



DGIV/EDU/HE (2008) 16 rev 4  
Orig. Eng.  
Strasbourg, October 9, 2008

**BOLOGNA PROCESS**  
**Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework**

**REPORT ON QUALIFICATIONS  
FRAMEWORKS TO BE SUBMITTED TO  
THE BFUG IN EARLY 2009  
THIRD DRAFT**

Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (Directorate of School,  
Out-of-School and Higher Education – Higher Education and Research Division)

Distribution: BFUG  
Coordination Group

**BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Like all Coordination Groups and Working Groups operating under a mandate in the Bologna work program for 2007 – 2009, the Coordination Group on Qualifications Frameworks will be required to submit a preliminary report to the BFUG by January 15, 2009 and a final report by March 2009. The Coordination Group has considered various drafts of the reports at its meetings in February, May and September 2008.

The purpose of the present document is to provide a draft of the report to the BFUG for comments during the BFUG meeting of October 14 – 15 in Paris. It goes without saying that for some elements, no text can be provided at this stage.

The revised draft, reproduced in Appendix 1, is submitted for discussion in the BFUG. A synthesis report on the development of national qualifications frameworks, on the basis of information provided by NQF correspondents, is submitted as a separate document. The Coordination Group will resume its discussion of the report at its next meeting, on November 17, 2008.

## **REPORT ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE BFUG**

*REVISED DRAFT October 9, 2008*

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Mandate**

The work on qualifications frameworks in the 2007 – 2009 work program has been led by the Council of Europe under the mandate given in the London Communiqué:

*Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.*

*We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.*

The Council of Europe has been assisted in this work by the Bologna Coordination Group on Qualifications Frameworks, which was appointed in accordance with the decision by the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG).

It is important to emphasize that the EHEA Framework was adopted by Ministers in Bergen in 2005, and the development of national qualifications frameworks is within the competence and responsibility of the competent national authorities. It is recalled that Ministers committed to launching this work by 2007 and to complete it by 2010. The role of the Council of Europe and, by extension, the Coordination Group, has therefore been to facilitate the sharing of experience and to help develop good practice so that the

competent national authorities could benefit from relevant experience from other countries to the extent that the national authorities wished to do so. The role of the Council of Europe and the Coordination Group was emphatically *not* to elaborate national frameworks or to give directives to the competent national authorities. On the contrary, they have seen their role as that of facilitators.

## **SHARING GOOD PRACTICE**

### **European level**

The Bologna work program 2007 – 2009 has included three conferences on qualifications frameworks:

- the Council of Europe Forum on Qualifications Frameworks (Strasbourg, October 11 – 12, 2007);
- the conference on learning outcomes based higher education organized by the Scottish authorities in Edinburgh on February 21 – 22, 2008;
- the conference on self certification of national qualifications frameworks organized by the Georgian authorities in cooperation with the Council of Europe in Tbilisi on November 27 – 28, 2008.

In addition, three further Bologna conferences have been particularly relevant to qualifications frameworks:

- the conference on ECTS and student workload organized at the Russian University of Peoples' Friendship in Moskva on April 17 – 18, 2008, in cooperation with the national Training Foundation and the Council of Europe.
- the conference on Development of a common understanding of ECTS and learning outcomes held in Porto on June 19 – 20, 2008.
- the conference on employability held in Luxembourg on November 6 - 7, 2008.

### **Regional initiatives**

A regional conference for South East Europe was held in Beograd on November 1 – 2, as a part of the program of the Serbian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, with the participation of representatives of Albania (including the Minister of Education), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia (including the Minister of Education), “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey as

well as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the European Agency for Reconstruction and ERI-SEE.

One of the main recommendations of this conference was that a regional network on qualifications frameworks should be established. The launching conference for this network was held in Cetinje on July 8 – 9, 2008 and co-organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro and the Council of Europe. The Network is open to participation by the competent authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey.

A regional conference for countries of the New Independent States was held in Yerevan on September 8 – 9, 2008 with the participation of representatives of Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine. The conference was organized by the Ministry of Education of Armenia and the Council of Europe. The objective of the conference was to take stock of the progress achieved in the participating countries in the development of national qualifications frameworks; provide expert advice for further development of national qualifications frameworks; contribute to the sharing of experience and networking between the countries.

## **DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

### **Web site on qualifications frameworks**

In the course of December 2007 and January 2008, a special section on qualifications frameworks was developed as a sub-site to the official Bologna web site<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the site is to provide updated information on the main aspects of qualifications frameworks. The site provides information on the EHEA Framework as well as on the EQF-LLL, and it includes a section on national qualifications frameworks with links to country pages.

### **National QF correspondents**

In March 2008, all countries of the Bologna Process were invited to appoint national correspondents for qualifications frameworks, with the intention that the correspondents be the main links between developments concerning qualifications frameworks in their own country and the other partners in the Bologna Process. As of early September 2008, 36 countries had appointed correspondents.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.Bologna2009Benelux.org/qf>

## **Self certification**

Self certification is the final step in the development of a national qualifications framework and is an integral part of the process. The purpose of the self certification is to demonstrate that the national qualifications framework is compatible with the EHEA Framework. The self certification process – which should involve international experts – and report are therefore essential to establishing the credibility of a national qualifications framework

At the time of writing, 2 countries - Ireland and the United Kingdom (Scotland) - have submitted and made public their self certification reports. The replies from national QF correspondents show that some further countries plan to complete the process by 2010, but it also shows that some countries plan to complete it after 2010, and most countries do not report definite plans for their self certification. In some cases, there also seems to be a lack of clarity of what self certification actually means.

It is also worth noting that three further self certification processes are under way or planned. The self certification exercise for the United Kingdom (the QF for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) has been launched and it is hoped to conclude the exercise by the end of November 2008. The project group, including foreign experts, met for the first time on October 8 and will meet again on October 24, 2008. The Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands will carry out a joint exercise for their two separate frameworks, and the project group will have a majority of foreign experts. This exercise will be launched in early November 2008. The Coordination Group understands that Denmark will also launch its self certification, possibly in early 2009.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

Like the EHEA Framework, the EQF-LLL, formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2008, is an overarching framework of qualifications against which national frameworks will be referenced. The EQF addresses two main objectives, namely to increase European mobility and to facilitate lifelong learning. There are two significant differences between the two in terms of scope. On the one hand, the EHEA Framework concerns higher education only, and a conscious decision was made not to include levels giving access to higher education, whereas EQF-LLL concerns all levels of education, from primary to higher education, in a lifelong learning perspective. Thus, the EHEA Framework consists of three levels, whereas the EQF-LLL consists of eight<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the EHEA Framework concerns all countries of the Bologna Process –

---

<sup>2</sup> The three levels of the EHEA Framework correspond to levels 6, 7 and 8 of the EQF-LLL. Level 5 of the EQF-LLL corresponds to short cycle qualifications, which are not a part of the overarching EHEA Framework but which may be included in national frameworks as an intermediate level within the first cycle in terms of the EHEA Framework

currently 46 – whereas the EQF-LLL concerns the countries of the European Union, the European Economic Area and party to relevant EU programs in education – currently 32.

