



Údarás Náisiúnta  
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann  
National Qualifications  
Authority of Ireland



### ***Information bulletin 1: The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning***

This is the first of a short series of information bulletins about the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland is the National Coordination Point for the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).

As the National Coordination Point, the Qualifications Authority is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the EQF in Ireland. Communicating EQF developments to national stakeholders is a key part of this responsibility. This bulletin is intended to explain the background and purposes of EQF.

If you have any queries, please contact us by email to [eqf@nqai.ie](mailto:eqf@nqai.ie) or by telephone on (01) 8871500.

Dr. Jim Murray  
Chief Executive  
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

## **EQF: Background and Purposes**

The development of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) commenced in 2004 in response to requests from Member States, the social partners and other stakeholders for a common reference tool to increase the transparency of qualifications. An initial blueprint, proposing an 8-level qualifications framework based on learning outcomes, was published by the European Commission and consulted upon in the latter half of 2005. The consultation demonstrated that there was widespread support for the initiative, and a revised text was adopted by the Commission as a proposal in September 2006.

This proposal recommended the establishment of an overarching qualifications framework, which would serve as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. The core of the EQF consists of [8 qualifications levels](#), which are described through learning outcomes (knowledge, skill and competence). The principal aims of EQF are to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning. The formal adoption by the European Parliament and Council of the Recommendation establishing EQF was completed on 23 April 2008.

## What is the EQF?

EQF is an overarching qualifications framework or common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe.

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## When is this happening?

Those countries deciding to proceed with the EQF are being asked to implement it in two stages. The first stage (referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF) should be completed by 2010. Ireland intends to complete this process by summer 2009. The second stage (introducing a reference to the EQF in all new Certificate and Diploma Supplements) should be completed by 2012.

## Referencing the NFQ to the EQF

A major element of implementing the European Qualifications Framework is the referencing of the National Framework of Qualifications to the EQF.

The Qualifications Authority is responsible for:

- Coordinating referencing of the Irish Framework levels to the EQF, using a transparent methodology
- Providing access to information and guidance to stakeholders on the referencing process
- Promoting participation of stakeholders in the referencing process

The Irish Referencing process is now underway. The Qualifications Authority has convened a [National Steering Committee](#) to assist it in the referencing process. The Steering Committee is using the Referencing Criteria and Procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group, which has been established by the European Commission to coordinate implementation of the EQF at European level. Details of the referencing criteria can be found [here](#).

The first meetings of the national Steering Committee took place in January and March 2009. It is intended to finalise the Referencing Report by May 2009. As part of the process, the Steering Committee is convening a seminar in Dublin on 20 April 2009. Further details will appear on our [website](#) in due course.

## Further information on EQF

Further information on EQF and the Referencing process, including Frequently Asked Questions, can be found on our website at [www.ngai.ie/interdev\\_eqf.html](http://www.ngai.ie/interdev_eqf.html)