

# **Twinning project “Further support to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework”**



## **QUALIFICATIONS FOR BETTER FUTURE!**

### **Project Achievements and Outcomes**

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## **A Journey Culminated**

On 31 December 2023, the European Union-funded Twinning project “Further support to the implementation of National Qualifications Framework” in the Republic of North Macedonia will be concluded. Over a span of 27 months, this endeavour, with a substantial budget of €1.5 million, embarked on a mission to strengthen and operationalize the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The direct beneficiary of this transformative initiative is the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia.

### **Project Objectives: Elevating Employability, Mobility, and Social Integration**

The overarching objective of the project was to strengthen and operationalize the NQF, with a vision to enhance the employability, mobility, and social integration of workers and learners in the Republic of North Macedonia. The Twinning project supported the effectiveness of the NQF, focusing on critical areas:

- Development and implementation of quality assurance (QA) processes and procedures.
- Transparency and governance of skills and qualifications across Vocational Education and Training (VET), and Higher Education.
- Enhancement of education and training quality, aligning with labour market requirements.
- Integration of formal, non-formal, and informal learning.
- Support for the validation of learning outcomes acquired in diverse settings.

This 27-month journey wouldn't have been possible without the collaborative efforts of all the partners, stakeholders, and dedicated teams involved. They worked together to build a solid foundation for further enhancement of both, institutional and individual capacities, essential for the successful introduction, and, more importantly, implementation of necessary legislative changes, further developing quality management framework and quality culture in education and training. This concerted approach aimed not only at bolstering confidence within the system but also at establishing trust among key stakeholders in the country and beyond, fostering a positive perception of the education and training system on both local and international scales.



“The trust in qualifications is a testimony of their quality. Project partners and involved parties contributed to developing layers of quality that in turn build an image of qualifications that everyone wants to treasure as gold and hand over as heritage.”

*Borčo Aleksov, BC project leader*

*Deputy Head, Higher Education Sector, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia*

“The project's comprehensive approach and strategic interventions have significantly advanced the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in North Macedonia, promising to enhance the quality and relevance of education and training. A notable benefit of the framework is its role as a unifying element, fostering a cohesive understanding of qualifications and competencies across borders. This not only streamlines academic and professional recognition but also establishes a foundation for stronger regional cooperation in education and workforce development.

As a beneficiary, North Macedonia has received valuable recommendations and expert assistance, potentially leading to tangible improvements in the transparency, consistency, and credibility of its qualifications. This elevates the overall standard of education and training, positioning the country as an attractive destination for investment and collaboration. The positive effects extend beyond North Macedonia, fostering cooperation and progress among member states and partner countries.”

*Agnė Kudarauskiėnė, MS project leader*

*Vice-minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania*

“It was an excellent experience for France and Hcéres to participate in this Twinning project for the benefit of all citizens of North Macedonia, especially academics and students. On both sides, we have learned from each other and built bridges between communities that share the same goals: continuously enhance the level of education in our countries and make it more efficient to boost the labour market. The National Qualifications Framework is undoubtedly a powerful tool for integration and transparency of the education and training offered all over the country and beyond its borders. Of course, there are still regulatory obstacles to overcome, but we really believe that the patient dissemination of shared experiences among academics all over the country is a crucial impact factor in making sound, step-by-step progress.”

*Michelle Houppe, Junior project leader*

*Head of Project, Europe & International Department, High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education, France*

It was a great honour for Slovenia to participate in the project “Further Support to the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework”. The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET and our experts were entirely devoted to working for the benefit of all citizens of North Macedonia, especially young people. Our past experiences in national and international environments enabled us to have direct access to a wealth of new knowledge for the development of vocational education and support systems, and we used this knowledge and experience in all the activities of this project. The relationship between our countries is based on decades of friendly relations, mutual respect, and support. We share so much history, culture, traditions, and exchanges of all kinds. On that basis, we understand the real needs of the education and business system in North Macedonia. We are happy that we brought our experiences to a table together with Lithuanian and French colleagues. We made this possible by bringing together a perfect blend of experts in all areas vital to the project. We look forward to continuing our work together, and I am sure our collaboration will continue after the project.

*Aleksandar Sladojević, Junior project leader*

*Acting Director, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training*





Training at the University Goce Delchev in Shtip



The Twinning project has provided specific and significant recommendations for enhancing quality in higher education and developing the overall educational process. The guidance offered for quality enhancement and recognizing higher education qualifications is poised to facilitate robust advancements in the field. To ensure the continued development of the National Qualification Framework, it is essential for the Agency for Quality in Higher Education, the Ministry of Education and Science, and all universities—both private and state—in the Republic of North Macedonia to actively engage as serious partners, consider and follow the outlined recommendations.

