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# ITALIAN REFERENCING REPORT OF THE QUALIFICATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

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*Through its Research Units, the Agency also carries out analysis, monitoring and evaluation of active labour policies and employment services.*

*The European Qualifications Framework - EQF National Coordination Point is located at the Agency and it is responsible for the technical-scientific implementation functions of the EQF Recommendation in Italy, such as: periodic updating of the Referencing Report, management of the referencing procedure of Italian qualifications to the EQF, monitoring, evaluation and maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework - NQF.*

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# Table of contents

Reading Guide	8
Foreword	10
Introduction	12
What is the EQF?	13
Aims and goals of the EQF	14
Objectives, implementation process and structure of the Report	15
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> - The regulatory context for the updating of the Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF	17
1.1 - The Italian strategy for lifelong learning and the National system for certification of competences	18
1.2 - Other policy interventions enhancing the Italian strategy for lifelong learning	25
1.3 - The National Qualifications Framework within the Italian strategy for lifelong learning	26
1.4 - The tools for the recognition and use of competences and qualifications in Italy	27
<b>CHAPTER 2</b> - The National Qualifications Framework: objectives, structure, procedures, governance and compliance with the ten criteria for referencing to the EQF	31
2.1 - First referencing of the qualifications to the EQF	31
2.2 - The National Qualifications Framework	33
2.2.1 - Goals and aims of the NQF	33
2.2.2 - The defining framework of the NQF	33
2.2.3 - The structure and technical specifications of the NQF	33
2.2.4 - Legal effects and phases of the referencing process of qualifications to the NQF	39
2.2.5 - Referencing other qualifications typologies to the NQF	42
2.2.6 - Criteria for referencing the Italian qualifications to the NQF	43
2.2.7 - Criteria for determining the internal sub-articulations of each NQF level	46
2.2.8 - Coding criteria for qualifications referenced to the NQF	47
2.2.9 - The information systems supporting the implementation of the NQF and the referencing of Italian qualifications	49
2.2.10 - The governance of the NQF	50

2.2.11 - The quality assurance of the referencing process and the national quality assurance systems in education and training	51
2.2.12 - The NQF updating process	55
2.3 - Compliance with the ten criteria for referencing to the EQF	57
<b>CHAPTER 3 - The Italian qualification systems and their referencing to the NQF</b>	60
3.1 - Initial education and training system	61
3.1.1 - Integrated system 0-6 years (pre-primary)	63
3.1.2 - First cycle of education	64
3.1.3 - Second cycle of the education and training system	64
3.1.4 - Post-secondary higher technical education and training	67
3.1.5 - Tertiary education and training system	67
3.2 - The adult education system	74
3.3 - The regional vocational training system	76
3.4 - The continuing training for workers	78
3.5 - The system of professions	79
3.5.1 - The regulated professions	80
3.5.2 - The non-regulated professions	81
3.6 - The offer of non-formal learning	82
3.7 - The Italian qualification systems: schematic diagrams, NQF visual identity and referencing synoptic table	84
<b>CHAPTER 4 - Synthesis of the results of the institutional confrontation debate and of the national and international consultation</b>	93
4.1 - Main findings of the confrontation debate with national and regional public competent authorities	94
4.2 - Main results of the international consultation	96
4.3 - Public on line consultation	98
ANNEX 1 - ANNEXES TO THE EQF RECOMMENDATION (2017)	100
Annex II - Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	100
Annex III - Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	102

Annex IV - Quality assurance principles for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	103
Annex V - Principles for credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	104
Annex VI - Elements for data fields for the electronic publication of information on qualifications with an EQF level	105
ANNEX 2 - Interministerial Decree on 8 January 2018 establishing the National Qualification Framework - NQF	106
Annex 3 - Interministerial Decree on 5 January 2021 for the adoption of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the National Competent Authorities of the National System for Certification of Competences - NSCC	113
ANNEX 4 - Glossary of definitions	121
ANNEX 5 - Index of legislative references	126
ANNEX 6 - References	134
ANNEX 7 - Sitography	136
ANNEX 8 - Questionnaire for the national public consultation	138
APPENDIX I - List of public authorities consulted for their respective qualifications systems	143
APPENDIX II - International experts' reports	144

*Some of you may be wondering how Europe could be useful to you, with its burdens and bureaucracy, when it would be better to take care of one's own Country's affairs [...].*

*Since the end of the Roman Empire, Europe began forming itself as a blend of peoples, each of them with a dialect and then a national language. Over all these centuries, there have been uninterrupted massacres between the peoples of Europe [...].*

*For the first time in fifteen hundred years of history, from 1945 to date, we have had almost seventy uninterrupted years of peace [...]. Today all of you live in harmony in your homes and many of you may also experience the Erasmus program, by living and studying in another Country for several months. Why is this granted to you? As the result of clever personalities, like Altiero Spinelli, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schumann and other founders of the European union, who understood that they had to elect our continent as a common homeland, not only for political and economic needs, but also for deeper reasons of cultural identity [...].*

*Copernicus and Erasmus of Rotterdam, Paracelsus and Dürer attended the first university in the world, which was located in Bologna. All medieval philosophical culture was European, without distinction of nationality. Thomas Aquinas taught in Paris, the English Occam and the Italian Marsilius supported the monarchy of the German emperor. At the same time, the songs of the heroes and the stories about the Grail travelled around England, France, Spain and Germany up to the Renaissance in Italy thanks to Pulci, Boiardo and Ariosto. When you go to the theatre or a classical music concert, you usually don't mind which Country Verdi or Beethoven, Handel or Mozart, Vivaldi or Chopin, Ravel or De Falla belonged to. You enjoy music as something common to a single continent [...].*

*This long dialogue between literature, philosophy, music and theatre inspires the European cultural identity and it cannot be cancelled by any war. The community of European peoples, based on this identity, manages to go beyond the greatest of barriers, the barrier of linguistic diversity [...].*

*Thank God or luck, as you prefer, to be born a European citizen.*

Umberto Eco, Speech to Italian students, 28 November 2014.

## Reading Guide

This Report contains a large number of regulatory and technical references forming an integral part of the Report itself. In order to make it easier to read and consult the Report, it was considered appropriate to limit quotes in the text to a minimum, thus referring to the essential references in the footnotes and the complete and systematic collection of the relevant sources in the annexes. In summary, in this Report:

- the annexes of the EQF Recommendation are in Annex 1;
- the text and related annexes of the Decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 8 January 2018 establishing the National Qualifications Framework are presented in Annex 2;
- the text and related annexes of the Interministerial Decree on 5 January 2021 for the adoption of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities are presented in Annex 3;
- the legal definitions are detailed in Annex 4 - Glossary of legal definitions and the first footnote of the Introduction and of each Chapter lists the main definitions;
- the legislative references included in the text list only the number and date of the standard; the full legislative references, including publication data in the Official Journal of the European Union and Italian Official Gazette and the *permalink*, are collected in Annex 5;
- the bibliographic references are collected by alphabetical order in Annex 6;
- the institutional websites are collected in Annex 7;
- the questionnaire used for the public consultation is in Annex 8;
- the list of Public Competent Authorities consulted for their respective qualification systems and international experts' reports are in Appendices I and II, respectively.

Below is a list of the main abbreviations and acronyms:

- ACCREDIA - Italian National Accreditation Body
- AFAM - Higher Education in Arts and Music
- ANPAL - National Agency for Active Labour Policies
- ATECO - Classification of economic activities for 2007 (national version of the European NACE nomenclature Rev. 2, adopted with (EC) Regulation No. 1893/2006 of 20 December 2006)
- CCIAA - Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicrafts and Agriculture
- CFA - Academic Formative Credits
- CFU - University Educational Credits
- CIMEA - Information Centre on Mobility and Academic Equivalence
- CNAM - National Council for Higher Education in Art and Music
- CNSU - the National Council of Undergraduates
- CONI - Italian National Olympic Committee
- CP ISTAT - Nomenclature and Classification of Occupations for 2011 (national version of the ISCO08 classification adopted with (EC) Recommendation of 29 October 2009)
- CPIA - Provincial Centres for Adult Education
- CRUI - The Conference of Italian University Rectors
- CUN - National University Council
- ECTS - European Credit Transfer System
- ECVET - European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
- EHEA - European Higher Education Area
- EQAVET - European reference framework for quality assurance of education and vocational training
- EQF - European Qualifications Framework
- EQF NCP - EQF National Coordination Point ESF - European Social Fund
- FSE - European Social Fund

- GUUE - Official Journal of the European Union (formerly Official Journal of the European Community)
- GURI - Official Gazette of the Italian Republic
- IDA - Adult Education
- IeFP - Initial Education and Vocational Training
- IFTS - Higher Technical Education and Training
- INAPP - National Institute for Public Policy Analysis
- ITS **Academy** - Higher Technological Institutes
- NQF - National Qualifications Framework
- NSCC - National system for certification of competences
- NFRQ - National Reference Framework for Regional Qualifications
- QTI - Framework of Italian Higher Education Qualifications
- SCU - Universal Civil Service
- SIU - Unitary Information System of labour policies
- UNI - Italian National Unification Body

## Foreword

This Report for the referencing of Italian qualifications to the EQF is the result of the referencing process carried out in Italy, while implementing the 2017 EQF Recommendation and the 2018 Inter-Ministerial Decree establishing the National Qualifications Framework - NQF.

The aim of this Report is to promote, through the implementation of the NQF, a cohesive model of *governance* of education and training systems capable of facing the dynamism and reactivity of qualifications and competences, due to the green, technological and digital transition and the increasingly changes of the labour markets, as well as to unpredictable transformations such as the current epidemiological emergency from COVID-19.

In fact, the NQF in Italy, in addition to being the tool for referencing qualifications to the EQF, aimed at linking and comparing the Italian qualifications system with the systems of the other participating countries in the context of the EU cooperation in education and training, is also the national "*governance system*" aimed at promoting transparency, usability and portability of qualifications and competences within the National System for Certification of Competences.

Based on these characteristics, the implementation of the NQF, achieved through the adoption of this Report, lays the foundations, as stated in the 2017 EQF Recommendation, to "modernize education and training systems, increase employability, mobility and the social integration of workers and learners [...] and ensure a better link between formal, non-formal and informal learning", thus providing a valid tool to support the services of identification, validation and certification of the competences acquired in different contexts. Likewise, through greater transparency, understanding and comparability of qualifications, the NQF implementation aims at "supporting and facilitating the practices of recognition of qualifications for professional and learning purposes" while not generating automatic legal effects of equivalence both with reference to foreign qualifications and to national qualifications referenced to the same level.

To this end, the Report defines common transparency and readability criteria of the qualifications with the aim of facilitating the comparability and spendability processes and, at the same time, enhancing the identities of the individual systems which differ in purposes, targets, characteristics of the offer and educational, cultural and professional features of the pathways.

Therefore, the NQF descriptors and sub-domains are entrusted with the task of developing and expressing the dimensions of internal and external comparability within and between the qualification systems, as detailed in Chapter 3; at the same time, the sub-articulation of level helps define cultural, professional and structural specificities. In addition, the infographic in four distinct colors facilitates an intuitive and immediate vision of the identifying dimensions. In particular, the macro qualifications' systems are identified by the following colors:

- Light blue for the national Primary, Secondary and Higher Education systems;
- Green for the Vocational Education systems of Regions and Autonomous Provinces;
- Yellow for the Adult Education system;
- Red for the system of regulated qualifications and professions.

The entire process is based on three approaches taken as a general method in the implementation of the National system for certification of competences:

1. the *cooperative approach* between the administrations involved, aimed at ensuring a shared and participatory application of the referencing process, in order to safeguard mutual trust and the collective and coordinated growth of qualification systems;
2. the *progressive approach* based on the maximum enhancement of consolidated experiences, thus favouring gradual adaptation options of the legal systems and limiting the introduction of innovation elements to the minimum necessary;
3. the *substantial approach* that favours the maximum sustainability, timeliness and cost-effectiveness of the referencing procedures, thus ensuring the enhancement of existing information assets and, where possible, the adoption of mechanisms aimed at simplifying procedures according to proportionality criteria.

In line with these approaches, the referencing process of qualifications to the NQF is carried out in harmony with the work and with the *governance* sites of the National system for certification of competences, thus providing, where useful, the active involvement and cooperation of the Public Competent Authorities both in the initiation of procedures and in the progressive implementation phases.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (hereinafter referred to as EQF) established with the 2008 Recommendation is the common reference framework aimed at improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications in the EU Member States and in the other participating Countries. Covering the qualifications of every order and grade from all national education and training systems, the EQF offers a comprehensive overview of qualifications in the 39 Countries currently involved in its implementation.

While maintaining the main goals established in 2008, the EQF Recommendation was revised and updated in 2017 with the aim of “allowing learners and workers to make their skills and competences more visible no matter where they acquired them”, and of making it more adapted to the needs of the current scenario and ready to face future challenges in the vast panorama of qualifications in Europe.

The revision of the EQF Recommendation was preceded, in 2012, by another important European Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which places the validation of competences acquired in different contexts as an essential lever for “improving employability and mobility, as well as increasing motivation for lifelong learning” by considering national qualifications frameworks as key tools to increase the visibility and value of learning, regardless of the context where they take place.

Italy has adhered to the EQF Recommendation from the beginning, thus adopting in 2013 the “First Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework” (ISFOL, 2014).

Italy is currently in a second phase of the implementation process of the EQF Recommendation. This is due to a deep and complex interinstitutional cooperation work for the implementation of the National system for certification of competences (hereinafter referred to as NSCC), in the context of the more comprehensive Italian strategy for lifelong learning launched in 2012. As part of this process, Italy adopted in 2018 its own National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on whose basis it is proposed, with this Report (which replaces the previous one), to update the referencing of Italian qualifications to the EQF.

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<sup>1</sup> For the definitions of the terms *Skills, Lifelong Learning, Formal Learning, Informal Learning, Non-formal Learning, Atlas of Work and Qualifications, Competence, Knowledge, Credits, Regulated Training, European Qualifications Framework, Referencing, Responsibility and autonomy, Outcomes of learning, national education and training system, National system for certification of competences*, please refer to the Glossary in Annex 4 of this Report.

## What is the EQF?

The EQF, established with the 2008 Recommendation<sup>2</sup>, is the common reference tool for the transparency and comparison of the national qualification frameworks and systems of the Member States.

The Recommendation does not replace national frameworks or systems, nor does it define specific qualifications or competences attributable to the individual but, as stated by the recital (3) of the new 2017 Recommendation<sup>3</sup>, it establishes: "A common reference framework comprising eight levels of qualification, expressed in the form of learning outcomes corresponding to increasing levels of expertise. They act as a translation mechanism between the different qualification systems and their respective levels. The EQF is aimed at improving the transparency, comparability and transferability of citizens' qualifications".

On the basis of the EQF Recommendation, Member States and participating Countries are called, on a voluntary basis, to re-read and, if necessary, update their education and training systems, in order to connect them to the EQF. Currently 39<sup>4</sup> Countries adhere to the EQF, thus reflecting the high level of commitment and attention paid to the issues of transparency and comparability of qualifications between Countries, even beyond the EU Member States.

At a technical level, the EQF is a grid of descriptors applicable to all qualifications, from those obtained at the end of the first cycle of education, up to the highest levels of academic and specialized education and training. The framework, contained in Annex II of the Recommendation, consists of eight levels and each of them is defined in terms of learning outcomes through descriptors divided into three dimensions:

- **knowledge** divided into theoretical and/or practical;
- **skills** divided into cognitive (including the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (including manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and equipment);
- **responsibility and autonomy** or the ability to apply knowledge and skills in an autonomous and responsible way (this dimension substitutes the "competence" dimension of the 2008 Recommendation).

The relationship between national qualifications and EQF levels takes place through the referencing to the EQF of national qualifications frameworks or, where they do not exist, of individual national qualifications systems. This is an autonomous national process implemented by the national authorities responsible for qualification systems, in compliance with the referencing criteria described in Annex III of the Recommendation. Compliance with these criteria is essential to ensure the quality assurance of all qualifications corresponding to an EQF level and to foster mutual transparency and trust in national referencing processes.

In addition, an EQF *Advisory Group*, coordinated by the European Commission and composed of representatives of all Member States and participating Countries, works in support of the uniform, coherent, transparent, and coordinated implementation of the EQF Recommendation. In the EQF *Advisory Group*, three technical notes were drawn up and represent the common methodological reference for the implementation of the referencing process of national frameworks to the EQF and for the drafting of the related referencing reports<sup>5</sup>, including this one.

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<sup>2</sup> EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 23 April 2008.

<sup>3</sup> EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017 that updates and replaces the 2008 Recommendation.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the 27 EU Member States, 12 other Countries are involved in the implementation of the EQF: United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (European Economic Area countries), Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey (Candidate Countries), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (Potential Candidate Countries) and Switzerland.

<sup>5</sup> Note AG 43-4 on the Updating of EQF referencing as part of the EQF AG work program for 2018-19; Note 5 on Referencing National Qualifications Levels to the EQF Update 2013 European Qualifications Framework Series; Note EQF AG 54-3 "Strengthening the referencing to the EQF - reflections on the updating of EQF referencing" on 18 November 2020.

## Aims and goals of the EQF

The EQF falls within the broader context of existing European cooperation in the education and training area within the ET 2020 European Education and Training 2020<sup>6</sup> framework (and future European strategic frameworks) and specifically aims at achieving the goals listed below:

- contributing to modernizing education and training systems;
- increasing the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners;
- ensuring a better link between formal, non-formal and informal learning and supporting the validation of learning outcomes obtained in different contexts (for example in the workplaces).

Over the last 10 years, Member States with the support of the European Commission have further developed the EQF to make it more effective in order to increase the level of transparency, comparability and understanding of national and international qualifications, not only between European Countries, but also with Third Countries. This resulted in an update in 2017 of the Recommendations addressed to Member States and participating Countries, summarized as follows:

- using the EQF to relate own national qualifications frameworks or systems and comparing them with all types and levels of qualifications in the European Union and, where appropriate, reviewing and updating the referencing of the levels of national qualifications frameworks or systems based on levels and descriptors of Annex II and of the referencing criteria referred to in Annex III (Recommendations 1 and 2);
- ensuring compliance of qualifications included in national frameworks or systems and referenced to the EQF with the common principles of quality assurance set out in Annex IV<sup>7</sup>, in order to facilitate the mobility of learners and workers within and across sectoral and geographical borders (Recommendation 3);
- promoting, where appropriate, links between credit systems and national qualifications frameworks or systems, considering the common principles for credit systems set out in Annex V<sup>8</sup> (Recommendation 4);
- strengthening the indication of EQF/NQF levels in all new qualifications and related certification (certificates, diplomas, supplements to certificates and diplomas, etc.) issued by the competent authorities and in the qualifications registers and making the referencing results publicly available at national and European Union level, thus ensuring that information on qualifications and related learning outcomes is accessible, using the data fields for electronic publication of information on qualifications, in accordance with Annex VI<sup>9</sup> (Recommendations 5 and 6);
- encouraging the use of the EQF by social partners, public employment services, education providers, quality assurance bodies and public authorities in order to support the comparison of qualifications and transparency of the results of the learning (Recommendation 7);
- ensuring continuity of the tasks and activities carried out by the EQF National Coordination Points in supporting national authorities when referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the EQF and bringing the EQF closer to individuals and organizations (Recommendation 8).

There are therefore multiple goals that the EQF sets itself and the results and impacts that the implementation of this framework records at both national and international level are equally numerous. According to the latest CEDEFOP<sup>10</sup> monitoring, 35 out of the 39 participating Countries have referenced their qualifications to the EQF and all have developed or are developing their national framework. Even among Third Countries, an increasing number of Countries are seeking a link between their national frameworks and the EQF. This means that the first referencing cycle is about to end, thus significantly

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<sup>6</sup> EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS OF 12 May 2009.

<sup>7</sup> "Without prejudice to national quality assurance principles that apply to national qualifications".

<sup>8</sup> "Without prejudice to national decisions relating to: i) the use of credit systems; and ii) their connection to national qualifications frameworks or systems". Credits do not involve automatic recognition of qualifications.

<sup>9</sup> Annex VI includes both mandatory elements (such as EQF/NQF level and learning outcomes) and optional elements. All Countries are encouraged to also provide optional items, if any.

<sup>10</sup> CEDEFOP (2019).

contributing to the improvement of the transparency of national qualifications systems and to the enhancement, through these, of the different learning contexts: formal, non-formal and informal ones.

## **Objectives, implementation process and structure of the Report**

In implementation of the EQF Recommendation of 2017 and in order to coordinate the various systems that contribute to the public offer of lifelong learning and the services for identifying and validating and certifying competences, the "Italian referencing Report of qualifications to the EQF" aims at making the NQF, established in Italy by Inter-ministerial Decree of 2018<sup>11</sup>, operational, through the referencing of the national and regional education and training systems and the related types of qualifications to the framework itself and to the EQF.

On the basis of this Report and consistently with the indications provided by the decree establishing the NQF<sup>12</sup> and the EQF Recommendation, the "Procedure for referencing individual qualifications issued at national and regional level to NQF/EQF" will be launched. To this end, the EQF National Coordination Point (hereinafter EQF NCP), located at the National Agency for Active Labour Policies - ANPAL, will adopt and periodically update an "Operational guide for the preliminary analysis, description and referencing of qualifications to the NQF" with the aim of offering all the parties concerned information, training, and operational supporting elements for referencing of qualifications. The referencing procedure will be managed through a dedicated IT application aimed at: collecting and managing the referencing requests submitted by the Public Competent Authorities for the respective qualifications; feeding the Italian Register of qualifications referenced to the NQF. The Register will complement the information infrastructure of the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications, already implemented with the Atlas of Work and Qualifications<sup>13</sup>, and will be interoperable with national databases and with the European Europass portal as required by the Europass Decision<sup>14</sup>, and with the EURES network, as required by the EURES Regulation<sup>15</sup> through the link with the classifications of the ESCO Program<sup>16</sup>.

