard describes the qualification content (units of learning outcomes and corresponding learning outcomes for each unit), the assessment standard, the relation with labour market (jobs available) and access to further studies. Specific curricula are approved by Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research Order no. 4457/15.07.2016. Curricula state: the training plan (number of training hours and distribution between theory and practice), the training modules (one module correspond to one unit of learning outcomes), the learning content for each module, assessment procedures applicable and recommendations for learning process.
RQF/EQF level	Level 3
Summary of reasons for the level allocation	Level of qualification is allocated in accordance to the referencing levels framework, on the basis of the level of autonomy and responsibility (assuming responsibility to perform tasks in the work field and adapting behaviour to problem solving circumstances)

Table 8 Example of level 4 qualification

Level 4

Example	Telecommunications technician: level 4 qualification certificate (Certificat de calificare) and Descriptive Supplement (initial VET) Qualification is available also for apprenticeship or adult training programs
Entry requirements:	Lower secondary education for direct access from gymnasium Level 3 qualification certificate in electronic domain
Intended learning outcomes	<p>Units of general learning outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - performance of basic mechanic and electric operations in electronics and automation - conducting technical measurements in electronics - performing simple electronic circuits with analogue components - making of combinational logic circuits with digital integrated circuits - execution of electrical lighting and power installations - production planning - manufacture of analogue and digital electronic equipment - assessment of the functioning of electronic circuits and equipment <p>Units of specialized learning outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of electronic communications signals and media - use of techniques and systems for electronic communications - installing the operating system and specific software for personal computers - use of network services and the protection of computing systems
Duration of learning	4 years training in initial VET programmes 1080 training hours for adult training programs and apprenticeship
Assessment and awards (in English and	Certification exam at the end of training (practical and written examination) Award: qualification certificate telecommunications technician (certificat de calificare tehnician în telecomunicatii)

Progression routes – connectivity	Direct access to level 5 qualifications (available through postsecondary education or adult learning programs): “telecommunication electronics technician”, “technician for automation equipment”, technician for industrial electronic”, “technician for electro-medical appliances”, and “technician for biomedical equipment”. Access to higher education for graduates with baccalaureate diploma.
Labour market	Jobs available on the labour market: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “computer equipment and network technician” - “telecommunications network technician” - “technician for radio and TV stations” - “ technician for radio and satellite stations”
Quality assurance	Design of qualifications and curricula is quality assured through predefined procedures for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - planning (identification of needs for a specific qualification) - implementing (elaboration of qualification on the basis of descriptor levels, learning outcomes and according to unitary guidelines) - evaluation and revision (validity period and provisions for revision available) Involvement and responsibility of business world in process of design and revision is ensured in all stages.
Legal basis; curricula	Qualification standard is approved by Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research Order no. 4121/13.06.2016. Qualification standard describes the qualification content (units of learning outcomes and corresponding learning outcomes for each unit), the assessment standard, the relation with labour market (jobs available) and access to further studies. Specific curricula are approved by Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research Order no. 4457/15.07.2016. Curricula state: the training plan (number of training hours and distribution between theory and practice), the training modules (one module correspond to one unit of learning outcomes), the learning content for each module, assessment procedures applicable and recommendations for learning process.
RQF/EQF level	Level 4

Summary of reasons for the level allocation	Level of qualification is allocated in accordance to the referencing levels framework, on the basis of the level of autonomy and responsibility (self management in work situations, surveillance ability of routine activities of other people, taking a certain responsibility for assessing and improving other people work).
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Annex 4

Table 9 The National Qualifications Framework level descriptors as per the legislation in force

	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
	In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).	In the context of the EQF responsibility and autonomy is described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility
Level 1 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 1 are	Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
Level 2 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 2 are	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy
Level 3 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 3 are	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
Level 4 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 4 are	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and

	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
			improvement of work or study activities
Level 5 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 5 are	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others
Level 6 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 6 are	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
Level 7 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 7 are	Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
Level 8 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 8 are	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research

Annex 5

Self-certification Report

Verification of compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

Document for further consultation and implementation

November 2011

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- Cătălina Gabriela Hîrceag, Expert, ANC
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Message

September 2011

Dr. Cătălin Baba

Secretary of State

Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports

The Self-Certification Report concerning the verification of compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area is an important tool that facilitates the interaction between the higher education systems in Europe and brings its support to the development of a culture of mutual trust. The Report expresses Romania's answer to its 2005 commitment to design and implement a national qualifications framework for higher education that is fully compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area.

I am pleased that the National Qualifications Authority has taken the initiative to reference the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. This document is a testimony of Romania's strong commitment to fulfil the obligation assumed under the Bologna Process from its start in 1998. The Report reflects Romania's contribution to the development of the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area by its special focus on the development of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education as well and demonstrates its full compatibility with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The design and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education is a first step in the development of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework and in referencing the qualifications system of our country against the qualifications in other European states by means of the European Qualifications Framework.

The design and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education has been a lengthy process initiated in 2005 by ACPART and finalised in 2011 by the National Authority for Qualifications. It involved wide consultations with all the institutions and organizations interested in the national qualifications system: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, higher education institutions and their students and teaching staffs, quality assurance agency in higher education, sectoral committees, other social partners (trade unions, employers' associations, non-governmental organizations and professional associations) as well as other regulatory authorities.

The 2011 National Education Law strengthens the legal and institutional framework that creates a coherent, transparent and flexible national framework and opens new perspectives for the development and recognition of this framework by all stakeholders.

Let me remember here some of the actions taken by the MERYS to reach this goal:

- The setting-up and the full support given to the National Qualifications Authority (NQA);
- Ensuring Romania's active participation in the European meetings related to the European Qualifications Framework and to the various European and regional thematic working groups in the field of education and training;
- Appointing the National Qualifications Authority as the National Coordination Point for the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework in Romania at national level;

- Supporting the initiatives and actions of NQA aiming at the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in all the Romanian universities and at the promotion of the National Qualifications Register for Higher Education;
- Promoting the enhancement of quality assurance in the Romanian higher education with a focus on the quality of learning outcomes.

The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports also supported the National Qualifications Authority in accomplishing the main objectives of the self-certification process, as follows:

- To certify that Romania has developed and implemented a functional framework for qualifications in the higher education which is compatible with the similar frameworks put in place in other European countries and/or in other regions of the world, a framework which is recognized as such both at national and international level;
- To explain the compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area;
- To provide essential data and information on the conceptual and institutional foundation leading to the establishment of the national framework closely linked to the two European reference frameworks.

As a concluding remark, I may say that the self-certification process contributes to the development of a consistent qualifications culture in Romania built upon four principles: Quality, Transparency, Transferability and Progression.

Executive summary

This document is Romania's response to the obligation assumed concerning the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and its preparation for the self-certification process to demonstrate the compatibility with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area by 2012.

The main goals of the Report are:

- To be a visit-card of the Romanian NQFHE;
- To be a marketing tool of the study programs offered in the Romanian HE system;
- To be an easy understandable explanation of the Romanian NQFHE for all the stakeholders in the HE sector and society (employers, parents, professional associations, civil society) with a focus on the complexity and variety of the learning outcomes and their aims (professional and personal development goals, democratic citizenship etc.)
- To be an instrument explaining the compatibility of the Romanian NQFHE with the Bologna overarching QF for the EHEA (where appropriate, we will include also references to EQF in a LLL perspective).

In order to achieve the above stated goals the report was structured as follows:

- For a proper understanding of the compatibility references, the Romanian higher education system is shortly presented with a focus on the reforms implemented in European context;
- Another part of the Report describes the design, instruments and implementation of the NQFHE;
- Having clarified this information on the Romanian specificity in the implementation strategy of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education, the Report proceeds with operationalizing the process of indicating the compatibility of the Romanian NQFHE with the EQF and the FQ-EHEA. This is the central part of the self-assessment process and the Report details the two crucial sets of referencing elements: the verification criteria (1-7) and the verification procedures (1-6).
- The chapter on conclusions and perspectives captures the main further steps of self-assessment endeavours.
- The annexes provide, on the one hand, the main legal provisions underpinning the setting-up of NAQ and the NQFHE implementation and, on the other hand, a comparative table facilitating understanding of the match and of the possible differences or particularities within the two European frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA) and the national qualifications framework for higher education developed by Romania.

In September 2011, Romania successfully finalized all 11 steps recommended by the Council of Europe for the implementation of the framework for qualifications of higher education. A brief presentation of the step-by-step actions undertaken is presented below.

The development of the national qualifications framework for higher education started in Romania in 2005 with the **setting-up of the responsible institution** – the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment – ACPART (**STEP 1**). In 2011, the responsibilities of that implementation body were extended and the new official name given to the agency is National Qualifications Authority (NQA).

The responsible institution established its **strategy and agenda** for the development of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE), which involved initiatives and activities both at national and international level (**STEP 2**). At national level, a Working Group was established in order to compare and analyse the Bologna documents (EHEA Framework) and the EQF documents, and to clarify the terminology and concepts. The aim was a common understanding by

all stakeholders and the outcome was a *Glossary of the NQFHE (STEP 3)*. The next stage was the development phase (2006-2009) which consisted in the design of the **NQFHE Methodology (STEP 4)** with details concerning the NQF objectives, definitions and key concepts, the necessary descriptors and assessment standards of the learning outcomes involved in the implementation of the NQFHE. The design of the Methodology was followed by the **piloting phase of the first version (STEP 5)** consisting in the full description of 45 qualifications at Bachelor and Master's level (first and second Bologna cycle). The final version of the **Methodology was officially enacted** by Order No. 4430 of the Minister of Education in June 2009 **and published** in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, No. 545/05.08.2009 (**STEP 6**).

The implementation phase (STEPS 7, 8 and 9) started in October 2009 with the support offered by a project co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Romanian Government (DOCIS – Development of an Operational System of Qualifications in Higher Education). This stage involved the standardized description of higher education qualifications provided by Romanian universities as follows: all 332 Bachelor degree qualifications (in compliance with Government decisions concerning accredited study programmes) and a sample of 179 Master's degree qualifications, covering all fields of studies. This was a dynamic, lucrative, open process of repeated consultations, which involved final agreement by consensus of all participating stakeholders upon the descriptors and assessment standards of each qualification.

During the implementation process, ACPART (currently NQA) developed the **National Qualifications Register for Higher Education (RNCIS)** as an electronic platform for the registration, updating and management of the Romanian qualifications system. The Romanian version is already operational and can be accessed at www.rncis.ro (**STEP 11**). **The self-certification phase (STEP 10)** started on December 21st, 2010, when the **Working Group** met and agreed upon the action plan, which is based on the *Terms of Reference for the development of the self-certification Report*. A **Steering Committee** was created as a special consultative body including representatives of the stakeholders and international experts. Its mission was to review and approve the Self-Certification Report. On April 13th 2011, the first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Bucharest. The Self-Certification Report was **launched for public debate** during the **International Conference** organized by NQA in Sinaia on April 14-15, 2011 and was **uploaded** on www.acpart.ro and www.rncis.ro **for further consultation**. The members of the Steering Committee met again on September 5-6, 2011 for a second round of discussions. They agreed on the last improvements that could be brought to the report. The present version of the Self-Certification Report includes all the recommended improvements. It is a document, which the National Qualifications Authority presents to all stakeholders for further consultation and implementation.

The compatibility of the NQFHE with the EQF and the QF-EHEA, to be demonstrated by the Working Group writing this Report, was verified against **the following criteria**:

- “1. The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education;
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework;
3. The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS-compatible credits;
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are clear;

5. The national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process;
6. The national framework and any alignments with the European framework are referenced in all Diploma Supplements;
7. The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.”

and **procedures**:

- 1. The competent national body/bodies shall certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework;*
- 2. The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognised through the Bologna Process;*
- 3. The self-certification process shall involve international experts;*
- 4. The self-certification and the evidence supporting it shall be published and shall address separately each of the criteria set out;*
- 5. The ENIC and NARIC networks shall maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process;*
- 6. The completion of the self-certification process shall be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the European framework.*

Each criterion and procedure were analysed separately in the Report. The Working Group demonstrated that the Romanian NQFHE fully met all criteria for the verification of compatibility of the national framework with the EHEA framework as have been set according to the Bologna Working Group Report to the ministerial meeting held in Bergen in 2005.

Finally, the Report presents the road map used by NQA so that, after being implemented, the NQFHE should become one of the crucial instruments for the strategic coordination of all institutions in the Romanian education system. The public policies of the Ministry of Education, the implementation measures promoted by the agencies and commissions coordinated by the Ministry of Education, as well as the missions assumed by the higher education institutions will use the NQFHE to define the higher education provision in Romania according to the labour market needs, in order to enhance the quality of study programmes and the economic and social effectiveness of the higher education system.

Chapter I

Self-certification objectives and methodology

1.1. Objectives

This document is Romania's response to the obligation assumed with regards to the *implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and its preparation for the self-certification process to demonstrate the compatibility with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area by 2012* (Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 28-29 April 2009).

This self-certification report marks a new important step in the implementation of the Bologna strategy for quality assurance in higher education aiming to support the growth and development of a knowledge society, after the step achieved by the design of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE), as indicated by the Bologna Working Group Report³, adopted in Bergen, on May 2005 and the decisions stated by the 2007 Report 2007⁴.

- A first objective of our Report is to certify that Romania created a functional framework for qualifications, which is fully comparable with the frameworks of other European countries and of other continents⁵, and which is recognised as such both at national and international level.
- Second, the Report aims at explaining and detailing the compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE) with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and represents a preliminary step in demonstrating its compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- The operational objective of the Report is to provide essential data on the conceptual and institutional basis leading to the establishment of the national framework closely linked with the two European reference frameworks.
- More precisely, the Self-certification Report focuses on the following goals:
 - To ensure the reader that the qualifications described in the framework documents are valuable learning experiences, useful for the social and professional integration of the beneficiaries;
 - To certify that learning becomes an activity with no boundaries, no artificial limitations in terms of content or form and unburdened by excessive bureaucratic constraints, in order to foster mobility in the professional development and training process;
 - To demonstrate that the learner is at the core of this process, that they learn to learn and that lifelong learning skills are integrated in the curriculum;

³ Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks Report, 2005: www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Maindoc/050218QFEHEA.pdf

⁴ Report from Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2007: www.dfes.gov.uk/londonbologna/uploads/documents/WGQF-raport-final2.pdf

⁵ Our working group has also capitalised on the valuable experience of education systems which are not part to the Bologna Process, such as New Zealand, South Africa, Australia etc.

- To contribute to building awareness on quality and social responsibility in the provision of knowledge, skills and competences for the beneficiaries of the educational process, so that graduates' personal behaviour would become easily adaptable to the labour market requirements in a more and more dynamic, globalised and complex society.
- To summarise the objectives of the self-assessment process and of the Self-Certification Report we may state that they contribute to the development of a qualifications culture built upon the following principles: Quality – Transparency – Transferability – Progression.

1.2. Methodology

The self-certification report targets both domestic and foreign users – trainers, learners, employers, professional associations, trade union etc., and it intends to represent an official reference document, widely accepted, which highlights the educational strategies, and guides the beneficiaries' choices. This document points out both the common and the specific elements in the European/national relationship, but it also indicates areas where confusions or lack of clarity might occur.

Methodologically, the Self-Certification Report was designed as a landmark, a starting point in the evolution of a highly dynamic activity. Self-certification is the foundation of a process of revision, adjustment and development impacting both on the national and on the European qualifications frameworks, along with the overall developments in society.

In order to achieve the above stated objectives the report structure was designed to reflect adequately the conceptual and practical vision presented above. Thus, the Working Group agreed upon the following structure:

- For a proper understanding of the compatibility references, the Romanian higher education system is shortly presented with a focus on the reforms implemented in European context;
- Another part of the Report describes the design, instruments and implementation of the NQFHE;
- Having clarified this information on the Romanian specificity in the implementation strategy of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education, the Report proceeds with operationalising the process of indicating the compatibility of the NQFHE with the EQF and the FQ-EHEA. This is the central part of the self-assessment process and the Report details the two crucial sets of referencing elements: the verification criteria (1-7) and the verification procedures (1-6).
- The chapter on conclusions and perspectives captures the main the further steps of self-assessment endeavours.
- The annexes provide, on one hand, the main legal provisions underpinning the setting-up of NAQ and the NQFHE implementation and, on the other hand, a comparative table facilitating understanding of the match and of the possible differences or particularities within the two European frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA) and the national qualifications framework from higher education developed by Romania.

1.3. The self-assessment process

The development of this draft report has involved very intense and focused work during a relatively short period.

- On December 21 2010, the Working Group met and agreed on the action plan, based on the Terms of Reference for the development of the self-certification report.
- On January 6 2011, the Working Group drafted a first outline of the Report, based on several individual proposals and agreed on a breakdown of tasks specifically allocated to sub-groups.
- At the end of January 2011, a first draft of the Self-certification Report was developed as a starting point for consultations with stakeholders.

- During February and April there were working meetings with representatives of stakeholders, both in Romania and abroad, including a study visit to discuss the draft report with representatives of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland)
- On April 13 2011, the first meeting of the Steering Committee created to approve the self-certification of the compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area was held.
- The Self-Certification Report was launched for public debate during the National Conference organised in Sinaia, on April 14-15, 2011, and published on www.acpart.ro/docis and www.rncis.ro for further consultation.
- The Steering Committee met on September 5-6, 2011 for a second round of discussion and agreed on the last improvements that could be brought to the report. The following text includes all the recommended improvements.
- This Self-Certification Report is a document, which the National Qualifications Authority presents to all the stakeholders for continuing further consultation and implementation.

1.4. Self-assessment criteria

The compatibility of the NQFHE with the EQF and the QF-EHEA, to be demonstrated by the Working Group writing this Report, was verified against the criteria proposed by the Bergen Report, 2005:

- “1. The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education;
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework;
3. The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS-compatible credits;
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are clear;
5. The national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process;
6. The national framework and any alignments with the European framework are referenced in all Diploma Supplements;
7. The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.”

1.5. Self-assessment procedures

The procedures for the verification of compatibility of the national framework with the EHEA framework were also set according to the Bologna Working Group Report to the ministerial meeting held in Bergen in 2005, as follows:

1. The competent national body/bodies shall certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework;

2. *The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognised through the Bologna Process;*
3. *The self-certification process shall involve international experts;*
4. *The self-certification and the evidence supporting it shall be published and shall address separately each of the criteria set out;*
5. *The ENIC and NARIC networks shall maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process* ⁶ ;
6. *The completion of the self-certification process shall be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the European framework.*

1.6. Steps followed by Romania in the design and implementation of the National Qualification Framework for Higher Education

In September 2011, Romania has successfully finalized all 11 steps recommended by the Council of Europe for the implementation of the framework for qualifications for higher education. A brief presentation of the step-by-step undertaken actions is presented in the following lines.