*Prof. Liljana Koleva Gudeva*

*University of Goce Delcev, Member of the Accreditation Board*

The Twinning project has great importance in supporting the effectiveness of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the country, particularly in providing guidelines and recommendations for the implementation and development of the QA framework of the NQF, HE, and VET, further inclusion of qualifications in the digital NQF register and improving awareness-raising practices. It will significantly facilitate further operationalization of NQF with the active contribution of all relevant stakeholders in the Republic of North Macedonia.”

*Elizabeta Jovanovska – Radanovikj*

*Advisor for the Economy, Law and Trade Sector, Vocation Education Centre*

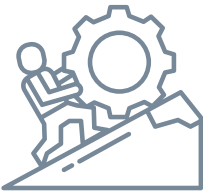


8th Steering Committee Meeting



# PROJECT RESULTS IN NUMBERS

## ENGAGEMENT



**36 ACTIVITIES**

successfully accomplished across four project component

**40 EXPERTS**

from the Republic of Lithuania, Slovenia, and France, contributing their expertise to project activities



**802 WORKING DAYS**

equal to 6416 hours of contribution by the experts during project activities

**113 CAPACITY BUILDING EVENTS**

including training sessions, workshops, focus groups, and interviews



**10 AWARENESS-RAISING EVENTS**

regional, local, and virtual events, including a significant international conference amplifying the project's impact

# PROJECT RESULTS IN NUMBERS

## ACHIEVEMENTS



### **77** WRITTEN OUTPUTS

encompassing thematic analysis, recommendations, manuals, guidelines, drafts of qualification standards, NQF roadmap, and strategic documents including the Communication Strategy with a detailed implementation plan

### **9** STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

of the project leadership with beneficiary policy developers to plan implementation toward a greater impact



### **4** STUDY VISITS

international exposure and cross-country collaboration between the partner countries

### **1000+** BENEFICIARY ENGAGED

from different higher education and training institutions and other relevant organizations took part in different capacities



### **SYNERGY WITH OTHER PROJECTS**

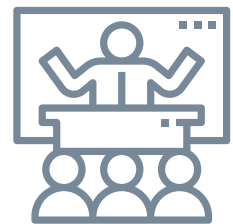
regular meetings with the team of the project "Increasing Attractiveness, Inclusiveness, and Relevance of VET and Adult Education"

# PROJECT RESULTS IN NUMBERS

## VISIBILITY

### 1 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

on the 10th anniversary of the National Qualifications Framework with a focus on international mobility



### 8 MEDIA OUTPUTS

issuance of 3 press releases and delivery of 5 statements to the press, ensuring widespread project's coverage and recognition

### 32 INFORMATIVE MATERIALS

monthly newsletters, one pager, a brochure, and a video for the promotion of the NQF disseminated in electronic and printed form



### 1000+ VISIBILITY MATERIALS

production and dissemination of brochures, pens, notebooks, folders, bags, umbrellas, water bottles, sticky notes, and travel kits with the project info and logo

These numerical achievements underscore the project's robust outcomes, reflecting a multifaceted and impactful approach to advancing the National Qualifications Framework.



## Principal Segments

To achieve mandatory project results, the tasks of 4 project components were structured into the following principal segments:

- **Analysis of Applicable Laws and Legal Acts and Other Relevant Documents:** This phase involved a comprehensive examination of pertinent laws, legal acts, and other documents associated with the management of NQF and quality assurance of education and training.
- **Extensive Round Table Discussions, Meetings, and Workshops** with relevant stakeholders and policymakers in the fields of qualifications and QA of education and training.
- **Drafting Proposals and Recommendations for Essential Amendments and/or Developing new Strategic Documents:** The subsequent focus was on formulating and presenting proposals for amendments to the existing laws and regulations and current practices, ensuring alignment with the Education Strategy 2018-2025 of the country and the project's objectives.
- **Training of Relevant Personnel:** This segment encompassed the provision of targeted training sessions for personnel involved in the management of NQF, and quality assurance of education and training.
- **Awareness-Raising Events:** Had the primary goal of enhancing understanding among key stakeholders about the recommendations and proposals developed, as well as disseminating best practices in developing qualifications/occupational standards, quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications.
- **Conducting Study Visits to MS Partner Countries:** Geared towards offering practical examples and hands-on experiences in the management of NQF, as well as showcasing quality assurance practices in education and training.