Starting from the technical proposal drafted by the EQF NCP, this Report is the result of an extensive institutional consultation process, that includes:

- the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, as the national authority responsible for the implementation of the provisions referred to in the NQF;
- the Ministry of Education and Merit and the Ministry of University and Research, as coordinating national authorities for the implementation of the provisions referred to in the NQF;
- the institutional partnership, made up of all national, regional and Autonomous Provinces competent within the NSCC;
- the European Commission, CEDEFOP, the Council of Europe expressly appointed international experts and Countries adhering to the EQF Recommendation participating in the *EQF Advisory Group*;
- economic and social partnership;
- the National Institute for Public Policies Analysis (INAPP) as a body identified with the role of independent evaluator of the referencing requests.

The Report is approved by an Agreement in the Permanent Conference for relations between the State, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano (State-Regions Conference) and adopted by Decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Minister

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<sup>11</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 8 January 2018.

<sup>12</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 8 January 2018, article 5.

<sup>13</sup> <https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> (EU) EUROPASS DECISION 2018/646 of 18 April 2018.

<sup>15</sup> (EU) EURES REGULATION 2016/589 of 13 April 2016.

<sup>16</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home?resetLanguage=true&newLanguage=it>.

of Education and Merit and the Minister of University and Research. The document will be published in Italian and English on the EQF NCP website and on the Europass Portal within six months from its adoption.

The Report complies with the 10 referencing criteria established in Annex III of the EQF Recommendation (compliance with each criterion is summarized in the Table 2.7) and is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 - **“The regulatory context for the updating of the Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF”** explains the two main innovation elements that took place in Italy with respect to the first referencing phase, both introduced by the Italian strategy for lifelong learning, launched in 2012<sup>17</sup>, at the basis of the drafting of this Report: the establishment of the NSCC for identifying, validating and certifying the competences acquired in all (formal, non-formal and informal) learning contexts, and the establishment of the NQF. The Chapter also highlights the full integration of the Italian strategy for lifelong learning with other national policies - implemented and in the process of being implemented - which expand the regulatory and technical framework, in favour of the strengthening of territorially integrated systems of education, training, work and social inclusion services. Finally, the devices adopted in Italy for the recognition and use of competences and qualifications are presented, grouped into six macro typologies, thus explaining the differences in value and purpose, the complementary relationships and the importance they take on in relation to the full implementation of the NQF.
- Chapter 2 - **“The National Qualifications Framework: objectives, structure, procedures, governance and compliance with the 10 criteria for referencing to the EQF”**, describes the NQF as the main element of innovation with respect to the first phase of referencing of Italian qualifications to the EQF. In particular, the chapter explains: the goals and purposes of the NQF, with specific reference to both the national and the European context; the structure and technical specifications of the Framework; the legal effects and the phases of the referencing procedure of all the Italian qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authorities; the minimum inclusion and positioning criteria adopted for the referencing and the criteria developed for the determination of the sub-articulation of level for distinguishing further specificities between the qualifications belonging to the same level; the multi-level and multi-actor governance of the implementation of the NQF and the role played by information systems (Atlas of Work and Qualifications and the Italian Register of Qualifications referenced to the NQF); the support provided to the Public Competent Authorities, as part of their respective qualification systems, by the national bodies set up to ensure the quality of education and training. Finally, the main topics supporting the consistency and fulfilment of the ten criteria for referencing established in Annex III of the EQF Recommendation are described.
- Chapter 3 - **“The Italian qualifications systems and their referencing to the NQF”** shows a complete mapping of the Italian education and training systems, including: the national education and training system, the adult education, the regional vocational training system, the continuing training for workers financed through the Joint Interprofessional training Funds, the regulated training and, finally, the non-formal learning. Each system is described by indicating: the governance, the learning pathways, the access requirements, the organization, the goals, the reference targets groups and the different types of qualifications issued. For each type of qualification and respective learning outcomes, the positioning on the 8 NQF/EQF levels and the related sub-articulations are indicated. Finally, the overall referencing of the Italian qualification systems to the NQF and EQF is summarized in a *visual identity* and in a synoptic table, including all the types of qualifications issued under the NSCC grouped by EQF level.
- Chapter 4 - **“Synthesis of the results of the institutional confrontation debate and of the national and international consultation”**, the main results of the three consultative processes carried out for the finalization of the report.

The Report is completed by the set of annexes and supporting documents as shown in the Reading Guide.

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<sup>17</sup> LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paras. from 51 to 61 and from 64 to 68.

## CHAPTER 1 - The regulatory context for the updating of the Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF<sup>18</sup>

Following the first phase of implementation of the EQF Recommendation that ended with the adoption in of the “Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF” (2013), Italy gradually moved towards a second phase of the EQF implementation starting from a deep and complex process of inter-institutional cooperation which resulted in the definition of the Italian strategy for lifelong learning (para. 1.1). Further reform measures were subsequently added for strengthening the strategy, thus expanding the legislative framework and the range of beneficiaries: the reform of employment services and active labour market policies; the introduction of citizenship income; the introduction of the dual system; the reform of professional institutes; the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation (para. 1.2).

In the context of this process, there are two main areas of innovation, with respect to the first referencing phase, to which the drafting of this Report is due:

- the implementation of the National system for certification of competences (NSCC) that introduces, in the various systems of education and vocational training, new services for the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts and adopts the referencing to EQF as one of the mandatory criteria for the inclusion of qualifications in the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications (para. 1.1);
- the establishment of the NQF introducing, like other Countries, a single framework, functional to a better organization, modernization and description of all the public education and vocational training systems by providing the conditions for *referencing* all the qualifications issued nationally and regionally, i.e. both those already referenced and those not yet referenced to EQF in the First Report of 2013 (para. 1.3).

In addition to the tools described above (referable respectively to the validation services of non-formal and informal learning and to the transparency devices for greater readability and comparability of qualifications), other specific tools for the recognition and spendability of competences and qualifications are provided in Italy: the individual procedure of declaration of value of those qualifications obtained abroad; the general provisions on equivalence of qualifications; the individual procedures and the provisions for the recognition of qualifications abroad; and, finally, the individual procedures of equivalence and purposeful recognition (para. 1.4).

<sup>18</sup> For the definitions of the terms *Formal learning*, *Non-formal learning*, *Informal learning*, *Lifelong learning*, *Atlas of Work and Qualifications*, *Certification*, *Classification of economic-professional sectors*, *Skill*, *Certification of competences*, *Knowledge*, *Credits*, *Public Competent Authority*, *Public Entitled Body*, *Regulated training*, *Identification and validation of skills*, *Regulated profession*, *National Qualifications Framework*, *National Reference Framework for Regional Qualifications*, *Qualification*, *Referencing*, *National Repository of education and vocational training qualification*, *Learning outcomes*, *National education and training system*, *National system of certification of competences*, *Credit systems*, *Credit transfer*, please refer to the Glossary in Annex 4 of this Report.

## 1.1 - The Italian strategy for lifelong learning and the National system for certification of competences

The Italian strategy for lifelong learning, launched as part of the Labour Market Reform Law of 2012<sup>19</sup>, recognizes, in line with the indications of the European Union, the individual right to lifelong learning that takes place in formal, non-formal and informal contexts and in the different phases of life, as a strategic lever in order to improve the knowledge, skills and competences of individuals, in a personal, civic, social and occupational perspective.

Within this framework, five priority measures were defined for the implementation of national policies for lifelong learning at the Unified Conference<sup>20</sup>:

- 1) measures including partnerships that also involve social partners and civil society;
- 2) measures to support lifelong guidance;
- 3) measures addressed to young people in vocational training, adults (specifically women) returning to the labour market and individuals with lower levels of qualification and competences;
- 4) measures that effectively use the tools of transparency (EQF) and integrate the various services offered within the systems of education, vocational training, work, guidance and certification of competences;
- 5) measures to improve the relevance of education and training both in relation to the specificity of the pathways and with reference to the employability and adaptation to targeted needs of specific groups of recipients.

The goal of the strategy is to make lifelong learning a concrete reality in terms of new opportunities and services to citizens and organizations, through the transparency, recognition, usability and portability of competences and qualifications at national and European level, for training and for smoothing transitions towards the labour market, also in terms of reintegration, flexicurity and geographic and professional mobility in every phase of life. At the same time, the strategy is aimed at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of public and community investments for the strengthening of national lifelong learning systems<sup>21</sup>, services and measures of active labour market and social inclusion policies.

To this end, the strategy for lifelong learning aims at the implementation of three systems, closely connected to each other, through which are determined the conditions and tools necessary to build a broad and stable multilevel governance, capable of coordinating the different providers of education, training and work services, in the form of territorially integrated networks. The latter are identified as the most appropriate organizational forms to strengthen the ability to reach (outreach) and tackle educational poverty, especially the most marginal ones, through the full taking charge of the person and the accessibility and personalization of services, leveraging on: the enhancement of the competences possessed by people regardless of the context in which they were acquired; the interoperability of services and information systems; and on the implementation of an NQF as a unitary coordination infrastructure for the governance of policies, for the provision of services, the monitoring of interventions and the assessment of impacts.

These three systems are:

- a) the **System of integrated territorial networks of education, training and work services**<sup>22</sup>;
- b) the **National system for certification of competences (NSCC)**<sup>23</sup>;
- c) the **Unitary Information System of labour policies - SIU**<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paras. from 51 to 61 and from 64 to 68.

<sup>20</sup> UNIFIED CONFERENCE UNDERTAKING of 20 December 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Commitment also undertaken in the context of the 10.3 ex ante conditionality of the 2014-2020 European Social Fund Programming: see PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR 2014-2020, ITALY Section 2, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraphs 55 and 56.

<sup>23</sup> LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraphs 58 and 64 - 68.

<sup>24</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 150 of 14 September 2015, artt. 13, 14 e 15.

**a) The system of integrated territorial networks** includes the set of public and private education, training and work services relating to all learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal), organically connected to the main strategies implemented for economic, occupational, social and personal growth (access to work by young people, welfare reform, active aging and active citizenship, including immigrants). The networks are based on the centrality of the person (and his/her needs, also in a multidimensional perspective) and aim at expanding the audience of beneficiaries of lifelong learning services through: the establishment of synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning systems and between the different subjects of the learning offer; the promotion of transversal actions between the different training offers and services, thus qualifying their specific standards and goals; the integration of the various opportunities for job placement, including through reskilling; the promotion of the apprenticeship contract, also defining its training content; the promotion of shared actions of lifelong guidance and accompaniment aimed at returning to education and training systems or entering or re-entering the labour market; and finally the promotion of continuous training of workers.

The main nodes of the network<sup>25</sup> perform the functions of reception, guiding and analysing the training needs of the most disadvantaged people and identifying and forecasting the demand for competences expected from the production system. On the basis of the Strategic Lines of intervention containing the essential constitutive elements of the integrated territorial networks<sup>26</sup>, three are essentially the services offered:

- the support for the personalization of paths and the assessment and analysis of the skills needs with relation to the requirements of the territorial production systems and labour market;
- the recognition of credits and the certification of competences;
- the lifelong guidance.

The action of the networks is based on a multi-level governance system:

- the national level with functions of direction, monitoring and evaluation and identification of policies and strategic priorities, through the establishment of an inter-institutional board for lifelong learning and the promotion<sup>27</sup> of periodic meetings with the social partners;
- the regional level within which the Regions and Autonomous Provinces plan the development of the networks in terms of: definition and evaluation of development programs, innovation and competitiveness service centres, training and professional needs and integrated use of resources;
- the local level within which the organizational and operating methods of the networks are defined in order to ensure citizens have access to build and support their own learning pathways.

**b) The National system for certification of competences (NSCC)**, established in 2013<sup>28</sup> and fully operational by the adoption of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities in 2021<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The nodes of the network are: schools, Higher Technical Institutes, Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), identification, validation and certification of competences services, employment centers, employment agencies, vocational training agencies, institutes and research agencies, third sector forums and associations, voluntary and non-profit organizations, one-stop shops for productive activities - SUAP, cultural bodies and associations (libraries, museums, theatres), technical-professional centres, Universities, guidance and consultancy services, businesses (through their employer and trade union representatives), Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts - CCIAA and the Immigration Observatory.

<sup>26</sup> UNIFIED CONFERENCE AGREEMENT of 10 July 2014.

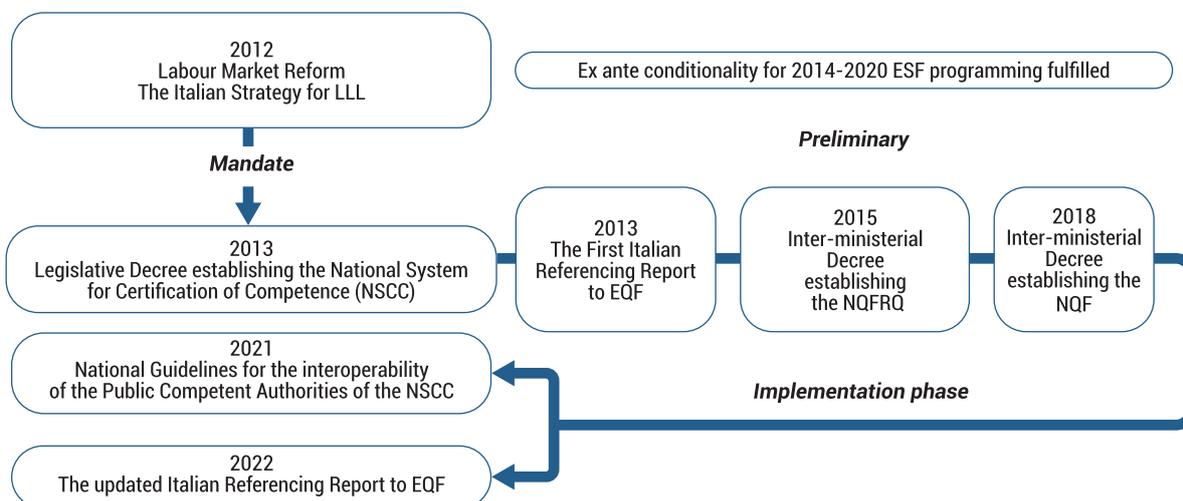
<sup>27</sup> The inter-institutional board on lifelong learning is set up at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers with the UNIFIED CONFERENCE UNDERTAKING of 20 December 2012 and is composed of the Ministry of Education (actually Ministry of Education and Merit), the Ministry of University and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Economic Development (actually Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy), the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Regions and Autonomous Provinces and Local Bodies, with the involvement of the competent public technical and research agencies.

<sup>28</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013.

<sup>29</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 5 January 2021 (see the Annex 3 of the present Report).

(Figure 1.1)<sup>30</sup>, aims at promoting transparency, usability, portability and the increase of competences at national and European level, also in terms of credits recognition, in the different phases of the learning pathway, in order to promote the growth and enhancement of the entire cultural and professional heritage acquired by the person in his/her life, study and work history.

Figure 1.1. The legislative process for the concrete putting into practice of the NSCC



The system is based on the reorganization of a number of legal institutions, some pre-existing (such as certifications of formal learning pathways), others newly introduced (the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal or informal learning contexts) and on adoption throughout the national territory of:

- i. general rules (purposes, definitions and legal effects) and common principles valid for all public administrations responsible for qualifications (Public Competent Authorities)<sup>31</sup>, such as: subsidiarity, centrality of the person, simplicity, accessibility, transparency, objectivity, traceability, confidentiality of the service, methodological correctness, completeness, fairness and non-discrimination;
- ii. essential levels of performance for the identification, validation and certification services, valid for all Public Entitled Bodies;
- iii. minimum service standards divided into: process standards (relating to the phases of identification, evaluation and certification of services); certification standards (concerning the minimum contents of the certifications and the registration and storage methods in the information system in interoperability with the SIU); system standards (relating to the organizational and professional requirements to be ensured in providing the identification, validation and certification services).

<sup>30</sup> Figure 1.1 shows the legislative process that led to the full implementation of the NSCC, currently being regulated and organized within the individual qualification systems. Launched in 2013 with the Legislative Decree No. 13, in application of the 2012 Reform of the Labor Market, the NSCC has envisaged a series of intermediate stages. In particular, before its full implementation in 2021 with the adoption of the national guidelines, the preliminary phase envisaged: the publication in 2013 of the first Italian Referencing Report to EQF (in the absence of an NQF), the establishment of the National Reference Framework for Regional Qualifications– NQFRQ in 2015 (referred to in this paragraph) and the establishment of the NQF in 2018 (referred to in par. 1.3 of this Chapter and Chapter 2).

<sup>31</sup> Compliance with essential levels and minimum service standards is supervised by the National Technical Committee, established with Legislative Decree No.13 of 16 January 2013, chaired by representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education (actually the Ministry of Education and Merit) and the Ministry of University and Research and made up of representatives from the Ministry for Public Administration and Simplification, the Ministry of Economic Development (actually the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy), the Ministry of Economy and Finance and from public, central, regional and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and of Bolzano administrations as Public Competent Authorities. Compliance with the essential levels of performance is verified on the basis of indicators, thresholds, methods of control, evaluation and assessment defined by the Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities of the NSCC.

As part of the NSCC, the Public Competent Authorities, through their Public Entitled Bodies, upon request and in compliance with the standards described above (synthesized in the Annex 3 of the present Report), can identify, validate and certify, also in terms of credits, the competences as parts of the qualifications (up to the total number of competence units of the entire qualification)<sup>32</sup> included in their repertoires and in the National Repository<sup>33</sup>. The Public Competent Authorities work autonomously according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus guaranteeing the separation of the regulation, organization, monitoring, supervision and control functions from the provision of the service in compliance with the law.

The validation documents and certificates issued at the conclusion of the identification and validation and certification of competences are official acts and the qualifications issued:

- a. are valid throughout the national territory according to the rules;
- b. are recognizable, at European and international level, through the referencing to NQF/EQF levels;
- c. are portable in the different qualifications systems of the NSCC, in accordance to the respective regulatory systems and provisions, and understandable for the world of work through their inclusion in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications.

Validated or certified competences can constitute a credit, according to criteria and procedures defined by each Public Competent Authority and also in complementarity with the European credit systems.

Figure 1.2 summarizes the phases, goals, methods, outputs and functions of the services for identifying, validating and certifying competences

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<sup>32</sup> The National system for certification of competences was implemented in accordance with the indications of the European Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and in complementarity with the application of the Recommendation of the Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), recently replaced by the VET (EU) RECOMMENDATION OF 24 November 2020, as well as with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Other legislative provisions on the subject are reserved, in particular those referring to regulated professions covered by EU Directive 2005/36/EC, as amended.

In this regard, it should be noted that, based on the Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities of the NSCC, the qualifications of the regulated professions, including the qualifications for the health professions and for the auxiliary arts of the health professions, are excluded from the scope of the services for the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. Without prejudice to the Public Competent Authorities of the above-mentioned qualifications, the power to regulate the application of the services above, for the qualifications of their competence, in accordance with the sector regulations and subject to an agreement in the State/Regions Conference or, where permitted, through the adoption of specific Agreements in the Unified Conference of State/Regions, also for the purpose of determining any cases of equivalence of qualifications or exemption from the training course and examination.

<sup>33</sup> Without prejudice to bilateral agreements, which allow a Public Competent Authority identifying, validating or certifying competences related to qualifications pertaining to another Public Competent Authority.

Figure 1.2 - The services for identifying, validating and certifying competences.

Service	Welcome	Identification	Validation	Certification
<b>Goal</b>	Informing and addressing the citizen with reference to the offered service	Reconstruct the experiences and identify in the NQF the qualifications and the competences that can be potentially validated or certified	Rebuilding the experiences and identify in the NQF the qualifications and the competences in the National Framework that can be potentially validated or certified	Certifying the competences acquired in formal contexts (outcoming from training) and non-formal and informal ones (outcoming from validation)
<b>Method</b>	Reception and individual and in group information	Individual interviews for sharing the activities performed, identification of competences and preparation of the dossier.	Assessment involving at least the technical analysis of the dossier. Any direct test	Direct test: technical interview or on-site test
<b>Certification</b>		Transparency document (first party value): competences detected and under transparency	Validation document (second party value): validated competences (or skills and knowledge)	Certificate (third party value): certified competences of the National Repository
<b>Figures entitled</b>		Operator, consultant	Methodology Expert and Sector Expert	Committee or Board Body with third party

The interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities, as essential element for the mutuality of services and the portability of competences, is based on the development of two main infrastructures:

- **the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications;**
- **the Single informative infrastructure.**

**The National Repository** is the unitary reference, for the planning of competence-based training, the personalization of education, training and work services, the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts and the transparency, spendability and recognition of qualifications at national and EU level. The National Repository is made up of all the repertoires of education and vocational training qualifications<sup>34</sup> codified at national, regional or Autonomous Province level.

<sup>34</sup> A repertory is the public act by which the different Public Competent Authorities formally adopt one or more qualifications within its competence. These repertoires are the following:

- the national reference University degree classes, adopted with the decrees of the Ministry of University and Research;
- the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Merit concerning Upper Secondary education (Lycée and technical and professional institutes) and Adult education;
- the regional repertoires of vocational training adopted by the 21 Regions and Autonomous Provinces with their own acts;
- the repertoires of national reference figures of leFP - Initial Vocational Education and Training, of IFTS - Higher Technical Education and Training and of ITS *Academy* - Higher Technological Institutes, adopted by interministerial Decrees following Agreements in the State-Regions Conference.

The qualifications included in the National Repository comply with four minimum access requirements:

- a) identification of the Public Competent Authority;
- b) the identification of the qualifications and related competences;
- c) the referencing of qualifications, where applicable, to the ATECO statistical codes and to the classification of occupations (CP ISTAT), in compliance with the national statistical system;
- d) the referencing of qualifications to the EQF through the NQF.

In order to implement all the minimum eligibility requirements mandatory for all qualifications to access the National Repository, the latter is still under development and will be implemented and made available through two main interconnected IT infrastructures: the Atlas of Work and Qualifications for its classification functions (ATECO and CP) and for connection to the world of work, and the Register of qualifications referenced to NQF (see para. 2.2.9) for its function of connection with the national and European systems of qualifications through the referencing procedure (see par. 2.2.6).