The development of the national qualifications framework for higher education started in Romania in 2005 with the setting-up of the responsible institution – the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment – ACPART (STEP 1). In 2011 the responsibilities of that implementation body were extended and the new official name given to the agency is National Qualifications Authority (NQA).

The responsible institution established its strategy and agenda for the development of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE), which involved initiatives and activities both at national and international level (STEP 2).

At national level, the strategy covered:

- I. **The pre-development phase**, involving the establishment of a Working Group (**STEP 3**); comparative analysis of the Bologna documents (EHEA Framework) and the EQF related documents of the European Commission; clarification and explanation of the terminology and concepts aiming at a common understanding by all stakeholders; drafting a *Glossary of the NQFHE*.
- II. **The development phase** (2006-2009) consisted in the design of the **NQFHE Methodology (STEP 4)** with details concerning the NQF objectives, definitions and key concepts, the necessary descriptors and assessment standards of the learning outcomes involved in the implementation of the NQFHE. During the design, ACPART (currently NQA) acted as a coordinator and link between all the stakeholders involved in the development of NQFHE. Regional meetings were organized aiming at extensive consultations with higher education institutions, employers, trade unions, professional associations, sectoral committees, student associations, alumni, parents. The design of the Methodology was followed by the **piloting phase of the first version (STEP 5)** consisting in the full description of 45 qualifications at

⁶ Cf. www.enic-naric.net

Bachelor and Master's level (first and second Bologna cycle). The piloting was facilitated by means of a multi-annual PHARE Programme.

At international level, ACPART and MERYYS were continuously involved in exchange of ideas and good practices concerning the progress made in the design and implementation of the national frameworks of higher education qualifications.

The first version of the Methodology was reviewed based on the outcomes of the piloting exercise. The final version of the **Methodology was officially enacted** by Order No. 4430 of the Minister of Education in June 2009 **and published** in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, No. 545/05.08.2009 (**STEP 6**).

III. **The implementation phase (STEPS 7, 8 and 9)** started in October 2009 with the support offered by a project co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Romanian Government (DOCIS – Development of an Operational System of Qualifications in Higher Education). This stage involved the standardized description of higher education qualifications provided by Romanian universities as follows: all 332 Bachelor degree qualifications (in compliance with Government decisions concerning accredited study programmes) and a sample of 179 Master's degree qualifications, covering all fields of studies. This was a dynamic, lucrative, open process of repeated consultations and final agreement by consensus of all participating stakeholders upon the descriptors and assessment standards of each qualification. The process will continue as a “lifelong” process of up grading and adjustment of qualifications in accordance with the continuing changes in the provision of higher education programmes and their adjustment to the needs and expectations of the graduate labour market.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education together with ACPART initiated the improvement of some of the **complementary regulatory documents** needed in the full implementation of the NQFHE: Government Decision No. 890/2008 on the *qualification titles and awards* granted by Romanian universities to graduates a Bachelor degree programmes; Minister Order No. 4151/2010 concerning the content and template of the *Master's degree diploma* and Minister Order No. 5803/2010 concerning the *Bachelor degree award, the architect diploma* and the respective *Diploma Supplements' models*.

During the implementation process, ACPART (currently NQA) has developed the **National Qualifications Register for Higher Education (RNCIS)** as an electronic platform for the registration updating and management of the Romanian qualifications' system.

RNCIS should be seen as a multi-actor and trans-national interest tool. It is a **multi-actor tool** as RNCIS represents the result of collaboration among different stakeholders. It is a **tool of trans-national interest** as RNCIS will be **available on-line both in Romanian and in English** aiming at ensuring national and international free access to information of all interested users. The Romanian version is already operational and can be accessed at www.rncis.ro (**STEP 11**).

The self-certification phase (STEP 10) started on December 21st, 2010, when the **Working Group** (see list of members bellow at 1.7) met and agreed upon the action plan which is based in the *Terms of Reference for the development of the self-certification Report*.

In the end of January 2011, a first draft of the Self-Certification Report as a start point for consultations with stakeholders. These consultations took place during February and March 2011. In addition, a study-visit of a part of the members of the Working Group was organized in order to discuss the draft report with experts of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

A **Steering Committee** (see list of members bellow, at 1.8) was created as a special consultative body including representatives of the stakeholders and international experts. Its mission

is to review and approve the Self-Certification Report. On April 13th 2011, the first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Bucharest.

The Self-Certification Report was **launched for public debate** during the **International Conference** organized by NQA in Sinaia on April 14-15, 2011 and was **up-loaded** on www.acpart.ro and www.rncis.ro **for further consultation**.

The members of the Steering Committee met again on September 5-6, 2011 for a second round of discussion. They agreed on the last improvements that could be brought to the report.

This version of the Self-Certification Report includes all the recommended improvements. It is a document which the National Qualifications Authority presents to all the stakeholders for further consultation and implementation.

1.7. The Working Group

In December 2010 a Working Group was created at UECNCFPA level to develop the Self-certification Report. The members of this Working Group are as follows:

- Professor Sorin Eugen ZAHARIA, PhD, director general NQA, former UECNCFPA
- Professor Gheorghe BÂRLEA, PhD, “Ovidius” University of Constanța;
- Professor Mihai KORKA, PhD, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest;
- Professor Mariana MOCANU, PhD, “Politehnica” University of Bucharest;
- Professor Bogdan MURGESCU, PhD, University of Bucharest;
- Professor Dan POTOLEA, PhD, University of Bucharest,
- Professor Steliana TOMA, PhD, Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest,
- Cătălina Gabriela HÎRCEAG, expert, NQA, former UECNCFPA,
- Margareta Simona IVAN expert, NQA, former UECNCFPA.

1.8. The Steering Committee

Chair: Cătălin BABA, Ministry of Education, Research and Sports

Members:

- Daniela ALEXE, National Association of Student Organisations in Romania;
- Gheorghe BARBU, National Council of Rectors;
- Mogens BERG, BFUG, Denmark;
- Alexandru BORCEA, Romanian Association for Electronic and Software Industry - ARIES;
- James CALLEJA, Malta Qualifications Council;
- Anne Marie CHARRAUD, National Commission for Qualifications in France;
- Romiță IUCU-BUMBU, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education;
- Mircea MICLEA, President of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis and Development of Education and Research Policies;
- Valentin MOCANU, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection;
- Lewis PURSER, Irish Universities Association;
- Jean-Philippe RESTOUEIX, Council of Europe;
- Sorin Eugen ZAHARIA, Romanian National Qualifications Authority.

The wide involvement of stakeholders and of international experts in drafting and finalizing the present Report helped the NQA to reflect all valuable opinions and suggestions to improve the document.

Chapter II

Romanian Higher Education System

2.1. Introduction

Similarly, to the other Central and Eastern European Countries, during the past 20 years the Romanian higher education has witnessed an impressive expansion, diversification and transformation.

Higher education reform was accompanied by a significant increase in the number of higher education institutions, by booming student population and by the appearance of private universities, in the context of a high demand for university education and of the physical and financial lack of capacity of public universities to meet such demand. The mix of public and private elements in the Romanian higher education system is one of its peculiarities and it impacts on its strategic and operational management.

2.2. Overall developments of higher education in Romania (1990-2010)

Before 1989, just like in all other socialist countries, access to higher education was severely limited, the contents were highly politicized and the management of this sector was fully centralised. The post-revolution reform of the Romanian higher education may be analytically divided into several subsequent steps:

- ◆ **1990-1997** featured measures focusing on a depolitisation of the syllabi and contents, on re-introducing study programmes, faculties and higher education institutions, which had been eliminated by the totalitarian regime. Besides the post-communist restoring measures, the system witnessed the beginnings of the massification of higher education with the emergence of numerous new study programmes providers both public and private, both local and foreign. As there was no regulation laying out the prerequisites for providers of tertiary education, there was a sudden, hectic development of the educational provision, with no guarantee on the quality of the teaching-learning process. These chaotic developments ended with the setting up of the National Council of Academic Evaluation and Accreditation – CNEAA, at the end of 1993. The Council imposed minimal standards for provisional authorisation and, subsequently, accreditation. Nevertheless, the quantitative growth of the higher education reached by the multiplication of public institutions and the emergence of private institutions has not had the expected effect of coping with the demand for tertiary education. Usually, the new institutions developed a parallel provision by adopting the curricula of the traditional public universities, by borrowing their teaching staff and imitating their operating mechanisms, although the *Accreditation Law*⁷ passed by the Romanian Parliament in 1993 specifically stipulated that the private higher education is an alternative to the public education. Moreover, there was a lack of concern for substantial change that would guarantee the autonomy of higher education institutions. Although the *Education Law*⁸ passed by the Romanian Parliament in 1995 provided for a series of transformations, its implementation was hesitant, torn between initiatives and repeated delays which left higher education at the

⁷ *Law no. 88/1993 on the accreditation of higher education institutions and diploma recognition*, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 307 of 27.12.1993.

⁸ *Law no. 88/1995 – The Education Law*, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 606 of December 10, 1999.

end of this stage as a rigid, under-financed system, unresponsive to the actual demand for initial and continuing training, dependent on the central decisions (ministry), using egalitarian criteria for organisation and management, a system which would not promote study programmes diversification, performance, quality and competitiveness. It was a system which gradually re-opened to international cooperation, but was not able to initiate the necessary steps to ensure compatibility, so that partnership with foreign universities would be real, sustainable, with benefits and assumed responsibilities for each party.

- ◆ **1997-2004** meant the beginning of the systematic implementation of four fundamental objectives of the higher education system:
 - Gradual increase of access to higher education ; the strategic goal was to guarantee the civil right to tertiary initial and continuing education;
 - Improvement of higher education and university research quality, so that the degrees and certificated awarded upon completion of studies should open opportunities for a competitive professional activity in the domestic and international labour market;
 - *Decentralisation of academic and financial management of higher education* by strengthening university autonomy, and personal and institutional accountability at management level;
 - *Fostering active networking* between universities in Romania and abroad and developing partnerships between universities, companies and institutions at local and regional level so that higher education might become a source of sustainable civic and spiritual development of the Romanian society.

Moreover, on the 19th of June 1999 Romania signed the *Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education in Bologna*, and committed to the coordination of national higher education policies and to the implementation of the first actions leading to the gradual development of the European Higher Education Area.

- ◆ **2004-2010** was characterised both by further actions to achieve the four objectives indicated above and by strong concern for the compatibility of the Romanian higher education with the European recommendations and standards, for fostering individual and institutional performance and competitiveness. Among the recently adopted measures we may mention:
 - Re-organisation of the Romanian higher education according to the recommendations *detailing the specificity of the three study cycles⁹ under the Bologna Process, generalisation of the implementation of the credit transfer system (ECTS) and of the Diploma Supplement*. The traditional long term higher education programmes (usually 5 years of study) were replaced by bachelor degree and master's degree programmes. The movement started in the academic year 2005/2006 and was accomplished in 2008/2009 in most of the study fields. The labour market is still not fully making a differentiation between a graduate holding a bachelor diploma after successful completion of a 3 or 4 year programme (180 or 240 ECTS) and the holder of a master's degree diploma which is awarded after another 1 or 2 years of studies (20 to 120 ECTS).

⁹ *Law no. 288/2004 on the organisation of university studies*, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 614, July 7, 2004. Mention should be made of all secondary legislation provisions passed during 2005-2009 for the enforcement of this Law.

The involvement of employers, professional associations, sectoral committees and other stakeholders in the description of qualifications in higher education proved to be an effective means to disseminate the distinctive labour market value of the diplomas awarded after completion of first and second cycle studies.

The mission to further disseminate the information related to the differentiation of higher education qualifications is now strongly supported by the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education – RNCIS – a electronic platform which offers for free comprehensive description of the learning outcomes for each study programme provided by Romanian universities. Its full compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education generates a competitive advantage in the trans-national mobility of students and graduates and eases the quick insertion in the labour market.

- *Change in the quality assurance philosophy by complementing the accreditation mechanism* with standards and procedures aiming at the development of a new quality culture at the level of each higher education institution. The mission of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ARACIS¹⁰ is not only to perform (on demand) the external evaluation of the study programmes and of the institutional capacity, but also to support the internal evaluation process, to advise higher education institutions and to disseminate good practices in the entire sector.¹¹
- The National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment – ACPART¹² was designated by the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE) compatible with the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ EHEA)*. Through the Methodology applied, ACPART met this requirement and, at the same time, ensured compatibility with the principles, criteria and procedures for the description of qualifications for lifelong learning, as laid out by the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council*¹³. These are developed in a distinct paragraph of this Self-certification Report.
- In order to promote attractiveness of higher education in Romania, as well as competitiveness of Romanian universities, the first legal provisions on the voluntary association of higher education institutions in university consortia¹⁴, based on common interests and academic values, on mutual support in the competition for national and European research grants etc. were adopted during this stage.

¹⁰ ARACIS replaced CNEAA, and took over the tasks of the entity, which operated during 1993-2005.

¹¹ Government Expeditious Ordinance no 75/2005 on quality assurance in education, passed by the Romanian Parliament with amendments laid out by Law no 86/2006, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 350 of April 19, 2006. Also, all relevant regulations related to the organisation and operation of ARACIS, as well as to the external evaluation methodology, standards and performance indicators used by ARACIS in the external evaluation process.

¹² ACPART is one of the entities under the subordination of the Ministry of Education, which ensures operative interaction between the structures of the central administration and universities. ACPART was appointed as national agency responsible for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education at the end of 2005.

¹³ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 23, 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008 C 111/1).

¹⁴ Law no 287/2004 on university consortia, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 614, of July 7, 2004

- Other initiatives focused on fostering the partnerships between universities and industry, central and local administration, not-for-profit organisations, as well as on raising awareness on the role of universities in the lifelong learning.

Strategic projects have played a crucial role in promoting all these initiatives. Such projects focus on fundamental issues related to the Romanian higher education system, such as:

- A strategic vision on the Romanian higher education until 2025;
- Implementation of a methodology on the development of study programmes in terms of learning outcomes and an online register of university qualifications;
- Development of structured instruments for the differentiation and ranking of universities based on their assumed mission and on their research performance;
- Design and implementation of the National Student Enrolment Registry;
- Enhancement of quality and efficiency of doctoral studies and advanced post-doctoral research internships;
- Updating the study programme external and internal evaluation methodologies, with a focus on the educational effectiveness and on the competitiveness of learning outcomes in the labour market.

2.3. Snapshot of the Romanian higher education system in the academic year 2009-2010

During the past two decades, the higher education registered an important quantitative growth: the number of public universities increased and there private higher education developed at a fast pace. The distribution of active higher education institutions in the academic year 2009-2010 according to longevity indicates, on the one hand that university education has historical traditions in Romania and, on the other hand, that the system has witnessed significant expansion during the past 20 years. Of the total higher education institutions in Romania:

- 18% are over 100 years old;
- 23% are between 51 - 100 years old;
- 7% are between 21 - 50 years old;
- 52% are 20 years old at the most.

During the academic year 2009-2010, there were 109 active higher education institutions in Romania. Of these 109, 56 are accredited public institutions (49 civil higher education institutions and 7 military higher education institutions), 29 are private higher education institutions, and other 24 private higher education institutions operate on provisional authorisation or are under accreditation.

All these higher education institutions provide about 330 first cycle programmes (Bachelor) within 74 study fields, according to data provided by the Ministry of Education. All accredited institutions also provide second cycle (Master) programmes, estimated to a number of 2570 study programmes of 3-4 semesters (90 to 120 ECTS). In order to provide third cycle programmes (doctoral studies), public and private accredited universities must apply with the National Council for the Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates – CNATDCU, which together with ARACIS perform an evaluation of the institutional capacity and of the scientific performance before granting the right to organise doctoral studies. During the 2009-2010 academic year, 57 universities and the Romania Academy were granted the right to develop doctoral study programmes. Admission to a higher education programme is based on competition open to all successful graduates of the previous educational cycle, according to the graduation diploma awarded by a legally recognised public or private institution.

Higher education in Romania is delivered in universities, academies, institutes, higher education schools and other similar institutions¹⁵ Nevertheless, beyond this list of official categories of higher education institutions there is a wide variety from the study field perspective: some universities have a more general profile and group a bigger or smaller number of study fields, while others have a specialised profile (medicine and pharmacy, technical universities, architecture and urban planning, agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, music etc.). There is high diversity as well when considering the number of students enrolled: there are big universities with over 50,000 students, medium-sized universities with 20,000-25,000 students, but also small universities (less than 20,000 students), while some specialise institutes barely reach several hundreds of students.

¹⁵ Art. 114 (2) of the National Education Law no 1/2011, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 18 of January10, 2011 (hereinafter quoted as NEL 1/2011). This text reproduces the list already stipulated by the 1995 Education Law.

Despite the impressive number of higher education institutions and the four-time increase of the student population during the past 20 years, in 2009 Romania rated 414 students in 10 000 inhabitants (according to the statistics annual).

2.4. Qualification levels in Higher Education

The higher education system in Romania has a three-cycle structure, complying with the Bologna system: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate. The three study cycles of the higher education are also legally mapped against levels 6, 7 and 8 of the European Qualifications Framework, as indicated below:

Table 10 Qualifications of the 3 cycle in the Romanian higher education from a European perspective

	National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Romania	Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area	Romania's National Qualifications Framework	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
Higher Education	Doctorate	Third cycle	Level 8	Level 8
	Master	Second cycle	Level 7	Level 7
	Bachelor	First cycle	Level 6	Level 6

Besides the three study cycles, *the National Education Law* in force since February 2011 provides for the post-university continuing training and personal development studies which do not lead to qualifications, but to certification of specific professional competences acquired by trainees during the respective study programme¹⁶.

2.5. Types of diplomas and awards

The qualifications acquired by the graduates of higher education study programmes in Romania are attested by 3 types of diplomas: Bachelor/engineer/medical doctor, urban planner diploma, Master diploma and PhD diploma. Competences acquired through post-university continuing training and personal development programmes are attested by certificates and other documents. All these diplomas, certificates and documents may be issued only by accredited higher education institutions and only for accredited study programmes and modes; they are similar for the same study programme, irrespective of the study mode.

Moreover, all these diplomas and certificates are issued upon graduation of a study cycle, which means that the learning outcomes they attest correspond to the level of qualification indicated by the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The **Bachelor** study programmes¹⁷ may be provided as full-time, part-time or distance learning education. They usually cover a work load corresponding to a minimum of 180 ECTS (3 years study programmes), may reach in some fields of study a maximum of 240 ECTS (4 years of study programme), correspond to first cycle programmes in the QF/EHEA and can be referenced to EQF/NQF level 6.

¹⁶ NEL 1/2011, art.173.

¹⁷ NEL 1/2011, art.150-152.