# Overview of the Achievement of Project Mandatory Results

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## MANDATORY RESULT 1 (COMPONENT 1): QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN A LLL PERSPECTIVE IS STRENGTHENED

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### Sub-Result 1.1: Quality assurance (QA) framework reviewed

- Review of methodical and legal regulations on NQF in line with policy and legal framework for external QA in higher education and VET conducted in accordance with an inclusive and evidence-based approach.
- Recommendations for higher education programmes development in accordance with the Bologna requirements and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- Recommendations on linking the NQF, study field descriptions, and study programmes descriptions.
- Recommendations on the classification of awarded qualifications.
- Recommendations for the improvement of the evaluation and accreditation processes.
- Recommendations on the improvement of external quality assurance communication.
- Analysis and critical review of the existing institutional arrangements, criteria, instruments, and procedures of the QA in VET to identify their relevance to the EQAVET.
- Recommendations and action plan for the development of the QA framework for the VET system and institutional arrangements, instruments, and procedures of the QA in VET according to the requirements of the national system of qualifications, EQAVET, and ECVET.
- Proposal of guidelines and recommendations on the development of the QA framework for the VET system and institutional arrangements, instruments, and procedures of the QA in VET according to the EQAVET and ECVET.
- Guidelines and recommendations for the development of requirements for programmes with a special focus on how the intended learning outcomes fit with the corresponding level based on the NQF level descriptors.
- Guidelines and recommendations for evaluation of NQF in line with the policy and legal framework for QA in education and training; development of QA framework in VET referring to the processes and approaches in the development of occupational standards and qualifications, assessment standards; development of the institutional arrangements, instruments, and procedures of the QA in VET according to the EQAVET.
- Training of staff through a practical transfer of knowledge and know-how on EQAVET Linked with ECVET at relevant institutions of the implementing party.
- A Study visit to Lithuania for QA-related staff to share practical experience on the QA of qualifications and curricula in MS partner country.

## Sub-Result 1.2: Efficient and applicable Methodology and procedures on QA developed – for new users in Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQAHE) Boards, practitioners in education and training institutions, and stakeholders (e.g. NQF Board, Sector Committee)

- Manual for Practitioners on the Quality Assurance of Qualifications and Curricula in the Context of Joint European Reforms and Development of the National System of Qualifications of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- Thematic analyses regarding academic recognition and professional recognition frameworks and practices.
- Guidelines for Recognition of Professional Qualifications.
- Guidelines for Academic Recognition.
- Guidelines for future development of the HE qualifications referenced to level V, including institutional aspects of provision, processes of assessment of competencies, and awarding of qualifications.
- Desk research on the current state of the classification of study fields, research fields, and occupations.
- Recommendations and draft proposal for harmonisation and standardization .
- Training of staff (all involved in AQAHE) on the Methodology and procedures of QA of NQF.
- Peer-learning activities regarding Western-Balkan-based occupational standards in the VET sector in priority areas.
- 4 regional public awareness events by the implementing institution on Skills Development and Matching labour market and society expectations through NQF perspective.



Public awareness event in Strumica

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## MANDATORY RESULT 2 (COMPONENT 2): STRENGTHENED IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPACITIES OF THE NQF IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE QA FRAMEWORK

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**Sub-Result 2.1: Road map (2021-2023) for future implementation and capacity building of the NQF aligned with the QA framework and other relevant policies and strategies (e.g., education, employment, economic development, Smart specialization (S3) strategy) developed**

- Questionnaires for the workshops on the social dialogue and stakeholder involvement in the development of qualifications, occupational and qualification standards, and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework.
- Evaluations and analysis report on implementation and practice of the NQF in relation to VET
- Workshops with presentation of experiences from member-state countries on referencing of NQFs to EQF.
- Proposal for an updated NQF roadmap (proposed time frame: 2023-2025).
- Training of staff through the practical transfer of knowledge and know-how for the internal Quality Assurance system for HE at relevant institutions of the implementing party.
- Workshops with the BC on the process of Referencing Report, presentation of good practices, and addressing concerns from the Advisory Group.
- Analysis and background of reaching EQF Referencing Criteria Nr. 10 and No. 4, with recommendations.
- Recommendations for responding to EQF referencing criteria and procedures in the EQF Referencing Report of the National Qualifications Framework and Self-Certification to the QF-EHEA.
- 2 Study visits for staff of institutions and bodies involved in the management and supervision of the NQF and quality assurance to share practical experience in Lithuania and France.