Good cooperation has been established between the Council of Europe, as Chair of the Coordination Group, and the European Commission, as the institution providing technical support for the EQF-LLL. The European Commission is a member of the Coordination Group, and the developments with regard to the EQF-LLL have been considered at every meeting of the Coordination Group. At the same time, the Council of Europe is a member of the EQF-LLL Advisory Board. The Council of Europe was also a member of a sub group of the EQF-LLL Advisory Board that looked at referencing of national qualifications levels in relation to the EQF-LLL and submitted its report to the EQF Advisory Board in September 2008. The Advisory Board adopted the criteria and procedures while the explanatory memorandum is currently the subject of a written consultation on the basis of the discussions in the meeting. The activities organized to assist in the implementation of the overarching frameworks have also sought to take account of developments in relation to the other framework.

In spite of these very positive developments, however, there is a need to continue work on the two frameworks.

## **STATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS**

NQF correspondents – or, where they had not been appointed, BFUG members – were asked to provide information on the state of development of their respective national framework. In brief, as of September 24, 2008, the state of development of national qualifications frameworks may be shown as follows:

### **- 11 steps:**

<b>Action/step</b>	<b>Step completed</b>	<b>Step indicated as planned with an indication of timing</b>	<b>No of answers</b>
1. Decision to start	28 countries; 2 countries for which the information is uncertain	0	30
2. Setting the agenda	18 countries; 8 countries for which the information is uncertain	3 countries, one of which indicates step to be completed end 2008, 2 in 2010	29

3. Organizing the process	22 countries; 6 countries for which the information is uncertain	1 country, which indicates step to be completed end 2008	29
4. Design Profile	18 countries; 6 countries for which the information is uncertain	6 countries, with various indications of timing	30
5. Consultation	16 countries; 4 countries for which the information is uncertain	9 countries, with various indications of timing	29
6. Approval	8 countries; 6 countries for which the information is uncertain	13 countries, with various indications of timing, 1 additional country indicates “not foreseen yet”	29
7. Administrative set-up	11 countries; 9 countries for which the information is uncertain	9 countries, with various indications of timing, 1 additional country indicates “not foreseen yet”	30
8. Implementation	3 countries; 9 countries for which the information is uncertain	17 countries, with various indications of timing, of which 2 indicate partial completion, e.g. through pilot projects	29
9. Inclusion of qualifications	3 countries; 11 countries for which the information is uncertain	16 countries, 3 of which indicate a completion date beyond 2010	30
10. Self-certification	3 countries, but for all three the information is incoherent in regard to the information provided for the other steps and the self certification reports have not been made public. On the other hand, Ireland and the United Kingdom, both of which have made their self certification reports public (in the case of the UK, for Scotland only), indicate that the self certification is in progress. In the case of Ireland, the first report held in 2006 will most likely be review. For 11 countries, the information seems uncertain.	15 countries, with various indications of timing, 4 of which indicate a completion date beyond 2010 and 3 give no indication of timing (“to be done” or “not foreseen yet”)	29
11. NQ web site	9 countries; 9 countries for which the information is uncertain	11 countries, with various indications of timing	29

Note: where a country has indicated 2008 for a given step, this has been taken as indicating completion unless the indication is “to be completed in 2008”, a month later than July 2008 or any other indication that the step has not been completed. “Uncertain information” indicates information that the Council of Europe Secretariat has found ambiguous or difficult to interpret.



## **OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

### **Developing, describing and implementing learning outcomes**

- Developing and describing learning outcomes is, in the view of the Coordination Group, one of the greatest challenges with which the European Higher Education Area will continue to be confronted over the next few years. Developing anything near a common understanding of how learning outcomes should be understood, developed and described will require continued exchange of experience across the EHEA.
- There will need to be a good mix of targeted activities at European level coupled with discussion and development work at national and institutional level. Regional events and cooperation should be seen as a valuable supplement to – but not as a substitution for – participation in European events and projects.
- An important task in the 2 – 4 years ahead will be not only to organize international events on key topics but to ensure that all countries of the EHEA are actually represented.
- The link between describing and implementing learning outcomes is also crucial. It is important that each competent authority and each higher education institution provide adequate descriptions of learning outcomes. Yet, it is also important that the development and description of learning outcomes be followed by implementation and not be reduced to formalistic administrative exercises without a real impact on the teaching and learning. It is important to focus not only on descriptions but also on how the learning outcomes have been achieved as well as on the evidence that demonstrates that the learning has been achieved. This should have a real impact in directing institutions toward more student centered learning.

### **Self certification**

- There is a strong need for continued exchange of experience in preparation of self certification, both through European and regional events and through expanding the pool of potential international experts in self certification exercises. The participation of international experts is an essential part of the self certification

### **Relationship to the EQF-LLL**

- The Coordination Group is pleased with the good cooperation that has now been established between the EHEA-QF and the EQF-LLL.
- The most important message is that the differences between the two overarching frameworks are far less important than the elements they have in common, that the differences have been minimized and that it is perfectly possible to develop national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with both the EHEA Framework and the EQF-LLL.
- There is nevertheless a need to clarify further the relationship between the overarching European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, so as to ensure that Europe has a widely understood and accepted approach to lifelong learning that facilitates recognition of all forms of learning

### **Timetable**

- The Coordination Group is aware that the 2010 commitment has played an important role in launching the development of national qualifications frameworks and that any discussion of modifying the deadline could be misread as indicating that a difficult task is less urgent than originally thought. It is also conscious of the value of coordinating deadlines with the EQF-LLL, which requires that countries relate their qualifications systems or frameworks to the EQF-LLL by 2010 and to ensure that all new qualifications issued from 2012 carry a reference to the appropriate EQF-LLL level.
- Nevertheless, the Coordination Group feels obliged to ask whether the 2010 deadline is realistic, and indeed also whether it is desirable to emphasize this deadline at the possible expense, in some countries, of the content or of stakeholder involvement.
- If the 2010 deadline is to be revised, this could best be done not simply by extending the general deadline, but by adopting a staggered deadline. Based on the 10 steps identified by the former working group, this could be done by specifying which steps should be completed by when. Alternatively, different rates of progression, leading to completion of the national framework by 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively could be identified, and each minister could be invited to commit to one of the scenarios.

### **2009 – 2010 work program**

- The 2009 – 2010 work program should include one major event focusing on qualifications frameworks. The Irish authorities have indicated that they would like to organize a conference in Dublin in autumn 2009 focusing on bringing

together progress internationally in the implementation of the EHEA-QF and the EQF-LLL. The Coordination Group recommends that this conference be included in the official Bologna work program 2009 – 2010.