The legislation provides for exceptions in case of study programmes leading to qualifications corresponding to EU regulated professions. Thus, in the field of pharmacy studies the workload corresponds to 300 ECTS, the duration of a full study programme is of five years, while for medicine, dental medicine, veterinary medicine the workload is of 360 ECTS, and the duration of Bachelor degree studies is of six academic years.

The qualification titles and awards granted after successful completion of a first cycle study programme are the following ones: “*diploma de licență*” (bachelor diploma), “*diplomă de inginer*” (engineer diploma), “*diplomă de licență de doctor medic*” (medical doctor diploma) or “*diplomă de urbanist*” (urban planner diploma) and specifies the respective field of study. These diplomas offer the necessary data and information that describe the study programme, including the learning mode and the degree level. Moreover, the diplomas are issued free of charge with Diploma Supplements for all graduates who successfully passed the final examination. The Diploma Supplement is drafted in Romanian and in English.

The Master’s **degree** study programmes¹⁸ may be provided as full-time or part-time, have 1 or 2 years duration, cover a workload of minimum 60 and maximum 120 ECTS and can be referenced to the QF/EHEA as offering second cycle qualifications and to the EQF/NQF as level 7 qualifications.

The diploma awarded upon successful completion of a Master’s study programme and presentation of dissertation is the Master’s diploma and it comprises all necessary information to describe the study programme, including the learning mode; diplomas are issued with a Diploma Supplement, free of charge, drafted in Romanian and an international language.

For professions regulated by European legislation, recommendations or good practices, the first and second cycles of higher education may be provided within one study programme with 5-6 year duration, full-time mode. In this case, the graduation diplomas are equivalent to the Master’s degree ones.

Doctoral studies¹⁹ may be provided only as full-time programmes by accredited doctoral schools. There are two types of doctorate: the scientific doctorate and the professional doctorate (in the fields of arts and sport). The successful completion of doctoral studies leads to a PhD diploma or a third cycle diploma in the QF/EHEA corresponding to a level 8 qualification in the EQF/NQF. The diploma certifying the award of the doctoral degree indicates specifically the disciplinary or the inter-disciplinary field for the scientific doctorate or the professional field for the professional doctorate.

2.6. National Education Law and perspectives for the evolution of higher education in Romania

Raising education level of the population is a national priority in the knowledge-based economy. This assumption led to the conclusion that a new legal framework is needed. The new National Education Law was designed to reflect and foster the coherence and dynamism of the components of the education system.

After all Parliament Parties agreed in 2008 upon a National Education Pact, the National Education Law was enacted in the end of 2010 and published in the Official Gazette as Law no 1/2011. Its provisions are in force since early February 2011, 30 days after the day of publication.

¹⁸ NEL 1/2011, art.153-157.

¹⁹ NEL 1/2011, art.158, 168-169.

2.6.1. Overall provisions on higher education

According to the National Education Law, higher education in Romania builds upon a set of principles²⁰, which combine university autonomy an academic freedom with public accountability of higher education institutions.

Thus, if **university autonomy** entitles the university community to define its own mission, institutional strategy, structure, activities, organisation and operation, as well as to decide on the management of the physical and human resources, **public accountability** means that any higher education institution, public or private, is under the obligation to comply with the legislation in force, its Charter and with the national and European policies in the field of higher education, to apply regulations in force on quality assurance and evaluation in higher education, to observe equity and university ethics policies, to ensure management efficiency and efficient use of public funds, to ensure transparency of all decisions and activities, to observe the academic freedom of the teaching staff, the auxiliary teaching and research staff, as well as the rights and liberties of students.

Other important principles underpinning the organisation of higher education in Romania are the principle of independence of ideologies, religions and political doctrines, the principle of national and international free movement of students, teaching staff and researchers, the principle of consultation of social partners in the decision-making process, and the principle of student-centred education.

2.6.2. Institutional provisions

The National Education Law indicates that higher education institutions in Romania may be public, private or denominational, all being not-for-profit legal entities; the law also stipulates that all types of higher education in Romania are of public interest and apolitical²¹. On these grounds, the law opens opportunities for the private higher education institutions to benefit from additional funding from public sources, just like public institutions, in order to stimulate high performance of institutions and study programmes.

The Law also provides that the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport relies on the support of national advisory bodies, which are based on professional and moral prestige: National Council of Statistics and Forecast for Higher Education (CNSPIS), National Council for the Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU), National Council of Scientific Research (CNCS), Advisory Board for Research, Development and Innovation (CCCDI), National Council of Higher Education Funding (CNFIS), National Council of University Libraries (CNBU), University Ethics and Management Board (CEMU) and National Council of Ethics for Research, Technological Development and Innovation (CNECSDTI)²².

The National Education Law provides²³ for strengthening the quality assurance in higher education and research. Moreover, it indicates study programmes ranking and classification of universities in three categories: (a) Universities focused on education; (b) Universities focused on

²⁰ NEL 1/2011, art.118, 123-124..

²¹ NEL 1/2011, art.114.

²² NEL 1/2011, art.217.

²³ NEL 1/2011, art.193.

education and scientific research, or universities focused on education and artistic creation; (c) Universities focused on advanced research and education.

The Law also stipulates that evaluation for the ranking of study programmes and classification of universities is performed by a consortium made of: ARACIS, including representatives of students, CNCS, CNATDCU and an international specialist body selected on competition basis; as an exception, the first assessment after enacting this law may only be performed by an international body with competences in the higher education institution ranking and classification or by a foreign quality assurance agency registered with EQAR.

The ranking of study programmes and the classification of universities aim at facilitating convergence of resources, strengthening of highly performing institutions and raising of the overall level of higher education and university scientific research in Romania.

2.6.3. The National Qualifications Authority and its responsibilities with regard the lifelong learning

The National Education Law highlights the importance of lifelong learning²⁴ and the idea that it comprises in an integrative whole all levels and types of education, including higher education. By stipulating that the mission of higher education in Romania includes generation and transfer of knowledge towards society through university initial and continuing training, in order to foster the individual's personal development and employability and to meet the labour market competence needs²⁵, the National Education Law provides for setting up the National Authority for Qualifications, with the following roles : to develop the National Qualifications Framework based on the European Qualifications Framework, to manage the National Qualifications Register and the National Adult Training Providers Register and to ensure the compatibility of the national qualifications system with the other existing European and international qualifications systems²⁶. According to the law, the National Qualifications Framework is an instrument for the classification of qualifications against a set of criteria related to specific learning levels and at integrating and coordinating all national qualifications sub-systems from a lifelong learning perspective, may they be general secondary education, technical and vocational education, continuing vocational training, apprenticeship or higher education, formal, informal and non-formal learning etc.

With specific reference to higher education qualifications, already integrated in the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education prior to the National Education Law, the latter provides that each study programme should be consistent with a qualification profile defined by NQF, and the correlation between the curriculum and the qualification provided is a compulsory criterion in the evaluation of the respective study programme and of the higher education institution providing it²⁷.

²⁴ NEL 1/2011, art.1-3.

²⁵ NEL 1/2011, art.117.

²⁶ NEL 1/2011, art.340-342.

²⁷ NEL 1/2011, art.137.

Chapter III

Romanian National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education – Identity and Development

3.1. NQFHE - overview

The Romanian NQFHE refers to the description of qualifications in higher education. The Romanian NQFHE is fully compatible with the overall framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. It also takes into consideration the European Commission's documents on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF).

The main purpose of the NQFHE is to contribute to the development, validation and promotion of qualifications and study programmes provided by higher education institutions, to their transparent correlation with the dynamics of the labour market needs.

The Romanian NQFHE has several significant **functions** in the higher education system:

- It defines the structure of the Romanian higher education qualifications;
- It ensures transparency and coherence of qualifications and degrees awarded by universities;
- It sets the standards and procedures for the analysis, evaluation and inclusion of qualifications in NQRHE;
- It structures and regulates the university curriculum according to the study cycles of the Bologna process, fields of study, curricula and disciplines;
- It provides a vast database to be capitalised on at national and international level;
- It includes references to all qualifications provided by higher education institutions;
- It allows for an appraisal of the compatibility of Romanian qualifications with the EU qualifications system;
- It facilitates trans-national recognition and professional mobility of graduates.

NQFHE is a constituent part of the National Qualifications Framework in Romania. In compliance with the provisions of the 2011 National Education Law, the National Qualifications Framework structures all the qualifications into 8 levels of formal, non-formal and informal education and training: level 8 – doctoral studies, level 7- Master's studies, level 6 – Bachelor studies; levels 5 to 1 are currently under development at the National Qualifications Authority and refer to qualifications in the non-university education and training

3.1.1. Key concepts

The key concepts used in defining the NQFHE are: **qualification, learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competence.**

Qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards²⁸. Thus, the qualification is the formal acknowledgement of the value of the individual learning outcomes for the

²⁸ "Recommendation of the European parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning" in the Official Journal of the European Union, C 111 of 6.05.2008 (2008/C 111/01), Annex 1 – Definitions, p. 4.

labour market, as well as for the continuing education and training, by means of a study document (diploma, certificate or attestation) awarding the legal right to practice a profession/trade. Each qualification in the NQFHE is defined in terms of **learning outcomes** and is centred on the concept of **competence** (Figure 3.1).

Learning outcomes means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on successful completion of a learning process. Learning outcomes are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence²⁹. Thus, the learning outcomes are a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences a person has acquired or is able to demonstrate upon completion of the learning process during a certain educational cycle.

Knowledge means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual³⁰.

Skill means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)³¹. Skills include certain types of operating structures, from dexterity to interpretation and problem-solving capacities.

Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy³². Competences can be classified in two categories (Figure 3.1.):

- a) Professional competences;
- b) Transversal competences.

By **professional competence** we understand the proven capacity to select, combine and use adequately knowledge, skills and other attainments (such as values and attitudes) which are specific to a professional activity in order to solve successfully problem situations related to the respective profession, effectively and efficiently.

Transversal competences are those capacities that transcend a certain field or study programme, having a transdisciplinary nature: teamwork skills, oral and written communication in mother tongue/foreign language, use of ICT, problem solving and decision making, recognition of and respect for diversity and multiculturalism, learning autonomy, initiative and entrepreneurship, openness to lifelong learning, respecting and improving professional values and ethics etc.

These key concepts serve to the description of a **learning outcomes based qualification**.

A pre-requisite for referencing a national qualification framework against the European meta-frameworks of qualifications consists in the use of learning outcomes in the description of qualifications by applying the level descriptors.

The level descriptors are neutral reference definitions that are applicable to all forms of qualifications obtained in the end of a formal, informal or non-formal education or training and/or to all sectoral qualifications. In other words, level descriptors represent qualifications' criteria or

²⁹ Ibidem;

³⁰ Ibidem;

³¹ Ibidem;

³² Ibidem;

standards that facilitate the understanding of the progression of a graduate's qualification from a study cycle to another.

The Romanian NQFHE is learning outcomes based and the **level descriptors** involved in its design **are more detailed** than those used for defining the QF/EHEA or the EQF. On the other hand, the Romanian level descriptors fully comply with the content and coherence of the system of Dublin Descriptors as tables 2-4 show.

In the same time, the NQFHE construction is taking into consideration the various missions of higher education, i.e.: education, personal development, citizenship, knowledge production, employability.

3.1.2. Descriptors of a higher education qualification

Professional competences are the integrated and dynamic unit of knowledge and skills:

Knowledge, as cognitive dimension and structural element of the competence, is expressed in terms of the following descriptors:

- (1) Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language;
- (2) Explanation and interpretation;

Skills, as functional-actional dimension and structural element of the competence, are expressed in terms of the following descriptors:

- (3) Application, transfer and problem solving;
- (4) Critical and constructive reflection;
- (5) Creative-innovative conduct;

Transversal competences are values and attitudes that transcend a certain study programme/field and are expressed in terms of the following descriptors:

- (6) Autonomy and responsibility;
- (7) Social interaction;
- (8) Personal and professional development.

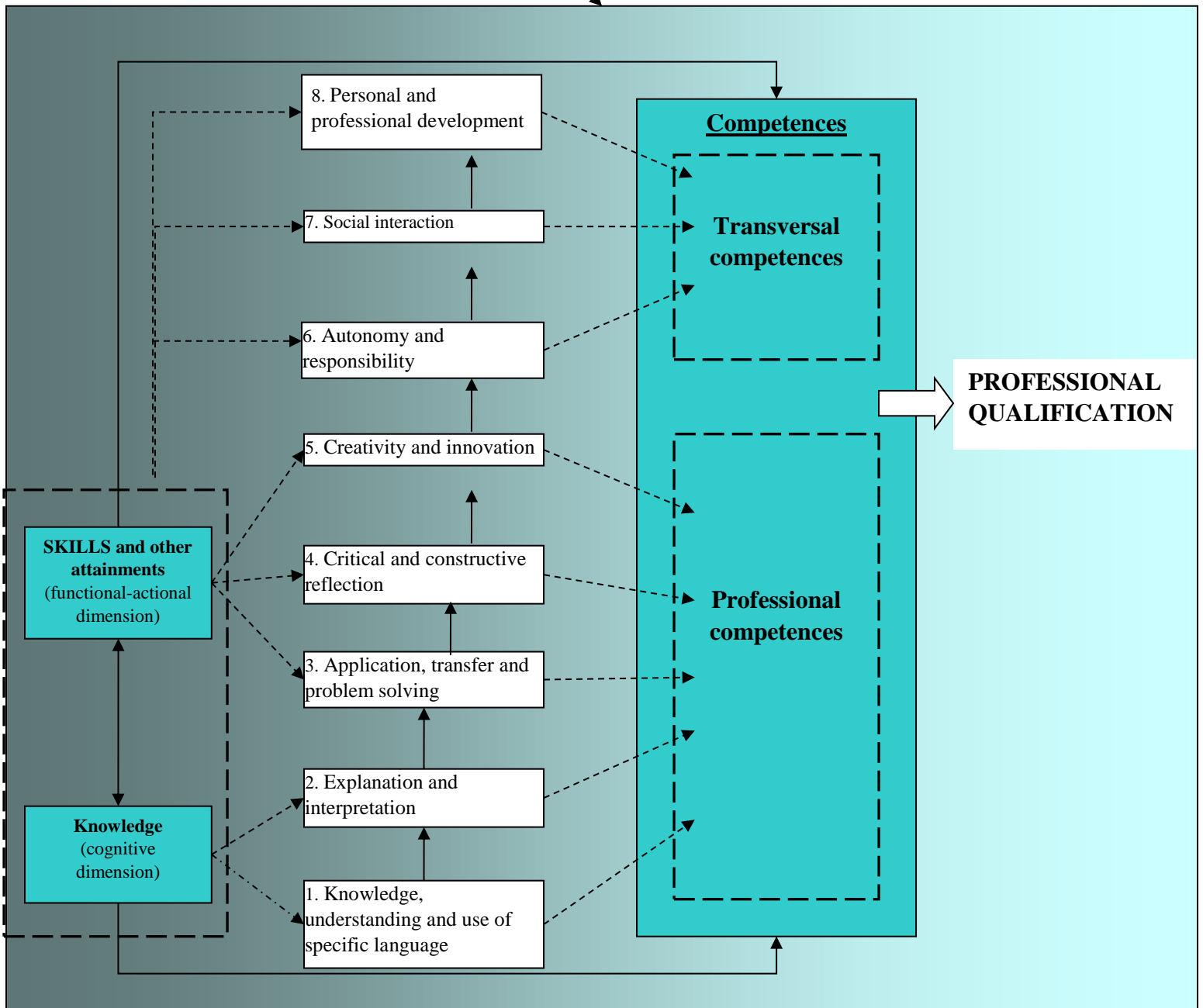


Figure 3.101 Learning outcomes

3.1.3. Conceptual-methodological model for describing a higher education qualification

The conceptual-methodological model is a reference framework developed for the analysis, description and interpretation of qualifications in higher education.

The structure and contents of the model capitalize on descriptors of the overarching framework for qualifications for the European Higher Education Area as well as on content elements of models that already enjoy the positive appreciation of European experts (the British, French, Irish, Maltese models etc).

At the same time, the Romanian model has its own identity; it integrates categories and types of competences, qualification levels and specific descriptors while following consistently the conceptual design presented in the above paragraphs. The essential elements of this model are the NQFHE Matrix (Figure 3.2.) and two complementary instruments, included in the Appendix to this report, namely: Grid 1, representing a learning Outcomes based description of a HE qualification (Annex 1) and Grid 2, representing curriculum to support the learning outcomes and correlation with the number ECTS credits (Annex 2).

3.1.4. National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Matrix

The **NQFHE Matrix** includes: qualification levels, learning outcomes expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences as well as the level descriptors for qualifications in higher education.

The **generic descriptors** introduced in the matrix in the first column indicate (in a vertical bottom listing) allow for the *description* of qualifications and, at the same time, formulate the necessary landmarks for the *assessment* of the competence level. The **level descriptors** for each type of learning outcomes detail *on a horizontal perspective* the generic descriptors for each qualification level: Bachelor, Master's, and Doctorate for each type of competence.

From a structural point of view, the **NQFHE Matrix** integrates professional and transversal competences, each of the two categories of competences having its legitimacy and importance in practising a profession. They form a solid couple that expresses the professional efficiency and effectiveness of a graduate that successfully finished a higher education programme.

Professional competences are expressed in terms of knowledge and skills, which cover comprehensively the professional expertise for any qualification, while **transversal competences** are structured as role competences and personal and professional development competences. These take into account the social and group context of practising a profession, as well as the awareness of the continuing training need.

The matrix is an integrative approach of higher education qualifications and it provides two perspectives for the analysis of these qualifications: vertical and horizontal.

The vertical analysis indicates the progress in professional competences from the level of knowledge and understanding (generic descriptor 1), the basic level of a learning outcome, **to the creative and innovative level** (generic descriptor 5), the highest level of training. Thus, professional competences are analysed and described in light of the generic descriptors (1 to 5).

The horizontal analysis presents a generic descriptor against the three university cycles: Bachelor, Master's and Doctorate. In this case, the descriptors highlight the competence development and the increase in the professional qualification level. One can notice that the model

targets another type of progress, suggesting an increase in the *added value* for each type of learning outcome with the progress from one university qualification level to another.

The vertical perspective emphasizes that a certain level of competence can be reached only if the subordinated levels have been achieved and consolidated.