In this first implementation phase of the NQF, the referencing of the individual qualifications included in the National Repository is, therefore, a progressive and dynamic eligibility criterion that will be satisfied with the adoption of this updated Report and with the subsequent referencing of the individual qualifications to the NQF/EQF, according to the procedure described in par. 2.2.6.

Furthermore, in order to bring the qualifications issued by the subsystem of regional vocational training (see para. 3.3) into a single framework, the National Reference Framework for Regional Qualifications (NQFRQ)<sup>35</sup> was established within the National Repository. The NQFRQ is aimed at guaranteeing a unitary governance as well as a framework of comparability and progressive standardization to a qualification subsystem whose responsibility and management (unlike other subsystems such as the Education subsystem) is left to a plurality of Public Competent Authorities with different repertoires (i.e. 21 Regions and Autonomous Provinces). The NQFRQ implementation allows: the correlation and progressive standardization of regional qualifications and related competences on the basis of the descriptive sequences of the professional contents of the work included in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications<sup>36</sup>; their portability at national and European level through the referencing to NQF/EQF; and, finally, their use as a reference for competences identification, validation and certification services.

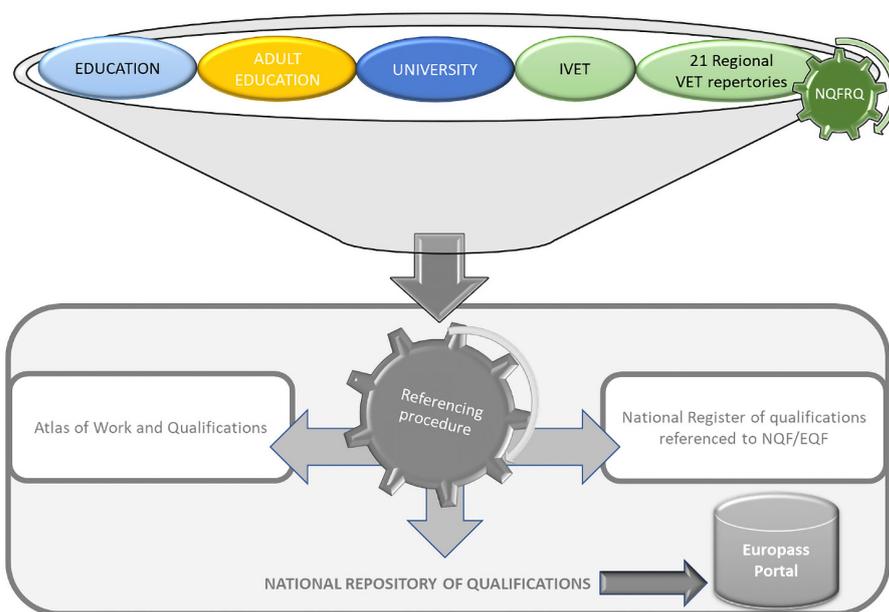
Figure 1.3 summarizes the interrelationships among the repertoires, the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications, the Italian Register of qualification referenced to NQF/EQF, the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and the NQFRQ.

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<sup>35</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 30 June 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Regional qualifications that, in terms of competences, oversee the same work activities can be correlated. These regional qualifications are automatically considered equivalent in relation to the specific correlation areas.

Figure 1.3 - Interrelationships among repertories, the National Repository, the Italian Register of qualification referenced to NQF/EQF, the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and the NQFRQ.



The **single informative infrastructure** is the interoperability infrastructure of central and territorial databases aimed at guaranteeing: the connection and mutuality of the identification, validation and certification services, the monitoring and evaluation of the measures adopted and the traceability and storage of the certificates issued<sup>37</sup>. The implementation of the single informative infrastructure is carried out in coherence with the development of the unitary information system of labour market policies described in the following point.

- c) **The Single Unified Information System of labour market policies (SIU)**, established in 2015<sup>38</sup>, is the technological infrastructure aims at improving the public employment services through the interoperability of central and territorial databases and by providing support for monitoring and the evaluation the measures provided. The SIU is structured as follows: a national coordination by

<sup>37</sup> The management of the minimum information elements is the responsibility of the Public Competent Authorities, through their own information systems that must be interoperable with the single informative infrastructure. The minimum elements must include:

- the personal data and tax code of the recipient of the service of identification and validation and certification of competences;
- the data of the Public entitled body with indication of the regulatory references of authorization or accreditation;
- the type of certification;
- the attested competences, indicating, for each of them, at least the description, the repository and the qualifications of reference (for the latter, the name, description, EQF/NQF level must be specified);
- the reference to the statistical classifications of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications, where applicable, for the purpose of recognition under the National system for certification of competences;
- learning modes;
- procedures for competences assessment;
- the date of issue of the certificates.

<sup>38</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 150 of 14 September 2015, Articles 13, 14 and 15.

ANPAL<sup>39</sup> and a regional and Autonomous Provinces coordination at local level<sup>40</sup>.

In addition, SIU is functional for the creation of the Worker's Electronic Booklet (formerly the Citizen's training booklet<sup>41</sup>), accessible without restrictions and free of charge, collecting information on education and training pathways, the working periods, the use of public benefits and contribution payments.

## 1.2 - Other policy interventions enhancing the Italian strategy for lifelong learning

Since 2012 the Italian strategy for lifelong learning has also paid special attention to the integration process with other policy measures and reform projects that broaden and strengthen its regulatory, technical and strategic framework. The most significant examples of these reforms can be summarized as follows:

- **The reform in the field of employment services and active policies<sup>42</sup>** establishing the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) for the coordination of the national network of services for active labour market policies, which involved numerous institutions and public and private bodies<sup>43</sup>. The central element of the reform is the reorganization of services and active policies and the relaunching and strengthening of the Public Employment Centres (PES), as service centres of a wider territorial network of public and private bodies. PES enter into personalized service pacts with the job-seekers (a sort of contract) which indicate the activities of guidance, profiling, training, supply-demand matching and job placement or reintegration on the basis of an adequate job offer<sup>44</sup>. Participation in these activities or the acceptance of job offers becomes a binding condition for the person to maintain income support measures, under penalty of reduction or loss of the economic support and unemployment status. In all these active policy measures the NQF plays an essential role of unitary coordination tool for the integration of services and for the connection between training and job placement.

<sup>39</sup> ANPAL's task involves creation and management of the SIU in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Ministry of University and Research, the Regions, the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, INPS and INAPP, thus enhancing and reusing the information infrastructures already implemented by other administrations. The Agency is also responsible for managing the national register of accredited subjects for active policies and that of training bodies accredited by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, the national repository of employment incentives and European activities and programs for training and employment.

<sup>40</sup> In particular, the following elements made up the SIU:

- a) the information system of the recipients of social safety nets, referred to in Article 4, paragraph 35, of Law No. 92 of 28 June 2012;
- b) the computerized archive of compulsory communications, referred to in Article 6 of Legislative Decree No. 297 of 19 December 2002;
- c) data relating to the management of employment services and active employment policies, including the personal and professional data form;
- d) the information system for vocational training;
- e) the digital platform of Citizenship Income for the Pact for Work, implemented through the application cooperation system with regional labour information systems.

The SIU also receives the data relating to the personal-professional records of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, the data contained in the income database, with reference to the tax returns, the results of the consultations of the cadastral databases and real estate advertising and the data contained in the databases of the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Ministry of University and Research, containing the National Student Registry and the National Student Registry System referred to in Article 3 of Legislative Decree No. 76 of 15 April 2005, as well as the national registry of university students and university graduates referred to in Article 1-bis of Decree-Law No. 105 of 9 May 2003, converted, with amendments, by Law No. 170 of 11 July 2003.

<sup>41</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 276 of 10 September 2003, Art. 2, para. 1, subpara. i).

<sup>42</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 150 of 14 September 2015.

<sup>43</sup> In addition to ANPAL, the following are part of the Network: employment centres and regional structures for active employment policies; the National Institute of Social Security (INPS), for the incentives and tools to support income; the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Workplace (INAIL), for the field of reintegration and work integration of people with work disabilities; Employment Agencies, subjects authorized to carry out intermediation activities and subjects accredited to employment services; inter-professional funds for continuing training; bilateral funds; INAPP; the system of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture; universities and upper secondary schools.

<sup>44</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE of 10 April 2018. The decree adopts the Atlas of Work and Qualifications as the reference institutional model for defining the adequate job offer.

- **The Citizenship Income** introduced in 2019<sup>45</sup> extending the personalization of the service pacts and related conditionality mechanisms to territorial social welfare services, through the approach of taking full charge of the individual and his/her family. These services are provided on the basis of social inclusion pacts<sup>46</sup>, stipulated in collaboration with the network of employment services, health services and schools, as well as with private welfare subjects, with particular reference to non-profit organizations. These interventions aimed at removing the causes of poverty and promoting the right to work, training and social inclusion of the weakest target groups.
- **The introduction of the dual system**<sup>47</sup> making the apprenticeship operational in Italy (see Box 2 in Chapter 3). The apprenticeship consists of an employment contract between the education and training institution and the employer, aimed at providing on-the-job training and at achieving all education and vocational training qualifications, included in the National Repository. The dual system integrates and recognizes equal value to both on-the-job training and education and training periods, within the personalized training plan. This important innovation was possible through the introduction of the validation of learning acquired in different contexts and gave an input to the implementation of the EQF Recommendation criteria on the learning outcomes qualifications description.
- **The reform of Vocational Training Institutes**<sup>48</sup> establishing a national network of vocational schools, including both State and regional vocational education and training institutions, recently reformed in 2019<sup>49</sup>. This reform aims at guaranteeing: the permanent connection with the workplace, the support to school-work transitions and to the dual system (school-work alternance and apprenticeships). The network of vocational schools acts in close collaboration with the PES network within the lifelong learning integrated services and policies.

The implementation of the Italian strategy for lifelong learning has been further strengthened and accelerated by the **Recommendation on upskilling pathways**<sup>50</sup>, from which it endorsed<sup>51</sup>: the principles of the "Three steps strategy"<sup>52</sup>, the integrated and multilevel governance approach and the outreach of disadvantaged targets groups. The implementation of the Recommendation is one of main discussion points of the Inter-institutional Board for lifelong learning which aims at adopting the "National Strategic Plan for the development of competences of adult population"<sup>53</sup> starting from the enhancement of the competences acquired in different contexts, on the basis of the national and European lifelong learning indications.

### 1.3 - The National Qualifications Framework within the Italian strategy for lifelong learning

The NQF, established in Italy in 2018<sup>54</sup>, is the national tool for the referencing of qualifications to the EQF and for the comparison of the Italian qualifications system with those of the other EQF participating

<sup>45</sup> LAW DECREE No. 4 of 28 January 2019.

<sup>46</sup> The Pact for social inclusion is an agreement between social welfare services and the entire family unit that is stipulated on the basis of the assessment of complex and multidimensional needs of users. It too, like the service pact for work, is based on the principle of conditionality with respect to the commitments undertaken, functional to maintaining the economic benefit of income support.

<sup>47</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 81 of 15 June 2015.

<sup>48</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 61 of 13 April 2017 and following implementation decrees.

<sup>49</sup> STATE-REGIONS CONFERENCE AGREEMENT of 01 August 2019 adopted by INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 7 July 2020, n. 56.

<sup>50</sup> (EU) RECOMMENDATION on Upskilling Pathways of 19 December 2016.

<sup>51</sup> MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICIES and MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH, Report for the Implementation of the Upskilling pathways Recommendation, (2019).

<sup>52</sup> Step 1 - Initial assessment of skills, Step 2 - Personalized offer of qualification or retraining paths, Step 3 - Final validation of learning.

<sup>53</sup> UNIFIED CONFERENCE AGREEMENT of 8 July 2021.

<sup>54</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 8 January 2018.

Countries<sup>55</sup>. In addition, for its broad applicability to all learning contexts, NQF describes and classifies all the qualifications issued under the NSCC. Based on these characteristics, the NQF implementation by means of the adoption of this Report, is an essential step for the development of the NSCC and the Italian strategy for lifelong learning and related reforms, in the field of education, training and employment policies and services. In particular:

- it contributes to improve, by the use of standardized criteria and descriptors, the transparency of all qualifications issued, thus increasing the comparability, usability, portability and incrementality of competences at national and European level, and the growth of training and professional mobility;
- it promotes the dialogue between the educational and training systems of all levels for a stable synergy between Public Competent Authorities;
- it improves the coordination among the education, training and work services, in a perspective of simplification, complementarity and synergy, and for a more effective lifelong guidance strategy;
- it is one of the essential references of individuals' and organizations' skills needs analysis for the profiling and personalization of education, training, and work services. It also supports the development of conditionality, and the self-assessment and matching demand/supply tools for better use of national and European investments in human capital, economic development and social cohesion;
- it contributes to the quality of training and to the enhancement of the competences acquired by persons in a perspective of personal, civic, social and occupational growth, thus favouring the update and/or the acquisition of new ones with particular regard to key competences for employability and citizenship<sup>56</sup>;
- it contributes to promote upskilling and reskilling of individuals, starting from the recognition of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, within the identification, validation and certification of competences;
- it encourages all forms of competence-based co-design of learning pathways by education and training institutions and work contexts, as well as work-based learning (e.g., apprenticeship, alternation, simulated training enterprise), thus favouring the qualifications/skills' matching and jobs/occupations' matching;
- it favours, through the levelling, the interoperability of national, local and European databases for supporting both operators (education and training institutions, counsellors, employment and mobility centres, employers, services for the validation of competences or centres for the recognition of foreign qualifications) and end users (citizens, students, workers).

## 1.4 - The tools for the recognition and use of competences and qualifications in Italy

In Italy the legal value of the qualification is not governed by a specific regulatory provision; it rather represents the legal effects of the achievement of the qualification issued within the public education and training system. These effects can be *internal* to the education and training system, thus allowing the progression to the various levels of the system; or *external*, where qualifications are the access requirement to regulated professions or to public tenders and competitions within the Public Administration<sup>57</sup>.

Many bodies are responsible for the recognition of a qualification, while the procedures differ in type, value, and purpose. The present paragraph offers an overview of the tools adopted for the recognition and spendability of competences and qualifications; it is organized into six macro typologies, in order to make visible the differences in value and purposes, the complementary and the relevance of the context they take on in relation to the implementation of the NQF:

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<sup>55</sup> For a more detailed description of the technical characteristics of the NQF, see Chapter 2.

<sup>56</sup> (EU) RECOMMENDATION on key competences of 22 May 2018.

<sup>57</sup> STUDIES SERVICE OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC SENATE (2011).

1. *Tools for the transparency and for the readability and comparability of the qualifications:* it includes the provisions, procedures and services deriving from the implementation of the EQF Recommendation and from the adoption of the Europass Decision<sup>58</sup> whose responsibility for their application lies in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, where ANPAL plays, since 2017, the role of EQF, Europass and Euroguidance National Coordination Point. The transparency tools work through the adoption of the NQF and of the Europass tools available on the Europass Portal<sup>59</sup>, for the purpose of the widest usability and portability of qualifications and competences. These transparency tools also aim at facilitating the assessment and recognition procedures, though they do not determine automatic legal effects of equivalence between qualifications.
2. *Services for the validation of learning achieved in non-formal and informal contexts:* this type includes the provisions, procedures and services for identifying, validating and certifying competences for the recognition of learning, however and wherever acquired within the NSCC, also in terms of credits. For the validation services, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is responsible for the implementation of the general regulations, while the Public Competent Authorities are responsible for the organization of the services.
3. *Documentation supporting the recognition procedures of qualifications obtained abroad:* qualifications obtained abroad are not automatically recognized in Italy; they have, therefore, no legal value. On the national scene, there are different types of documentation able to provide detailed and transparent information on qualifications obtained abroad. The *declaration of value* is a document that certifies the main elements of the qualification of the foreign reference system; it is drawn up in Italian and issued by the Italian diplomatic missions abroad<sup>60</sup>. In the Higher Education system, the Diploma Supplement is the document for the assessment of qualifications: it accompanies the final diploma by integrating it with additional information on the education path, on the awarding body, and on the description of the entire national education system. Information is provided in two languages. Another example is given by attesting documents awarded by the national information Centres, in accordance with art. IX.2 of the Lisbon Convention<sup>61</sup>: in Italy, CIMEA<sup>62</sup> awards the *Statement of Comparability of foreign qualifications* and the *Statement of Verification of foreign qualifications*, in order to facilitate their recognition within the national context<sup>63</sup>.
4. *Individual procedures and provisions for the recognition of qualifications abroad:* these procedures depend on the rules and specific standards of the country where recognition must be obtained. In all cases, recognition is not automatic and the documentation to be submitted is defined by the competent foreign authority. Each country has specific offices in charge of examining the application for recognition of the qualification. In many countries there are national information centres on the recognition of qualifications. The ENIC (European National Information Centres) of the Council of Europe and UNESCO and NARIC the (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) network of the European Union involve the information centres of 55 Member States<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> (EU) EUROPASS DECISION 2018/646 of 18 April 2018.

<sup>59</sup> National Europass Centre Italy is part of the European National Europass Centres, coordinated by the European Commission in connection with Euroguidance and EQF. Since 1st July 2020, the new Europass Portal offers free online tools that support learners, workers and job-seekers across Europe, with the aim of enhancing the transparency of skills, experiences and qualifications.

- Europass free accessible tools currently are:
- Europass profile, CV and cover letter editors: they support individuals in describing own skills, finding interesting jobs and learning opportunities, managing applications, and creating CVs and cover letters;
- Europass Certificate Supplement: it provides information that makes it easier to understand the knowledge and skills acquired during upper secondary school and vocational education and training);
- Europass Diploma Supplement: it provides information useful for understanding the level and the nature of the higher education qualifications, in terms of knowledge and skills acquired during higher education pathways, academic or technical;
- Europass Mobility: it helps to showcase skills acquired during mobility experiences abroad (EU, Efta countries and other candidate countries) in a simple, consistent and understandable way.

<sup>60</sup> Diplomatic Missions mean the competent Embassies and Consulates by area, i.e. the closest to the city where the institution that issued the foreign qualification is located. Source: <https://www.mieur.gov.it/dichiarazione-di-valore>

<sup>61</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168007f2c7>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.cimea.it/it/index.aspx>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.cimea.it/it/servizi/attestati-di-comparabilita-e-certificazione-dei-titoli/attestati-di-comparabilita-e-di-verifica-dei-titoli-diplome.aspx>.

<sup>64</sup> More information about the centres of the 55 Member States and the HE competent bodies is available on the ENIC-NARIC website <http://www.enic-naric.net>. The Italian Enic-Naric centre website is the following <https://www.enic-naric.net/italy.aspx>.

The Information Centre on Mobility and Academic Equivalences (CIMEA) is the official Italian centre of the ENIC-NARIC network and carries out its information and consultancy activity on the procedures for recognizing academic qualifications and on issues related to Italian and international higher education and training.

5. *The procedure for the comparison of qualifications*: this type includes both provisions of general application, and the provisions that Public Competent Authorities adopt for the comparison, even partial, between the qualification held by an individual and the qualifications awarded under their responsibility, in relation to the legal effects deriving from the possession of that qualification. This procedure may concern:
- qualifications of the same regulatory system;
  - qualifications of different regulatory systems;
  - qualifications of previous, reformed or updated regulatory systems.

Within provisions of general application, legislation may provide for the comparison of educational qualifications for the purpose, for example, of access to further study courses, for the participation in public competitions, or for access to regulated professions, according to Public Competent Authority's regulation. This case is known as *ex lege equipollence* which can be extended to areas other than those for which the legislation was issued<sup>65</sup>.

The comparison procedures upon individual application can be divided into two cases:

- the procedures aimed at determining the *equipollence* between a specific qualification held by an individual (for example a qualification obtained abroad) and a corresponding qualification issued by a Public Competent Authority (for example, the corresponding Italian qualification), in relation to all internal or external legal effects deriving from the possession of that qualification and with a permanent character<sup>66</sup>, within the limits laid down by the legislation<sup>67</sup>.
- the procedures aimed at determining the *equivalence* between a specific qualification held by an individual and a corresponding qualification issued by a Public Competent Authority, in relation to a specific purpose (for example, the continuation of studies, access to a public tender or a regulated profession in Italy). In this case, the term "recognition according to purpose" is used and the resulting documents effectiveness end within the scope for which they were issued. The procedure of recognition according to the purpose of the foreign qualifications was introduced in Italy with the ratification of the Lisbon Convention<sup>68</sup>, with the aim of minimizing costs and simplifying procedures in relation to the needs and purposes of the application for recognition. In this regard, CIMEA, in its role as a national information centre on the procedures for the recognition of higher education qualifications, has published the following synoptic table on the procedures for the recognition of tertiary level qualifications<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> With regard to the declaration of equipollence between different Master degrees, the Council of State held that: "It is clear that, since the legal system allows [...] subjects holding different Master degrees to exercise the same professional activity [...], those qualifications, although formally different, must be considered as substantially equipollent for the purposes concerned and by express legislative will" (Council of State, Judgment n. 5924/2019).

<sup>66</sup> By way of example, it is possible to cite the equivalence procedure for professional purposes of the Ministry of Education and Merit on the basis of which it can be possible to apply, at the local School Office, for the equivalence of the qualification (concerning lower and upper secondary education) obtained abroad to the Italian qualification required by public courses or competitions. In this case, the obtained equivalence Decree can be used always an

d in any case. In addition, it is also possible to submit an application for equivalence of a foreign qualification to the Directory for schooling systems of the Ministry of Education and Merit in order to obtain the spendability of the title exclusively within a specific competition procedure (recognition according to purpose) <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/equivalenza-ai-fini-professionali>).