- The Coordination Group also believes that there will be a continued need to offer assistance and coordination in the development of national frameworks compatible with the EHEA-QF (as well as with the EQF-LLL), and that there will also be a need for concentration and the exchange of experience at European level over the coming years.
- The Coordination Group therefore recommends that the BFUG consider establishing some kind of body or group for continued coordination, either by extending the mandate of the current Coordination Group or by making some other similar arrangement.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the present report is to provide an overview of the work undertaken at European level to assist countries of the Bologna Process in the development of their national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (hereafter referred to as the EHEA Framework). The report also aims to identify issues that need to be given consideration in the further development of national qualifications frameworks compatible with the EHEA Framework. These issues need to be addressed in the future work program of the Bologna Process (and, beyond 2010, that of the EHEA). The report makes a number of proposals in this regard. In addition to outlining the background and mandate for the work, this report is organized in the following main parts:

- Sharing of experience in the development of national qualifications frameworks;
- Dissemination of information;
- Relationship to the EQF-LLL;
- State of development of national qualifications frameworks;
- Outstanding issues and recommendations for further work.

### **MANDATE**

This work has been led by the Council of Europe under the mandate given in the London Communiqué:

*Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.*

*We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.*

The Council of Europe has been assisted in this work by the Bologna Coordination Group on Qualifications Frameworks, which was appointed in accordance with the decision by the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) at its meeting in Lisboa on October 2 – 3, 2007. The terms of reference and the membership of the Coordination Group appear in Appendices 1 and 2.

The Coordination Group met on November 26, 2007; February 22, May 21, September 4 and November 17, 2008.

By way of introduction, it is important to emphasize that the EHEA Framework was adopted by Ministers in Bergen in 2005, and the development of national qualifications frameworks is within the competence and responsibility of the competent national authorities. It is recalled that Ministers committed to launching this work by 2007 and to complete it by 2010.

The role of the Council of Europe and, by extension, the Coordination Group, has therefore been to facilitate the sharing of experience and to help develop good practice so that the competent national authorities could benefit from relevant experience from other countries to the extent that the national authorities wished to do so. The role of the Council of Europe and the Coordination Group was emphatically *not* to elaborate national frameworks or to give directives to the competent national authorities. On the contrary, they have seen their role as that of facilitators. Competent national authorities have been free to make use of the services of the Council of Europe and the Coordination Group, but there was no obligation to do so. The Council of Europe and the Coordination Group have also sought to facilitate the sharing of experience through measures at

European and regional level. These measures are outlined in the report and include European and regional conferences, an extensive part of the Bologna web site dedicated to qualifications frameworks and a group of national QF correspondents.

The work on qualifications framework has connected to other parts of the Bologna work program, in particular as concerns mobility, recognition, employability and stocktaking.

## **II. SHARING OF EXPERIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS 2007 - 2009**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD PRACTICE**

#### **European events: qualifications frameworks strand**

Three Bologna conferences have been organized under the “QF strand” of the Bologna work program 2007 – 2009.

The *Council of Europe Forum on Qualifications Frameworks*<sup>3</sup> was held in Strasbourg on October 11 – 12, 2007, as the first Bologna conference in the current work program. The conference provided an overview of the state of affairs with regard to the development of qualifications frameworks. It brought together more than 100 policy makers and practitioners from most States party to the European Cultural Convention. The conference emphasized:

- the relationship between national qualifications frameworks and the overarching framework of the European Higher Education Area;
- the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), presented by the European Commission;
- the concept of qualifications;
- the role of learning outcomes and credits in developing qualifications frameworks;
- three pertinent national experiences: Hungary, Ireland and New Zealand (the latter because New Zealand, with Australia and South Africa, was a pioneer in the development of qualifications frameworks).

The conference also provided an opportunity for participants to discuss issues related to the development of their national frameworks in smaller discussion groups.

The conference on *learning outcomes based higher education*<sup>4</sup> was held in Edinburgh on February 21 – 22, 2008 and organized by the Scottish authorities. The reason for the choice of topic was that developing, describing and using learning outcomes is considered the perhaps most difficult aspect of developing and implementing national

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/QF/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Edinburgh2008.htm>

qualifications frameworks. The conference drew in particular on the Scottish experience in the development of policy and practice in the use of learning outcomes at national, institutional and program level and also included a number of workshops that allowed participants to engage in discussion of highly practical issues. The conference included sessions on:

- Quality assurance national, institutional and program level: the design and
- implementation of outcome based programs
- Learning outcomes and the assessment of learner achievement
- Learning outcomes and information for stakeholders – public in general,
- employers
- The recognition of learning: informal learning; learning from work and the
- transfer of learning outcomes (credit).

The conference on *self certification of national qualifications frameworks* was held in Tbilisi on November 27 – 28, 2008 and organized by the Georgian authorities. **TO BE COMPLETED**

The conclusions and recommendations of the three Bologna conferences on qualifications frameworks are included in Appendices 3 – 5.

### **Other relevant Bologna conferences**

Three further conferences in the 2007 – 2009 work program have been particularly relevant to the development of national qualifications frameworks.

The conference on ECTS and student workload<sup>5</sup> organized at the Russian University of Peoples' Friendship in Moskva on April 17 – 18, 2008, in cooperation with the national Training Foundation and the Council of Europe.

The conference on Development of a common understanding of ECTS and learning outcomes held in Porto on June 19 – 20, 2008<sup>6</sup>.

The conference on employability held in Luxembourg on November 6 - 7, 2008<sup>7</sup>.

### **Recognition**

There is, of course, a strong link between the development of qualifications frameworks and the recognition of qualifications. Within the Bologna Process, the work program on recognition is carried out by the ENIC and NARIC Networks<sup>8</sup>, served by the Council of

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Moscow2008.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://portobologna.up.pt/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Luxembourg2008.htm>

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.enic-naric.net/>

Europe and UNESCO/CEPES (ENIC Network) and the European Commission (NARIC Network). At the same time, the ENIC Network includes some members that are not current or potential parties to the European Higher Education Area. Some of these (Australia and New Zealand) were among the pioneers in developing national qualifications frameworks, while others – Canada, Israel and the United States – have no current plans to develop national qualifications frameworks, even if they may have descriptions of their degree systems that are not very far removed from QF-like descriptions and at least one province of Canada has a framework. In this context, it may also be worth noting that while what is now referred to as qualifications frameworks – or sometimes “new style qualifications frameworks” – is a relatively new phenomenon, European countries have of course had a framework for their qualifications through their degree systems (sometimes referred to as “old style qualifications frameworks”).

The impact of the development of qualifications frameworks on recognition policy and practice were considered at the annual joint meetings of the ENIC and NARIC Networks in București in 2007 and in Malta in 2008 with a view to enhancing the understanding of qualifications frameworks among ENICs and NARICs and developing good practice. The 2008 ENIC/NARIC meeting also considered a draft analysis of the national action plans for recognition submitted to the 2007 London Ministerial conference. The analysis, carried out by Professor Andrejs Rauhvargers seconded by an ENIC/NARIC Working Party, which will be submitted to the BFUG, is relevant also for the role of qualifications frameworks in facilitating recognition.