The horizontal perspective demonstrates that each level of competence related to the three study cycles must integrate the previous levels. As a result, each level of a given competence has a relative autonomy, being conditioned by prior attainments, both horizontally and vertically (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.102 NQFHE Matrix

			DOCTORATE		
			BACHELOR	MASTER'S	
Transversal competences	Personal and professional development competences	8. Personal and professional development	Awareness of the need for continuing training; efficient use of learning techniques and resources for personal and professional development	Self-control of the learning process, diagnosis of training needs, reflective analysis on own professional activity	Development of creativity-centred projects as the basis for self-accomplishment
	Role competences	7. Social interaction	Familiarisation with the teamwork-specific roles and activities and with task allocation for subordinated levels	Assuming management roles/functions for the activities within professional groups or institutions	Assuming responsibility and capacity to organise and lead the activities of professional groups, scientific research groups or institutions
		6. Autonomy and responsibility	Responsible performance of professional tasks in an autonomous manner, with qualified assistance	Undertaking complex professional tasks under autonomy and professional independence conditions	Innovative initiation and development of complex theoretical and practical projects
		5. Creativity and innovation	Development of professional projects by using well-known principles and methods within the field	Development of professional and/or research projects using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods in an innovative manner	Design and undertake original research, based on advanced methods leading to the development of scientific and technological knowledge and/or of the research methodologies
		4. Critical and constructive reflection	Adequate use of standard assessment criteria and methods to appraise the quality, merits and limitations of processes, programmes, projects, concepts, methods and theories	Pertinent and appropriate use of assessment criteria and methods to formulate judgements and fundamental constructive decisions	Critical-constructive assessment of projects and scientific research results, appraisal of the stage of theoretical and methodological knowledge; identification of knowledge and applicative priorities within the field
	Functional-actional dimension	3. Application, transfer and problem solving	Use of basic principles and methods for solving well defined problems/situations that are typical to the field, with qualified assistance	Integrated use of the conceptual and methodological apparatus in incompletely defined situations in order to solve new theoretical and practical problems	Selection and use of advanced principles, theories and methods of knowledge, transfer of methods from one field to another, interdisciplinary approaches to solve new and complex theoretical and practical problems
		2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of basic knowledge to explain and interpret various types of concepts, situations, processes, projects etc. that are related to the field	Use of specialised knowledge in order to explain and interpret new situations, in wider contexts associated to the respective field	Use of advanced principles and methods to explain and interpret, from multiple perspectives, new and complex theoretical and practical situations/problems that are specific to the respective field
	Cognitive dimension	1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	Knowledge and understanding of basic concepts, theories and methods within the field and the specialisation area; their adequate use in professional communication	In-depth knowledge of a specialisation area and, within it, of the programme specific theoretical, methodological and practical developments; appropriate use of specific language in communication with different professional environments	Systematic, advanced knowledge of concepts, research methods, controversies and new hypothesis specific to the field; communication with specialists from related fields
		Learning outcomes	Generic descriptors	Level descriptors	

3.2. NQFHE – components

The identity of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education is shaped by 10 components, structured on 3 levels:

A.Determining factors and processes for qualifications development (components 1,2,3, 4 and 5);

B.Description and recognition of qualifications (components 6, 7 and 8);

C.Impact on the training process, on the one hand, and on social development and innovation, and on the quality of life, on the other hand (components 9 and 10).

D.The 10 components create a unitary whole where each component builds upon the value and functions of the others (Fig.3.3).

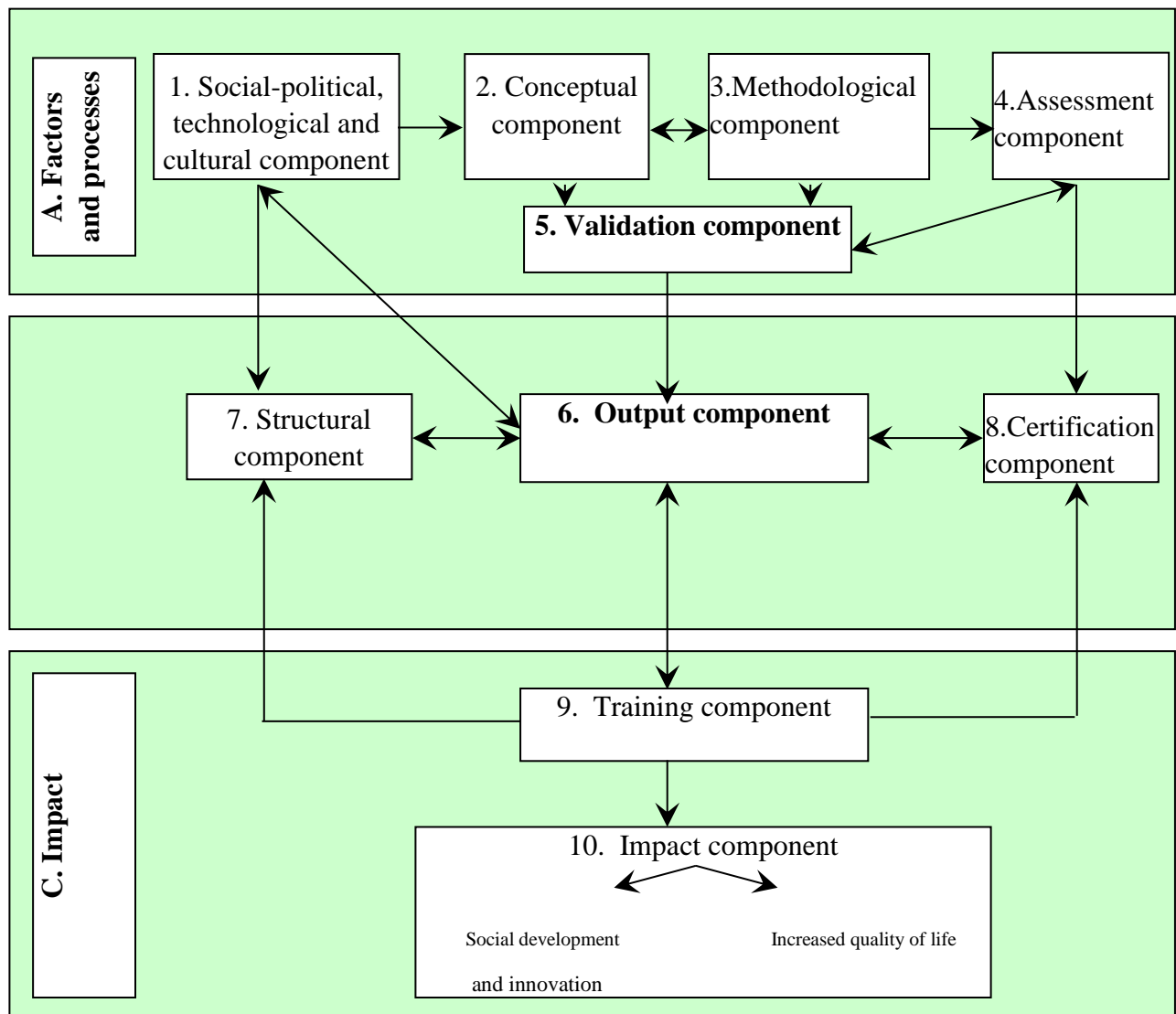


Figure 3.103 The ten components of the Romanian NQFHE and their interlinkages

1 **The social-political, technological and cultural component**

The NQFHE design and implementation involve links with social development projects, meeting the requirements of the knowledge society, lifelong learning and labour market. In the development of the NQFHE there was a focus on ensuring compliance with the European and national policies on qualifications description. NQFHE in Romania was developed so that it does not only allow for adaptation to the dynamics of existing professions, but also for the anticipation or forecasting of new ones.

2 **The conceptual component** includes the concepts and principles underlying the NQFHE design and implementation. They provide the theoretical basis for another component, namely the methodological-instrumental component.

3 **The methodological component** includes the conceptual matrix, the tools used to analyse and describe qualifications.

4 **The assessment component** encompasses the system of assessment types and procedures used for higher education qualifications. The minimum performance standards provided to demonstrate each competence defining the respective qualification are of outmost interest.

5 **The validation component** means that the designed NQFHE is subject to various subsequent analyses and evaluations.

6 **The output component** is illustrated by the types of qualifications and their correlations according to fields and to the three levels of qualification indicated above.

7 **The structural component**, in line with the Bologna process, focuses on three of the eight levels of qualification, namely: Bachelor university studies, corresponding to EQF level 6, Master's university studies, corresponding to EQF level 7, and doctoral university studies, corresponding to EQF level 8.

8 **The certification component** includes four categories of procedures:

- Development of relevant documents for validation of a university qualification, by the university study programmes providers;
- Qualification evaluation and accreditation procedures – by relevant bodies;
- Registration and updating procedures for the National Qualifications Register for Higher Education (NQRHE).
- Ensuring compatibility with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area as well as with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Annex 3)

9 **The training component** is based on the qualifications descriptions and the related curriculum documents (educational plans, curricula, discipline plans) and it relies on principles and strategies allowing the specification of competences defining each qualification.

10 **The impact component** evaluates qualifications designed and developed. The evaluation of impact takes into account both the contribution of qualifications to the social development and innovation and the effects on personal development and on the improvement of quality of life.

Figure 3.2 highlights the relationships between the ten components. The output component (6) holds a core position as the types of qualifications are developed, on the one hand, based on the social, political, technological and cultural component (1), on the conceptual-theoretical

component (2), on the methodological-instrumental component (3), on the assessment component (4) and on the validation component (5) and, on the other hand, on the qualification levels provided by the structural component (7): level 6-Bachelor, level 7-Master's and level 8-Doctorate. Component 8 (certification) aims at the social/national/international recognition of a qualification.

This system of components was put in place through the Methodology on the development and implementation of NQFHE in Romania, approved as Ministerial Order no 4430/2009.

3.3. NQFHE Relevance

The current version of the NQFHE model is the result of various argumentations, analyses and evaluations. All these actions led to a review of the initial version, in order to improve and validate the current structure.

The arguments to support the relevance and consistence of the current NQFHE model are as follows:

- Compatibility of the NQFHE design and structure with the principles of the Bologna process and with the EU documents concerning academic and professional qualifications;
- Use of valuable advanced and recognised experience of EU countries in the development of qualifications systems;
- Critical assimilation and use, according to Romania's own needs, of theories and research on career development and progression (types of competences, assessment criteria, development stages);
- Development of marketing studies on the university educational provision and the labour market demand for diagnostic and forecasting purposes as well as for the quality check of the referenced NQFHE;
- Illustration of the underpinning NQFHE concept (principles, key concepts) by means of a set of methodological instruments (matrix, grids etc.) to ensure the internal coherence of the model;
- Organisation of workshops attended by representatives of universities, employers, professional associations, students and graduates to analyse and improve the quality of the NQFHE model and of the methodological instruments designed;
- Piloting by teams of specialists in various fields to analyse and assess the implementation of the NQFHE model;
- Development and recognition of the qualifications system within a field, based on the NQFHE model. Most of these activities were undertaken under PHARE projects, as well as with the financial support of the European Social Fund and of the Romanian Government under SOPHRD 2007-2013.

The way the Romanian NQFHE descriptors were formulated reflects the specificity of our higher education system and the profession's culture of Romania. At the same time, can be

substantially referenced to the QF/EHEA level descriptors and to the EQF specific level descriptors as it is demonstrated in Annex 3.

Table 11 Level descriptors for the First Cycle (Bachelor's degree) of the Romanian Higher Education compared to the Dublin Descriptors involved in the design of QF/EHEA

Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education		1st Cycle Dublin Descriptors for the Bologna structure of HE
Generic Descriptors	First Cycle Descriptors	
1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	Knowledge and understanding of basic concepts, theories and methods within the field and the specialisation area; their adequate use in professional communication.	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study; + Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences
2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of basic knowledge to explain and interpret various types of concepts, situations, processes, projects etc. that are related to the field.	
3. Application, transfer and problem solving	Use of basic principles and methods for solving well defined problems/situations that are typical to the field, with partial qualified assistance.	Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study
4. Critical and constructive reflection	Adequate use of standard assessment criteria and methods to appraise the quality, merits and limitations of processes, programmes,	Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on

	projects, concepts, methods and theories.	relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
5. Creativity and innovation	Development of professional projects on unpredictable problems by using principles and methods within the field in a creative or innovative manner.	
6. Autonomy and responsibility	Responsible performance of professional tasks in an autonomous manner, with qualified assistance.	Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
7. Social interaction	Familiarisation with the teamwork-specific roles and activities and with task allocation for subordinated levels.	
8. Personal and professional development	Awareness of the need for continuing training; efficient use of learning techniques and resources for personal and professional development.	Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy;
Number of ECTS	Typically include 180-240 ECTS credits. Study programmes referring to academic qualifications for EU regulated professions might reach 300-360 ECTS credits.	Typically include 180-240 ECTS credits.

This verification process contributes to trust and confidence building among all the Romanian stakeholders as well as among all the participating states in the Bologna framework. Compatibility with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education and transparency of criteria and procedures involved in the description of the qualifications in the Romanian higher education are defining components of this process.

The following three tables highlight the compatibility of the level descriptors used in the Romanian NQFHE with the Dublin Descriptors applied in order to make visible the differentiation between the Bologna study cycles as well as the progression of knowledge, skills and other learning outcomes from the first cycle to the second one and, eventually to the third cycle of higher education.

The Dublin Descriptors concerning communication skills (“can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences”) is mentioned twice in the last column of Table 2 as these skills help the graduate of a bachelor’s degree programme to demonstrate “knowledge and understanding”, to take over responsibilities and to interact with others.

Table 12 Level descriptors for the Second Cycle (Master’s degree) of the Romanian Higher Education compared to the Dublin Descriptors involved in the design of QF/EHEA

Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education		2nd Cycle Dublin Descriptors
Generic Descriptors	Second Cycle Descriptors	for the Bologna structure of HE
1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	In-depth knowledge of a specialisation area and, within it, of the programme specific theoretical, methodological and practical developments; appropriate use of specific language in communication with different professional environments.	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;
2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of specialised knowledge in order to explain and interpret new situations, in wider contexts associated to the respective field.	+ Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
3. Application, transfer and problem solving	Integrated use of the conceptual and methodological apparatus in incompletely defined situations in order to solve new theoretical and practical problems.	Can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study
4. Critical and constructive reflection	Pertinent and appropriate use of assessment criteria and methods to formulate	Have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate

	judgements and fundamental constructive decisions.	judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;
5. Creativity and innovation	Development of professional and/ or research projects using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods in an innovative manner.	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context
6. Autonomy and responsibility	Undertaking complex professional tasks under autonomy and professional independence conditions.	Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
7. Social interaction	Assuming management roles/ functions for the activities within professional groups or institutions.	
8. Personal and professional development	Self-control of the learning process, diagnosis of training needs, reflective analysis on own professional activity.	Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.
Number of ECTS	Typically include 60-120 ECTS credits at the second cycle level.	Normally carry 90-120 ECTS credits – minimum 60 ECTS credits at the second cycle level.

As mentioned above, the Dublin Descriptor concerning communication skills (“can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously”) is mentioned twice in the last column of Table 3 as these skills help a graduate of a master’s degree programme to demonstrate “knowledge of a specialisation area”, to undertake complex professional tasks and to assume roles and function within professional groups or institutions.

Table 13 Level descriptors for the Third Cycle (Doctorate) of the Romanian Higher Education compared to the Dublin Descriptors involved in the design of QF/EHEA

Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education		3rd Cycle Dublin Descriptors
Generic Descriptors	Third Cycle Descriptors	for the Bologna structure of HE
1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	Systematic, advanced knowledge of concepts, research methods, controversies and new hypothesis specific to the field; communication with specialists from related fields.	Have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; +
2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of advanced principles and methods to explain and interpret, from multiple perspectives, new and complex theoretical and practical situations/problems that are specific to the respective field.	
3. Application, transfer and problem solving	Selection and use of advanced principles, theories and methods of knowledge, transfer of methods from one field to another, interdisciplinary approaches to solve new and complex theoretical and practical problems.	Have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity
4. Critical and constructive reflection	Critical-constructive assessment of projects and scientific research results, appraisal of the stage of theoretical and methodological knowledge; identification of knowledge and applicative priorities within the field.	Are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas.

5. Creativity and innovation	Design and undertake original research, based on advanced methods leading to the development of scientific and technological knowledge and/or of the research methodologies.	Have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;
6. Autonomy and responsibility	Innovative initiation and development of complex theoretical and practical projects.	Can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; + Can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.
7. Social interaction	Assuming responsibility and capacity to organise and lead the activities of professional groups, scientific research groups or institutions.	
8. Personal and professional development	Development of creativity-centred projects as the basis for self-accomplishment.	

As seen, the communication skills are again more detailed in the Romanian NQFHE aiming at making aware universities and research institutes to focus on those skills which enable a holder of a PhD diploma to become a pro-active actor in the organization and in the society.

3.4. NQFHE Implementation in Romania

The NQFHE methodology indicates clear and detailed procedures for the registration of a new qualification, or for the amendment or removal of an existing qualification. Before the implementation of NQFHE and of the National Register for Qualifications in Higher Education (NQRHE), the study programmes were approved by Government Decision and managed by the Ministry of Education. For example, under the ESF-funded DOCIS project, implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education started based on the study programmes included in the Government Decision No. 635/2008. Qualifications related to these study programmes were developed and validated in *consortia*, then registered with NQRHE.

The implementation agency – ACPART, currently NQA – organized a series of preparatory meetings with representatives of both public and private universities with a clear training goal of the local experts, which were later involved in the learning outcomes, based description of the qualifications. In all these meetings, besides **professors and students, stakeholders** were also invited to have an active involvement.

The 73 consortia and numerous dissemination activities represented other opportunities for the implementation agency to bring together higher education institutions and stakeholders for in-depth discussion on the description of qualifications.

Another series of regional meetings was dedicated to the training of university representatives empowered by their respective institutions to access the electronic platform of the Register in order to add detailed information concerning the provided study programmes. To sum-up, ACPART adopted a pro-active strategy in a continuing enlargement of those involved in the design, implementation and use of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The validation of a new qualification and its registration in NQRHE involve the following stages:

Stage I: Preparation and submission of the application dossier for validating a qualification.

The applicant submits to ACPART, currently NQA a validation dossier for the university or post-university qualification proposed to be attested by a diploma or certificate that is recognised on the labour market and within the academic division of qualifications. This dossier is filled in distinctly for each type of qualification and includes the following documents: Application form for the new qualification ; Copies of the documents that grant the applicant – according to the Romanian legislation in force – the legal right to issue diplomas and/or certificates recognised by the labour market; Grid 1; Grid 2; Curriculum and discipline sheets (syllabi); Summary of the qualification description to be up-loaded in NQRHE after validation; Payment receipt of the evaluation fee.

Stage II: Qualification Evaluation and Validation

ACPART analyses and evaluates the dossier against the following criteria:

- Provider's eligibility to be granted the right to issue diplomas and/or certificates attesting university and/or post-university qualifications.
- Novelty as well as the match with the labour market needs
- Academic and professional relevance of the proposed qualification from the perspective of the academic division of knowledge.
- Consistency of the proposed qualification – the qualification covers the professional and transversal competences necessary upon programme graduation;
- Compliance with NRQHE registration rules, considering the level and field of study, according to the professional and transversal competences obtained after successful graduation of the study programme.