Meeting with working group on Referencing Report

## **Sub-Result 2.2: Transparent and simplified procedures and methodology drafted and agreed for the development and inclusion of qualifications/occupational standards from various learning settings in the digital NQF register**

- Manual and Guidelines for transparent inclusion of qualifications/occupational standards (all levels) in the digital NQF register for all users.
- The Manual for Design and Development of Qualification Standards in Higher Education of North Macedonia.
- Draft Qualification Standards for the teaching profession for teachers of primary and secondary education, for school support staff and educational service experts (Pedagogues and Psychologists), and draft qualification standards for the Tourism and Hospitality sector as a national priority.
- 3 training and awareness-raising events (2 in the regions) on the inclusion of occupational standards and qualification standards in the digital register for the NQF Unit staff and Board representatives, representatives of the Sector Councils, and representatives of education and training institutions (including public and private) and other stakeholders.
- 2 webinars for High education institutions and relevant stakeholders on the development qualification standards.
- “Train the trainers” event on the development of qualification standards.

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## **MANDATORY RESULT 3 (COMPONENT 3): OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITIES OF NQF ADMINISTRATION FOR MANAGEMENT FOR NQF COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING PRACTICES IMPROVED**

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### **Sub-Result: 3.1: Communication Strategy developed and implemented for increased understanding and visibility of the NQF and NQF Digital Register**

- Survey of target groups on the understanding and visibility of the NQF and digital register.
- Communication Strategy and awareness-raising plan developed and approved by NQF Board.
- Training on Strategic Communication for NQF Board members, MoES Press Unit, VET Centre, HEIs, NQF Unit, and MoES representatives.
- Concept of communication campaign “10 years of NQF: qualifications for better future”.
- Visibility tools (1-pager “Discover the Transformative Power of NQF” in 3 languages, video on NQF in 3 languages, a banner, promotional brochure “National Qualifications Framework: A Decade of Advancement” in 3 languages).
- International conference on mobility and “10 years of National Qualifications Framework”.



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## MANDATORY RESULT 4 (COMPONENT 4): NQF DIGITAL REGISTER INTERCONNECTION AND COMPATIBILITY ON NATIONAL AND EU LEVEL IMPROVED

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### Sub-Result 4.1: NQF Digital register further supported for potential interconnection and compatibility to QMS, QDR, LOQ, ESCO, and EUROPASS

- Review of the current state-of-play on the NQF digital register in North Macedonia.
- Handbook on managing and quality assuring the digital input in the NQF Register.
- Recommendations for further upgrading and interconnection with online platforms at the European level in North Macedonia.
- Technical recommendations to achieve compatibility with the Qualifications Dataset Register (QDR).
- 3 regional awareness -raising events on data gathering and data management systems for compatibility of data on academic qualifications and study programmes with regional (Western Balkans) portal – joint information system – facilitating recognition of academic qualifications.
- Guidelines for the use and maintenance of the NQF digital register.
- 2 Webinars and 2 practical workshops/trainings on the use and maintenance of the NQF digital register.
- Study visit to Slovenia to gain practical experience on how Slovenia organised and executed the mechanisms and procedures of the development and implementation of the NQF register and its interconnection with European platforms.



International Conference 10 years of NQF



# Project`s Role in Elevating Awareness of the NQF Benefits

The project's targeted initiatives and strategic interventions have played a pivotal role in heightening awareness and ensuring that stakeholders from various sectors and society at large comprehend and appreciate the significance of the NQF as a catalyst for lifelong learning, urging individuals to view education as a ongoing journey rather than a finite phase. This dedication to continuous learning not only enhances personal development but also fosters a culture of innovation and resilience within society. Additionally, the project has underscored the NQF's crucial role in promoting social inclusion and equality, delineating pathways for individuals to access and progress through various educational levels. This inclusivity ensures that education becomes a tool for empowerment and generating opportunities for diverse segments of the population.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### Central Financing and Contracting Department

<https://cfcd.finance.gov.mk/?lang=en>

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

## TWINNING PARTNERS

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Ministry for Education,  
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Qualifications and Vocational Education and  
Training Development Centre



Centre for Quality Assessment  
in Higher Education



European Social  
Fund Agency

### FRANCE



High Council for the Evaluation of  
Research and Higher Education

### SLOVENIA



**CPI**  
INSTITUTE OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF SLOVENIA FOR VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING



This project is funded  
by the European Union