At the 2008 ENIC/NARIC meeting, the Networks completed their consideration of “substantial differences”. This is a key concept of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention but also one for which no legal text can provide a precise definition. The Networks have therefore sought to develop a better common understand of what may constitute a “substantial difference” – and hence a valid reason for non-recognition or partial recognition of a foreign qualification – through workshops and discussions at three successive network meetings. Most of the discussions have been conducted on the basis of case studies aiming to illustrate elements that may be of importance in deciding whether there is a substantial difference or not. The development of qualifications frameworks is highly relevant to the identification of substantial differences, as national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching EHEA-QF should make it easier for credential evaluators to situate a qualification. The discussions in the Network meetings will be the basis for a book in the Council of Europe Higher Education Series, with publication foreseen in the course of 2009.

The impact of qualifications frameworks on recognition is yet to be measured, since there is – for obvious reasons – very limited experience with the recognition of qualifications issued within “new style” qualifications frameworks. The real importance of qualifications frameworks for recognition therefore cannot be assessed until an adequate number of countries issue qualifications within their new qualifications frameworks, and until an adequate number of holders of such qualifications seek recognition across borders. It should nevertheless be safe to assume that the introduction of qualifications frameworks in all countries of the EHEA as well as parallel developments in a number of

countries outside of the EHEA should facilitate recognition by providing a framework that facilitates comparison. At the same time, it is important that credential evaluators at higher education institutions as well as in ENICs/NARICs and other competent authorities gain an adequate understanding of qualifications frameworks as well as of the concept of qualifications, which may be seen to comprise five key elements:

- Level
- Quality
- Workload
- Profile
- Learning outcomes

Emphasizing learning outcomes more strongly in the recognition of qualifications is a particular challenge. It requires that learning outcomes be well described and attested by higher education institutions but also that they be well understood by credential evaluators and that relevant legislation make it possible for credential evaluators to emphasize learning outcomes.

### **Regional events**

The Council of Europe and the Coordination Group have seen it as one of their priorities to stimulate regional cooperation in the development of national qualifications frameworks. Regional cooperation provides participating countries with excellent opportunities for concrete cooperation on issues of common concern. Even if the development of a national qualifications framework remains a national responsibility, regional cooperation is particularly important in that it allows countries to share experience in a more restricted circle of countries that in many cases have similar backgrounds. Regional cooperation is a complement to and not a substitution for European cooperation.

The Council of Europe has in particular sought to encourage regional cooperation in South East Europe and in countries of the former Soviet Union. The reason for this choice is that most countries in both regions joined the Bologna Process in 2003 or later, are going through a process of very extensive reforms and have, in many cases, developed from a common background.

### ***South East Europe***

A regional conference for South East Europe was held in Beograd on November 1 – 2<sup>9</sup>, as a part of the program of the Serbian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, with the participation of representatives of Albania (including the Minister of Education), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia (including the

---

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/EHEA2010/Belgrade/default\\_EN.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/EHEA2010/Belgrade/default_EN.asp#TopOfPage)



Minister of Education), “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey as well as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the European Agency for Reconstruction and ERI-SEE.

One of the main recommendations of his conference was that a regional network on qualifications frameworks should be established. The launching conference for this network was held in Cetinje on July 8 – 9, 2008 and co-organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro and the Council of Europe<sup>10</sup>. Eight countries participated in this meeting, which established a regional network to exchange experience and promote good practice among the participating countries in the development and implementation of their national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Participating countries should offer mutual assistance and support in the development and implementation of their national frameworks and consider issues of regional concern. The Network is open to participation by the competent authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey.

The meeting adopted terms of reference for the regional network and elected Ms. Nadežda Uzelac of the Ministry of Education of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” as the first Coordinator of the Network. Ms. Uzelac is also a member of the Coordination Group. The meeting also set up three dedicated teams to address specific issues. One team will plan and conduct a comparative analysis of qualifications frameworks and education systems of the countries participating in the Network. A second team will offer assistance and guidelines in developing national web sites for qualifications frameworks and consider whether it would be useful and feasible to develop a web site for the Network, and the third team will develop project proposals that may be submitted to external sources for support. This team will in particular consider project proposals that may help train higher education policy makers and practitioners in the region in key aspects of qualifications frameworks.

### ***New Independent States***

A regional conference for countries of the New Independent States was held in Yerevan on September 8 – 9, 2008 with the participation of representatives of Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine. The conference was organized by the Ministry of Education of Armenia and the Council of Europe. The objective of the conference was to take stock of the progress achieved in the participating countries in the development of national qualifications frameworks; provide expert advice for further development of national qualifications frameworks; contribute to the sharing of experience and networking between the countries.

### ***Other regional activities***

---

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/EHEA2010/QF/CetinjeEN\\_08.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/EHEA2010/QF/CetinjeEN_08.asp#TopOfPage)

COMPLETE – to date the Coordination Group has not been informed of other *regional* activities.

### III. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

#### Web site on qualifications frameworks

In the course of December 2007 and January 2008, a special section on qualifications frameworks was developed as a sub-site to the official Bologna web site<sup>11</sup>. The site was developed by the Council of Europe with valuable assistance from the Bologna Secretariat. The site was validated by the Coordination Group at its meeting on February 22 and was made public shortly thereafter.

The aim of the site is to provide updated information on the main aspects of qualifications frameworks. The target groups are both the general public – at least in the sense of those taking some interest in higher education reforms and in discussions of qualifications without being higher education professionals – as well as policy makers and practitioners.

The site provides information on the EHEA Framework as well as on the EQF-LLL, and it includes a section on national qualifications frameworks with links to country pages. As of September 24, 2008, only 12/system countries had provided information on their national QF sites, or sites providing information on their national QFs. The site further provides some information, with links, on qualifications frameworks outside of the EHEA and on conference and other relevant events. Not least, it includes a glossary and it includes a section on “sources and resources” with useful references for those who wish to develop a broader overview and deeper understanding of qualifications and qualifications frameworks.

#### National QF correspondents

In March 2008, all countries of the Bologna Process were invited to appoint national correspondents for qualifications frameworks, with the intention that the correspondents be the main links between developments concerning qualifications frameworks in their own country and the other partners in the Bologna Process. As of early September 2008, 38 countries/systems had appointed correspondents.

The Coordination Group would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by the majority of QF correspondents in facilitating information on the development of the respective national frameworks. Nevertheless, the Coordination Group must also note

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/qf>

with regret that some countries have not appointed national QF correspondents. Even if in some of these cases, the BFUG representative of the country concerned has provided information, this cannot entirely replace the appointment of a QF correspondent. The Coordination Group must also note with regret that the information provided by some of the correspondents appointed has been of limited value

### **National dissemination**

This part of the report could highlight examples of good practice if national correspondents help the Coordination group identify such examples. It could also include a consideration of national web sites.