This stage involves a verification of both **administrative compliance** (verification of all components of the dossier) and **methodological compliance** (analysis and evaluation of dossiers), according to the procedures indicated in the Methodology. Following this verification and analysis, the qualification may be validated, delayed or rejected.

Stage III – ACPART issues a **Recommendation** based on the evaluation and validation of the qualification, which is one of the compulsory documents of the application dossier forwarded by universities to ARACIS – the Quality Assurance Agency in order to get the accreditation.

Stage IV - Registration with the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education and information dissemination

3.5. National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (NQRHE)

3.5.1. National and international context

Due to the growing dispersion of the information sources and to the increasing number of universities providing similar or own qualifications, the need to structure educational provision became increasingly stronger.

The concern for a systematic and structured classification of qualifications at international level is currently enhanced by the growing interest in a unitary presentation, ensuring visibility of educational provision at national or regional level and access to it for as many as possible. Wide access to such information facilitates the recognition of qualifications acquired in a country or another and to more opportunities for graduates of higher education institutions in the labour market.

Currently, the information source, which meets most adequately these objectives, is an IT application, a portal that allows unrestricted access at international level. In Romania, the National Qualifications Register was developed under a strategic ESF-funded project, as an instrument of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education, a portal using the most advanced IT technologies currently available. The information and data security mechanisms of the database management system provide secure access to information.

3.5.2. What is the NQRHE?

NQRHE is a link between universities, current and future students and employers and a tool for the identification, registration, permanent consultation and updating of qualifications. In order to facilitate communication and access to information at international level as well, the website is available both in Romanian and in English.

The NQRHE portal centralises descriptions of **all** higher education qualifications accredited by the national authority for the accreditation of higher education institutions (ARACIS). Thus, the users know that upon graduation of a higher education institution registered in the portal their degree is recognised at national and European level.

The NQRHE allows for **searching** qualifications registered in the system, it optimises the qualifications **management**, it increases the **visibility** of higher education institutions, it supports career guidance for students and it assists **employers** to **select** the employees with the right qualifications from potential candidates. Thus, the NQRHE portal targets several categories of users.

- Higher education graduates and their parents have available a unitary description of the study programmes provided by universities, indicating the competences graduates acquire upon successful completion of studies.
- Potential and current students have available a clear overview on the **occupations** they may practise after graduation.
- Graduates and students of higher education institutions will benefit from an easier recognition of diplomas reflecting the competences they acquired, especially for the lifelong learning process, in national or foreign higher education institutions.
- Employers can better select their future employees, based on the description of competences and the on-the-job training needs after employment will decrease. Moreover, once familiar with the educational provision, companies may actively participate in the improvement of the educational provision, by providing internship opportunities and involvement in the teaching process.
- For universities/faculties, the NQRHE is first of all an information and dissemination instrument for their own provision. Based on the NQRHE information, universities can compare their own provision with what other institutions offer and to adjust to better cope with the competition.
- Besides public information, the Ministry of Education has access to reports indicating the dynamics of qualifications registration with the NQFHE and may request more detailed analyses.

The information included in the NQRHE is structured according to the NQFHE Methodology. The search mechanisms allow for filtering the information according to the user's interests: the search option can filter by qualification, by degree awarded after graduation, by possible occupations, by geographic area, by study duration, by study level, etc. Each user may choose the level of detail in their search – from general information (e.g. competences acquired or list of faculties providing a certain qualification) to detailed information (e.g. detailed descriptors of competences or educational plans of faculties).

The portal includes a public section registering information on the accredited qualifications and a section dedicated to own provision of universities/faculties. Thus, the university autonomy in the implementation of study programmes is encouraged. Universities/faculties are solely responsible for the information they register in their own section.

The portal allows public access, without authentication, for all types of users to read the information stored. In order to introduce new information or to ensure portal administration, access requires authentication based on user name and password. The information is fully protected by information security mechanisms.

3.5.3. NQRHE – information tool

The NQRHE is a portal built upon an Oracle database allowing (in the public section, which requires no authentication) simple and advanced search and provides overall information on the DOCIS project partners and on the NQRHE.

The portal provides access to information by means of useful links. The simple search can be filtered by occupation, qualification, key words or NACE activities (Fig. 3.4).

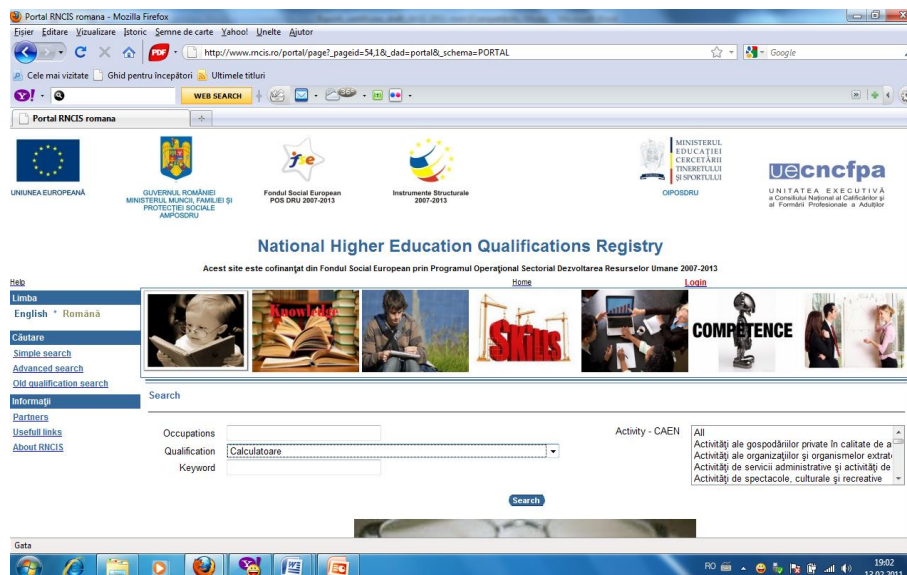


Figure 3.104 Simple search in NQRHE

Following the search, the list of qualifications matching the search criterion will be posted. In the next step, the user may search for a more detailed description of the qualification or for the list of universities/faculties providing that qualification (Fig. 3.5).

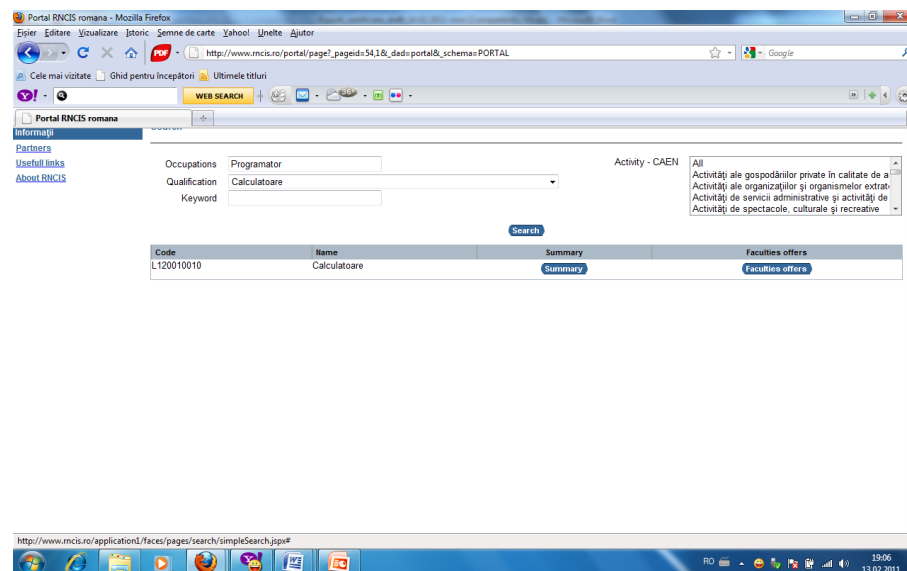


Figure 3.105 Simple search result

In order to facilitate precise information, the advanced search allows for the combination of several search criteria, such as learning mode, fundamental or study field, type of programme, programme duration, geographical area, entry requirements, teaching language etc. (Fig. 3.6).

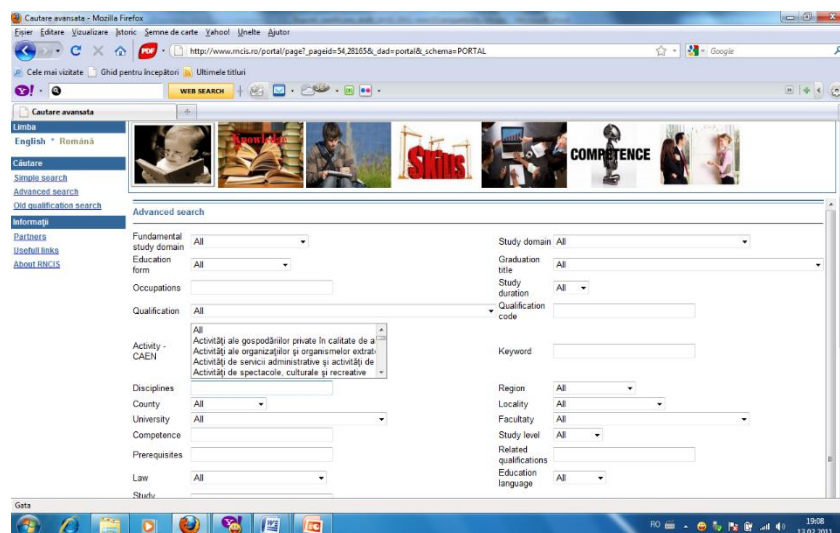


Figure 3.106 Advanced search criteria

Following the search, the list of qualifications matching the criteria will be posted on the screen. Detailed information, presented in compliance with the NQFHE Methodology may be obtained. The summary of the qualification and the description of competences may be printed (Fig. 3.7).

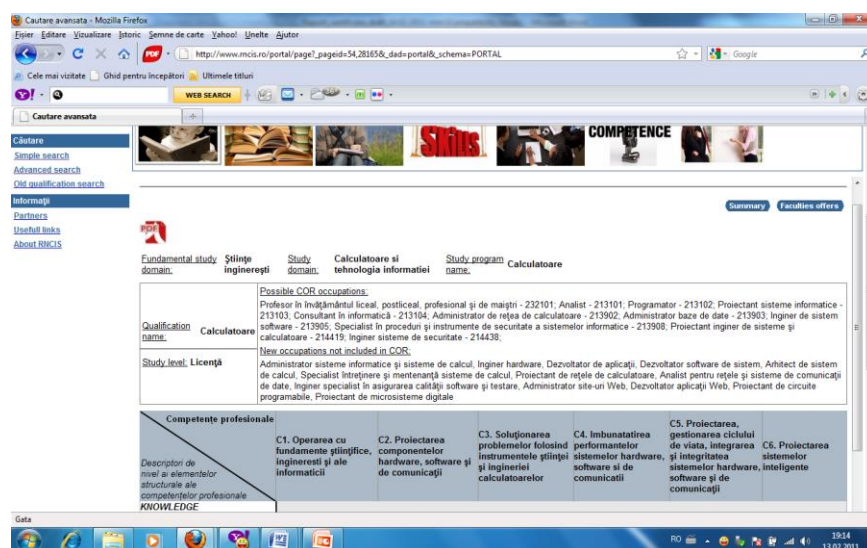


Figure 3.107 Qualification detailed description

Faculties may introduce their own educational provision: additional competences provided, grid 2 with the related educational plan and the link to the faculty/university website.

For better visibility of the higher education system, the portal allows for posting previous versions of qualifications, correlated with a current qualification. This can assist in tracing the qualification evolution (Fig.3.8).

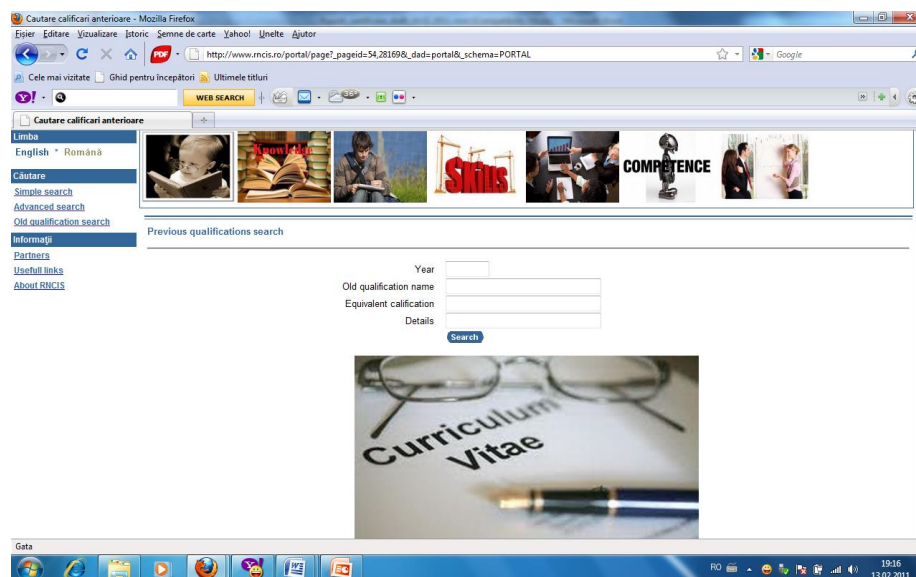


Figure 3.108 Search for previous qualifications

3.5.4. NQRHE – working instrument for faculties / universities

One of the important functions of the NQRHE is the support it provides for NQFHE management. More precisely, it ensures:

- **Verification of qualifications.** Upon registration, it checks whether the qualification was validated by the appropriate validation and that there is a sole registration.
- **Verification of educational provision** of universities/faculties. In order to be uploaded in the educational provision, the study programmes must be validated by ARACIS. Thus, the portal guarantees that upon graduation of a study programme published in the national register that degree is recognised at national/European level.
- **Archives of previous qualifications.** All changes made and validate are saved to archive. The qualifications, which are not provided anymore, are not removed from the system, their description can still be posted, and there is a mention that it is not valid anymore. Thus, the portal traces the qualifications evolution.
- **History of qualifications.** Due to the significant changes in the higher education field in the past half-century, there is a need to identify possible correspondence between the current qualifications and those awarded before the implementation of the Bologna Process. The portal includes a database, which may be interrogated by graduation year, for 1965-2010.
- **Comparison of various faculty provisions.** Following the search based on different criteria, we get the list of all faculties providing a certain qualification and their educational provision so that we can compare.
- **The diagnosis of the higher education system** and opportunities to correct issues identified. Using the advanced search, we may notice overlapping in the provision,

mismatches between the competences declared and the syllabi or between the syllabi and the study duration.

The NQRHE portal can also be accessed at <http://www.rncis.ro> (Fig. 3.9).

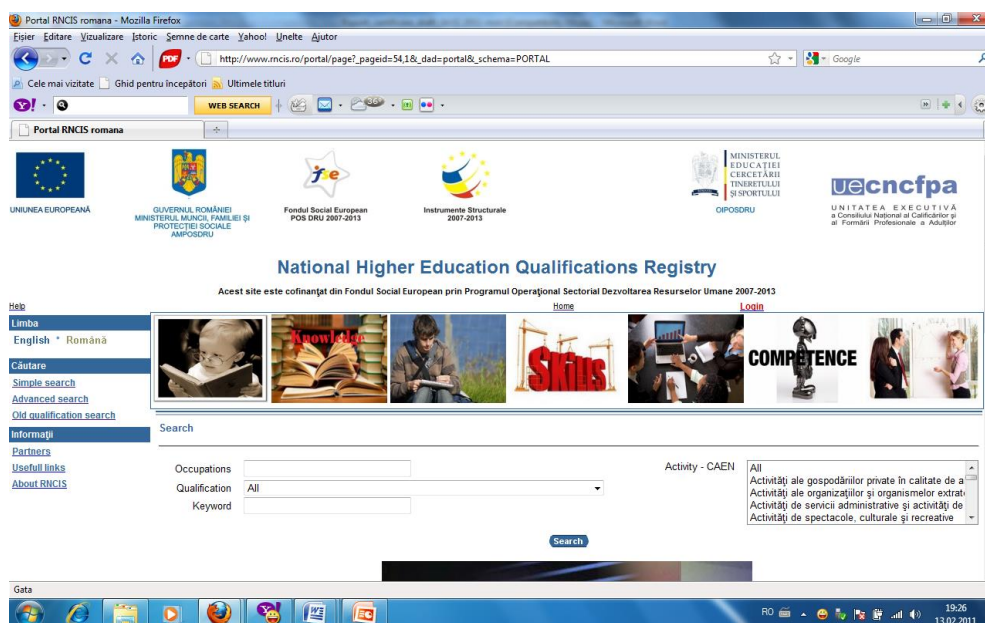


Figure 3.109 NQRHE Homepage

Chapter IV

Compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

4.1. Compatibility Criteria

Criterion 1

The Bergen Communiqué (2005) stated:

„The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education.”

The development of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Romania (NQFHE) was initiated in 2005, and NQFHE was designed as a sole fundamental instrument to determine the qualifications structure and ensure national recognition as well as international comparability and compatibility of qualifications acquired within the higher education system. The purpose of the NQFHE is to recognise, measure and relate all learning outcomes acquired in the higher education system (BMD) and ensure coherence of qualifications and degrees.

During the whole period, the implementation agency was systematically supported by the Ministry of Education in its endeavour, this support being an expression of the strong commitment of the Romanian authorities to implement all the Bologna framework agreements.

The development of the NQFHE included 3 stages: the institutional development stage, conceptual-methodological stage and the implementation stage.

1.1. The institutional development stage

By Government Decision no 1357/2005, the Romanian Government appointed the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment - ACPART public legal entity, specialised body subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport with the role of national authority for higher education qualifications.

ACPART ensured permanent cooperation with the Council of Europe for the implementation of the national qualifications framework in line with the Overall Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, as the director of ACPART was nominated as national representative for the consultation process organised at European level.

In June 2010, ACPART merged³³ with an institution having similar tasks in the pre-university and adult training sectors, under the name of the Executive Unit of the National Qualifications and Adult Training Council (UECNCFPA).

UECNCFPA is a public legal entity specialised body subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport. In October 2010, UECNCFPA became the National Coordination Point for the Qualifications Framework in Romania.

The National Education Law stipulates that the institution responsible for the management of the entire national qualifications framework is the National Authority for Qualification (ANC), set up by re-organisation of UECNCFPA, under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport³⁴.

1.2. Conceptual-methodological stage

During 2006-2009, in its capacity as national authority for higher education qualifications, ACPART developed the NQFHE Methodology³⁵ and acted as coordinator and link between all stakeholders involved in the development of the NQFHE: higher education institutions, employers, trade unions, employers' associations, sectoral committees, students, parents. The Methodology design involved thorough consultation with all categories of stakeholders during regional meetings. The initial version of the Methodology was followed by a piloting exercise: 45 qualifications concerning first and second cycle study programmes were described according to the provisions of the initial Version of the Methodology in order to observe its applicability in the context of Romanian higher education institutions. A series of corrections and improvement resulted during these exercises. The piloting actions were funded from PHARE Programmes.