<sup>67</sup> The equipollence of academic qualifications for participation in public competitions can be established by primary or secondary regulations, but not by the administration or by the judge. When a call for applications requires the possession of a specific qualification, the evaluation of a different qualification is not allowed, unless the equipollence is established by a law. The judgment of equipollence between qualifications for the purposes of admission to public competitions belongs to the legislator and the only correct parameter is that qualifications are different from each other and the equipollence constitute exceptions non-susceptible of interpretation. A marginal role of integration can be recognized to administrations only in two cases: where the call admits a specific qualification or equivalent qualification tout-court as an admission requirement; where the call requires a specific qualification or those equivalent to it by law, (Council of State, Sentence n. 6260 of 2012).

<sup>68</sup> LAW No. 148 of 11 July 2002.

<sup>69</sup> Source: <http://www.cimea.it/it/servizi/procedure-di-riconoscimento-dei-titoli/procedure-di-riconoscimento-dei-titoli-overview.aspx>

Table 1.1 - Procedure of recognition according to the purpose of tertiary level qualifications in Italy

CATEGORY	RECOGNITION PURPOSE	RESPONSIBLE BODY	REFERENCE STANDARDS
Academic recognition	Access to a course/continuation of studies	AFAM and Universities Institutions	rt. 2 of Law 148/2002
	Shortening of the course/recognition of the period of study/recognition of credits		
	Achievement of the corresponding Italian qualification (equivalence)		
	Equivalence of the Research Doctorate	Ministry of University and Research	Art. 74 of Presidential Decree No. 382/80
Non-academic recognition	Access to public tenders	Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department of Public Administration - P.P.A. Office	Art. 38 of Legislative Decree No. 165/2001 and Art. 2 of Legislative Decree No. 189/2009
	Scoring for the definition of the final ranking in public tenders/career progression in the Public Administration	Ministry of University and Research by applying to the administration concerned	Art. 3 of Presidential Decree No. 189/2009
	Social security purposes/redemption of study period		
	Enrolment in employment centres		
	Access to the apprenticeship or internship after graduation	Administration concerned	Art. 4 of Presidential Decree No. 189/2009
	Awarding of scholarships and other benefits		
	Evaluation of Community qualifications and certifications	Administration concerned with the opinion of the Ministry of University and Research	Art. 12 of Law 29/2006
Professional recognition	Exercise of regulated profession (i.e. Chemist, Physician, Psychologist, Engineer, etc.)	Ministry that supervises the profession	Legislative Decree No. 206/2007

## CHAPTER 2 - *The National Qualifications Framework: objectives, structure, procedures, governance and compliance with the ten criteria for referencing to the EQF*<sup>70</sup>

The EQF Recommendation defines the NQF as an “instrument for the classification of qualifications [...] [which] aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society” and encourages Member States to adopt comprehensive and unified frameworks including qualifications of all types and levels, and to reference national frameworks to EQF.

The implementation of the first EQF Recommendation, which ended in 2012 with the First Italian Referencing Report, was carried out in the absence of an NQF, through a direct connection of part of the qualifications issued by the national lifelong learning system to the eight levels of the European taxonomy (para. 2.1).

As shown in Chapter 1, the progress completed in Italy since 2012 (Figure 1.1), with the definition and the recent implementation of the NSCC and the establishment of the NQF, have made it possible to fill the gaps present in the first phase of the implementation of the EQF Recommendation and currently represents the technical and methodological prerequisite for updating the first Italian Referencing Report.

In particular, the Decree establishing the NQF not only defines the aims, goals and structure of the National framework in connection with the European framework, but also establishes the minimum criteria for referencing to the NQF/EQF of the various Italian qualification systems, and the procedure for the referencing of all qualifications issued (at national and regional level), within the NSCC for their inclusion in the National Repository. The EQF NCP's task is, therefore, to update the Referencing Report and, based on this, to start and manage the referencing procedure of the qualifications to the NQF/EQF, also through the support of a specific management application, interoperable with national and European databases and information systems. Paragraph 2.2 of the present Chapter is dedicated to a precise and detailed presentation of all the structural and functional components of the NQF.

In addition, the present Chapter concludes with a paragraph (2.3) summarizing and systematizing all the topics developed in the Report, thus supporting the compliance of the referencing process carried out in Italy with the ten criteria established in Annex III of the EQF Recommendation.

### **2.1 - First referencing of the qualifications to the EQF**

The First Italian Referencing Report<sup>71</sup> was the result of an analysis and comparison work that involved numerous institutional actors (the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Department for the European Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Regions and Autonomous Provinces), of the social partners and international experts.

<sup>70</sup> For the definition of the terms *Skills, Formal learning, Non-formal learning, Informal learning, Lifelong learning, Atlas of Work and Qualifications, Classification of economic-professional sectors, Competence, Certification of competences, Knowledge, Credits, Public Competent Authority, Public Entitled Body, Regulated training, Identification and validation of competences, micro-qualification, Regulated profession, National reference Framework of Regional Qualifications, National Qualifications Framework, Qualification, International qualification, Referencing, National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications, Responsibility and autonomy, National education and training system, National System for certification of competences*, please refer to the Glossary in Annex 4 of this Report.

<sup>71</sup> The First Italian Referencing Report was prepared by ISFOL (now INAPP), approved at the State/Regions Conference on 20 December 2012 and adopted by INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 13 February 2013. The Report was also the subject of subsequent presentation to the EQF Advisory Group.

In the absence of its own national framework, the choice made was to link the qualifications of the national lifelong learning system directly to the 8 levels of the EQF and to refer, in a first phase, only the qualifications of the first and second cycle of the education and training system, the tertiary education and training (Higher education, academic and non-academic education) and the vocational and higher technical education and training qualifications regulated by State-Regions Agreements and as such equipped with national reference repositories of qualifications. Table 2.1 shows the referencing of the Italian qualifications to EQF included in the First Report.

Table 2.1- Referencing of the Italian qualifications to EQF - 2012

EQF LEVEL	Titolo/Qualificazione
1	Final diploma of the first cycle of education
2	Compulsory education certificate
3	Initial education and vocational certificate (IeFP) (Professional operator)
4	Upper secondary education diploma (Lycée, Technical, Vocational) Initial education and vocational diploma (IeFP) (Professional technician) Higher technical specialisation certificate (IFTS)
5	DHigher technical education diploma <sup>72</sup>
6	Bachelor degree First-level academic diploma
7	Master degree Second-level academic diploma (AFAM) First-level university post degree First level Academic specialization diploma Higher specialization diploma or first level post degree
8	Research doctorate (PhD) Research training academic Diploma (AFAM) Specialization diploma Second-level university post degree Second level Academic specialization diploma (AFAM) Higher specialization diploma or second level post degree (AFAM)

The first referencing did not concern qualifications relating to regional vocational training. The reason can be traced back to the absence of two essential elements:

- a national reference framework of regional qualifications, capable of allowing a homogeneous correlation of regional qualifications to the EQF levels;
- an NQF and the related criteria for referencing qualifications belonging to the same system, but potentially positioned at different levels.

For similar reasons, the First Report also did not contain elements for the referencing of qualifications relating to regulated professions.

<sup>72</sup> Sulla base della LEGGE 15 luglio 2022, n. 99 sull'istituzione del Sistema terziario di istruzione tecnologica superiore, il Diploma di Tecnico superiore ha assunto la denominazione di Diploma di specializzazione per le tecnologie applicate. Gli Istituti Tecnici Superiori hanno altresì assunto la denominazione di Istituti Tecnologici Superiori (ITS *Academy*).

## **2.2 - The National Qualifications Framework**

The Decree establishing the NQF<sup>73</sup> is made up of 6 Articles and 3 Annexes (see Annex 2 of this Report). The Articles regulate the purposes and goals, definitions and legal effects, procedures and governance of the referencing process of qualifications issued on the national territory. The Annexes describe the technical specifications of the NQF and the referencing criteria, in coherence and complementarity with the implementation of the standards governing the implementation of the NSCC (see paragraph 1.1).

### **2.2.1 - Goals and aims of the NQF**

As anticipated in Chapter 1, the NQF performs the dual function of:

- implementing the EQF Recommendation, with the aim of linking the Italian framework to those of other European Countries;
- meeting the regulatory requirement of referencing Italian qualifications to the NQF for their inclusion in the National Repository, in order to coordinate the various systems of the lifelong learning offer and the services for the identification and validation and certification of competences.

This dual function, and the related purposes, contributes to the achievement of the following strategic goals:

- improving the accessibility, transparency and permeability of qualifications;
- facilitating the use of qualifications at national and European level, also in relation to geographical and professional mobility;
- promoting the centrality of the person and the enhancement of individual experiences, through the identification and validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, including those acquired in work-based learning contexts;
- contributing to the quality of training and to the upskilling of individuals in a perspective of personal, civic, social and occupational growth.

### **2.2.2 - The defining framework of the NQF**

The NQF takes on a broad defining framework to guarantee the uniformity and uniqueness of the languages based on the EQF Recommendation and integrated with the definitions taken within the NSCC outlined in the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities<sup>74</sup>. These definitions apply to this Report and are listed in the Glossary of terms contained in Annex 4.

### **2.2.3 - The structure and technical specifications of the NQF**

The NQF's structure is developed, in coherence and continuity with that of the EQF, in a common reference grid comprising eight levels, expressed in the form of learning outcomes, corresponding to increasing levels of expertise and complexity. Each of the eight levels of the NQF is matched to the corresponding EQF level. In order to distinguish the specificities of the qualifications belonging to the same level, the NQF envisages sub-articulations of level as shown in para. 2.2.7.

As for the EQF, the learning outcomes are the reference for the description of competence on the basis of three dimensions (knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility) and through descriptors that express what the individual should know and be able to do with a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility in relation to the achievement of a certain qualification.

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<sup>73</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 8 January 2018.

<sup>74</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 5 January 2021.

In line with the EQF Recommendation, the NQF adopts the definition of competence, as a proven ability to use, in work, study or professional and personal development situations, a structured set of knowledge and skills acquired in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts.

Compared to the EQF, the NQF, however, expands the set of descriptors, thus explaining, adapting and integrating those present in the EQF Recommendation, with additional sub-domains defined on the basis of the criteria listed below:

- a) adoption of the descriptors explicitly detailed in the EQF Recommendation;
- b) adaptation of descriptors explicitly linked to the scenario of the Italian qualification systems;
- c) clarification of descriptors implicit in the EQF Recommendation;
- d) insertion, where necessary, of further descriptive elements to make the descriptor more inclusive of the different types of national qualifications.

The sub-domains aim at enhancing the taxonomy and the features of each EQF level, in order to make the NQF more inclusive and to ensure greater transparency, comparability and usability of the qualifications, since:

- they express the expected learning outcomes regarding what the individual should know and be able to do in relation to a certain level of qualification;
- they are guide references aimed at encouraging the development and positioning of qualifications in relation to each level;
- they are broad to allow their application to the work and study context, to be able to address the needs of the different actors of the education, training and employment system.

Furthermore, the dimensions and descriptors of the NQF are defined as functional parameters for the description of qualifications according to a qualitative approach and, therefore, they are to be understood in the referencing process as:

- a) typical but not necessarily exclusive to a certain level;
- b) correlated but independent, in their progression, with respect to the other descriptors and dimensions.

In accordance with the criteria described above and summarized in table 2.2, the three EQF domains (Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility) are enriched, within the NQF, with specific sub-domains, as subsequently illustrated in detail.

Table 2.2 NQF sub-domains and respective methodological criteria

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility/Autonomy
Theoretical and/or factual dimension of knowledge The EQF explicit dimensions are fully adopted <b>CRITERION 1</b>	Procedural and practical skills The EQF explicit dimensions are fully adopted <b>CRITERION 1</b> Technical, professional and context specific skills Further descriptive elements to make NQF descriptors more inclusive <b>CRITERION 4</b>	Context The EQF implicit dimensions <b>CRITERION 2</b>
Extent and depth of knowledge The EQF implicit dimensions are made explicit <b>CRITERION 2</b>	Cognitive skills The EQF explicit dimensions are fully adopted <b>CRITERION 1</b> Social-interaction and activation skills Further descriptive elements to make NQF descriptors more inclusive <b>CRITERION 4</b>	Responsibility The EQF explicit dimensions adjusted to the national qualifications systems <b>CRITERION 3</b>
Understanding and awareness of knowledge The EQF implicit dimensions are made explicit <b>CRITERION 2</b>		Autonomy The EQF explicit dimensions adjusted to the national qualifications systems <b>CRITERION 4</b>

## Knowledge

As explicitly defined in the EQF, knowledge is described as conceptual (theoretical) and factual (practical). The knowledge descriptors have been made explicit along the level scale within the NQF, with reference to the following elements:

- c) *Conceptual and/or factual dimension*, which expresses the transition from a dimension of knowledge that is purely concrete and anchored to facts (levels 1 and 2), towards a conceptual and abstract dimension that emerges starting from level 3 and unfolds in subsequent levels. Between levels 4 and 8, knowledge is understood to be integrated with respect to this dimension;
- d) *Extent and depth*, which respectively express the horizontal and vertical extension of knowledge. Width develops progressively between levels 1 and 3; the dimension of depth at level 4 acquires relevance, and it is expressed starting from level 5 in terms of progressive specialization and innovation;
- e) *Understanding and awareness*, which expresses the interpretative capacity and the level of "awareness" with respect to knowledge. This dimension is made explicit starting from level 3 in terms of interpretation capacity and at level 5 in terms of awareness of the areas of knowledge, and then develops as critical thinking.

## Skills

As explicitly defined in the EQF, skills are "the ability to apply knowledge and use *know-how* to complete tasks and solve problems" and are described as *cognitive* (including the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or *practical* (including manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools). This meaning is taken up and adopted by the NQF that broadens the scope of applicability of both the *practical component*, including other types of skills (procedural, practical, technical, professional and context specific skills), and the *cognitive component*, also capturing the typical skills of social interaction. The integration of the skill descriptor is justified within its very definition, which refers to a multidimensionality of the skill, thus referring to the ability to develop ideas (cognitive skills) and things (technical skills) and to establish and maintain relationships with people (relational and activation skills). Therefore, the descriptors of the skill dimension have been made explicit, within the NQF, with reference to the following elements:

1. *the practical component* is characterized by different skills: *procedural, technical, professional* and *context specific* ones. The descriptor places in a progressive way those skills that mainly refer to an operational action (materials and tools) from level 1 to level 5, and those relating to the procedural component (methods, procedures and protocols) starting from level 3. In the progression of the levels, the different level of "action" is also described: in levels 1-2 the only "application", in levels 3-5 "the use also through adaptation, reformulation and reworking" and in levels 6-8 respectively "transferring, integrating and innovating" knowledge, materials, tools, methods and procedures, according to the incrementality described above;
2. *the cognitive component*, understood as the ability to apply knowledge and use *know-how* to complete complex activities, is expressed with reference to three groups of skills:
  1. *cognitive* skills that allow a correct interpretation and integration of reality;
  2. *social interaction* skills, related to interaction with other individuals;
  3. *activation* skills, in relation to the ability to face and solve problems.

Within the cognitive component, some elective and typical (but not exclusive) skills of a given level have been identified, in order to qualitatively connote the physiognomy of the levels, make them more easily distinguishable, as well as facilitate the positioning of the qualifications. The cognitive component, therefore, other than the description of the skills related to reasoning, logical, intuitive and creative thinking, includes those skills applied in the labor market, i.e., typical of a wide range of occupational

profiles and easily transferable from one occupation to another or from one context to another. These skills were identified on the basis of a comparative analysis, conducted in 2016, of the main European and international classifications, such as: Bloom cognitive taxonomy<sup>75</sup>; De.Se.Co. project<sup>76</sup>; the 2006 European Recommendation on Key Competences<sup>77</sup>; the PIAAC survey (2012)<sup>78</sup>; UNESCO Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015)<sup>79</sup>.

### **Responsibility and autonomy**

As explicitly defined in the EQF, responsibility and autonomy are described as the ability to apply knowledge and skills in an autonomous and responsible way. The dimension of autonomy and responsibility is expressed by focusing on aspects of competence necessary for its most effective description, thus specifying:

- the component relating to the context, according to increasing levels of uncertainty and complexity within which the conditions of study, social life and work are achieved;
- the decision-making component, according to progressive levels, which, starting from ensuring the conformity of the expected result, promotes the transformation and innovation of the results to be achieved;
- the component relating to the degrees of independence envisaged in the activities to be performed.

Given the above, the descriptors of responsibility and autonomy have been made explicit and integrated as follows:

- a) context, which expresses increasing levels of uncertainty and complexity within which study, social and work life activities are carried out, and represents the environmental and relational conditions within which the other dimensions of competence relating to responsibility and autonomy are acted;
- b) responsibility is the decisional component that a subject applies and puts in place to achieve a result. It expresses itself progressively according to the tasks performed, i.e. starting from routine to more complex tasks and is carried out in ensuring the compliance of the expected result (level 3). Starting from level 4, one gradually enters the dimension of controlling the results of others. Between levels 4-5 the responsibility for coordinating activities and resources and verifying the results achieved according to the assigned goals is expressed. From level 6, responsibility expresses as the ability to define aims, to provide evaluation and the development of results and resources and to promote transformation and innovation;
- c) autonomy expresses the level of independence in carrying out the activity. It gradually expresses between levels 1-3 in the progressive independence of the activity from the supervision of others. Between levels 4-5, the activity is expressed in particular in the function of controlling and supervising the work of others, in order to ensure the conformity of the results and the correct application of the procedures provided. Between levels 6-8, after having achieved a wide independence from supervision, the activity is characterized by the gradual transition from the management level to that of the development and transformation of the activity.

Within the NSCC, in order to promote common principles for the description of the qualifications and competences contained in the National Repository and their greater homogeneity (*qualification design*), the learning outcomes are described in terms of competences and associated with descriptive elements of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and of the NQF, starting from a synthetic description

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<sup>75</sup> Bloom, B. S., (1956).

<sup>76</sup> Rychen D.S. & Salganik L.H. (Eds.), (2003), De.Se.Co.'s final report.

<sup>77</sup> (EU) RECOMMENDATION on Key competences of 18 December 2006.

<sup>78</sup> OECD, (2013), OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD Publishing.

<sup>79</sup> UNESCO, 2015.

concerning: the activities to which it refers, the expected results, the context and the complexity, also in terms of autonomy and responsibility. Subsequently, competences contain descriptive elements of knowledge, skills and level of responsibility and autonomy, also in relation to the context of exercise of the competence. Knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy, as constitutive elements of competences as a whole, are described with respect to the learning outcomes according to criteria of essentiality and effective significance, as well as coherence in terms of extension and level of complexity, with respect to the competence to which they refer. The dimension of autonomy and responsibility does not necessarily require a separate description and can be made explicit in the context of the synthetic description of the competence.

Table 2.3 presents the NQF for the 8 levels, of the dimensions and level descriptors explained above.

Table 2.3 - The Italian National Qualifications Framework (2018)

Level	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESPONSIBILITY and AUTONOMY
<i>Sub-domains</i>	<i>Theoretical and/or factual dimension</i> <i>Extent and depth</i> <i>Understanding and awareness</i>	<i>Procedural, practical, technical, professional and context specific skills</i> <i>Cognitive, social-interaction and activation skills</i>	<i>Responsibility</i> <i>Autonomy</i> <i>Context</i>
<b>Level 1</b>	General and basic knowledge, with a limited extent, aimed at performing simple tasks in well-known and structured contexts.	Using know-how, materials and tools to perform simple tasks by involving basic cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. Typically: FOCUS and INTERACTION	Performing given task in accordance with required parameters, under direct supervision of the activities, in a structured context.
<b>Level 2</b>	General and basic knowledge, with a moderate extent, aimed at performing simple tasks in different sequences.	Using know-how, materials and tools to perform simple tasks in different sequences, by involving cognitive, interpersonal and social skills, in a detailed range of context variables. Typically: MEMORY and PARTICIPATION	Performing assigned tasks in compliance with established criteria, under supervision for the achievement of results, in a structured context characterized by a limited range of diversified circumstances.
<b>Level 3</b>	A range of mainly general knowledge with conceptual elements, aimed at producing logical connections. Capability of understanding.	Applying a range of know-how, methods, materials and tools to achieve expected results by involving a set of cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills which facilitate the adaptability in changeable contexts. Typically: UNDERSTANDING, CO-OPERATION and GOAL ORIENTATION	Achieving expected results by ensuring their compliance and by identifying the most appropriate implementation methods, in a structured context characterized by mutable circumstances requiring own activity change.
<b>Level 4</b>	A wide range of specialized knowledge in different fields, integrated by the factual and/or conceptual dimension. Capability of understanding.	Applying a range of know-how, methods, routines, procedures, materials and tools to solve problems, by involving a set of cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to overcome increasing difficulties. Typically: PROBLEM SOLVING, CO-OPERATION and MULTITASKING	Achieving goals by coordinating and integrating own and others results and activities, and by participating in both decision-making and implementation process, in a foreseeable context subject to unpredictable changes.
<b>Level 5</b>	Integrated, comprehensive, in-depth and specialized knowledge. Awareness of fields of knowledge.	Applying a wide range of methods, routines, procedures and tools, in a conscious and selective manner also to modify them, by involving an extensive set of cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to find unconventional technical solutions. Typically: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, SPECIALIZED AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN A TECHNICAL FIELD and MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL PROBLEMS	Ensuring compliance of goals, achieved autonomously and by others, by identifying and planning corrective and development measures, and by taking part in the implementation process, in a specific and complex context subject to frequent and unpredictable changes.