COMPLETE – depends in part on contributions from national QF correspondents

### **Self certification**

Self certification is the final step in the development of a national qualifications framework and is an integral part of the process. The purpose of the self certification is to demonstrate that the national qualifications framework is compatible with the EHEA Framework. The self certification process – which should involve international experts – and report are therefore essential to establishing the credibility of a national qualifications framework

The Coordination Group has examined an overview of the self certification process building on the report by the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks submitted to and accepted by the London Ministerial meeting in 2007. The overview, which is reproduced in Appendix 7, is available on the QF section of the Bologna web page, and the completed self certification reports are also published on this site as well as on the ENIC-NARIC web site. Self certification was also the topic of the third European conference of the QF strand of the work program, held in Tbilisi on October 27 – 28, 2008, cf. above.

At the time of writing, 2 countries - Ireland and the United Kingdom (Scotland) - have submitted and made public their self certification reports. The replies from national QF correspondents show that some further countries plan to complete the process by 2010, but it also shows that some countries plan to complete it after 2010, and most countries do not report definite plans for their self certification. In some cases, there also seems to be a lack of clarity of what self certification actually means.

It is also worth noting that three further self certification processes are under way or planned. The self certification exercise for the United Kingdom (the QF for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) has been launched and it is hoped to conclude the exercise by the end of November 2008. The project group, including foreign experts, met for the first time on October 8 and will meet again on October 24, 2008. The Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands will carry out a joint exercise for their two

separate frameworks, and the project group will have a majority of foreign experts. This exercise will be launched in early November 2008. The Coordination Group understands that Denmark will also launch its self certification, possibly in early 2009.

#### **IV. RELATIONSHIP TO THE EQF-LLL**

Whereas the EHEA Framework was adopted by the Ministers of the Bologna Process in Bergen in May 2005, work on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF-LLL)<sup>12</sup> was launched by the European Council and the European Commission in 2004 (in the joint report on the Education and Training 2010 process). Following preparations by the European Commission and a Europe-wide consultation process (2005) the EQF-LLL was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2008.

Like the EHEA Framework, the EQF-LLL is an overarching framework of qualifications against which national frameworks will be referenced. The EQF addresses two main objectives, namely to increase European mobility and to facilitate lifelong learning. There are two significant differences between the two in terms of scope. On the one hand, the EHEA Framework concerns higher education only, and a conscious decision was made not to include levels giving access to higher education, whereas EQF-LLL concerns all levels of education, from primary to higher education, in a lifelong learning perspective. Thus, the EHEA Framework consists of three levels, whereas the EQF-LLL consists of eight. On the other hand, the EHEA Framework concerns all countries of the Bologna Process – currently 46 – whereas the EQF-LLL concerns the countries of the European Union, the European Economic Area and party to relevant EU programs in education – currently 32.

The element that both frameworks have in common is the part covering higher education. Here, concern has been voiced that whereas the higher education part of the EQF-LLL is not far removed from the EHEA-QF, the EQF-LLL has not adopted the wording of the EHEA-QF. Therefore, Europe has two similar but not identical qualifications frameworks covering higher education.

***The most important message is, however, that the differences between the two overarching frameworks are far less important than the elements they have in common, that the differences have been minimized and that it is perfectly possible to develop national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with both the EHEA Framework and the EQF-LLL.***

Good cooperation has been established between the Council of Europe, as Chair of the Coordination Group, and the European Commission, as the institution providing technical support for the EQF-LLL. The European Commission is a member of the Coordination

---

<sup>12</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm)

Group, and the developments with regard to the EQF-LLL have been considered at every meeting of the Coordination Group. At the same time, the Council of Europe is a member of the EQF-LLL Advisory Board. The Council of Europe was also a member of a sub group of the EQF-LLL Advisory Board that looked at referencing of national qualifications levels in relation to the EQF-LLL and submitted its report to the EQF Advisory Board in September 2008. The Advisory Board adopted the criteria and procedures while the explanatory memorandum is currently the subject of a written consultation on the basis of the discussions in the meeting. The activities organized to assist in the implementation of the overarching frameworks have also sought to take account of developments in relation to the other framework.

The activities organized to assist in the implementation of the overarching frameworks have also sought to take account of developments in relation to the other framework. The European Commission presented the EQF-LLL at the first Bologna in the current work program, in Strasbourg in October 2007, and the Council of Europe and several members of the Coordination Group contributed to a large EQF-LLL conference on “implementing the European Qualifications Framework” in Bruxelles on June 3 – 4, 2008.

In spite of these very positive developments, however, there is a need to continue work on the two frameworks. In this context, it is worth noting that the Edinburgh conference on learning outcomes (February 21 – 22, 2008) concluded that

*there was a need to clarify further the relationship between the overarching European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, so as to ensure that Europe has a widely understood and accepted approach to lifelong learning that facilitates recognition of all forms of learning and the transition between VET and HE, and that promotes mobility, encourages individual educational ambition and motivates learner achievement. In particular, there is a need to promote dialogue between ECTS and ECVETS to ensure interoperability.*

## **V. STATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS**

NQF correspondents – or, where they had not been appointed, BFUG members – were asked to provide information on the state of development of their respective national framework. A synthesis of the information provided by NQF correspondents is provided in Appendix 8.

In brief, as of September 24, 2008, the state of development of national qualifications frameworks may be shown as follows:

- **11 steps:**

<b>Action/step</b>	<b>Step completed</b>	<b>Step indicated as planned with an indication of timing</b>	<b>No of answers</b>
1. Decision to start	28 countries; 2 countries for which the information is uncertain	0	30
2. Setting the agenda	18 countries; 8 countries for which the information is uncertain	3 countries, one of which indicates step to be completed end 2008, 2 in 2010	29
3. Organizing the process	22 countries; 6 countries for which the information is uncertain	1 country, which indicates step to be completed end 2008	29
4. Design Profile	18 countries; 6 countries for which the information is uncertain	6 countries, with various indications of timing	30
5. Consultation	16 countries; 4 countries for which the information is uncertain	9 countries, with various indications of timing	29
6. Approval	8 countries; 6 countries for which the information is uncertain	13 countries, with various indications of timing, 1 additional country indicates "not foreseen yet"	29
7. Administrative set-up	11 countries; 9 countries for which the information is uncertain	9 countries, with various indications of timing, 1 additional country indicates "not foreseen yet"	30
8. Implementation	3 countries; 9 countries for which the information is uncertain	17 countries, with various indications of timing, of which 2 indicate partial completion, e.g. through pilot projects	29
9. Inclusion of qualifications	3 countries; 11 countries for which the information is uncertain	16 countries, 3 of which indicate a completion date beyond 2010	30
10. Self-certification	3 countries, but for all three the information is incoherent in regard to the information provided for the other steps and the self certification reports have not been made public. On the other hand, Ireland and the United Kingdom, both of which have made their self certification reports public (in the case of the UK, for Scotland only), indicate that the self certification is in progress. In the case of Ireland, the first report held in 2006 will	15 countries, with various indications of timing, 4 of which indicate a completion date beyond 2010 and 3 give no indication of timing ("to be done" or "not foreseen yet")	29

	most likely be review. For 11 countries, the information seems uncertain.		
11. NQ web site	9 countries; 9 countries for which the information is uncertain	11 countries, with various indications of timing	29

Note: where a country has indicated 2008 for a given step, this has been taken as indicating completion unless the indication is “to be completed in 2008”, a month later than July 2008 or any other indication that the step has not been completed. “Uncertain information” indicates information that the Council of Europe Secretariat has found ambiguous or difficult to interpret.