The final version of the *Methodology on the development of the NQFHE* was officially approved by the Ministry of Education and Research by Ministerial Order No 4430/29.06.2009. The legal provisions include the *Matrix of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education*, the working tools/grids for the description of qualifications and the *Implementation Guide*³⁶.

The Methodology was implemented without amendments by ACPART, currently NAQ, and its main provisions were included in the National Education Law no 1/2011, art. 341, al. (1) – (4)³⁷.

The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport – MERYYS is the official structure coordinating NAQ – the agency with specific responsibilities in the development of the national qualifications framework, including higher education qualifications.

³³ GEO no 74/2010 as amended by GEO no 132/ 2010

³⁴ *National Education Law* no 1/05.01.2011, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, Year 179 (XXIII), number 18 of January 10, 2011, art. 340, al. (1) – (4) and art. 342, al. (1) – (4).

³⁵ The authors of the Methodology are: Sorin Eugen ZAHARIA (coordinator), Gheorghe BARBU, Gheorghe BÂRLEA, Toma Leonida DRAGOMIR, Mihail KORCA, Mariana Ionela MOCANU, Bogdan Costin MURGESCU, Ioan NEACȘU, Dan POTOLEA, Steliana TOMA, Margareta Simona IVAN, Iuliana Marinela TRĂȘCĂ

³⁶ *The Order of the minister of education, research and youth on the use of the national qualifications framework* no 4430/29.06. was published in the Official Gazette *of Romania*, Part I, no 545 of 05.08.2009

³⁷ *National Education Law*, no 1/2011, published in the *Official Gazette*, Part I, no 18 of 10.01.2011.

1.3. The implementation stage

Implementation commenced in October 2008, under the ESF-funded project “Development of an operational system of qualifications in higher education – DOCIS” no 2/1.2/S/2, funder under the SOPHRD 2007-2013, by the European Social Fund and the Romanian Government. This stage involved the description of all higher education qualifications provided by universities in compliance with the GD no 635/2008, GD no 749/2009 and GD no 634/2010.

In order to facilitate the process, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport together with ACPART initiated and promoted the necessary documents for the NQFHE implementation: *Government Decision no 890/* on the titles of qualifications and awards granted to graduates of Bachelor higher education studies³⁸, as well as other documents on the use of Diploma Supplement for higher education: *Minister Order no 5289/September 9, 2008 on the Bachelor diploma and diploma supplement*, *Order no 4151/2010* on the Master diploma and the Diploma Supplement and *Minister Order no 5803/2010* on the approval of the Bachelor diploma, architect diploma and Diploma supplements models.

Therefore,

Criterion 1 has been met and is fully compliant with requirements stated by the Bergen Report.

³⁸ *Government Decision no 890/2008* on the titles of qualifications and awards granted to graduates of Bachelor higher education studies, published in the *Official Gazette*, Part I, no 269-29.08.2008.

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.

2.1. Context

The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE) was developed simultaneously with the implementation of other priorities of the Romanian higher education system: the continuing enhancement of quality assurance in universities, the improvement of dialogue and interaction among universities and the main stakeholders of their host region/country, the self certification of the compatibility of the NQFHE with the two reference tools at continental level:

- 1 The overarching **Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area** (QF/EHEA)³⁹ adopted in 2005 by European Ministers of Education on the proposal of the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks. In the context of the present Self-Certification Report, the main priority was to demonstrate the full compatibility of the Romanian NQFHE with QF/EHEA.
- 2 The **European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning** (EQF) published in 2008 by the European Commission⁴⁰ represents a referencing goal, which will be reached after the full development of the National Qualifications Framework, covering all the eight levels (under development).

The Dublin Descriptors – were circulated Europe wide starting with October 2004. They define a qualification obtained upon successful graduation of a study programme in terms of level of knowledge, professional skills and abilities as well as role attitudes, which are recognized in the labour market as job requirements.

Romanian higher education institutions introduced in their Mission Statement the concern for preparing the graduates to enter the current labour market, and by now are engaged in their first attempts to describe academic qualifications in specific terms of the labour market were marked.

The overarching European framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a meta-reference, which “supports better understanding of *how qualifications systems of the various states in the area are related to each other*”. *The framework for qualifications of the EHEA does not replace national frameworks. It augments them by providing a series of reference points whereby they can demonstrate their mutual compatibility*”.⁴¹ International transparency of the learning outcomes, international recognition of qualifications and

³⁹ *A Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area*. Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks. Published by the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Copenhagen, February 2005.

⁴⁰ *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)*. European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Brussels, 2008.

⁴¹ *A Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area*. Copenhagen, February 2005, pp. 57-58.

international mobility of learners and graduates are the three main purposes aimed when developing a national qualifications framework compatible with QF-EHEA.

The Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve 2009 Conference Communiqué underpins the consent of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education to have implemented the national qualifications frameworks by 2012 and to have prepared for self-certification against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the EHEA. Ministers recognize that this objective requires continued coordination at the level of EHEA with the other reference – the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.⁴²

It promotes “*both lifelong learning and equal opportunities in the knowledge-based society, as well as the further integration of the European labour market, while respecting the rich diversity of national education systems*”.⁴³

By 2012, all new qualification certificates diplomas and “*Europass*” documents issued by the competent national authorities contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level. At that moment, “*The EQF will relate different countries’ national qualifications systems and frameworks together around a common European reference – its eight reference levels.*”

2.2. Comparative Analysis of EHEA, EQF and NQFHE of Romania

Under the circumstances created by the European reference documents indicated above, Romania has revised its national legal framework to develop transparent and easily applicable links between the two meta-references (see Table 1, page 25).

Between the Romanian NQFHE and the FQ/EHEA there are consistent similarities with regard to: key concepts, goals, qualifications’ levels, study programmes’ duration, sequencing of higher education and learning outcomes for each study cycle.

On the other hand, the Romanian NQFHE and the EQF: have been designed for a common goal; have the same definition of the qualification; are based on the learning outcomes concept, allowing users to compare various specific aspects like level of knowledge, variety of skills and competences; have the same architecture. Moreover, The Romanian qualifications’ levels 6, 7, and 8 correspond to the EQF qualifications’ levels 6, 7, and 8.

As a conclusion, the National Qualifications Framework in Romania (NQFHE-RO) is compatible in structure and content with the two European meta-frameworks.

Therefore,

Criterion 2 has been met and is fully compliant with the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.

⁴² See article 12 in the *Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education*, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009.

⁴³ *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*. Official Journal of the European Union C 111, 06.05.2008, p. 3.

Criterion 3

The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits.

The NQFHE implementation is based on the *Methodology* providing clear advice on how learning outcomes are used in the design of a study programme and, implicitly, in the description of a qualification. The NQFHE matrix includes: qualification levels, learning outcomes expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences as well as the level descriptors for qualifications in higher education.

The level descriptors for each type of learning outcomes detail the generic descriptors for each type of competence and for each qualification level: Bachelor, Master's, and Doctorate.

From a structural point of view, the NQFHE matrix integrates professional and transversal competences, each of the two categories of competences having its legitimacy and importance in practising a profession. They form a solid unity of learning outcomes that expresses the professional efficiency and effectiveness of a study programme graduate. See details concerning the analytical properties of the Matrix under paragraph 3.1.4 of this Report.

Romanian universities started using the ECTS system in mid-'90s, as a tool for stimulating the international mobility of the.

The use of ECTS became necessary within the practices promoted by the Bologna Process not only for facilitating the international practices, but also to ensure students of own faculties the right to choose between two study disciplines proposed as optional/elective. ECTS also became the ideal tool for managing transfers from one institution to another, at national. In other words, ECTS was not used merely as a transfer system, but also as means to highlight the credit accumulation by each student.

Under this context, a first order on the implementation of ECTS was issued by the Ministry of Education in 1998. The university senates were invited to use ECTS to define the student workload for each discipline in the curriculum. Starting with the academic year 1998/1999, most universities aligned to the requirement to equate the normal workload specific to a university study-year to 60 credits, based on an equivalent of 25-27 work hours for each credit point accumulated.

The Romanian Parliament adopted Law No 288/2004 on the organisation of university studies⁴⁴. In order to create the basis of student-centred higher education together with the re-organisation of higher education studies according to the three cycles, there was a need for new legislation – Minister Order no 3617 of March 16, 2005 on the general use of the ECST in all Romanian universities. According to the provisions of this order, each university created its own Regulation on credit transfer between own faculties, as well as between domestic and foreign universities so that, on the one hand, to ensure the finality of each university study cycle and, on

⁴⁴ Law 288/2004 on the organisation of university studies, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no 614 of 07.07.2004.

the other hand, to help customise the study pathways by encouraging students' option for specialised and complementary disciplines.

The National Education Law⁴⁵ No 1/2011 re-iterates the regulation concerning the general use of ECTS in the Romanian higher education. Article 148 of the Law stipulates that 300 ECTS credits represent the cumulated credits obtainable in Bachelor and Master' degree studies, out of which 180 to 240 credits are allocated to the Bachelor cycle. Article 149 stipulates that the number of transferable credits is the reference element universities can use for:

- Recognition of studies of periods of studies undertaken previously in order to equate and transfer credits and possibly to continue studies within a programme provided by the higher education institution;
- Equivalence, continuing studies or completion of studies within the country or abroad.

ECTS is used in the Methodology on the development and implementation of the NQFHE as well. Grid 2 is used at the level of each qualification to determine the correlations between the professional and transversal competences, on the one hand, and the contents areas, study disciplines and credits allocated, on the other hand. Grid 2 is one of the tools developed for the NQFHE, but used mainly by ARACIS to evaluate the quality of similar study programmes within a fundamental knowledge field. The data included in this grid will enhance transparency of the study provision in each field, by ranking the study programmes provided by various universities.

Therefore,

Criterion 3 has been met, the national qualifications framework for higher education and each qualification building on the learning outcomes, which are correlated with the ECTS specific credits.

⁴⁵ National Education Law no 1/2011, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no 18 of 10.01.2011.

Criterion 4

The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are clear.

The Methodology on the development and implementation of the NQFHE includes a chapter describing the procedures to include new qualifications in the national framework. Thus, *the Methodology* includes clear and detailed procedures for registering a new qualification, for amending or eliminating a qualification from the Romanian NQFHE (see paragraph 3.4 of this Self-certification Report). The inclusion of in the NQFHE fosters the transparency of the Romanian higher education provision, stimulates universities to continually improve the quality of their study programmes, and leads to fair competition between the various universities providing similar study programmes.

Procedures for including qualifications specific to study programmes are as follows:

- For Bachelor study programmes listed in the Government Decision No 635/2008, the qualification validation was performed through consensus of participants in national validation consortia. All universities providing study programmes in the respective field, as well as employers associations, students and graduates were invited to participate in these consortia which were organised under the DOCIS project – *Development of an operational system of qualifications in higher education in Romania*. After validation, the qualification was included in the NQFHE by the project management.
- For Bachelor and Master's study programmes to be set up after 2010, Romanian universities were trained on higher education qualifications development under the DOCIS project and are assisted by ACPART/NQA experts to prepare and submit the application for the validation of the new qualification (Annex 5 to the Methodology).
- For the new Master's programmes, ACPART/NQA experts working under the DOCIS project developed the description of professional and transversal competences specific to Master's level qualifications for a number of projects amounting for about 8% of the total current provision registered by universities with ARACIS as authorised Master's programmes. These were selected so that each study field will have at least one Master's qualification described. ACPART/NQA experts, following discussions on the qualification description grid in the councils of the faculties, with employers and professional associations, perform the validation of these qualifications.
- For the other Master's programmes, universities are supported to develop them by ACPART/UECNCFPA experts who apply a methodological verification of the applications with a view to validation (Annex 5 to the Methodology).

On the other hand, the development of the National Qualifications Register for Higher Education in Romania – NQFHE (see paragraph 3.5 of this *Self-certification Report*) creates a modern tool for fast and free information not only for universities and employers in Romania and abroad, but also for students, future students and their families. Thus, full transparency of the higher education system is ensured from the perspective of learning outcomes and qualifications that may be awarded upon completion of studies.

There are several legal provisions stating the place and the role of the national qualifications framework within the Romanian education system, as well as its interface with the rest of the system.

The National Education Law No 1/2011 allocated a chapter for lifelong learning, providing for all institutional and operational aspects related to the development of the national qualifications framework, as well as the validation of qualifications acquired by learning.

Article 341 focuses on the integration of sub-systems within the national qualifications framework, emphasising the following: *“the national qualifications framework is a tool for the classification of qualifications against a set of criteria matching specific learning levels. The implementation of the national qualifications framework targets qualifications acquired in general secondary education, in the technical and vocational education, in continuing vocational training, apprenticeship, **higher education**, as well as formal, informal and non-formal learning in a lifelong learning perspective”*.

As indicated in this Report, the Methodology on the development and implementation of the NQFHE was approved by Order of the Minister of Education in 2009, which allowed for coherent management by ACPART/NQA of inclusion of validated qualifications in the NQFHE as a sub-system of the national qualifications framework.

The Methodology can be consulted on the ACPART//NQA web page and on the web pages of higher education institutions.

The Romanian NQRHE became operational in January 2011. The Register allows users to visualise the documents regulating the inclusion of a qualification in the NQFHE (see paragraph 3.5 of this *Self-certification Report*).

Therefore,

Criterion 4 has been met, and the procedure for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework is clear and easy to explain.

Criterion 5

The national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the *Berlin Communiqué* and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.

The National Qualifications Authority, former ACPART through its Higher Education Qualifications Directorate considers quality as one of the crucial values of the higher education system, a guarantee of the quality of learning outcomes, of the graduates' competitiveness in the labour market and of the personal satisfaction of diploma holders. This is the reason for a strong co-operative work with ARACIS – Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Romania had an Accreditation Council – CNEAA (1993-2005) which was replaced in 2006 by the current Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in order to bring external evaluation procedures in accordance with ESG – European Standards and Guidelines of ENQA. After implementing a new evaluation methodology for the quality assessment of study programmes and for the quality management at university level, ARACIS became in 2009 a full member of European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education– ENQA, and was later on registered with EQAR – European Quality Assurance Register.

The National Qualifications Authority through its Higher Education Qualifications Directorate, together with the universities, ARACIS and with stakeholders interested in the higher education issues appraise quality as one of the fundamental values in the operation of the higher education system, a guarantee of the learning outcomes, of graduates satisfaction and competitiveness in the labour market. The implementation of this requirement proves to be a complex activity. It involves close interaction between universities and the economic and institutional environment where students find employment, as well as with professional associations that contribute actively in defining the quality standards of the profession.

The new higher education quality culture means the involvement of all stakeholders interested in quality, from students and teaching staff to department, university, and quality assurance agency, national authority for qualifications, employers and professional associations. This process has taken an important step ahead in raising awareness on this shared responsibility as a result of the organisation of validation consortia at national level for the Bachelor study programmes⁴⁶. Building on this model, each faculty develops dialogue with social partners on the qualifications acquired by Master's graduates. Each Romanian university developed a specialised department for dialogue with employers and one of the deputy rectors is responsible both for the quality of the teaching-learning process and for the qualifications acquired by the graduates of the study programmes. Universities are interested in attracting representative employers and professional associations to be involved in a regular review of the curriculum and of the syllabi, as efficient means of fast adaptation of the contents of tertiary training to the labour market requirements and expectations.

ARACIS is currently updating the methodology on external evaluation of the study programmes quality. The chapter on educational efficiency in the Quality Review Methodology

⁴⁶ *DOCIS – Development of an operational qualifications system in higher education in Romania* (2009-2011) este un SOP HRD project no 2/1.2/S/2 funded by the European Social Fund and co-funded by the Romanian Government. The project included the organisation of 72 national consortia for validation of all Bachelor-level qualifications in Romania.

includes now criteria, standards and performance indicators reflecting the learning outcomes in terms of the professional and transversal competences a graduate should demonstrate, as laid out by the *Methodology on the Development of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education*.

The higher education quality review process in Romania takes into consideration several principles:

- Ongoing internal evaluation of the quality of the learning and teaching process, involving the students and employers;
- Regular external evaluation of the quality of study programmes, considering the success rates of graduates both in terms of employment and in terms of further education to higher cycles or abroad. Professional associations and representative employers are systematically invited to participate in the evaluation.
- Annual publication of a survey on the higher education in Romania, considering both academic management issues and students' and graduates' perceptions and the labour market requirements and expectations.
- Registration with the NQRHE functions as a quality check on the university management, as it involves peer review to indicate whether the quality and transparency measures adopted by each department and university to quality assure graduates' training have been observed.

This last principle summarises the links between the Romanian system for quality assurance in higher education and the national qualifications framework and the NQRHE.

Therefore,

Criterion 5 has been fully met and compliant with the requirements stated by the Berlin Communiqué (2003) of the higher education ministers.

Criterion 6

The national framework and any alignments with the European framework are referenced in all Diploma Supplements.

All universities in Romania issue a *Diploma Supplement* upon graduation of Bachelor⁴⁷ (first cycle) and Master's⁴⁸ (second cycle). The universities develop a customized document for each graduate, using a national template promoted by the Ministry of Education, compatible with the Recommendation of the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES.

The Diploma Supplement is drafted both in Romanian and in English and it indicates the competences acquired (according to the Methodology developed by ACPART and approved by the Ministry of Education). The document refers in its title to the level of the graduated studies (i.e. Diploma Supplement for Bachelor's degree studies and/or Diploma Supplement for Master's degree studies) and has a specific reference to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. This supplement is issued free of charge for each student, at the same time with the graduation diploma.

Therefore,

Thus, Criterion 6 has been fully met and compliant with the European Qualifications Framework.

⁴⁷ Minister Order no 5289/September 9, 2008 on the Bachelor diploma and diploma supplement, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research, published by the *Official Gazette*, Part I, no 655 of 17.09.2008.

⁴⁸ Minister Order no 4151/15 June 2010 on the Master diploma and the Diploma Supplement, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research, published by the *Official Gazette*, Part I, no 445/01.06.2010.

Criterion 7

The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published

The NQFHE Methodology indicates both the responsibilities higher education institutions have in the implementation of the national qualifications framework and the instruments they have available to this purpose: qualifications descriptions through grids 1bis and 2, registration with the NQRHE and the validation dossier for new qualifications. The same Methodology provides for the validation procedures in case of learning outcomes describing already existing qualifications: university-employers-social partners-students consortia, as well as commission of experts created for the validation of new qualifications.

The National Qualifications Authority is responsible for the maintenance, continuing upgrade and follow-up dissemination and for the local and international promotion of the Romanian National Register for Qualifications in Higher Education – RNCIS. The NQF development and implementation Methodology also indicates the cooperation means and instruments between NQA/ACPART – ARACIS – the Ministry of Labour, as well as with all higher education institutions in order to fulfil their missions. All these institutions have had an important role in the design and development of the NQFHE in Romania.