<b>Level 6</b>	Integrated and advanced knowledge in a specific field, transferable from one context to another. Critical awareness of theories and principles in a specific field.	Transferring, in different contexts, methods, routines and procedures needed to solve complex and unexpected problems, by involving advanced cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to synthesize review and address demands through innovative and creative solutions. Typically: SYNTHESIS VISION, NEGOTIATION AND MOTIVATION and PLANNING	Overseeing objectives and processes of individuals and teams, by facilitating the day-to-day management and conditions stability, by autonomously making decisions and negotiating both goals and implementation methods, in an undefined context subject to unpredictable changes.
<b>Level 7</b>	Integrated and highly specialized knowledge, some of which is cutting – edge in a given field. Critical awareness of theories and principles in multiple extent of knowledge.	Integrating and turning know-how, methods, practices and procedures, by involving specialized cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills needed to address development scenarios and to plan and implement new activities and procedures. Typically: SYSTEMIC VISION, PLANNING, LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL INTERACTION and COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	Leading integration and turning processes, by implementing strategies and directing objectives and resources development, by autonomously making decisions on goals and implementation methods, in an undefined context subject to continuous changes and comparable to well-known variables.
<b>Level 8</b>	Integrated, proficient and cutting-edge knowledge in a specific field and in common extent of different fields. Critical awareness of theories and principles in multiple extent of knowledge.	Creating new knowledge, methods, routines and procedures, by involving accomplished cognitive, interpersonal, social and activation skills, needed to detect and react to the demand for innovation. Typically: STRATEGIC VISION, CREATIVITY and INNOVATION	Promoting innovation and strategic development processes, by foreshadowing scenarios and solutions, and by assessing their possible effects, in an advanced context not comparable to known situations and settings

In order to offer a more intuitive understanding of the NQF and of the taxonomic physiognomy of the individual levels, in table 2.4 a synthetic version of the NQF and the taxonomic profile of each level for skills, performance and context is described. The table, implemented on the available literature on cognitive taxonomies and action verbs<sup>80</sup>, represents a first preparatory technical reference for the development of the “Operational guide to the preliminary analysis, description and referencing of qualifications to the NQF” (see para. 2.2.4). The Guidelines aim at offering the Public Entitled Bodies and the education and training agencies information, training and operational support for *qualification design*, in terms of correct description and positioning of the qualifications on the 8 NQF levels. The operational guide will be drawn up and periodically updated by enhancing the pilot phases of the referencing procedure (referred to in paragraph 2.2.6) carried out in collaboration with the Public Competent Authorities on the basis of a *bottom up* approach aimed at a continuous valorization of best practices, well-established practical experiences and existing information systems.

<sup>80</sup> CEDEFOP (2017); Ruhl (2021).

Table 2.4 - Synthetic table of the NQF levels

Nqf level	Skills	Performance	Context
	Able to...	In order to...	In a context...
1	Focus and interact	Perform assigned tasks in compliance with the foreseen parameters	Structured under direct supervision
2	Memorize and participate in processes	Perform assigned tasks according to predefined criteria	Structured with a limited number of diversified situations and under supervision
3	Goal oriented co-operation	Achieve expected results by identifying adequate implementation methods	Structured but subject to changing situations
4	Solve problems and cooperate in multitasking	Achieve goals by coordinating and integrating activities and results, also of other people participating in the decision-making and implementation process	Foreseeable but subject to unexpected changes
5	Analyze and assess, communicating and managing criticalities	Ensure the compliance of objectives achieved by own and other people by identifying and planning review and development interventions	Determined, complex and subject to recurring and unexpected changes
6	Synthesize, negotiate, motivate and design	Oversee the objectives and processes of people and groups by deciding autonomously and negotiating objectives and methods of implementation	Not determined and subject to unexpected changes
7	Manage relational networks and complex social interactions, plan in a systemic vision	Govern integration and transformation processes by developing implementation and development strategies and deciding independently	Not determined subject to continuous changes not comparable with known variables, subject to innovation
8	Research and create in a strategic and evolutive dimension	Promote innovative and strategic development processes, prefiguring scenarios and solutions and assessing their effects and evolutions	Cutting-edge and not comparable with previous situations and contexts

### 2.2.4 - Legal effects and phases of the referencing process of qualifications to the NQF

Referencing is the institutional and technical process that associates single qualification issued under the NSCC to one of the eight NQF levels. The referencing of the Italian qualifications to the NQF guarantees their referencing to the EQF.

For the legal effects, the referencing of Italian qualifications to the NQF, on the basis of the comparison between the learning outcomes of a qualification and the dimensions and descriptors referred to in paragraph 2.2.3, constitutes a minimum requirement for the inclusion of the qualifications in the National Repository.

According to the Decree establishing the NQF, all certificates issued under the NSCC indicate the level of referencing of the qualification to the NQF/EQF, according to the coding criteria referred to in paragraph 2.2.8.

As previously illustrated (para.1.1), in this first NQF implementation phase, the referencing of individual qualifications of the National Repository is a progressive and dynamic eligibility criterion that will be progressively satisfied with the completion of the referencing process and which includes the following phases:

- Phase 1: adoption of this Report providing the referencing to the NQF/EQF of all the subsystems and related types of qualification (included in Table 3.10.). Phase 1 is mainly aimed at promoting better integration and coordination of the lifelong learning offer and at providing an operational tool to support Phase 2 for referencing to the NQF/EQF of the individual qualifications;
- Phase 2: referencing to the NQF/EQF of the individual qualifications issued at national and regional level by the Public Competent Authorities, and their inclusion in the Italian Register of qualifications referenced to NQF. Phase 2 is mainly aimed at improving the qualification design (both in terms of description and levelling of the qualification), and the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities at national and European level. This second referencing phase will be activated following the adoption of this Report.

Preliminarily the procedure envisages a pilot phase conducted in collaboration with the Public Competent Authorities, in compliance with the founding cooperative, progressive and substantive approaches at the base of the whole NQF implementation process. The pilot phase is aimed at optimizing the referencing procedure that will affect:

- all the qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authorities that is, both those belonging to qualification systems already referenced to EQF and those belonging to qualification systems not referenced in the context of the first Italian Referencing Report;
- all the qualifications of the Public Competent Authorities already referenced to the NQF that undergo a maintenance or updating procedure.

The referencing procedure is managed by the EQF NCP that relies on the INAPP for the independent evaluation of the referencing applications. In order to simplify and optimize the submission of applications by the Public Competent Authorities, the referencing procedure is carried out through a specific management application created by ANPAL that: automatically draws on the information already available in the existing databases (especially in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications); manages the referencing applications presented by the Public Competent Authorities for the qualifications of its own competence and provides, as the qualifications are described and referenced on the basis of the minimum references referred to in Annex VI of the EQF Recommendation, the Italian Register of qualifications referenced to the NQF (see para. 2.2.6).

The Public Competent Authorities apply for referencing the individual qualifications of their competence to the EQF NCP, taking as a reference the results of the referencing of the qualification systems and the respective qualification typologies (Phase 1) published in the updated EQF Referencing Report. The NQF/EQF level of an individual qualification must always be consistent with the level or range of levels of the respective qualifications sub-system and qualification typologies referenced in the Updated Report<sup>81</sup>.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the referencing procedure is divided into five phases:

- a) *start-up* phase: Public Competent Authority submits the referencing request to the EQF NCP taking into consideration the minimum descriptive requirements defined in Annexes IV, V and VI of the EQF Recommendation and in coherence with the legislative context of the NSCC<sup>82</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Only in the case of micro qualifications (see note 83 of this paragraph) it is possible to submit applications for referencing to an NQF/ EQF level different from the one given, in the context of the Updated referencing report, to the qualification typology of which the micro qualification is part of. For example, theoretically, a regional vocational education and training qualification referenced to level 4 NQF/EQF, could be split in several modules of micro qualifications and one of these could be a level 3 NQF/EQF micro qualification, i.e. different from the level attributed to the qualification typology by the Updated referencing report (IeFP diploma). For this reason, micro qualifications are not included in the NQF/EQF referencing synoptic table 3.10 (cfr Chapter 3).

<sup>82</sup> Public Competent Authorities promptly report to ANPAL any integration, update or removal of qualifications of their own competence referenced to the NQF/EQF, as well as any revision of laws and regulations relating to their own systems. In case ANPAL, for qualifications already referenced, ascertains the persistent lack of the minimum requirements for referencing and, following the opinion of INAPP, it can suspend the referencing procedure for the time needed to restore the conditions for referencing the qualification; in more complex cases, ANPAL may revoke the referencing, following the opinion of INAPP and the ratification by the National Technical Committee referred to in Article 3 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013.

- b) *preliminary* phase: EQF NCP instructs the referencing requests for qualification to the NQF;
- c) *independent evaluation* phase: INAPP formulates an independent evaluation of the referencing request<sup>83</sup>;
- d) *follow up* phase: EQF NCP provides indications to the Public Competent Authority on any integrations and shared revisions of the qualification for the purpose of consistency with the requirements of the EQF Recommendation and by the national regulations in force.
- e) approval and publication phase: EQF NCP approves the referencing of the qualification to one of the NQF levels and its publication in the Italian NQF Register of qualifications referenced to NQF/EQF. Following their inclusion in the NQF Register, the referenced qualifications to the NQF/EQF will be widely accessible for all levels of governance and all certificates issued within the NSCC will adopt common format and learning outcomes descriptions.

The referencing procedure of individual qualifications aims at verifying both the correctness of the levelling of the qualification with respect to the description in terms of learning outcomes, and, vice versa, the correctness of the description in terms of learning outcomes with respect to the level assigned, in a logic of transparency 2.0 (as defined in the context of the EQF Advisory Group) aimed at overcoming the one-dimensional approach of the level (adopted so far for referencing) and at achieving greater consistency and accessibility of the qualification in terms of learning outcomes.

The EQF NCP, following the referencing of the qualification to the NQF, may, if necessary, provides indications for promoting the progressive comparability of the qualification systems, in line with the indications of the EQF Recommendation.

For the purposes of a correct management of the referencing procedure to the NQF and to ensure its success, the EQF NCP adopts and periodically updates, on the basis of consolidated procedures, an "Operational guide to the preliminary analysis, description and referencing of qualifications to the NQF" addressed to all parties concerned, thus supporting them with appropriate information, training and operational elements, both for the definition and description of qualifications and for positioning them to the appropriate levels of the NQF.

In this perspective, the referencing procedure is to be understood as a process of learning and continuous improvement in the description of the qualification, on the basis of the common principles for qualification design, and for a better quality, comparability and interoperable use of the qualifications at national and European level.

In application of the provisions of the NSCC, the Public Competent Authorities, within their own regulations, may delegate the submission of the referencing request of one or more qualifications of their competence to another Public Competent Authority, to their own supervised bodies or to regional administrations or local authorities (application in delegated mode). Where appropriate for a progressive standardization of the qualifications, the Public Competent Authorities can submit single applications on the basis of the criteria and methods defined during the pilot phase.

In addition to the referencing proposal for the entire qualification, the Public Competent Authorities, when submitting their referencing request for a qualification under their responsibility may submit, referencing proposals for each competence of which the qualification is composed (micro-qualifications<sup>84</sup>), in order to be able to indicate the EQF/NQF level in the certifications attesting the possession of these competences, as required by the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities<sup>85</sup>, in order to promote a richer, more inclusive and personalized lifelong

<sup>83</sup> Pursuant to the LAW No. 241 of 7 August 1990.

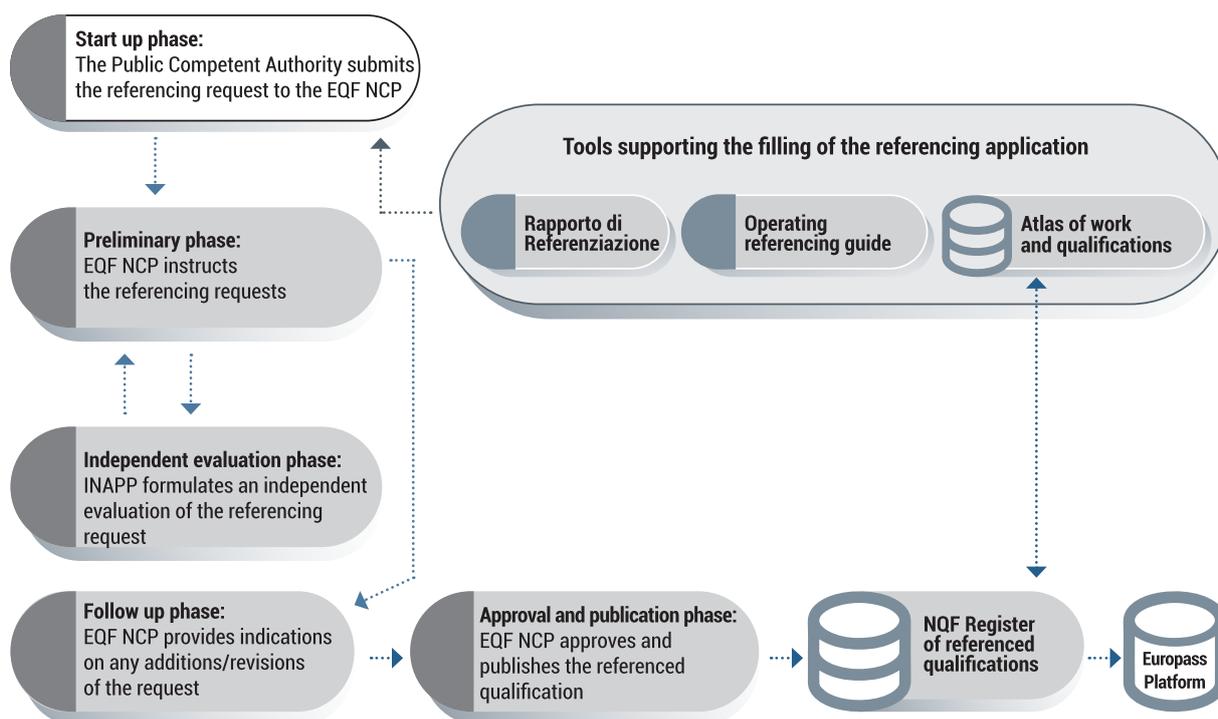
<sup>84</sup> In accordance with the national regulation and the European indications on micro-credentials, in this Report, micro-qualifications are qualifications composed of one or more competences, as part of a broader qualification, issued at the end of short-term and modular (also flexible and personalized) learning pathways.

<sup>85</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 5 January 2021.

learning public offer, also taking into account the opportunities offered by the services for identifying, validating and certifying competences.

On the basis of specific and proven needs, the referencing process can be speeded up and the Public Competent Authorities will be able to submit, according to the procedural specifications defined by the EQF NCP, a prior referencing request also for those qualifications whose formalization is still being finalized. Likewise, where made possible by the information available or by any provisions of the law, the referencing procedure can be carried out by adopting simplified procedures.

Figure 2.1 - Example chart of the referencing procedure of qualifications to NQF/EQF



## 2.2.5 - Referencing other qualifications typologies to the NQF

In addition to the qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authorities within the NSCC, qualifications falling within the definition of "international qualification"<sup>86</sup> may also be referenced. These qualifications are issued by awarding bodies other than the Public Competent Authorities, being understood that the referencing of such qualifications does not in any case involve the automatic acquisition of the legal value of a public deed (which is exclusively reserved for qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authorities).

The referencing procedure of international qualifications is subject to the following conditions:

1. the qualifications subject to the referencing request must refer to the above-mentioned definition of international qualifications and must demonstrate proven stability and diffusion of the offer;
2. the qualifications must be formally adopted, valid, in force and the related contents publicly and freely accessible without charges for the citizen;

<sup>86</sup> Definition referred to in the INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE, 8 January 2018. See Annex 4 - Glossary of legal definitions.

3. the qualifications must be described in terms of one or more competences in line with the descriptive criteria of the EQF, with the indications established in coherence with the legislative context of the NSCC, as well as with the dimensions and descriptors referred to in the NQF;
4. the definition and issue of qualifications must comply with the minimum service standards defined in coherence with the legislative context of the NSCC or, in the case of qualifications issued by awarding bodies other than the Public Competent Authorities, they must comply with codified and internationally recognized standards, qualitatively comparable with the minimum service standards defined in coherence with the legislative context of the NSCC and, in any case, based on publicly accessible, transparent and formalized quality assurance mechanisms.

International qualifications are not included in the National Repository but once referenced they are included in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and in the Italian Register of qualifications referenced to NQF in a separate section called "Qualifications referenced to NQF not included in the National Repository".

In addition to international qualifications, it will be referenced to NQF - also by means of a dedicated sub-articulation of level (para. 2.2.7) - those "qualifications issued in accordance with the law" by Public Competent Authorities, or by public Bodies (other than Public Competent Authorities). These qualifications permit specific functions or professional activities, though they are not meant as regulated professions (para. 3.5.1).

The minimum NQF levelling criteria of other qualifications typologies are the same as those described for the qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authorities within the NSCC.

The referencing procedure of this type of qualifications will be identified in the subsequent maintenance phase of this Report, also by considering the results of the debate over the international qualifications within the EQF Advisory Group<sup>87</sup>.

## 2.2.6 - Criteria for referencing the Italian qualifications to the NQF

Both phases of the referencing process to NQF (Phase 1 and Phase 2 referred to in par. 2.2.4) are carried out starting from the two main minimum criteria established by the Decree establishing the NQF:

- 1) **Minimum general criteria for the inclusion of the qualification in the NQF** that refer to the preliminary conditions for referencing and making the document classifiable as NSCC qualification, on the basis of the following requirements:
  - i. the qualifications must be included in repositories, codified at national, regional or Autonomous Province level, publicly recognized and fulfilling the following minimum standards: a) identification of the Public Competent Authority; b) identification of the qualifications and related competences that make up the repository; c) referencing of the qualifications, where applicable, to the statistical reference codes of economic activities (ATECO) and the nomenclature and classification of occupations (CP ISTAT), in compliance with the rules of the national statistical system;
  - ii. the qualifications must be expressed in terms of one or more competences in line with the descriptive criteria of the EQF, with the indications established in coherence with the legislative context of the NSCC, as well as with the dimensions and descriptors referred to in the NQF;
  - iii. the qualifications must be included within a regulatory framework adopted in accordance with the minimum service standards and the essential levels of performance defined in coherence with the legislative context of the NSCC.

<sup>87</sup> Note EQF AG 50-3 *Final report of the project group on the levelling of international qualifications and the information exchange between National Qualification Frameworks or systems that have been referenced to the EQF*, Brussels, 28 May 2019.

**2) Minimum criteria for positioning the qualification at the NQF levels** that refer to the positioning of the qualification at one of the eight levels of the NQF, given by a reading of the learning outcomes of the qualification<sup>88</sup>, and on the basis of the comparison and consistency:

- i. between the descriptive elements of the qualification and the dimensions and descriptors defined for the structure of the national framework;
- ii. between the descriptive elements of the qualification and the qualifications already included in the NQF through the first referencing phase and the first Italian Referencing Report;
- iii. among the descriptive elements of the qualification and the indications on the level defined by current legislative standards;
- iv. between the descriptive elements of the qualification and the results of the comparison at national, European or international level (for example, on the positioning of similar qualifications, in the case of types of qualifications common to several Countries).

The levelling of the qualifications to the NQF is determined, in any case, as a result of a balancing process of the descriptive elements of the qualification to be referenced, by also considering information on the entry-level competence requirements and on the pathways duration range for the achievement of the qualification.

In continuity with the first referencing phase, the comparative and coherent evaluation bring to two types of level positioning:

- a) "*full fit*" positioning, when the outcome of the analysis gives rise to a unique referencing of the qualification at a specific level of the NQF;
- b) "*best fit*" positioning, when the outcome of the analysis does not reach a unique referencing of the qualification at a specific level of the NQF, and the positioning is determined on the principle of the best possible position based on the qualitative prevalence criterion, i.e., by attributing the most recurrent or elective level to the qualification (as, for example, in cases where the qualification presents competences with different levels).

With particular regard to Phase 1 of the referencing process (see par. 2.2.4), of which this Report is the main result, the referencing of the regional vocational training system (see par. 3.3), represents both an innovative aspect compared to the first referencing phase (2013) and a concrete example of the application of the aforementioned referencing criteria. Box 2.1 shows the main methodological steps and some examples of individual qualifications of this subsystem and related typologies of qualifications assumed for referencing.

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<sup>88</sup> Taking into consideration the different sources available such as: the repositories of each subsystem; the results of the first referencing phase; the educational, cultural and professional profile of the system, in terms of what the student should know and be able to do at the end of the learning path; the different typologies of qualification of each subsystem; samples of individual qualifications which are part of the same subsystem.

### Box 2.1 - Referencing to NQF/EQF of the regional vocational training subsystem

In order to referencing the regional VET subsystem, two preliminary steps were necessary:

- I. the identification, starting from a comparative analysis of the qualifications contained in the Atlas of Work, of three macro-areas (Operating Area, Technical Area, Higher training Area) of qualifications typologies within the regional VET subsystem, in order to create 3 homogeneous clusters in relation to the NQF dimensions and descriptors;
- II. the positioning at the NQF levels of the qualifications typologies of the three macro areas abovementioned, also determining their respective verticalization progressions from one qualification type to another belonging to the next NQF level, taking into consideration both the specific cultural and professional identities of the vocational training subsystem and the need of comparability, within the same NQF level, among the qualification typologies belonging to the different subsystems.

This involved a careful comparative analysis, carried out through a sample examination of the learning outcomes of the individual qualifications issued by the regional vocational training subsystem and which concerned: the reference repertories; the results of the first referencing phase; the different typologies of qualification; the European NQFs and the positioning of vocational training qualifications similar to those taken into consideration; access requirements; the duration of the courses for the achievement of the qualification and the opportunities for the continuation of study.

This complex work of analyzing the different sources and balancing the different descriptive elements of the qualification, as well as the in-depth analysis and comparison carried out directly with the Public Competent Authorities, have made it possible, for example, to determine the positioning of the regional Higher vocational training qualifications to level 6 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 4, and to level 7 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 3 (see para.3.3), considering the respectively access requirements: qualifications of minimum NQF/EQF 4.2 or 4.4 level (or an appropriate entry level of competences ascertained through specific procedures of identifying or re-training of competences).