In somewhat more detail, the information may be summarized as follows:

Country	1.Decision to start	2.Setting the agenda	3.Organizing the process	4.Design Profile	5.Consultation	6.Approval	7.Administrative set-up	8.Implementation	9.Inclusion of qualifications	10.Self-certification	11.NQ web site
ALBANIA	07/2006	07/2006	Done	Done	09-10/2008	12/2008	06/2008	01/2009	06/2009	To be completed in 09/2009	Under construction
ANDORRA	2007	06/2008	Done	Done	To be completed	09/2008	09/2008	06/2009	To be done	To be done	To be done
ARMENIA											
AUSTRIA	11/06	12/06-01/07	02-07/2007	03-12/2007	01-06/2008	10/2008-02/2009	12/2008-02/2009	03-12/2009	06/2009-04/2010	06/2009-12/2011	Done
AZERBAIJAN											
BELGIUM (FLEMISH COMMUNITY)	2003	Done?	Done?	Done?	done	In progress	done?	Pilots projects 12/2007, 2009-2010	?	?	?
BELGIUM (FRENCH COMMUNITY)	2008										
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	2006-2008	2010	2006-2008	To be completed	ongoing	2007	2007-2010	To be completed by 2010	2009/2010	Ongoing By 2010	2010
BULGARIA	2007	2010	2007-2008	1995-2007 to be completed in 2010	2007-11/2008	2010	2007-2010	In progress?	To be done	2007	To be done
CROATIA	03/2006	07/2007	07/2007 - 09/2007	07/2007-01/2008	11/2007-2008	To be done in 2009	To be done in 2009	To be done in 2011-2012	to be done in 2012	2005	07/2008
CYPRUS	2008										
CZECH REPUBLIC	2005-2006	2005-2007	done	In the phase	2008 and will	2006	Done and more	2008-2011?	2008-2011? – mainly in	2011	Autumn 2008-

				of suggestion which is being discussed	continue during the whole preparation 2009-11*/		structures, in particular for the tertiary sphere will be introduced – e.g. “sectoral expert groups”.*/		the second half of the project */		This will be the present information on the state of art. It will be on the Bologna web page of the Ministry. The “professional” web will be prepared during the project*/ in 2009
A lot of work has to be done and will be done with the help of the National Project under the Operational Programme “Education for Competitiveness” which will be realised in 2009-11.											
DENMARK	Done	done	done	done	done	2003	done	done	done	Will be started at the end of 2008 and completed during the first semester 2009	done
ESTONIA	done?	done?	done?	done?	done?	2007	done	2009	?	?	?
FINLAND											
FRANCE	2002	2002	2002	2002	done	2002	done	2002	From 2002 to 2008(work still ongoing for HE qualifications	Done	done
GEORGIA	2006	done?	2007	2007	2007-10/2008	12/2008-03/2009	2009	2008-2010	2011	06 /2009 – 2010	?
GERMANY											
GREECE											
HOLY SEE	2005	2005	2005-2006	Done to be updated	10/2006	To be decided	To be done in 2009	To be done in 2009	In process	To be completed in 2010	To be done in 2009
HUNGARY											
ICELAND	2004-2005	2004-2005	2004-2005	2006	2006-2008	2006	2006	Done	done	To be completed in 2009	To be done in 2010
IRELAND	Done	done	Done	Done	Done	Done	Done	done	done	Completed in 2006	Done
ITALY	2007	To be completed in 2008	To be completed in 2008	to be completed in 2008	to be completed in 2008	To be completed	Partially done in 2008, to be completed in 2010	Partially done in 2008, to be completed in 2010	To be concluded in 2009	To be concluded in 2009	To be concluded in 2010



LATVIA	2004	2004-2006	2004	2004-2005	2005 on QF 2006-2008 on the draft	Starts 2008 For adoption in 2009-2010		2013			To be done in 2009/2010
LIECHTENSTEIN	End 2007	01-02/2008	05/2008	10/2008	05/2009	10/2009	From 09/2009	Ongoing Until 07/2011	08/2009	07/2010	done
LITHUANIA											
LUXEMBOURG											
MALTA	2005	done?	done	Done ?	?	06/2007	done	done	?	?	done
MOLDOVA											
MONTENEGRO	2006	done	2006?	Done	2008	?	?	2010?	?	?	?
NETHERLANDS	Done	done	Done	done	To be completed	To be completed	?	?	?	07-11/2008	?
NORWAY	2005	Done?	Done?	04/2007	Done	In progress	done	?	?	?	?
POLAND	2006	2006	2006	01/2008	2008-2009-2010	2009-2010	2010	2010	2011	2012	?
PORTUGAL											
ROMANIA	2005	done	2005-2006	2007	2007	To be approved in 2008	Done in 2008	2008-2010	2010	2010-2012	done
RUSSIAN FEDERATION											
SERBIA											
SLOVAK REPUBLIC											
SLOVENIA	Done	Done?	2007	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
SPAIN	2007	2007	2007	To be developed in 2008	To be developed in 2008	not foreseen yet	not foreseen yet	To be developed in 2008	To be developed in 2008	not foreseen yet	not foreseen yet
SWEDEN	Done	Done?	Done?	2007	Done?	Done?	Done?	In 2008?	?	?	?
SWITZERLAND	09/2005	2005-2006	2005	2006	2007-10/2008	2009-2010	Autumn 2008	No date set	2010	2009-2010	done
“THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”	Done	done	Partially completed	To be completed	To be completed	done	To be completed	?	To be completed	To be completed	To be completed
TURKEY	Done 04/2006	Done 2006	Done 2006-2008	To be completed by 11/2008	Partially completed and will be fully completed by 12/2008	To be done by 03/2009	To be done by 05/2009	Pilot implementation in 2010 and full implementation by 12/2012	To be done in 2010-2015	To be done in 2010-2012	To be completed in 2009
UKRAINE											
UNITED KINGDOM	Done	done	done	done	done	2001	?	done	Done?	11/2008	done

UNITED KINGDOM SCOTLAND	1997	done	Done in 1998	Completed in 1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2003-2004	2003	2001	2006-2007	done
-------------------------	------	------	--------------	-------------------	-----------	-----------	-----------	------	------	-----------	------

## V. OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

In the course of its work, the Coordination group has identified a number of issues on which further work is required and which would, in most cases, benefit from further consideration at European level even if the principle of course remains that the competent authorities of each education system are responsible for their own national qualifications framework.