The National Qualifications Authority, former ACPART collaborates with DG Education of the European Commission, in its capacity of National Coordination Point (NCP) for the implementation of EQF in Romania, as well as with the Council of Europe for the implementation of the Overall Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, where the Director General of ACPART/NQA is national representative. Under the auspices of the Council of Europe, ACPART/NQA participates in consultations organised by the Regional Network of South-Eastern Europe on the national qualifications frameworks. The Director General of ACPART/NQA was appointed by the Ministry of Education as active member in the EQF Advisory Group, supported by DGEAC, European Commission. NQA also maintains close cooperation with similar institutions from other countries (France, Ireland, Malta, Italy), by means of specific European projects aiming at the coherent and transparent design and implementation of the Framework for Qualifications, based on mutual trust.

Finally yet importantly, mention should be made that NQA, former ACPART, is promoter or partner in various European projects focusing on the NQF in EU member states. Besides the previously mentioned institutions, NQA also cooperates with the national representatives under the Bologna Process. In turn, universities include in the official graduation documents the NQFHE provisions (the description of the respective qualification in terms of learning outcomes), on the Diploma Supplement, as well as in their public provision posted on the NQRHE. Both the National Education Law and the Charter of each university indicate clearly and publicly which are the responsibilities of the higher education institutions, as well as those of each stakeholder involved in the implementation of the national qualifications framework.

Therefore ,

Criterion 7 has been met and is fully compliant with requirements stated by the Bergen Report and all other relevant documents.

4.2. Procedures for the verification of compatibility with the Bologna Framework

1. The competent national body/bodies shall self-certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework.

The Steering Committee of the self-certification process includes representatives nominated by the Ministry of Education, Research Youth and Sport, UENCNFPA, ARACIS, Presidential Commission for Analysis and Development of Education and Research Policies in Romania; National Council of Rectors; Romanian Association for Electronic and Software Industry - ARIES; National Association of Student Organisations in Romania; Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection.

According to the National Education Law no 1/2011, art.340, the National Authority for Qualifications – ANC develops the national qualifications framework in Romania based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

2. The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question, as recognised through the Bologna Process.

ARACIS is the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. A representative of ARACIS was part of the Steering Committee responsible for the self-certification report. Two of the ARACIS permanent experts are members of the Working Group who developed this Self-certification Report.

According to art. 137 (3) of the National Education Law no 1/2011, „*the match between curriculum and the qualification provided by the university study programme is a mandatory quality assurance criterion*”.

In the new *Methodology on external evaluation of the study programmes quality*, ARACIS developed criteria, standards and performance indicators reflecting to appraise the match between the educational contents of various fields and the professional and transversal competences, which describe the qualification obtained upon successful graduation of each university study programme.

In the final stage of the self-certification process, based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee, ARACIS stated its agreement on the referencing process concerning the compatibility of the NQFHE with the FQ/EHEA.

3. The self-certification process involved international experts.

The Steering Committee includes five international experts:

- Lewis Purser, IAU – Irish Universities Association, director for academic affairs;
- Anne-Marie Charraud, CNAM – National Conservatory for Arts and Trades of Paris, counsellor in the Continuing Training Department, former rapporteur general of the National Commission for Qualifications, France;

- James Joachim Calleja – Malta Qualifications Council, Chief Executive and Secretary of State, Ministry of Education and Labour, Malta;
- Mogens BERG, BFUG, Denmark;
- Jean-Philippe RESTOUEIX, Higher Education and Research Division, Council of Europe.

The five international experts will play a key role in the self-certification process and in the Report review.

4. The self-certification and the evidence supporting it shall be published and shall address separately each of the criteria set out.

The Steering Committee submitted the final version of the Self-Certification Report both to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport and to the National Qualifications Authority, to be published on the MERYs website, as well as on the www.ncis.ro, portal hosting the electronic version of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Romania.

The report can be accessed on the webpage of the Bologna Secretariat - BFUG and on the ENIC-NARIC webpage of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, detailing each criterion described in the previous chapter of this Report.

5. The ENIC and NARIC networks maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process [www.enic-naric.net].

Upon completion of the self-certification process, the Steering Committee of the self-certification process informed the National Centre for Diploma Recognition and Validation, the ENIC-NARIC body in Romania, so that it will include Romania on the list of countries, which finalised the self-certification process. The National Authority for Qualifications will inform the Bologna Secretariat on the completion of this process.

6. The completion of the self-certification process shall be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the European framework.

Diploma Supplements are issued in Romania by accredited higher education institutions, which use a standard template regulated at national level at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport.

After publication of this report, the National Qualifications Authority – NQA will initiate, and the Ministry of Education will issue a Ministerial Order concerning the newly improved standard template of the Diploma Supplements for the first two study cycles having inserted the mention on the completion of the self-certification process, as well as the **link between the Romanian National Qualifications Framework, QF/EHEA and the European Qualifications Framework**, indicating the European equivalent of each qualification level.

Chapter V

Further stages of the NQFHE implementation in Romania

In the forthcoming period there will be several activities aiming at the successful completion of the self-certification process:

Following this wide process of public consultation and debate, the final version of the Report, as approved by the Steering Committee for the validation of the self-certification process during the meeting on 5-6 September 2011, is now published both in Romanian and in English.

The final version of this report will be uploaded on the ERIC/NARIC website and on the Bologna Secretariat website.

After being implemented, the NQFHE becomes one of the crucial instruments for the strategic coordination of all institutions in the Romanian education system. The public policies of the Ministry of Education, the implementation measures promoted by the agencies and commissions coordinated by the Ministry of Education, as well as the missions assumed by the higher education institutions will use the NQFHE to define the higher education provision in Romania according to the labour market needs, in order to enhance the quality of study programmes and the economic and social effectiveness of the higher education system.

Currently, Romania has the NQFHE, the NQRHE and all necessary tools to proceed with the next step, namely their **use** aiming at strengthening the Bologna Process, and at fostering dialogue between universities and employers in order to engage all stakeholders interested in the modernisation of the university study provision according to the ever-changing labour market requirements.

At the same time, these tools strongly support updated and consistent information provided to current and prospective students in order to guide them to make informed decisions when choosing a profession, qualification or career, based on their skills and aspirations, as well as on the European principle of lifelong learning.

For this phase, of using NQFHE and NQRHE, NQA has already designed an action plan for 2012-2015, so that all opportunities and benefits that their adequate and consistent use may bring to the Romanian higher education should become reality and be capitalised on. The main objectives of this action plan are:

- To introduce an online qualification assessment system, by extending the NQRHE functions;
- To implement a unitary competence assessment methodology to enhance the quality of the educational provision;
- To undertake sociological studies on regular basis in order to highlight the developments in the match between the university provision and the labour market requirements;
- To operationalise the “university-enterprise consortia” so that there should be a functional framework to ensure for each study field the permanent dialogue between

universities, employers, professional associations, students and all stakeholders interested in a real cooperation between the academic world and the world of work.

- To create and introduce in Romania a portal to allow for connecting NQFHE with COR and NACE, which would be an answer to the European initiative on ESCO (European Skills, Competences and Occupations);
- To develop and implement methodologies for the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal contexts at the level of higher education qualifications;
- To encourage universities to widen their training provision for non-traditional, especially mature learners;
- To promote national and European projects to meet both the aims of Europe 2020 and of the National Reform Plan.

Annex 1.a

Fundamental Field

Study Field

Study Programme

Grid 1B – Description of study programme/field by means of professional and transversal competences

Qualification Title..... Qualification Level: BACHELOR	Possible Occupations						
Level descriptors of structural elements of professional competences**	Professional competences *	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
	KNOWLEDGE						
1. Knowledge and understanding of basic concepts, theories and methods in the field and the specialization area; their adequate use in professional communication	C1.1	C2.1	C3.1	C4.1	C5.1	C6.1	
2. Use of basic knowledge to explain and interpret various types of concepts, situations, processes, projects etc. related to the field	C1.2	C2.2	C3.2	C4.2	C5.2	C6.2	
SKILLS							
3. Application of basic principles and methods to solve well defined problems/situations that are typical to the field, with qualified assistance	C1.3	C2.3	C3.3	C4.3	C5.3	C6.3	
4. Adequate use of standard assessment criteria and methods to appraise the quality, merits and limitations of processes, programmes, projects, concepts, methods and theories	C1.4	C2.4	C3.4	C4.4	C5.4	C6.4	
5. Development of professional and/or research projects using well known principles and methods within the field	C1.5	C2.5	C3.5	C4.5	C5.5	C6.5	
Minimum performance standards for competence assessment:							
Transversal competences level descriptors	Transversal competences			Minimum performance standards for competence assessment			
6. Responsible performance of professional tasks, with limited autonomy and qualified assistance							
7. Familiarisation with the teamwork-specific roles and activities and with task allocation for subordinated levels							
8. Awareness of the need for continuing training; effective use of learning techniques and resources for personal and professional development							

* Maximum 6 professional competences will be identified.

** The level descriptors indicated in the Matrix of the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education (figure 3) shall be mentioned in the grid, according to the qualification level (Bachelor/Master's/Doctorate).

Annex 2

University: Faculty: Qualification: Study level:

Fundamental field: Study field: Study programme:

☐ Grid 2, Determining the correlations between professional and transversal competences, contents areas, study disciplines and credits allocated

Professional competences	Competences detailed by level descriptors	Contents areas	Study disciplines	Credits	
				By discipline*	By competence
C1			D1		
			D2		
				
C2			D1		
			D2		
				
C3			D1		
			D2		
				
C4			D1		
			D2		
				
C5			D1		
			D2		
				
			D1		
			D2		
				

Transversal competences	Study disciplines	Credits	
		By discipline	By competence
CT1	D1		
	D2		
		
CT2	D1		
	D2		
		
CT3	D1		
	D2		
		

* Indicate the number of credits by which the respective discipline contributes to the development of competences, of the total number of credits allocated to the study discipline, according to the educational plan

ANNEX III

National Report Regarding the compatibility of the Romanian Qualifications Framework (NQFHE) with the QF for EHEA (Dublin descriptors) and EQF

Table 14 Level Descriptors for Level 6

QF-EHEA - 1st cycle (Dublin Descriptors)	NQFHE - Level 6		EQF - Level 6	
	Generic descriptors	Level 6 descriptors		
Learning Outcomes: Knowledge				
Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;	1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	Knowledge and understanding of basic concepts, theories and methods within the field and the specialisation area; their adequate use in professional communication.	Professional competences	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study involving a critical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences	2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of basic knowledge to explain and interpret various types of concepts, situations, processes, projects etc. that are related to the field.		understanding of theories and principles;

QF-EHEA - 1st cycle (Dublin Descriptors)	NQFHE - Level 6		EQF - Level 6
	Generic descriptors	Level 6 descriptors	
Learning Outcomes: Skills			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study; 	3. Application, transfer and problem solving	Use of basic principles and methods for solving well defined problems/situations that are typical to the field, with partial qualified assistance.	Advanced skills demonstrating mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study;
Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;	4. Critical and constructive reflection	Adequate use of standard assessment criteria and methods to appraise the quality, merits and limitations of processes, programmes, projects, concepts, methods and theories.	
	5. Creativity and innovation	Development of professional projects on unpredictable problems by using principles and methods within the field in a creative or innovative manner.	

QF-EHEA - 1st cycle (Dublin Descriptors)	NQFHE - Level 6		EQF - Level 6	
	Generic descriptors	Level 6 descriptors		
Learning outcomes: Competences				
Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy	6. Autonomy and responsibility	Responsible performance of professional tasks in an autonomous manner, with qualified assistance.	Transversal competences	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups.
	7. Social interaction	Familiarisation with the teamwork-specific roles and activities and with task allocation for subordinated levels.		
Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy	8. Personal and professional development	Awareness of the need for continuing training; efficient use of learning techniques and resources for personal and professional development.		

Table 15 Level Descriptors for Level 7

QF – EHEA 2 nd cycle (Dublin descriptors)	NQFHE– Level 7		EQF - Level 7	
	Generic descriptors	Level 7 descriptors		
Learning Outcomes: Knowledge				
Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;	1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	In-depth knowledge of a specialisation area and, within it, of the programme specific theoretical, methodological and practical developments; appropriate use of specific language in communication with different professional environments.	Professional competences	Highly specialised some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study as the basis for original thinking and/or research;
	2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of specialised knowledge in order to explain and interpret new situations, in wider contexts associated to the respective field.		

QF – EHEA 2 nd cycle (Dublin descriptors)	NQFHE– Level 7		EQF - Level 7
	Generic descriptors	Level 7 descriptors	
Learning Outcomes: Skills			
Can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;	3.Application, transfer and problem solving	Integrated use of the conceptual and methodological apparatus in incompletely defined situations in order to solve new theoretical and practical problems.	Specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields;
Have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge an judgements;	3. Critical and constructive reflection	Pertinent and appropriate use of assessment criteria and methods to formulate judgements and fundament constructive decisions.	Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields;
Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying	5. Creativity and innovation	Development of professional and/or research projects using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods in an innovative manner.	Specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields;

QF – EHEA 2 nd cycle (Dublin descriptors)	NQFHE– Level 7			EQF - Level 7
	Generic descriptors	Level 7 descriptors		
ideas, often within a research context;				
Learning Outcomes: Competences				
	6.Autonomy and responsibility	Undertaking complex professional tasks under autonomy and professional independence conditions	Transversal competences	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches.
	7.Social interaction	Assuming management roles/functions for the activities within professional groups or institutions.		Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous	8. Personal and professional development	Self-control of the learning process, diagnosis of training needs, reflective analysis on own professional activity.		

Table 16 Level Descriptors for Level 8

QF – EHEA 3 rd cycle (Dublin descriptors)	NQFHE H - Level 8		EQF - Level 8	
	Generic descriptors	Level 8 descriptors		
Learning Outcomes: Knowledge				
Have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; Can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;	1. Knowledge, understanding and use of specific language	Systematic, advanced knowledge of concepts, research methods, controversies and new hypothesis specific to the field; communication with specialists from related fields.	Professional competences	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;
	2. Explanation and interpretation	Use of advanced principles and methods to explain and interpret, from multiple perspectives, new and complex theoretical and practical situations/problems that are specific to the respective field.		
Learning Outcomes: Skills				
Have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;	3.Application, transfer and problem solving	Selection and use of advanced principles, theories and methods of knowledge, transfer of methods from one field to another, interdisciplinary approaches to solve new and complex theoretical and practical problems.		The ability to apply the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques including synthesis and evaluation to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and

QF – EHEA 3 rd cycle (Dublin descriptors)	NQFHE H - Level 8		EQF - Level 8
	Generic descriptors	Level 8 descriptors	
Are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas.	4. Critical and constructive reflection	Critical-constructive assessment of projects and scientific research results, appraisal of the stage of theoretical and methodological knowledge; identification of knowledge and applicative priorities within the field.	redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;
Have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;	5. Creativity and innovation	Design and undertake original research, based on advanced methods leading to the development of scientific and technological knowledge and/or of the research methodologies.	Competence at the forefront in work or study including research contexts demonstrating substantial authority, innovation , autonomy, scholarly or professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes

QF – EHEA 3 rd cycle (Dublin descriptors)	NQFHE H - Level 8		EQF - Level 8	
	Generic descriptors	Level 8 descriptors		
Learning outcomes: Competences				
Can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; Can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge sed society.	6.Autonomy and responsibility	Innovative initiation and development of complex theoretical and practical projects.	Transversal competences	Competence at the forefront in work or study including research contexts demonstrating substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly or professional integrity and b sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes.
	7.Social interaction	Assuming responsibility and capacity to organise and lead the activities of professional groups, scientific research groups or institutions.		



AGENȚIA ROMÂNĂ DE ASIGURARE A CALITĂȚII ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR
THE ROMANIAN AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Membri cu drepturi depline în Asociația Europeană pentru Asigurarea Calității în Învățământul Superior - ENQA
Înscrisă în Registrul European pentru Asigurarea Calității în Învățământul Superior - EQAR
Strada Spiru Haret nr. 12, sector 1, București, România

Nr.: 1562
Data: 25.04.2011



STATED AGREEMENT

On the verification of compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education
with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

The Council of ARACIS, in its capacity as joint leadership body of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), hereby agree on the verification of compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, based on the following:

- According to art. 137, paragraph 3 of the National Education Law no 1/2011, "consistency of curriculum with the qualification provided by the university study programme is a mandatory criterion in the evaluation on quality assurance";
- Through the *Methodology on the external evaluation of study programmes* ARACIS developed performance criteria, standards, and indicators to evaluate the consistency of the educational contents of the various subject areas with the professional and transversal competences related to the qualification acquired upon graduation of a university study programme, in compliance with the Order no 4430/2009 on the *Methodology on the use of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education*, issued by the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sport.

We hereby confirm that a representative of the Council of ARACIS is a member of the Steering Committee created for the development of the Self-Certification Report and that two permanent experts of ARACIS were members of the Working Group who developed the Report of the verification of compatibility of the Romanian National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Therefore, we appreciate the manner in which the Steering Committee fulfilled their mission and we recommend that the Self-Certification Report be submitted to the Higher Education and Research Division of the Council of Europe.

President of ARACIS,
MILUȚA CLUTU

Annex 6

Comments on the ROQF Referencing Report to EQF

I. Comments on the draft report

Spanish Review of the ROQF1 Referencing Report to the EQF2

The ROQF Referencing Report to the EQF (hereinafter, the Referencing Report) is a comprehensive document which, generally speaking, complies with the requirements to make it a useful instrument allowing readers to understand the education and training system of the country and the process leading to the development and implementation of its national qualifications framework.

The main purpose of this note is to provide you with some observations derived from an attentive reading, which you might take into account if considered of any use to enhance the overall quality of the work done. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and time you have devoted to this task. That will undoubtedly lead to a final product of outstanding quality.

So far as we have noticed, the Referencing Report is structured in two main blocks:

- The Romanian Education System and Lifelong Learning and the development and implementation of the ROQF.
- The ROQF Referencing Report to the EQF.

Let's have a look at them.

The Romanian Education System and Lifelong Learning and the development and implementation of the ROQF

The Referencing Report presents a detailed vision of the current education system in Romania. It covers all its levels, from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education, Adult Education being taken into account, and all types of learning, that including non-formal and informal ones. We would like to make the following comments:

- As a first suggestion, we think that it would be interesting to interlink the different chapters by means of cross-references, so that we can perceive a clear relationship among all the parts. That, we believe, would enhance and give coherence to the whole text and be helpful when trying to gain more in-depth knowledge about the subject dealt with.

- From page 7 to page 14, we read about the legal basis, which support the education system, and also about its structure. Considering most of the same aspects are to be dealt with from page 15 to page 44, we wonder whether it would be more practical to reduce the contents of that first part and preserve all the details for further analysis when developing each level of the system. That would facilitate a more comfortable reading.