In this regard, among the qualifications examined, some exemplary cases are reported below with their short description in terms of learning outcomes that confirmed the positioning of the regional higher vocational training qualifications:

- **DIRECTOR** is able to implement the idea and the realization of a live show or an audiovisual work by coordinating the technical and artistic work of a group of professionals (artists, technicians and workers) who participate in the conception and realization of the work.
- **FASHION DESIGNER AND PLANNER** autonomously designs, based on the observation of trends and on his/her own creativity, ideas for new clothing and accessories. Through manual and computer-assisted drawing techniques, he/she takes care of the sketch and of the definition of the fashion collection, of the pattern and its prototype, as well as of the requirements for putting into production.
- **SCREENWRITER** is able to conceive and write a text for any fictional product or audiovisual documentary (cinema, television, web), at any level of development (concept, subject, treatment, lineup, script, script revision), by collaborating with the writing team and with the other professionals involved. He/she is also able to develop a dramaturgical writing for a live or radio show.
- **PROFESSIONAL MASTER** possesses entrepreneurial and management knowledge and skills (e.g. economic and financial management of the production unit, planning and management of procurement, reading, understanding and evaluation of the progress and results of the accounting and financial management; organizational management, identification of needs and development of personnel performance; negotiation of organizational solutions, motivation for improvement and new performances), pedagogical-training skills (e.g. reception and training accompaniment of apprentices, performance evaluation and development of the professionalism of collaborators); theoretical skills and professional practices (conception, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of products/services, also by use of innovative materials/technologies/solutions, in the light of market developments or its possible evolutions), necessary to carry out responsibility of assignments and autonomous management of a company, and for qualifying the training of young collaborators.

The qualifications referenced to the NQF for which the association with the statistical reference codes (ATECO and CP ISTAT) is not applicable, are categorized in the National Repository with the wording "Qualifications of General education and training". The classification of this category of qualifications will be supported by the future and progressive expansion of the NQF through the definition of national reference frameworks of key competences, coherent or otherwise correlated with:

- the European sectoral frameworks, such as: the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)<sup>89</sup>; the European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp)<sup>90</sup>; the European e-Competence Framework (e-CF)<sup>91</sup>; the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp)<sup>92</sup>;

<sup>89</sup> EUROPEAN COUNCIL (2001), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/home> and <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/sites/default/files/cefr-en.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017).

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.ecompetences.eu/it/>

<sup>92</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018).

- the European Recommendation on Key competences of 2018<sup>93</sup>;
- the international standards and classifications, such as: the ESCO taxonomies and, in particular, that of competences<sup>94</sup>, the ISCED classifications and in particular the ISCED-F<sup>95</sup>, the frameworks for the assessment of competences underlying the international OECD surveys and in particular those of *literacy* and *numeracy* of the PIAAC survey<sup>96</sup> and of *reading, mathematics* and *science* of the PISA survey<sup>97</sup>.

### 2.2.7 - Criteria for determining the internal sub-articulations of each NQF level

As anticipated in paragraph 2.2.3, the NQF provides for internal sub-articulations of each level for distinguishing further specificities of the qualifications belonging to the same level. However, these sub-articulations are not based on distinctive descriptors and sub-descriptors that would make the NQF taxonomy excessively complex and potentially confusing. Therefore, also in order to maintain a more direct comparability between the EQF and NQF frameworks, the structural features of the levels of the national framework remains articulated on eight levels. The sub-articulations, therefore, involving distinctive criteria of qualifications at national level, do not affect the referencing of the NQF to EQF, which remains anchored to the above-mentioned eight levels.

The criterion of the sub-articulation is based on additional qualitative information, aimed at distinguishing:

- qualifications that allow direct access to next-level learning pathways versus qualifications that do not allow any direct access to next-level learning pathways;
- vocational training and specializing qualifications that respectively allow or do not allow access to next-level learning pathways.

This criterion takes up the logic of the *International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED*, created by UNESCO as a tool for statistical purposes for the organization of education systems of the different countries and for their comparison at the international level (Eurostat, OECD etc.), also in order to facilitate the connection between the referencing levels of the NQF/EQF and the ISCED 2011 classifications of titles and qualifications (ISCED-P and ISCED-A<sup>98</sup>).

In particular, as shown in Table 2.5, there are four sub-articulations of level (1-4) that originate from the application of this criterion, starting from the descriptors of the ISCED-A classification indicating whether a given qualification allows or does not allow access to the next-level learning pathways.

The difference between “qualifications” (sub-articulation 1 and 2) and “vocational training and specializing qualifications” (sub-articulation 3 and 4) is related to a differentiation between qualifications of the General Education and those more vocational-addressed. As explained in the forward of the present Report, the NQF provides both elements that allow comparability among qualifications of different subsystems, and elements highlighting the different identities of each subsystems referring to purposes, targets groups, characteristics of the offer and the educational, cultural and professional features of the pathways.

<sup>93</sup> (EU) RECOMMENDATION on Key competences of 22 May 2018.

<sup>94</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home?resetLanguage=true&newLanguage=it>

<sup>95</sup> UNESCO (2014) and UNESCO (2015).

<sup>96</sup> OECD (2019) and <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>

<sup>97</sup> OECD (2020) and <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

<sup>98</sup> UNESCO (2012).

In addition, two further sub-articulations of level are envisaged: sub-articulation of level 0 for micro qualifications<sup>99</sup> composed of one or more constitutive competences of broader qualifications, and sub-articulation of level 5 for the international qualifications.

Table 2.5 - NQF sub-articulations of level

SUB-ARTICULATION OF LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
0	Micro qualification composed of one or more competences of a broader qualification.
1	Qualification that does not allow direct access to next-level formal learning pathways.
2	Qualification that allows direct access to next-level formal learning pathways.
3	Specializing qualifications of a type 1 or 2 qualification or vocational training qualifications, which do not allow direct access to next-level formal learning pathways.
4	Specializing qualifications of a type 1 or 2 qualification or vocational training qualifications, which allow direct access to next-level formal learning pathways.
5	International qualifications not included in the National Repository.

For the purposes of referencing all types of qualifications issued in Italy, the sub-articulations of level constitute the second digit of each of the eight levels of the NQF. The criterion of the sub-articulations of the NQF levels is to be considered conventionally descriptive of the regulatory characteristics of the qualification and not prescriptive with respect to the real opportunities for access by individuals to the learning pathways. For example, in the context of their own regulatory systems and in compliance with current legislation, the Public Competent Authorities can determine personalised conditions for access the pathways, thus starting from the validation of the competences acquired in different contexts and from the recognition of credits that, in some cases, may replace the possession of the qualification for access to the pathway.

Finally, about qualifications that allow direct access to next-level learning pathways, in some cases the continuity or consistency of the profile or discipline can also be required for the access.

### 2.2.8 - Coding criteria for qualifications referenced to the NQF

When reporting the NQF level of referencing, the Public Competent Authorities comply with the standard code of double digit wherein the first digit indicates the NQF level and the second digit indicates the relative sub-articulation of level. In addition, the initials IT, identifying the Country, are indicated as recommended and not binding, and, if the Public Competent Authorities implement the digitalization procedures of the qualifications (such as, for example, open badges and digital qualifications), the relative graphic layout of reference for the iconization of the NQF level is displayed as shown in Table 2.6.

The table also shows the NQF logo containing the QR Code for the permanent link to the EQF NCP institutional website. The NQF logo is consistent with the interactive *visual identity* of the NQF (Figure 2.4 in paragraph 3.7), aimed at the broader dissemination of the eight levels descriptors, of the different systems and related types of qualifications and of the Public Competent Authorities, and it has five colour variants:

- a blue monochromatic variant identifying the systems and qualifications issued in the field of primary, secondary and tertiary education, for the exclusive and optional use of the Ministry of

<sup>99</sup> See para. 2.2.4

Education and the Ministry of University and Research also in the context of certifications or in digitization of qualifications;

- a green monochromatic variant identifying the systems and qualifications issued in the context of regional vocational training, for the exclusive and optional use of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, also in the context of certifications or in the digitization of qualifications;
- a yellow monochromatic variant identifying the system and qualifications issued in the context of adult education, for the exclusive and optional use of the Ministry of Education and Merit, also in the context of certifications or in the digitization of qualifications;
- a red monochromatic variant identifying the systems and qualifications issued within the regulated professions, for the exclusive and optional use of the respective competent Authorities, also in the context of certifications or in the digitization of qualifications;
- a multi-colour variant, for the exclusive use of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the EQF NCP.

On the basis of the NQF decree, all the certificates issued within the NSCC indicate the NQF/EQF level of the qualification, according to the coding criteria referred to in this paragraph that will be made them visible and comparable to the administrations, organizations and interested parties, and to end users (learners and employers).

The NQF logo in all colour variants will be registered by the EQF NCP and the rules of use defined in a manual for the use by Public Competent Authorities.

Table 2.6 - Coding of qualifications referenced to the NQF

NQF levels and recurrent sub-articulations	EQF correspondence	Graphic layout of iconization	NQF Italy logo*
IT.1.0 IT 1.1 IT 1.2	1		<p><i>The logo and the QR Code can also be used separately in all colour variants</i></p> 
IT.2.0 IT 2.1 IT 2.2 IT 2.4	2		
IT.3.0 IT 3.2 IT 3.4	3		
IT.4.0 IT 4.1 IT 4.2 IT 4.4	4		
IT.5.0 IT 5.4	5		
IT.6.0 IT 6.2 IT 6.4	6		
IT.7.0 IT 7.2 IT 7.3	7		
IT 8.0 IT 8.1 IT 8.3	8		

## 2.2.9 - The information systems supporting the implementation of the NQF and the referencing of Italian qualifications

The implementation process of the NQF and the start of the referencing procedure of the Italian qualifications to EQF/NQF are made possible thanks to the implementation of two information infrastructures instrumental to the organization of the National Repository to promote the transparency, accessibility, spendability and portability of qualifications and competences in the different learning contexts both in Italy and in Europe. These are:

- a) **the Atlas of Work and Qualifications:** a classification and information tool, created and managed by INAPP, to support the development of the National Repository, in order to systematise the information and correlate, where possible, the competences of the qualifications to the work activities and processes and economic sectors. The Atlas provides a detailed mapping of the world of work and of the qualifications issued under the NSCC. It provides standardized references for skills needs analysis, skill gap analysis and orientation; supports the services for the identification, validation and certification of competences; and supports the qualification design. The Atlas of Work is organized into three sections (Atlas of Work, Atlas and Qualifications and Atlas and Professions) and based on two ordering tools: the NQF identifying the different levels of complexity of the qualifications; the Classification of the economic-professional sectors (consisting of the national statistical ATECO and CP classifications) representing the common technical reference for the description of the contents of work and professions and for promoting a better correspondence of qualifications to the labour market. While the statistical classifications are the stable ordering criterion over time, the descriptive sequences of the work contents represent the dynamic ordering criterion, since they are subjected to permanent maintenance (annually) coordinated by INAPP, in which all public and private stakeholders representing a specific professional economic sector (according to the so-called wiki approach) can participate. The Atlas of Work and Qualifications is interoperable with the main statistical sources and international, national and territorial databases, since the codes of the ATECO and CP Classifications are associated with the descriptive sequences of the contents of work and professions. The interoperability of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications is further guaranteed through the progressive connection with the classifications of the ESCO Program for the mobility of workers within the EURES network;
- b) The **Italian Register of qualifications referenced to EQF/NQF (NQF Register):** a management application created and managed by ANPAL to support the referencing procedure of qualifications to NQF described in para. 2.2.4. The NQF Register is implemented by the whole referencing applications and by all Italian qualifications referenced to NQF. The applications of the Public Competent Authorities are compiled starting from the information present in the repositories included in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications; once approved, the referenced qualifications become part of the NQF Register. Each qualification will be described starting from the information provided by the data fields of Annex VI of the 2017 EQF Recommendation, as well as the information of their related regulation in accordance with the criteria of Annexes IV and V. The Register of qualifications referenced to EQF/NQF is interoperable with national databases and freely accessible for public consultation and data download. The Register will, therefore, have a double function: a "back office" function, for managing the referencing procedure of individual qualifications, by collecting all useful information referred to in Annexes IV, V and VI of the EQF Recommendation; a "front office" function in order to disseminate and make transparent such information at national and international level. Furthermore, as the Register is developed in full compliance with the technical and technological standards defined at European level for the Europass Portal and with the classifications of the ESCO Program, it is not only the information base to promote greater use and quality of the Europass transparency documents and for supporting the comparability with the referenced qualifications of other Countries adopting the EQF, it is also an essential tool for the progressive implementation, at national level, of all sections of the Europass Portal, including information relating to learning opportunities, job vacancies, training, identification, validation and certification of competences services and the Digitally-signed-credentials framework.

The information tools described above are a constitutive and integral part of the Single Informative System of labour market policies - SIU (see para. 1.1) and of the related functions (in the cycle of planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of policies), with particular reference to the implementation of the components relating to training (training information system and the national register of accredited bodies for vocational training activities), for the purpose of coordinating information systems and the release of the Worker's Electronic Booklet.

### **2.2.10 - The governance of the NQF**

The governance of the NQF in Italy is distributed on different levels and has a wide and articulated structure of public administrations and qualification systems.

The implementation of the NQF in Italy is attributed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which adopts the regulatory provisions, together with the Ministry of Education and Merit and the Ministry of University and Research, supervises the application of rules and coordinates the government sites and forums with the economic and social partnership.

The EQF NCP is responsible for the technical and scientific implementation of the NQF, such as: periodic updating of the Referencing Report; the management of the referencing procedure of Italian qualifications to the EQF (see para. 2.4), monitoring, evaluation and maintenance of the framework. The EQF NCP periodically informs the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies on the progress of activities related to the referencing process of qualifications to NQF. INAPP is assigned the role of independent authority for guaranteeing the quality and reliability of the referencing of Italian qualifications to the EQF.

The Public Competent Authorities are responsible for their qualification repositories and for the related quality assurance systems, in compliance with the NSCC.

In order to ensure convergent and integrated methods and phases, the inter-institutional supervision, discussion and coordination sites for the implementation of the NQF coincide with those of the NSCC, as well as with the governance and maintenance of the NQFRQ, and are:

- the Technical Group<sup>100</sup>, at a technical and methodological preliminary level of governance;
- the National Technical Committee<sup>101</sup> representing all the Public Competent Authorities issuing qualifications within the NSCC, with functions of guiding, ratifying, monitoring, evaluating and verifying the essential levels of performance;
- the Permanent Conference for the relations between State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano (State-Regions Conference), which approves by agreement the updated referencing report to be adopted by the Interministerial Decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies.

For the same reasons, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the NQF are also an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation that is carried out within the NSCC<sup>102</sup>.

The Department of European Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers is also present within the Technical Group and the National Technical Committee as authority coordinating the implementation process in Italy of Directive 2005/36/EC<sup>103</sup> that, in the context of the NSCC, concerns the qualifications of regulated professions.

Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education and Merit and the Ministry of University and Research are present in the forums for discussion and technical coordination at EU level, such as the EQF Advisory Group, also through experts of the EQF NCP.

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<sup>100</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 30 June 2015, Art. 9 integrated by the INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE OF 5 January 2021, Art. 4

<sup>101</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013, Art. 3.

<sup>102</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013, Art. 9 and INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE OF 5 January 2021, Art. 4.

<sup>103</sup> It was transposed in Italy with LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 206 of 9 November 2007, as amended.

At national, regional or sectoral level, the Public Competent Authorities involve the economic and social partners in the definition and updating of their respective qualification systems. A representation of the economic and social partners also participates in the Apprenticeship Technical Board which also acts as advisory group for the implementation of the dual system in Italy. Economic and social partners are periodically involved and consulted in the implementation of the NSCC and NQF: they actively participate in the update of the National Repository through the maintenance of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications, as well as in the updating process of the Referencing Report by participating in the national consultation and on occasion of the presentation of the Report to the Economic and Social partners led by the Ministry of Labour<sup>104</sup>.

### **2.2.11 - The quality assurance of the referencing process and the national quality assurance systems in education and training**

In line with the provisions of the NQF Decree, and on the basis of the inclusion and positioning criteria described in par. 2.2.6, the quality assurance of the referencing process and of the inclusion of individual qualifications in the Italian Register is ensured by the supporting role played by EQF NCP and by INAPP as independent evaluator. INAPP is also the national EQAVET reference point. The two institutes guarantee a double level of evaluation:

- internal evaluation performed by the EQF NCP in charge of: the maintenance and periodic update of the referencing report (referred to in para. 2.2.12.); the procedure for referencing individual qualifications to NQF/EQF (see para. 2.2.4) and the implementation of the Italian Register of referenced qualifications; the development and periodic update of the operational guide for referencing and for the qualification design; the monitoring, evaluation and maintenance of the NQF; periodic reporting to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies on the progress of the referencing process of qualifications to NQF/EQF and on the activities carried out within the EQF Advisory Group; the communication and dissemination activities in order to promote knowledge on the EQF, NQF and the Italian referencing process.
- external evaluation performed by INAPP which, as independent authority, guarantees the quality and reliability of the referencing process (the periodic update and maintenance of the referencing report) and the procedure for referencing individual qualifications to NQF/EQF by providing an independent evaluation on the referencing application. INAPP also makes available the information on the qualifications published in the Atlas of work and qualifications (interoperable with the Italian Register of referenced qualifications). In addition, INAPP coordinates, on an annual basis, the maintenance of the Atlas by involving all public and private actors and the social partners representing the different economic-professional sectors.

The quality assurance of each qualifications sub-system of the NSCC is ensured as follows<sup>105</sup>.

The National institute for the evaluation of the education system - INVALSI<sup>106</sup> is responsible for the National Evaluation System<sup>107</sup>, which implements the quality assurance process in school education, from the primary to the upper secondary level<sup>108</sup>.

The evaluation process consists of four phases: self-evaluation of schools (Self-evaluation Report - RAV), external evaluation of schools, improvement actions and public accountability of schools. External evaluation also includes the external evaluation of students' learning achievements. The evaluation procedures develop in a three-year period. In addition, regulations on public administration require that

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<sup>104</sup> The presentation took place on 15 March 2022.

<sup>105</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-33\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-33_en) of 26 January 2022.

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/index.php>

<sup>107</sup> <https://snv.pubblica.istruzione.it/snv-portale-web/public/scuole/normativa>

<sup>108</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 5 of 9 febbraio 2012, Art. 51 converted with amendments by Law No. 35 of 4 April 2012.

schools develop performance management and improvement processes. This includes also awarding systems for best performers<sup>109</sup>.

From school year 2019/2020 the National Evaluation System also involves the adult education system organized at Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIAs. In 2019, INVALSI has started, in strict collaboration with the National network of Regional Research, Experimentation and Development Centres of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CRRS&S<sup>110</sup>, their first evaluation by drawing up a self-evaluation report specific for this type of institution (RAV-CPIA<sup>111</sup>) according to the format already used by all I and II cycle schools, and adapted to the reality and peculiarities of the CPIA.

Quality assurance in higher education is guaranteed through both internal and external evaluation<sup>112</sup> in compliance with the main European directives. The internal evaluation is carried out by the 'Evaluation centres' and by other specific bodies of each university. Starting from 2012<sup>113</sup>, the Government regulated the procedures for the accreditation and evaluation of university courses and settings through: the introduction of the initial and recurrent evaluation of university settings and courses; the introduction of an evaluation system and a system for assuring quality, efficiency and effectiveness of didactic and research; empowerment of the system of self-evaluation of the quality and efficiency of teaching and research activities. The external evaluation is under the responsibility of the autonomous National Agency for the evaluation of the university and research system - ANVUR<sup>114</sup>, the national agency for quality assurance as foreseen by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)<sup>115</sup>, in compliance with the evaluation practices at international level and according to principles of autonomy, equity, transparency, publicity of documents. In 2012, in the document 'Self-evaluation, recurrent evaluation and accreditation of the Italian university system'- AVA<sup>116</sup>, ANVUR defined the model of Quality assurance of universities and research institutes. The AVA System is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) that are drawn up by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). A quality assurance system for the Higher education for fine arts, music and dance system - AFAM is, at present, under development<sup>117</sup>

In addition, other bodies contribute to the quality assurance process for the respective areas of competence, supporting the Public Competent Authorities in the context of their respective qualification systems, such as:

- the National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Innovative Research - INDIRE<sup>118</sup> - for the first and second cycle of the education and training system, post-secondary higher technical education and training and non-academic tertiary training (the Higher Technological Institutes);
- the Information Centre on Mobility and Academic Equivalences - CIMEA<sup>119</sup> (also as the official Italian centre of the ENIC-NARIC network) for the academic tertiary education system;
- the national network of Regional Research, Experimentation and Development Centres of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CRRS&S - for the adult education system.

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<sup>109</sup> Law No. 150 of 27 October 2009.

<sup>110</sup> <https://miur.gov.it/i-centri-regionali-di-ricerca-sperimentazione-e-sviluppo>

<sup>111</sup> <https://snv.pubblica.istruzione.it/snv-portale-web/public/ravCPIA/ravCPIA>

<sup>112</sup> LAW No. 240 of 30 December 2010.

<sup>113</sup> DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 27 gennaio 2012, n.19.

<sup>114</sup> <https://www.anvur.it/>

<sup>115</sup> In 2018 ANVUR has been externally assessed by ENQA. The assessment and the relative documentation are available on: <https://www.enqa.eu/review-database/external-review-report-of-anvur/>.

<sup>116</sup> Ministerial Decree No. 6 of 7 January 2019.

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.anvur.it/news/gruppo-di-lavoro-internazionale-sulla-valutazione-e-lassicurazione-della-qualita-nel-settore-afam/>

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.indire.it/>

<sup>119</sup> <http://www.cimea.it/it/index.aspx>

The main tool for ensuring the quality of the learning offer for the regional vocational training systems is represented by the accreditation of the training institutions<sup>120</sup> that provides for the possession by these institutions of a number of requirements defined by each Region and Autonomous Provinces in reference to criteria for quality assurance established at national level also in line with the European Reference Framework for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)<sup>121</sup>.