### Developing, describing and implementing learning outcomes

*Developing and describing learning outcomes is, in the view of the Coordination Group, one of the greatest challenges with which the European Higher Education Area will continue to be confronted over the next few years.* On the one hand, the traditions and experiences of actors – whether in public authorities or at different levels within higher education institutions, whether as policy makers, practitioners, students or credential evaluators – varies very considerably across the EHEA. Developing anything near a common understanding of how learning outcomes should be understood, developed, described and implemented in the learning and testing process will require continued exchange of experience across the EHEA. There will need to be a good mix of targeted activities at European level coupled with discussion and development work at national and institutional level. It is clearly not feasible that every institution benefit directly from international advice or participation in conferences and projects organized as a part of the Bologna Process, yet it is crucial that no country in the EHEA not benefit from the experiences of its peers. While the European events organized as a part of the 2007 – 2009 Bologna work program have been successful, the number and range of participants have necessarily been limited and some countries have not sent representatives to any of the three “QF events” in the work program. A process within each country and institution will be required to implement the concept of learning outcomes in curricula as well as in testing/assessment.

An important task in the 2 – 4 years ahead will therefore be not only to organize international events on key topics but to ensure that all countries of the EHEA are actually represented. This is of course primarily a responsibility of each individual country, since the EHEA builds on the principle that each country is responsible for its own participation in the Bologna Process. Nevertheless, there seems to be a need for, on the one hand, a measure of European coordination of events and, on the other hand, some

coordination of participation with a view to ensuring that no country is either disengaged from the work on qualifications frameworks or unable to secure a place at key events.

Events are not necessarily only pan-European. Regional events and cooperation should be seen as a valuable supplement to – but not as a substitution for – participation in European events and projects. In this respect, the 2007 – 2009 work program provides a good example through the regional network established by and for South East Europe.

The link between describing and implementing learning outcomes is also crucial. It is important that each competent authority and each higher education institution provide adequate descriptions of learning outcomes. Yet, it is entirely possible to provide “formally correct” description of learning outcomes without modifying institutional or pedagogical practice. It is important that the development and description of learning outcomes be followed by implementation and not be reduced to formalistic administrative exercises without a real impact on the teaching and learning. It is important to focus not only on descriptions but also on how the learning outcomes have been achieved as well as on the evidence that demonstrates that the learning has been achieved. This should have a real impact in directing institutions toward more student centered learning.

### **Self certification**

Self certification is a crucial part of the development of national frameworks, since self certification is the exercise that will convince partners in the EHEA and beyond that a given national framework is indeed compatible with the QF-EHEA and that its qualifications should therefore be recognized at the appropriate level.

There is a strong need for continued exchange of experience in preparation of self certification, both through European and regional events and through expanding the pool of potential international experts in self certification exercises. The participation of international experts is an essential part of the self certification – as is the publication of the self certification report – in order to ensure credibility and also because international participants have greater distance to the framework in question and may raise issues that seem obvious to those intimately familiar with the framework in question but far less obvious to those who are not. So far, the pool of potential international experts with sufficient knowledge of and experience with qualifications frameworks is, however, relatively limited. If national frameworks are self certified gradually, the pool of experts will increase gradually. If, however, a high number of countries wish to self certify their frameworks at the same time, such as in 2010, we may well be faced with a shortage of international experts.

### **Relationship to the EQF-LLL**

The Coordination Group is pleased with the good cooperation that has now been established between the EHEA-QF and the EQF-LLL, including between the Council of Europe as Chair of the Coordination group and the European Commission is the institution offering technical support for the EQF-LLL. The Coordination Group is of the opinion that the most important message is that the differences between the two overarching frameworks are far less important than the elements they have in common, that the differences have been minimized and that it is perfectly possible to develop national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with both the EHEA Framework and the EQF-LLL.

Nevertheless, the Coordination Group is also convinced that there is a need to clarify further the relationship between the overarching European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, so as to ensure that Europe has a widely understood and accepted approach to lifelong learning that facilitates recognition of all forms of learning and the transition between VET and HE, and that promotes mobility, encourages individual educational ambition and motivates learner achievement. In particular, there is a need to promote dialogue between ECTS and ECVETS to ensure interoperability. It is, however, generally understood that EQF levels 6 – 8 correspond to the three levels of the EHEA-QF and that level 5 of the EQF-LLL corresponds to short cycles as intermediary qualifications within the first cycle of the EHEA-QF. It is further understood that ECVET is attached to ECTS.

### **Timetable**

Ministers made an ambitious commitment in Bergen in 2005 when they promised to launch work on their national qualifications frameworks by 2007 and to complete it by 2010. In London in 2007, they recommitted to the ambitious goal of having national frameworks in place by 2010. The tight deadline has undoubtedly had a beneficial effect in that the vast majority of EHEA countries have now launched work on their national frameworks. Information provided by the national correspondents show that most countries are in the first 5 of the 10 steps in developing a national qualifications frameworks identified in the report by the former QF working group submitted to Ministers in 2007. The Coordination Group takes this to indicate that most countries have made a good start in developing their national frameworks but that some time is still required for all countries to complete this task. This is borne out by the fact that some countries indicate that they plan to complete self certification after 2010.

It should be noted that in many countries, the development of a national qualifications framework is one of the more visible manifestations of the Bologna Process. As such, it is far more an enmeshed policy exercise than merely a technical one. Time is required to undertake necessary consultation and to adapt overarching concepts to national practice and traditions, and this will ensure better implementation in the longer run. Inadequate preparatory work can in the worst of cases lead to over-enthusiastic starts followed by

slowing down or even reversing reforms. The Coordination Group also notes the parallel work on national lifelong learning frameworks compatible; with the EQF-LLL. While it is essential to have these coordinated with the development of the higher education framework – whether done separately or as a joint exercise – this can lead to more protracted processes because wider groups of stakeholders are involved.

The Coordination Group is aware that the 2010 commitment has played an important role in launching the development of national qualifications frameworks and that any discussion of modifying the deadline could be misread as indicating that a difficult task is less urgent than originally thought. It is also conscious of the value of coordinating deadlines with the EQF-LLL, which requires that countries relate their qualifications systems or frameworks to the EQF-LLL by 2010 and to ensure that all new qualifications issued from 2012 carry a reference to the appropriate EQF-LLL level.

Nevertheless, the Coordination Group feels obliged to ask whether the 2010 deadline is realistic, and indeed also whether it is desirable to emphasize this deadline at the possible expense, in some countries, of the content or stakeholder involvement. Ideally, qualifications frameworks should be developed fast and well, but where the two are incompatible, the Coordination Group is of the opinion that it is more important to have well developed national frameworks even if this were to take somewhat longer than originally envisaged.