- There seems to be a, let's say, lack of balance regarding the qualifications derived from the formal system of education (adult education included) and those which may result from non-

formal and informal processes of learning. While the former are well dealt with, what we understand about the latter is that “a set of specific methodologies related to the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning” have been drafted and proposed for public debate, but have not entered into force yet. Bearing this in mind, it would be advisable to take on the commitment to report about the developments and state the possibility of attaching the corresponding addenda to the Referencing Report in due time.

- Regarding point 4, on the development of the ROQF, neither the aims nor its contents appear too evident to us. Is it absolutely necessary to develop this sort of introduction? If so, we consider it advisable to clarify its contents. As regards point 4.2, we assume the relevance of quality assurance in the development of the qualifications frameworks, so we would suggest a more nuanced description of the methods employed and measures adopted to that end. Last, but not least, we understand from point 4.3 that the ROQF has been structured in 8 levels, but have not found any explanation about it. How would you justify the adoption of such a structure?

- Finally, we wonder if Lifelong Learning in point B.4 (page 8) could be avoided, since point C. is specifically devoted to it, and whether the figure on page 10 -“3.7343”- is actually correct.

The ROQF Referencing Report to the EQF

To guide the referencing process of the ROQF to the EQF, the ten criteria outlined by the EQF Advisory Group have been taken into account. Considering their relevance for obvious reasons, due attention is to be paid to them. Generally speaking, we find some of them have been developed in depth, while others seem to lack consistency. That could be easily solved by linking the different parts of the document as suggested above. It is not a question of contents that might be missing; the point is how to have easy access to the right and, let’s say, clarifying contents in the document itself.

Apart from all this, we would like to point out the following considerations:

- Having gone through criterion 3, it is not clear to us the extent to which Romanian education and training systems are based on the learning outcomes approach and that is a crucial question which, in our view, deserves close attention. Besides, reference is made to validation concerning the credit systems, but we miss details on validation of non-formal and informal learning (we have read in point 3.3, as we have already mentioned, that is an aspect not regulated so far; a cross-reference to it, for example, would be perfectly adequate in this context).

- As for criterion 4, we find the procedures are not sufficiently described and that does not benefit at all the attempt to ensure transparency, and, therefore, trust, in the process.

- Stakeholders are mentioned in criterion 6, but not listed. We have read about them and their roles and responsibilities in other parts of the report. Shouldn’t we make reference to the fragments in question?

Considering the rest of the chapters, allow us to make the following comments:

- Being the “Introduction” the first approach we come across, it would probably be convenient to revise its contents for the sake of accuracy. We can choose to be synthetic, but have to be careful about the information to be included. Just as an example, the fact that “employers can

identify easier the skills...” is not the only reason why we are working on these qualifications frameworks. In fact, we can find some others in point 4.1 which we could make reference to here.

- As regards the “Methodology” chapter, we believe that a more detailed scheme could be developed to enrich it. We read about the basics of it and understand that most of the process has relied on the “ad hoc” Working Group created and about the stakeholders involved. But we miss some details about how this group has actually worked, roles and responsibilities, to come to the final product.

By the way, note that when listing the structure of the Referencing Report agreed upon, point one looks more “methodological” than “structural” if compared with the rest of them.

- Chapter 5 on “The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning” will not probably add too much to what is already known, unless we reinforce its contents. Just as another possibility we would suggest you to use the information given as “food” for the “Introduction”, so that readers unfamiliar with the subject in question can make a general idea about it.

- Finally, we miss a final chapter on challenges and next steps, which could be useful to outline the work to be completed.

Having said all this, we would like to sincerely congratulate you on the work carried out and beg you to excuse us if we have failed to understand whatever aspect of the Referencing Report we have made reference to. Furthermore, we also take the opportunity given to thank you for sharing your expertise with us. It has been an invaluable experience we have really learnt a lot from.

Comments made by Slovenia on the Romanian EQF Referencing Report

First we would like to stress out that Romanian EQF Referencing Report is comprehensive, well structured, written in transparent manner and provides a good and in-depth insight into the Romanian education system.

The fulfillment of the 10 EQF referencing criteria is made visible and the description of education and training system is well presented.

A. Important features:

- Established relevant bodies and responsibilities
- Legislation basis for ROQF (Government Decision no 918/2013)
- National register of qualifications in HE (RNCIS)
- Legislation basis for validation of informal and non-formal learning (Law on National Education no. 1/2011)

B. Comments and questions:

General comment

The emphasis of the report is on descriptions of education system, established responsibilities of different institutions involved in referencing process, etc. However from an international perspective EQF referencing criteria are rather poorly described and could be more strengthen. Also, more information about ROQF would be welcome in the report.

Comments to chapter 3

- Table 1 is quite informative. If understood correct, you put lower secondary education at NQF/EQF level 1. What are reasons for this decision? Maybe conclusion from PLA on levels 1, 2, 3 could be informative or valuable for you.
- Where is master craftsman qualification placed in education system and ROQF?

Comments to chapter 4

- The information about ROQF is poor. We can see ROQF level descriptors and qualifications included in the framework (4.3). But, it would also be helpful if you could add information about: the role of stakeholder in the development of ROQF (including time frame, how the ROQF was developed); the purpose, role or objectives of the ROQF; structure and concepts of framework; current status of the framework (is it implemented yet?); relation between quality assurance and the framework and relation between framework and validation of informal and non-formal learning.
- In chapter 3 you mention national register of qualifications in HE (RNCIS). Do you plan to develop also a national register for all qualifications included in the ROQF?

Comments to chapter 6

- **Criterion 2:** this is very important criteria in which you should demonstrate how did you establish the correspondence between NQF and EQF levels. Saying that this is demonstrated in government decision is not helpful for international community. You should make this comparison visible (structural, conceptual comparison, comparison of level descriptors, etc.).
- **Criterion 3:**
 - o National qualifications framework and *its qualifications are based on learning outcomes*: in criterion 3 we can read that initial VET qualifications are based on training standards which are described in terms of LO. Also in chapter 3 learning outcomes are mentioned in relational to HE qualifications. It would be welcome if information of all qualifications from annex 2 (NQF) could be provided (are they all LO based, did your system introduce any reforms, etc.). Also, examples of these qualifications and LO descriptions in the annex of the report would be helpful.
 - o *LO and link to validation of non-formal learning*: here is the place to explain this relationship, even though it is not approved yet (see p. 27). Also, do you differentiate between LO and learning objectives which are relevant for non-formal learning? If so, then how?
- **Criterion 4:** here the same comment goes as for criterion 2. It would be helpful if you describe the procedures (for nomenclature of VET, for LLL, and for apprenticeship). If they are different than describe all of them.
- **Criterion 7:** it would be welcome to include comments of three international experts about your referencing report in the annex of the report.

Detailed written comments on the referencing the Romanian National Qualifications Framework to the European qualifications framework

by Mimi Daneva, chief expert at the International and European Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria, EQF AG member

THE PROCESS OF REFERENCING IN ROMANIA

Romania has decided to adopt the EQF as a NQF in order to establish a functional qualifications framework, which is both nationally and internationally recognized and fully comparable with the NQFs of the other countries and by this way to promote mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications based on learning outcomes. All Romanian qualifications from general education, VET, higher education and adult learning are covered by the 8-level ROQF, with a particular stress on adult education and training. Therefore, as many countries have done while adopting the EQF as a NQF, the overall objective of the Romanian referencing report is to explain in clear, transparent and understandable manner how the EQF/ROQF fits within the Romanian education and training system, and what evidences could be presented, including evidences from the national legislation in the field of education and training (law and sub-law legal provision). That's why the operational objective of the Romanian report is to provide essential data on the conceptual and the institutional framework leading to establishing a NQF this closely linked to the EQF.

The process of elaborating the Romanian NQF is described in a separate section (section № 4). Debates on creating a NQF in Romania started in 2007, just like it happened in Bulgaria. Therefore, our two countries are following kind a common track.

In 2011 Romania has elaborated a draft project of a national self-certification report on checking the compatibility of the NQF for Higher Education in Romania and the EQF'QF-EHEA. It would be good some more information to be provided on what has happened with the Romanian NQF for higher education and the ROQF, was the Romanian NQF for higher education canceled after adopting the ROQF, and what happened with this self-certification report

The ROQF was adopted in 2013 by a governmental decision, after setting up the task on ROQF development in the National Education Act (2011). The steps of the referencing process have been discussed on working meetings with national authorities and stakeholders, which formed an Advisory Council with functions to assist the National Qualifications Authority in its efforts aimed to establish the Romanian NQF. A special working group was established to decide on placing the qualifications on the NQF levels. Bearing in mind the information on page 63 while responding the referencing criterion № 1, where it is said that the working group has had several meetings on discussing the law on the NQF, it should be clarified what happened with this law and was it finally adopted, as it was not mentioned anywhere else while presenting the national legislation base.

The decision on approval the ROQF was taken after consultations with all the stakeholders involved. Employers, trade unions, professional associations, the Rectors' Conference are mentioned among the stakeholders involved. Nothing is said about participation of students as stakeholders. It seems that students, in particular students in higher education have been excluded from the referencing process. Therefore, as it was said in the report that the Romanian education

and training system is learner-centered, it would be more than recommendable if Romania actively includes students and parents in its information, dissemination and promotional activities on the ROQF and its Referencing Report.

THE REPORT

The draft Romanian referencing report is elaborated to explain the referencing to the EQF of the Romanian NQF (ROQF). Therefore its self-certification to the QF-EHEA is a subject of a separated report, which was drafted in 2011. As in the most countries these two processes are ongoing in parallel, in my opinion this issue should be pointed out in the beginning of the referencing report to make it clearer.

Legislative grounds are explained in the Report starting from the Constitution of Romania through the National Education Act and the respective sub-law legislation.

An overview of the Romanian education and training system is included in the report from pre-school education to higher education, with a focus on adult education and training and lifelong learning. The structure of the Romanian education and training system is presented in a table (Table 1 on page 9) with respect to age, grade/period, educational levels, NQF levels and ISCED levels. A strong side is the table view representation of equivalence between the levels of qualifications prior entering into force of the NQF and those provided in the NQF. Another strong side is annex № 2 (pages 54-59), where a table of correspondence between the ROQF levels, the type of education and training programmes, the qualification awarding institutions, and who can be a graduate of these programmes is presented. The table of this annex is repeated while answering the referencing criterion № 2. Therefore in order to avoid duplication, I would recommend this table to remain on the place where responding criterion № 2, as it seems more relevant to keep it there.

A brief analysis of the education and training system is presented in the Report, including some statistical data. The responsible national authorities in this field, including ministries and the national Qualifications Authority of Romania, and the respective stakeholders are also pointed out.

Concerning lifelong learning, as it is pointed out on page 8, in the Romanian case lifelong learning covers postgraduate education outside the Master/Doctorate framework. Therefore it seems that there is a contradiction with the explanation for lifelong learning education further on page 10 (point C. Lifelong learning education), where it is said that LLL includes “all the learning actions performed by each person throughout his/her life starting from the early education...”. Therefore the scope of lifelong learning should be defined more precisely in the Report.

Romania has established a National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education, which is going to be merged with a National Register of Qualifications. The both of them are national electronic databases aimed to support quality of education, unification of qualifications in terms of description, improve the transparency of qualifications and facilitate mobility of learners by supporting the use of Europass instruments.

A separate section (section № 3) is devoted to non-formal and informal learning. It includes definitions, eligible institutions, legislative bases and methodologies. Three methodologies are mentioned there (page 27), namely:

- a methodology on the criteria and procedures for evaluation/certification of assessors, for assessors of the assessors and external evaluators and authorisation /accreditation of the Professional Competences Assessment Center;
- a methodology for the identification, assessment and recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal context
- a methodology for establishing Community Lifelong Learning Centres.

To the moment all these methodologies are draft projects and are going to be adopted soon. From EQF referencing perspective, it could be good after they become formally adopted, more information regarding the learning outcomes-related methodology in NQF context to be included in a next version of the report. This is important for the implementation of both the EQF Recommendation and the Recommendation on recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Romania.

Regarding the information on the authorized professional competences assessment centres (page 29), it is said that the geographical distribution of such centres is highly unequal. It would be good a sentence on any future plans aimed to improving the situation to be included in the report.

Detailed overview of the adult education system in Romania is presented in section 3.4. It covers general information and legislative grounds. I have a technical suggestion for improving in this respect. It is presented in the section on technical remarks and suggestions below.

Concerning the sub-law legislation in education and training and labour market (page 35), it should be noted that the Romanian qualifications are based on occupational standards that are developed by employers and are a subject of validation by sectoral committees of employers and of an approval by the National Qualifications Authority of Romania. In parallel, training standards exist for initial VET. They are described in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) of a qualification covering more than one occupation. From a NQF/EQF referencing point of view, it is essential more information on the use of learning outcomes in the occupational standards to be included in the Report, together with information on the links between occupational and training standards and the generic learning outcomes, which are set up in the ROQF/EQF. It would be good if such information is provided regarding the use of learning outcomes in curricula and syllabi, too. In particular, some details on the link between learning outcomes and transferable credits could be completed on page 42.

It is said on page 50 of the Report that the foundations of ROQF are defined by law, more than 750 VET qualifications and all the higher education qualifications have already been developed and are going to be included in the ROQF. In order to better understand the roots of the ROQF within the Romanian education and training system on practice, it would be good if some examples of qualifications covering different education and training sectors are included in an annex together with a brief explanation of the correlations with the occupational/training standards and ROQF in terms of learning outcomes.

Separated sub-section (№ 4.2) on quality assurance is presented. It consists of information mostly on the functions of the National Group for Quality Assurance, which is active in the VET sector. Nothing is said there on quality assurance in the school and tertiary education systems, but information on the functions of the National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (ARACIS) is included while responding the referencing criterion № 1. Information on that is

included while responding Criterion № 5. Therefore it could be recommended that all the general quality assurance sub-section is put together and better focused information to be provided to answer Criterion № 5.

Section 5 is devoted to the EQF for LLL. For better logical structuring of the Report and raising awareness of stakeholders both at national and international level on what is the purpose of this exercise, it should be recommendable if this section is moved in the beginning after explaining the purpose and the scope of the referencing report, together with sections 6.1 and 6.2 on the referencing process and the referencing criteria.

Concerning the Romanian responses to the 10 referencing criteria, I have the following few more remarks and suggestions:

- On Criterion № 3: In my opinion here is the time and the place the links and the relevance between the occupational/training standards, the curricula, and the NQF level descriptors to be justified in terms of learning outcomes and linked to validation/recognition arrangements. The Report should be improved in this respect. Also, the NQF table is repeated here. Therefore it could be recommended if the NQF table is enclosed in an annex.
- On Criterion № 6: written statements of the national quality assurance bodies should be provided in annexes to the Report;
- On Criterion № 7: It is mentioned that three international experts have supported Romania in the referencing process, but only two of them are mentioned. It seems a technical mistake, which was done in the hurry. Relevant information on that should be included.
- On Criterion № 10: a reference school/academic year should be added from which the second EQF milestone to be implemented. Information on how this will be done should be added.

Some more technical remarks and suggestions aimed to easier reading and understanding the Report:

- A Glossary of Terms, a List of Abbreviations, a List of References to be included in annexes to the Report;
- The section on the adult education system contains information also regarding schools, education and vocational training of children, young people and adults, pre-university and higher education, including the respective ruling principles, and roles of national authorities that are created by law. In my point of view, it would be better understandable for an outside reader if this section is extracted as a separate section covering the legislative grounds, including respective laws and sub-law legislation of the entire education and training system.
- The paragraph on developing occupational/training standards by training providers in the field of adult education (page 41) is partially repeating the information on page 35. The text could be revised in this respect.

- The information on validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which is presented in Section 4. The development of ROQF in Romania (page 46) is relevant to be moved to Section 3. Non-formal and Informal learning.

I. Comments on the final revised version of the report

Detailed written comments on the referencing the Romanian National Qualifications Framework to the European qualifications framework

by Elido Bandelj, Director of Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana

General comments on the report

The document records a fair view of the situation and the system, shows positive moves in the last years. There are many bodies involved in the system, which will require strong coordination of these. It provides a good and transparent overview of the existing national qualifications system. It is also evident that reforms still take place. May be are missing more informations about future implementation and challenges.

I would like to stress out that the Referencing report of the Romanian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework is comprehensive and well structured, written in transparent manner. The report consists of two parts (a framework for lifelong learning and a higher education framework), which also shows the processes and development of a uniform report at different times.

The structure of the report

ROQF is a comprehensive framework and has the capacity to promote lifelong learning as well. Description of education system is well organised and structured, written in transparent and understandable manner.

The Report provides good and in-depth insight into the development and structure of ROQF.

The fulfilment of the criteria and procedures of the EQF is well structured. The report follows all ten agreed criteria and having in addition a lot of a lot of supplement information are in the Annex.

The goals of the Romanian Qualification Framework are clear, relevant and based on the national situation. Such a large and open system requires however a strong quality control system.

The link to non-formal learning can be seen but, the development in this area is still required. The description of the levels are clear and coherent. The correspondence between the ROQF levels and levels of EQF has been done very systematically. But I think that we need more examples of qualifications at different level and type of qualifications.

The 10 referencing criteria

Overall the 10 referencing criteria have been met. But some points require clarification and further discussion.

Detailed written comments on the referencing the Romanian National Qualifications Framework to the European qualifications framework

by Volker Gehmlich, Osnabrueck University of Applied Sciences

General comments on the report

The table of contents starts with a “Foreword” and comprises as main parts “1 Background and introduction”, “2 The Romanian Education system and qualification referenced to ROOQF”, “Referencing process in Romania and Future developments and challenges” and “4 Future developments and challenges”, followed by six Annexes.

Yes, Romania has created a framework but to function it has to become part of the Romania culture of education and training, and therefore the reform has been initiated intensively but not yet concluded. A close mentoring and evaluation of the framework is in place.

Remarks on the referencing report

The report stipulates the enormous efforts the country made to align its qualifications achievable in education and training institutions and organisations, to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong-Learning, comprising the Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

With all the legal backing it goes without saying that the Romanian Qualifications Framework will work. However, the decision-makers have to be patient as it will take some time till the education and training system has digested the development and will exploit it to the full, achieving the objectives outlined. Also, a continuous mentoring is essential; in the sense of a formative evaluation and accompanying pre- and post-evaluation by external bodies. Institutions and organisations have to learn how to adapt and how to develop their own internal quality assurance system to assure that the framework lives. This surely entails a cultural change.

A solid basis has been built – it is time to prove its suitability (fit-for-purpose) to the stakeholders gaining their acceptance (acceptability) by demonstrating its feasibility in the light of available resources and finally – over time – its sustainability within the European Higher Education Area.

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