In the period 2021 - 2027, the role of EQAVET<sup>122</sup> national Reference Point was confirmed, as abovementioned, to INAPP<sup>123</sup>, whose task is to support:

- the implementation of the European reference framework for the quality assurance of education and vocational training;
- the dissemination of technical and scientific documentation of procedures and tools to support the culture of quality of the learning offer;
- the implementation of the National Plan for the quality assurance in education and training - NPQ (2017)<sup>124</sup>.

In particular, the implementation of the National Plan for the quality assurance in education and training (NPQ), in application of the EQAVET European Framework and in line with Annex IV of the EQF Recommendation, is characterized in Italy by the involvement of multiple institutional actors at national and regional level and the important role of the social partners. While sharing the aims and advantages related to the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation, the Ministries of Labour, Education and Universities and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces have agreed on the opportunity to identify a common reference framework for quality assurance in the education and training system, which guarantees homogeneous choices and tools, while also leaving the decisions on further developments and territorial changes to the autonomy of the various stakeholders. The objective of the National Plan for quality assurance is to reduce and prevent the early school leaving and drop-out through the continuous improvement of the training offer, the promotion of a culture of quality systems, and the implementation of procedures and tools to ensure the quality of the training pathways provided. To this end, the adoption of many of the indicators suggested by the EQAVET Recommendation is envisaged, also enhancing the using of methods such as qualitative evaluation and peer learning activities, able to taking into consideration the complexity of the learning activities.

<sup>120</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE No. 166 of 25 May 2001, and UNDERSTANDING IN THE STATE/REGION CONFERENCE of 20 March 2008.

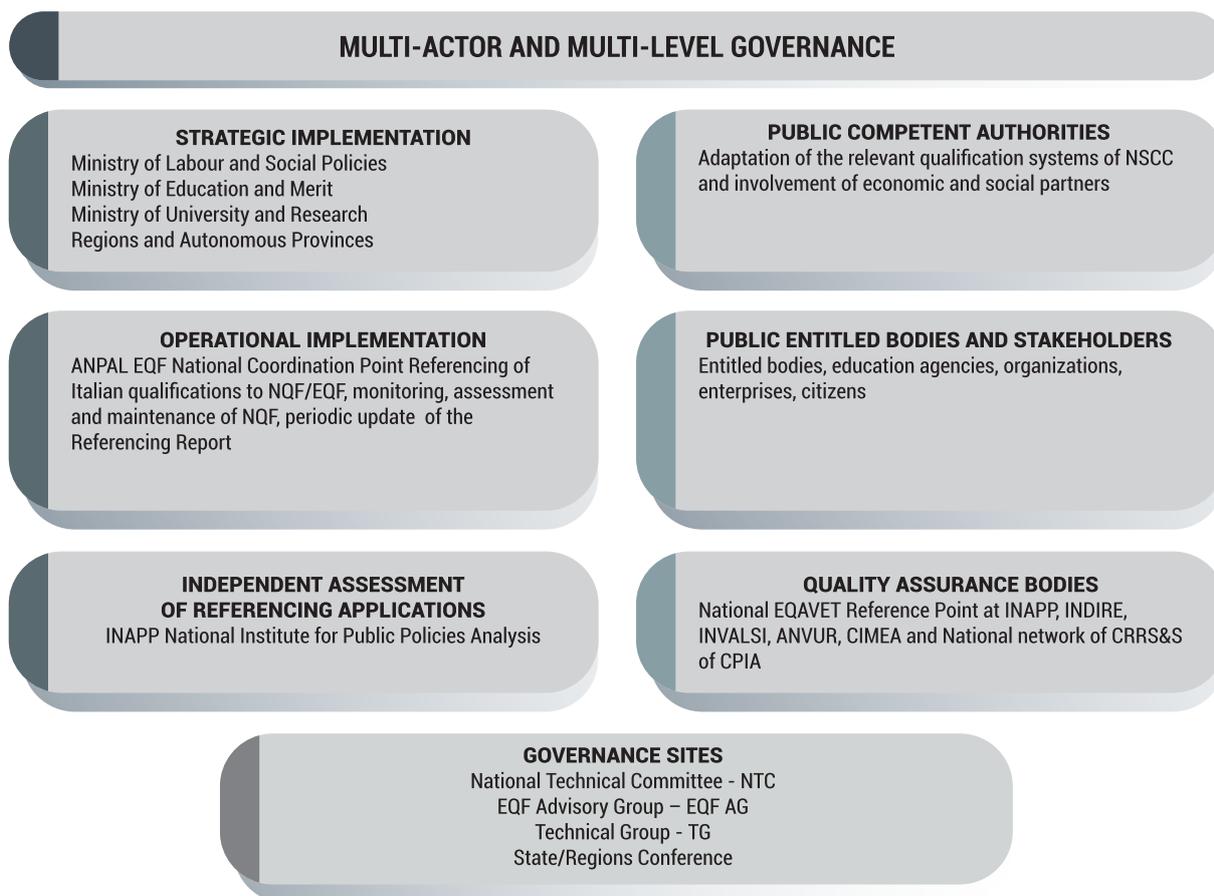
<sup>121</sup> See (EU) EQAVET RECOMMENDATION of 18 June 2009 replaced by the (EU) RECOMMENDATION regarding the education and vocational training (EVT) for sustainable competitiveness, social equality and resilience, of 24 November 2020.

<sup>122</sup> <https://inapp.org/it/eqavet>

<sup>123</sup> Assignment entrusted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and by Ministry of Education.

<sup>124</sup> MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICIES, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF THE UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH, REGIONS AND AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES (2017). The National Plan for Quality Assurance of the Education and Training System (NPQ) was first approved in 2012 to improve the quality level of education and training systems, as well as to monitor their progress in response to the EQAVET Recommendation of June 2009. The Plan, revised and updated in 2017 by the Ministries of Labour and Education, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, the Social Partners and the education and training institutions (part of the Board of the National Reference Point for the quality assurance of Education and Training), was approved on 21 December 2017 by the State/Regions Conference.

Figure 2.2 - The Governance of the NQF - Ministry of Education con Ministry of Education and Merit



## 2.2.12 - The NQF updating process

The drafting of the Italian Referencing Report of qualifications to EQF is entrusted to the EQF NCP. Specifically, the dynamic nature of NQFs, as also emerges from the 2017 EQF Recommendation, suggests distinguishing two procedures for periodic review of the Report:

- a) **the updating procedure** concerning the constructive components of the NQF, such as the structure, implementation rules and governance of the NQF;
- b) **the maintenance procedure** concerning the aspects of adaptation to any regulatory, technical and methodological innovation, or the revision in the positioning of qualifications systems to NQF/EQF, not aimed at modifying the system and the constructive components of the NQF, rather at updating or improving their application.

The two procedures for reviewing the Report envisage two different procedures in relation to the extent of the changes introduced.

As shown in Table 2.3, the **updating procedure** involves the following steps:

- 1) EQF NCP develops, in agreement with INAPP, the technical proposal for updating the Referencing Report and forwards it to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies;
- 2) EQF NCP presents the technical proposal for updating the Referencing Report to the Technical Group for the purposes of consultation, shared revision and approval;
- 3) once approved by the Technical Group, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies submits the technical proposal to the National Technical Committee for the purpose of launching the public consultation at national and international level;
- 4) the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies presents the technical proposal for updating the Referencing Report to the economic and social partners;
- 5) EQF NCP launches the national consultation and involves at least two international experts from two different Countries for the international consultation;
- 6) EQF NCP submits the technical proposal to EQF Advisory Group;
- 7) based on the findings of the national and international consultation, the EQF NCP, in agreement with INAPP, implements a review of the proposal and forwards it to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies;
- 8) the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, after the approval by the National Technical Committee, proceeds with the formalization of the Referencing Report through an Agreement signed in the Permanent State-Regions Conference, and subsequent adoption by Decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies in agreement with the Minister of Education and Merit and the Minister of University and Research.
- 9) the EQF NCP forwards the final version of the updated referencing report to the EQF *Advisory Group* for publication on the Europass Portal.

The **maintenance procedure**, on the other hand, involves the following procedure:

- 1) the EQF NCP, in conjunction with INAPP, develops a technical proposal for the maintenance of the Referencing Report that is submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies;
- 2) the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies submits the technical maintenance proposal of the Referencing Report to the Technical Group for supervision and approval;
- 3) the technical proposal for the maintenance of the Referencing Report, approved by the Technical Group, is adopted by Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, after informing the National Technical Committee.

The EQF NCP guarantees an adequate return of the results of the public consultations of the updating processes of the Referencing Report and makes available, on its institutional website, the current version of the Referencing Report both in Italian and English, as well as the archive of all the versions. The EQF NCP promptly uploads the current version of the Referencing Report in Italian and English on

the Europass Portal of the European Commission and in any case no later than six months from the date of formalization of the last revision, together with any useful information.

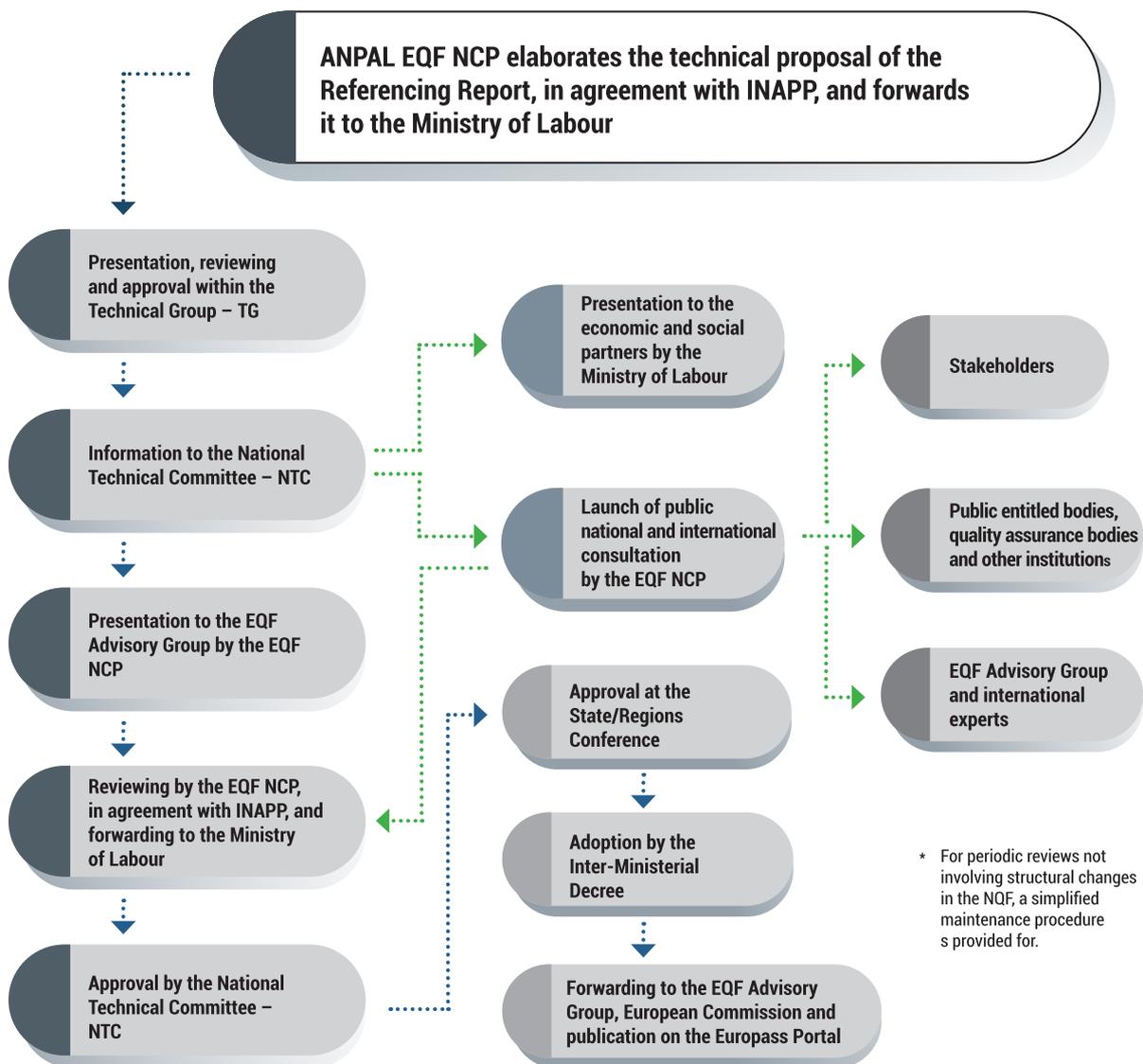
The classification of the versions of the Referencing Report takes place according to the double numerical coding corresponding to the revision year (yyyy) respectively:

- for the updating procedure: "Update: yyyy";
- for the maintenance procedure: "Maintenance: yyyy".

The Referencing Report will, therefore, bear in the title the complete wording of:

"Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework – Update: yyyy - Maintenance: yyyy".

Figure 2.3 - The Governance of the NQF - Updating procedure\*



## 2.3 - Compliance with the ten criteria for referencing to the EQF

While complying with the structure and functioning of the EQF Framework, the NQF adopts the ten criteria supporting the referencing procedures, as described in Annex III of the EQF Recommendation. The criteria are the guiding principles that make it possible to compare national qualifications frameworks or systems, through the EQF, with a view to mutual trust for the transparency and usability of the qualifications.

In line with the first phase of the referencing process, the ten guiding criteria are fully met. Furthermore, following the technical and regulatory progresses introduced after the first referencing phase and as a result of the establishment of the NQF and the related referencing procedure, the explanations supporting of the fulfilment of the ten criteria are significantly strengthened.

Table 2.7 summarizes, for each criterion, the explanations for compliance, thus making explicit the specific references to the paragraphs of the Report.

Table 2.7 - Compliance with the 10 criteria and procedures for referencing the NQF to the EQF.

**Criterion 1: The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.**

As explained in paragraphs 2.2.10-2.2.12 of this Report, the responsibilities and legal competences of all relevant national bodies that participate in the referencing process as well as the related institutional governance bodies are clearly defined at the regulatory level and made public. The authorities responsible for their respective qualification systems (Public Competent Authorities) are indicated in the referencing tables included in Chapter 3 of this Report.

The governance of the NQF is a multi-actor and multi-level governance wherein the responsibility of the single systems is attributed to the Public Competent Authorities responsible for the respective qualifications and quality assurance systems and that, at national, regional or sectoral level, involve the economic and social partners in the various processes concerning the definition and updating of the respective qualification systems and the implementation of the NSCC and the NQF. The implementation of the NQF is defined at a regulatory level and attributed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Ministry of Education and Merit and the Ministry of University and Research. The technical- scientific implementation functions are instead attributed to the EQF NCP, while the INAPP plays the role of independent authority to guarantee the quality and reliability of the referencing procedure. The inter-institutional comparison and coordination centres coincide with those of the NSCC (the Technical Group, the National Technical Committee and the State-Regions Conference).

**Criterion 2: There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.3 of this Report and defined at the regulatory level, the structure of the NQF is developed, in coherence, continuity and clear and direct correlation with that of the EQF, in a common reference grid comprising eight levels, expressed in the form of learning outcomes, thus corresponding to increasing levels of competences and complexity. Each of the eight levels of the NQF has a correspondence in the homologous level of the EQF (see Table 2.3). Compared to the EQF, the NQF expands the set of descriptors, thus explaining, adapting and integrating those present in the EQF Recommendation, with additional level sub-domains that aim at enriching the European taxonomy and the features of each level. Finally, the definitions of the NQF in Annex 4 of this Report are fully consistent with the definitions in Annex I of the Recommendation.

**Criterion 3: The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.3 of this Report and defined at the regulatory level, the NQF and the descriptive criteria of the related qualifications are fully based on the principle and goal of the learning outcomes. Furthermore, as explained throughout Chapter 1 and paragraph 2.2.4, the provisions on NQF are linked and integrated with the provisions on validation of non-formal and informal learning and credit systems, since referencing Italian qualifications to NQF is a minimum legal requirement for the inclusion of qualifications in the National Repository of education and training titles and vocational qualifications.

**Criterion 4: The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.**

As explained throughout Chapter 1 and paragraph 2.2.4 of this Report and defined at the regulatory level, the procedure and roles of the competent authorities for referencing the qualifications to NQF are clearly defined and made public. Similarly, as explained in paragraph 2.2.5 and defined at the regulatory level, the criteria for the inclusion of qualifications in the NQF are clearly defined and made public.

Furthermore, the referencing of qualifications to NQF is carried out on the basis of an application procedure fully consistent with the requirements set out in Annexes IV, V and VI of the EQF Recommendation and through a specific management application (National Register of qualifications referenced to NQF/EQF) that allows the collection of all the documentation concerning the individual referencing applications of the qualifications and the implementation of the register in applicative cooperation with the European Europass portal.

In addition, the EQF NCP as defined at the regulatory level ensures the definition and periodic updating of an "Operational guide to the preliminary analysis, description and referencing of qualifications to the NQF" addressed to all parties concerned, thus supporting them with appropriate information, training and operational elements, both for the definition and description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and for the positioning phases at the appropriate levels of the NQF.

**Criterion 5: The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this recommendation.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.11, the National Plan for quality assurance in education and training (NPQ), promoted and coordinated at a technical level by the National EQAVET Reference Point, located at INAPP, is the single reference framework of the national quality assurance systems for all education and training systems and orders, in application to the EQAVET European Framework and in accordance with Annex IV of the EQF Recommendation. INDIRE, INVALSI, ANVUR, CIMEA and the national network of Regional Research, Experimentation and Development Centres of Provincial Centres for adult education contribute to the quality assurance processes, through technical support, monitoring and evaluation, for the respective areas of competence.

**Criterion 6: The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.11, the contribution to the referencing process by the relevant quality assurance bodies is ensured by the technical role of the EQF NCP and the independent evaluator function performed by INAPP also by the public consultation process.

**Criterion 7: The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing report shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.12, in the periodic updating process of the NQF, the participation of at least two international experts from two different Countries is required in the process of implementing and formalizing the Report. The EQF NCP guarantees an adequate return of the documentation and the results of international consultations in the process of updating the Referencing Report.

**Criterion 8: The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.**

This Report accurately describes in paragraphs 2.2.1 to 2.2.12 the referencing process and argues for the evidence supporting the referencing, with explicit reference to each of the criteria set out by the EQF Recommendation. As explained in paragraph 2.2.12, the preparation and periodic review procedures of the Report are handled at a technical level by the EQF NCP. The Report is formally adopted by the competent authorities issuing the referenced qualifications, through an Agreement sanctioned in the Permanent Conference for relations between the State, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano and subsequent implementation by Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Ministry of Education and Merit and the Minister of University and Research.

The EQF NCP guarantees an adequate return of the results of the public consultations in the updating processes of the Referencing Report and makes available, on its institutional website, the current version of the Referencing Report in Italian and English, as well as the archive of all the versions. The EQF NCP also ensures communication and dissemination activities, in order to promote knowledge of EQF, NQF and the Italian referencing process. Regarding the self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, during the maintenance phase, the present Report will be further integrated with the self-certification report which will make explicit the QTI self-certification elements on the basis of the reform processes of the educational and tertiary and training systems.

**Criterion 9: Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.12, the EQF NCP promptly uploads the current version of the Referencing Report in Italian and in English on the Europass Portal of the European Commission, and in any case no later than six months from the date of formalization of the latest revision, together with any useful information.

**Criterion 10: Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.**

As explained in paragraph 2.2.4 of this Report and defined at the regulatory level, all certificates issued within the NSCC indicate the referencing level of qualification to NQF/EQF, according to the coding criteria defined in paragraph 2.2.8. The integration of the EQF level is completed through the correspondence to the homologous NQF level. Each qualification will be codified as stated in the Table 2.6 - Example of coding of qualifications referenced to the NQF and all these elements will be visible both to institutions, organizations and stakeholders and to end users (learners and employers). For this purpose, it is planned to create specific interactive tools aimed at enhancing the communication and dissemination of the NQF, starting from the new logo (in different colors for each subsystem), the QR code including main NQF/EQF information, and the new visual identity available on line too.

## Chapter 3 - The Italian qualification systems and their referencing to the NQF<sup>125</sup>

The education and training offer in Italy is organized according to a complex structure whose specific governance, objectives and targets can be summarized as follows:

1. the education and training system (para. 3.1) articulated into 4 levels, propaedeutic and divided by age groups, which include the whole educational offer from pre-primary level to tertiary level, whose responsibilities are shared between the Ministry of Education and Merit, Regions and Autonomous Provinces and the Ministry of University and Research;
2. the adult education system (para. 3.2) provided by the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) and under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit;
3. the vocational training system (para. 3.3), which is the responsibility of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, centred on a professionalizing offer addressed to young people and adults. Continuing training for workers also falls within the responsibilities of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces (para. 3.4);
4. the continuing training offer financed by the Joint Interprofessional Funds, under the responsibility of the social partners (para. 3.4), aimed at providing corporate, sectoral, territorial and individual training activities to encourage innovation and competitiveness of enterprises;
5. regulated training whose area of competence is concurrent between the State and Regions and Autonomous Provinces and whose offer is aimed at accessing and exercising professions or professional activities reserved by law (para. 3.5.1).

Each system listed above offers diversified learning opportunities, at the end of which different types of qualifications are issued (certifications, certificates, diplomas etc.) whose learning outcomes are placed on an NQF level.

The Chapter explains the overall structure of the Italian education and training offer and the related types of qualifications issued<sup>126</sup>. In addition to the Public Competent Authority and Public Entitled Body issuing qualification, on the basis of the positioning criteria referred to in para. 2.2.5, the NQF level or, where appropriate, the *range* of any NQF levels (first digit) and the related sub-articulations<sup>127</sup> shown in Table 2.5 (second digit) are specified for each type of qualification. The minimum NQF access requirements are also indicated. The referencing to the NQF and EQF of the various qualification systems referred to in this Chapter is a positioning reference for the purpose of submitting the referencing request for individual qualifications by the Public Competent Authorities in accordance with the procedure described in para. 2.2.4.