If Ministers were to consider revising the 2010 deadline, it is the view of the Coordination group that this could best be done not simply by extending the general deadline until, say, 2012 or 2013, but by adopting a staggered deadline. Based on the 10 steps identified by the former working group, this could be done by specifying which steps should be completed by when. Alternatively, ministers could identify four different rates of progression, leading to completion of the national framework by 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively, and invite each minister to commit to one of the scenarios.

### **2009 – 2010 work program**

Less than a year will separate the 2009 ministerial conference from that of 2010, which will formally declare the establishment of the European Higher Education Area. This means not only that the BFUG will need to have a clear idea of the work program already before the ministerial conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, but also that the official work program is likely to consist of a limited number of events and activities.

The Coordination Group is of the opinion that the 2009 – 2010 work program should include one major event focusing on qualifications frameworks. The Irish authorities have indicated that they would like to organize a conference in Dublin in autumn 2009 focusing on bringing together progress internationally in the implementation of the

EHEA-QF and the EQF-LLL. The Coordination Group recommends that this conference be included in the official Bologna work program 2009 – 2010.

The Coordination Group also believes that there will be a continued need to offer assistance and coordination in the development of national frameworks compatible with the EHEA-QF (as well as with the EQF-LLL), and that there will also be a need for concentration and the exchange of experience at European level over the coming years. It is worth recalling that even when all EHEA countries will have developed and self certified their national frameworks, there is likely to be a need for continuous concentration on the implementation of national frameworks.

The Coordination Group therefore recommends that the BFUG consider establishing some kind of body or group for continued coordination, either by extending the mandate of the current Coordination Group or by making some other similar arrangement.

## **APPENDICES**

1. Terms of reference adopted by the BFUG in October 2007
2. Membership of the Coordination Group

**APPENDIX 1****TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE BOLOGNA COORDINATION GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS**

<p><b>Name of the working group</b></p> <p>Bologna Coordination Group for Qualifications Frameworks</p>
<p><b>Contact person (Chair)</b>  Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe  Mail: <a href="mailto:sjur.bergan@coe.int">sjur.bergan@coe.int</a>  Phone: (33) 3 88 41 26 43</p>
<p><b>Composition</b> (Please ensure the necessary balance with regard to geography, size, old vs. new, countries vs. organisations etc.)</p> <p>Czech Republic, Germany, Georgia, Ireland, Portugal, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, United Kingdom/Scotland, European Commission, ESU, EURASHE, EUA, President of the ENIC Network, ECTS coordinator, Bologna Secretariat</p>
<p><b>Purpose and/or outcome</b></p> <p>The Bologna Coordination Group for Qualifications Frameworks shall advise the Council of Europe in fulfilling the mandate given to the Council of Europe by Ministers in paragraph 2.8 of the London Communiqué</p>
<p><b>Reference to the London Communiqué</b></p> <p>Paragraph 2.8:</p> <p><i>We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.</i></p>
<p><b>Specific tasks</b></p> <p>The Coordination Group shall give act as a forum for debate on qualifications frameworks and advice on:</p>

- activities designed to promote the sharing of experience in the development of national qualifications frameworks within the European Higher Education Area or at regional level within the EHEA;
- specific issues relating to the development of national qualifications frameworks, their purposes, relationship to credits, qualifications, learning outcomes and curriculum reform, as well as issues of content, methodology and procedure, as appropriate;
- experts that might assist countries in the development of their national frameworks, in cases where countries request such assistance. In so doing, the Coordination Group shall seek to ensure that experts represent a variety of backgrounds and experience;
- methodology and procedures for the self-certification of completed national frameworks and help identify experts who might participate in self-certification exercises where countries ask for assistance in identifying suitable foreign experts for this purpose;
- the publication of self-certification reports;
- cooperation with the European Commission with a view to ensuring that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework for the EHEA are also compatible with the European Qualifications Framework;
- public information designed to promote the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks;
- activities and material designed to ensure compatibility between the overarching EHEA framework and the EQF;
- the relationship between the development of qualifications frameworks and other key policy areas within the Bologna Process, in particular as concerns the recognition of qualifications.

The Coordination Group shall also assist the Bologna Secretariat and the Stocktaking Group in gaining an overview of the state of developments of national qualifications frameworks in time for the 2009 stocktaking exercise.

### **Reporting**

Minutes of working group meetings will be made available to BFUG on the protected part of the website (by the Bologna Secretariat).

BFUG should also receive regular reports and updates.

To allow for good communication with BFUG as a whole and for the necessary consultations, progress reports should be submitted at least two weeks before each BFUG meeting. In between BFUG meetings, updates can be circulated by the Bologna Secretariat via e-mail.

Deadline for final report (draft version): 15 January 2009

Deadline for final version: 1 March 2009



**Meeting schedule**

The first meeting will be held on November 26 – 27, 2007. The exact schedule is to be established. We would foresee one meeting per semester.

**Liaison with other action lines**

Through the Secretariat and the Chair/Vice Chair of the BFUG. For the Coordination Group, the groups on stocktaking, lifelong learning and employment are particularly relevant, but it is not realistic to have cross representation (which would need to be of persons and not only of countries) with all other relevant groups.

**Additional remarks**

We aim to have a European conference focusing on learning outcomes, to be organized by the United Kingdom (Scotland) in February 2008 and one in Georgia in fall 2008.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOLOGNA COORDINATION GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS**

#### **Council of Europe**

Sjur Bergan, Chair

Jean-Philippe Restoueix, Secretary

#### **Bologna Secretariat**

Marlies Leegwater

#### **Czech Republic**

Věra Šťastná, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

#### **ECTS counsellors**

Maria Sticchi Damiani

#### **ENIC / NARIC Network**

Françoise Profit, President of the ENIC Network

#### **European Commission**

Christian Tauch

Jens Bjørnavlod (CEDEFOP)

#### **ESU**

Anne Mikkola until May 2008

Bruno Carapinha from May 2008

Mark Sciriha from September 2008

#### **EUA**

Michael Hörig

#### **EURASHE**

Bryan Maguire

#### **Georgia**

Lela Maisuradze, Ministry of Education and Science

#### **Germany**

Birger Hendriks, Ministry of Science, Economic Affairs  
and Transport of Schleswig-Holstein

#### **Ireland**

Seán Ó Foghlú, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, until July 2008

John Scattergood, Pro-Chancellor of Trinity College Dublin, from July 2008

**Portugal**

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, Universidade do Porto

**“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**

Nadežda Uzelac, Ministry of Education and Science

**Turkey**

Professor Şener Oktik, Chair of the Commission for National Qualifications Framework until September 2008

Prof.Mehmet Durman, Member of the Commission for National Qualifications Framework from September 2008

**United Kingdom**

Gerard Madill, Universities Scotland (substitute David Bottomley)