Paragraph 3.6 offers a summary of the non-formal learning offer, selected in relation to the complementarity that the identification and validation services potentially provide with respect to the public formal learning offer.

Finally, paragraph 3.7 summarizes the overall framework of the Italian education and training systems

<sup>125</sup> For definitions of the terms *Skills, Formal Learning, Non-formal Learning, Informal Learning, Lifelong Learning, Atlas of Work and Qualifications, First or Second or Third Party Attestations, Reserved Activities, Competence, Competence Certification, Knowledge, Credits, Public Competent Authority, Public Entitled Body, Regulated training, Micro qualifications, Italian national accreditation body, Profession not organized in associations, Regulated profession, National Qualifications Framework, Qualification, Referencing, National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications, Learning outcomes, Systems of credits*, please refer to the Glossary contained in Annex 4 of this Report.

<sup>126</sup> The main sources for the description of the different Italian qualification systems referred to in this chapter are: First Italian referencing Report of qualifications to EQF, the institutional websites of the Public Competent Authorities and the Euridyce and Refernet European networks, the contributions by the public administrations concerned as a result of the national consultation of the technical proposal.

<sup>127</sup> Except for the code 0 regarding the micro qualifications composed by one or more competences which are part of wider qualifications.

through an NQF *visual identity* and a synoptic table containing all the types of qualifications of the NSCC, ordered by EQF level in connection with the NQF level and the ISCED-P and ISCED-A 2011 classification.

### 3.1 - Initial education and training system

The Italian initial education and training system is structured as follows:

- 1.1. Integrated system of education from 0 to 6 years (pre-primary);
- 1.2. First cycle of education;
- 1.3. Second cycle of the education and training system;
- 1.4. Post-secondary higher education and technical training;
- 1.5. Tertiary education and training.

Compulsory education has a duration of 10 years (from 6 to 16 years of age) and includes eight years of the first cycle of education (five years of primary school and three years of lower secondary school) and the first two years of the second cycle of education and training<sup>128</sup> (which can be attended in upper secondary school or in regional vocational education and training). The last year of compulsory education can also be fulfilled through an apprenticeship contract, as shown in Box 2. Furthermore, at the end of compulsory education, due to the right and duty of education and training for at least 12 years (or, in any case, until the achievement of a three-year professional qualification by the age of eighteen)<sup>129</sup>, students can choose whether to continue their own course of study:

- in the upper secondary education system, which falls under State's responsibility,
- or in the education and vocational training system, which falls under regional responsibility.

Students who have fulfilled the compulsory education can continue their studies also in the adult education system (see para. 3.2).

With reference to the governance<sup>130</sup>:

- the State has exclusive legislative competence on the general rules on education and for the definition of the "essential levels of services concerning civil and social rights" which must be guaranteed throughout the national territory;
- the State, Regions and the Autonomous Provinces have concurrent legislative competence in the field of education through the definition of essential principles by the State and the issue of detailed rules by the Autonomous Regions and Provinces;
- the Regions and Autonomous Provinces have sole legislative power in matters of vocational training, including initial education and vocational training courses<sup>131</sup>;
- local authorities participate in the organization of education and training services on the territory.

In the exercising of their respective competences and in carrying out activities of common interest, the State, Regions and local bodies coordinate at the levels of government and work in loyal collaboration

<sup>128</sup> Law No. 296 of 27 December 2006 art. 1, subparagraph 622: "Education given for at least ten years is compulsory and is aimed at the achievement of an upper secondary school qualification or a vocational qualification lasting at least three years by the age of eighteen".

<sup>129</sup> LAW No. 53 of 28 March 2003 and LEGISLATIVE DECREES n. 76 of April 2005 and No. 226 of 17 October 2005.

<sup>130</sup> ITALIAN CONSTITUTION, Title V.

<sup>131</sup> Since the constitutional reform of 2001, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces regulate and organize vocational training by own acts of regulation and planning; the prior state legislation, such as for example the law n. 845 of 1978, maintain a compliant application with respect to regional provisions.

through Agreements and Understandings within the Permanent and Unified State-Regions Conferences.

The Italian education and training system recognizes educational, organizational and research, experimentation and development autonomy to school<sup>132</sup> and university<sup>133</sup> institutions.

The implementation of the provisions normally concerning the NSCC aims at promoting the widest usability of qualifications and portability of competences, thus strengthening the personalization of courses and favouring bridges between different systems and regulations, also through the recognition of credits.

All the education and training systems, foresee, for the final three years of the second cycle, compulsory school-work learning periods<sup>134</sup> or curricular internships (Box 1), according to specific terms and conditions of each system and field of study.

With the introduction of the dual system in 2015<sup>135</sup>, the fulfilment of the compulsory education and the achievement of qualifications of all levels of the education and training system is possible, starting from the age of fifteen, also through an apprenticeship contract (Box 2).

#### Box 3.1 - Internships in Italy

*The internships is a period of orientation and training carried out in a working context but that is not intended as an employment contract. In Italy there are two categories of internships<sup>136</sup>.*

*Curricular internships are training courses and methods that are carried out during a learning pathway, as a constitutive and integral part of the learning plan, aimed at integrating learning with a work context experience. The regulation and organization of curricular internships are defined within the respective regulations of the NSCC.*

*Extra-curricular internships are training measures of active policy aimed at creating direct contact between an enterprise and a trainee in order to facilitate his/her orientation, the acquisition of professional competences and the entering or re-entering into the world of work. This type of internship is regulated by the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces. At national level, common minimum standards are defined referring, for example, to the ways in which the trainee provides his/her activity, and the minimum allowance<sup>137</sup>. Consistently with what has been illustrated, it is emphasized that internship, whether curricular or extra-curricular, is not a job contract, rather a training measure inside the company, aimed at job placement/reintegration, and whose learning outcomes are described in the individual training project. The internship project, like the apprenticeship individual training plan, represents the main requirement for the initiation of the internship.*

<sup>132</sup> DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 275 of 8 MARCH 1999.

<sup>133</sup> ITALIAN CONSTITUTION, Art. 33, LAW No. 168 of 9 May 1989 and LAW No. 240 of 30 December 2010.

<sup>134</sup> Among these we have the school-work alternation, introduced by Legislative Decree No. 77 of 15 April 2005, as a teaching method that allows students combining school learning, mainly theoretical, with a period of practical experience by a public body or a private enterprise. With Law no. 107 of 13 July 2015 reforming the school system, school-work alternation has become standard, as it has been introduced in a stable manner in the school and training curriculum and made compulsory. Starting from the 2018-19 school year, on the basis of the provisions established by Law No. 145 of 30 December 2018, the school-work alternation courses are labelled as "Paths for the Transversal skills and Orientation - PCTO" with a duration, in the last three years of study, of at least 210 hours in Professional Institutes, at least 150 hours in Technical Institutes and at least 90 hours in Lycée. The role of the enterprises in the so called - PCTO is socially and didactically important, though it is fundamental to specify that subjects involved are "students" and not "workers"(as in the Apprenticeship contract).

<sup>135</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 81 of 15 June 2015.

<sup>136</sup> LAW No. 196 of 24 June 1997, Art. 18 and INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE No. 142 of 25 March 1998.

<sup>137</sup> STATE-REGIONS CONFERENCE AGREEMENT of 25 May 2017.

### Box 3.2 - The apprenticeship contract in Italy

Apprenticeship is a job contract aimed at training and employment of young people. According to the innovations introduced with the dual system, apprenticeship in Italy is divided into three schemes with different training purposes and different relationships with the public systems of formal learning offer:

a) Apprenticeship for vocational qualification and diploma, upper secondary education diploma and upper technical specialization certificate (First level): it is addressed to young people aged between 15 and 25, who can be hired in all economic sectors; it has a fixed duration in relation to the legal duration of the qualification to be achieved which is, as a rule, not exceeding four years;

b) Occupation-oriented apprenticeship or trade contract (second level): it is addressed to young people aged between 18 and 29 or to adults with no age limit and beneficiaries of income support measures. The occupation-oriented apprenticeship is not aimed at acquiring a qualification of the NSCC, rather than at leading to an occupational profile recognized by the national sectoral collective agreement applied by the hiring company for the purpose of apprenticeship contract. Therefore, it is the collective agreements that establish the duration of the contract (which cannot exceed three years or five years for craft professions), the professional referencing standards and the methods of providing technical-professional training. Regions provide an additional public offer for the development of basic and transversal skills, for a total number of hours equal to more than 120 total hours over the three-year period;

c) Higher Education and Research apprenticeship (Third level): it is addressed to young people aged between 18 and 29, who can be hired in all economic sectors for the achievement of university degrees and higher education, including Research Doctorate (PhD), diplomas relating to the courses of higher technological institutes, for research activities, as well as for the apprenticeship to access professions organized in orders and associations; it has a fixed duration in relation to the legal duration of the qualification to be achieved.

Apprenticeship is a job contract mixing education and training. Students enrolled in education and training courses are involved in the first and third level contracts and have, therefore, a double status, i.e., "student" and "worker". Cooperation between training institutions and employers in dual apprenticeships (first and third level) is very structured, since the training and work activities, provided for and regulated by law through the individual training Plan, are co-planned and co-evaluated by both didactic and company tutor.

### 3.1.1 - Integrated system 0-6 years (pre-primary)

The integrated system from birth up to six years (*Early childhood education and care - ECEC*)<sup>138</sup>, is divided into:

a) educational services for children from 0 to 3 years divided into:

- nurseries and micro-nurseries that welcome children aged between 3 to 36 months;
- "spring sections" that welcome children aged between 24 to 36 months;
- supplementary services<sup>139</sup>;

b) kindergarten that welcomes children aged between 3 to 6 years.

The Ministry of Education and Merit, Regions and Autonomous Provinces have concurrent legislative competence on the integrated system from birth up to six years, and local authorities and other public or private entities also contribute to its operation.

Pre-primary education is an integral part of the education and training system but is not compulsory and does not provide for the issue of qualifications referenced to the NQF.

<sup>138</sup> LAW No. 107 of 13 July 2015 and LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 65 of 13 April 2017.

<sup>139</sup> Services for children aged less than 36 months, meet the needs of families through a flexible organization. They are divided into playgrounds (12-36 months), children and family centres (from early months with an accompanying adult), home-based services (3-36 months).

### 3.1.2 - First cycle of education

The first cycle of education<sup>140</sup>, whose direction and coordination are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit, has a total duration of 8 years, its attendance is compulsory and free of charge. It is divided into:

- primary school, lasting five years, from 6 to 11 years, aimed at providing pupils with basic knowledge and tools to prepare them for active citizenship and help them to elaborate the meaning of their own experiences. At the end of primary school, the certification of competences is issued and describes the proficiency level of competences progressively acquired, thus supporting and guiding the pupils towards the continuation of the training path whose learning outcomes are at level 1 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 1 as shown in Table 3.1.
- lower secondary school, lasting three years, from 11 to 14 years, which aims at increasing the autonomous abilities of pupils to study and strengthening their attitudes to social interaction, as well as at organizing and increasing their knowledge and skills. At the end of the three years, a final State exam of the first cycle of education, is taken, which provides for the release of the final diploma of the first cycle of education<sup>141</sup>, whose learning outcomes are at level 1 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.1.

The first cycle of education takes place in State schools and independent schools with parity (*paritarie*)<sup>142</sup>, which make up the national education system, as well as in independent schools without parity (*non paritarie*)<sup>143</sup> or through home-schooling education<sup>144</sup>. In the latter two cases, a number of conditions are required such as passing specific eligibility exams for admission to next classes.

Table 3.1 - Referencing of the qualifications system of the first cycle of education to NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Certification of competences at the end of primary school	-	IT 1.1	1
Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Final diploma of the first cycle of education	-	IT 1.2	1

### 3.1.3 - Second cycle of the education and training system

The second cycle of the education and training system<sup>145</sup>, whose attendance is free of charge and compulsory up to the second year, includes various types of study pathways with the same learning objectives of compulsory education and aimed at the acquisition of key competences fundamental for citizenship and employability. The learning goals of compulsory education represent therefore, the equivalence educational factor of all second cycle courses although they are characterized by very diversified curricula. Although the compulsory education is not a final title within the second cycle of the education and training system, students can apply for the compulsory education certificate, whose learning outcomes are placed at level 2 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.2.

<sup>140</sup> DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 89 of 20 March 2009.

<sup>141</sup> Together with the Diploma it is also issued the Certification of competences certifying the level of achievement of learning outcomes provided by the educational curriculum, supplemented by a certificate issued by INVALSI as a result of the compulsory participation in the national exams in Italian, English and Maths.

<sup>142</sup> LAW No. 62 of 10 March 2000.

<sup>143</sup> LAW No. 27 of 03 February 2006.

<sup>144</sup> <https://www.miur.gov.it/istruzione-parentale>.

<sup>145</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 226 of 17 October 2005.

The second cycle of the education and training system is divided into two parallel systems:

- upper secondary education system, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit;
- the vocational education and training system, which falls under the responsibility of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces.

The upper secondary education system provides five-year courses or four-year experimental courses divided into three orders of study:

- Lycée<sup>146</sup> aimed at providing the student with cultural and methodological tools for an in-depth understanding of reality and to develop a rational, creative, critical and planning attitude, thus orienting him/her mainly towards higher education studies, as well as integration into social life and the world of work, through the acquisition of adequate skills, competences and knowledge.
- Vocational institutes<sup>147</sup> aimed at providing the student with a solid base of general education and technical-vocational competences allowing him/her to enter, in an operational dimension, in the productive sectors of the world of work to which the field of studies refers to (primary, secondary, tertiary sectors).
- Technical institutes<sup>148</sup>, aimed at providing the student with a solid cultural, scientific and technological basis for the purpose of exercising the technical professions within the relevant professional sectors (Economics, Technology).

The list of the institutions of the second cycle of the education and training system is available through the national database on the website "La scuola in chiaro" of the Ministry of Education and Merit: <https://cercalatuascuola.istruzione.it/cercalatuascuola/>

At the end of the upper secondary education pathways, the final State examination of the second cycle of education is envisaged, aimed at issuing the upper secondary education diploma (lycée, technical or vocational)<sup>149</sup> giving access to tertiary education and training (para. 3.1.5), both academic (University and Higher Education in Arts and Music), and non-academic (Higher Technological Education System - ITS Academy)<sup>150</sup> and whose learning outcomes are at level 4 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.2.

Similarly, to first-cycle courses, upper secondary education courses are carried out in State schools and independent schools with parity (*paritarie*) as well as in independent schools without parity or, only up to compulsory education<sup>151</sup>, through home schooling education. In the latter two cases, a number of conditions are required such as passing specific eligibility exams for admission to next classes.

The Initial Education and Vocational Training system (IeFP) characterized by a significant work-based learning, is aimed at the development and acquisition of basic and vocational competences related to profiles linked to the world of work. It is divided into two training pathways of different duration:

- three-year courses for the achievement of an Initial Education and Vocational Training Certificate attesting learning outcomes at level 3 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4 as shown in Table 3.2. After achieving the three-year vocational certificate, it is possible to continue in an additional year

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<sup>146</sup> DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 89 of 15 March 2010.

<sup>147</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 61 of 13 April 2017.

<sup>148</sup> DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 88 of 15 March 2010.

<sup>149</sup> Pursuant to the LEGISLATIVE DECREE 13 April 2017, n. 62, the student's Curriculum attached to the Diploma showing: the study plan and the whole number of hours for each discipline; the knowledge, skills and competences acquired; cultural, artistic and musical, sporting and voluntary activities carried out in an extra-curricular setting; school-work alternation activities and any other documentation achieved for guidance and job-access purposes.

<sup>150</sup> Law No. 99 of 15 July 2022 establishing the Tertiary System of Higher Technological Education (ITS Academy).

<sup>151</sup> After compulsory education, the student willing to continue his/her studies outside the public-school institutions is defined "private student". The student takes suitability examinations, on a yearly basis or cumulatively.

- in leFP course for the achievement of the diploma, or in vocational education pathways, through the transitions between the vocational education system and the vocational education and training system for the achievement of the upper secondary education diploma;
- four-year courses for the achievement of an Initial Education and Vocational Training Diploma attesting learning outcomes at level 4 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4 as shown in Table 3.2. After achieving the four-year vocational diploma, it is possible either to continue in vocational education pathways, through the transitions between the vocational education system and the vocational education and training system for the achievement of the upper secondary education diploma, or to continue in a yearly higher technical education and training (IFTS) pathway to access Higher Technological Institutes (ITS *Academy*) courses. Without prejudice to the possibility of taking, as a private student, the State exam in accordance with the legislative provisions, two other courses are also envisaged to achieve an upper secondary education diploma: an additional year carried out in agreement with the universities and with the Higher Education in Arts and Music, or an additional year organized by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces.

The courses are provided by training institutions accredited by the Regions or by vocational institutes as part of the subsidiary training offer organized by the Regions (in agreement with the regional School Offices). The Initial Education and Vocational Training Certificate and the Initial Education and Vocational Training Diploma are included in the National Repository of the vocational education and training offer, have national validity, refer to professional profiles of the different economic-professional sectors, and are described in terms of learning outcomes<sup>152</sup>.

Table 3.2 - Referencing of the qualifications system of the second cycle of the education and training system to NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	State and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate	IT 1.2	IT 2.2	2
		Upper secondary education diploma (lycée, technical, vocational)	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 leFP	IT 4.2	4
Regions and Autonomous Province	State and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate (leFP)	IT 1.2	IT 2.2	2
		Initial education and vocational training certificate (leFP)	IT 1.2 IT 2.2 leFP	IT 3.4	3
	Accredited training institutions	Initial education and vocational training diploma (leFP)	IT 1.2 IT 2.2 leFP	IT 4.4	4

<sup>152</sup> AGREEMENT IN THE STATE REGIONS CONFERENCE, 1 August 2019, implemented with INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE 7 July 2020, n. 56.

### 3.1.4 - Post-secondary higher technical education and training

The higher technical education and training system (IFTS) offers post-secondary courses, whose organization falls under the responsibility of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, aimed at developing technical professional specializations that meet the training needs of economic productive sectors in the context of regional planning<sup>153</sup>.

Higher technical education and training are all-year courses (usually 800-1000 hours) and are addressed to young people and adults with an upper secondary education diploma or an initial education and vocational training diploma; access is also allowed to those admitted to the fifth year lycée courses and to those with no upper secondary education diploma, following the recognition of the competences acquired in previous education, training and work contexts. The attendance of the courses is generally free of charge or at most a registration fee and teaching materials are required.

The courses are provided by partnerships including at least one educational institution accredited by the Regions, a university institution and at least one enterprise. The qualifications awarded as a result of these courses have national validity, as they are included in a National Repository of higher technical education and training courses referring to professional profiles with respect to the different economic-professional sectors, described in terms of learning outcomes<sup>154</sup>.

At the end of the higher technical education and training courses, a post-secondary higher technical specialization certificate is issued, allowing access to non-academic tertiary education and training (Higher Technological Education System - ITS Academy) to students holding an initial education and vocational training diploma and whose learning outcomes are at level 4 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4 as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 - Referencing of the qualification system for higher technical education and training to NQF<sup>155</sup>

Public Competent Authority	Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited educational institutions, in partnership with universities and enterprises	Higher technical specialization certificate (IFTS)	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	IT 4.4	4

### 3.1.5 -Tertiary education and training system

The tertiary education and training system includes various study pathways, divided into distinct and parallel systems:

1. Higher technological training courses promoted by Higher Technological Institutes (ITS Academy);
2. Higher Education and Training courses;
3. Higher Education in Arts and Music (AFAM);
4. Other courses organized by Institutes for special purposes.

<sup>153</sup> Regions and Autonomous Provinces, within the programming of the higher technical education and training offer set up technical-professional poles including technical and professional institutes, higher technological institutes and accredited professional training bodies (DECREE LAW 31 January 2007, n. 7, art. 13, paragraph 2).

<sup>154</sup> LAW No. 144 of 17 May 1999, Art. 69 of DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS of 25 January 2008 and INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 7 February 2013.

<sup>155</sup> Any qualifications of professions duly issued in the context of higher technical education and training are included in paragraph 3.5.1 specifically dedicated to regulated professions.

The learning offer provided by the tertiary education and training system is accessible through the constantly updated national database available on the portal of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research <https://www.universitaly.it/>.

### **3.1.5.1 - Higher technical training courses promoted by Higher Technological Institutes (ITS Academy)**

Higher Technological Institutes (ITS Academy)<sup>156</sup> are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit; Regions and Autonomous Provinces are responsible for the programming of the learning paths. ITS Academy provide high technical and technological specialization: two-year courses (1800/2000 hours) - three-year in some cases - with a strong work-based learning component (at least 30% of the total hours). ITS Academy are divided into technological areas defined at national level and identified within regional plans<sup>157</sup> and are addressed to young people and adults in possession of an upper secondary education diploma and to holders of an initial education and vocational training diploma (IeFP, four years) who have achieved a Higher technical specialization certificate (IFTS). Access to the courses is subject to the completion of an entry test. The attendance of the courses is, as a rule, free of charge. Nevertheless, a contribution can be required for enrolment and teaching materials.

From an organizational point of view, ITS Academy are set up in participatory Foundations that include, among the founders, at least one upper secondary education institute, both Public and independent schools with parity, whose learning offer is coherent with the ITS Academy technological area, a training institution accredited by the Region, a university department or other body belonging to the scientific and technological research system and at least one enterprise in the economic sector which the Higher Technological Institute refers to.

The qualifications awarded have national validity, as they are included in a National Repository referring to professional profiles with respect to the different technological areas, described in terms of learning outcomes<sup>158</sup>.

At the end of the higher technical training courses promoted by ITS Academy<sup>159</sup> the following qualifications are issued: an Applied technologies specialization Diploma (two-year course), whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 5 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 4, and an Applied technologies Higher specialization Diploma (three-year course) whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 6 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 4<sup>160</sup>, as shown in Table 3.4.

**The applied technologies specialization diploma issued by the ITS Academy, at the end of the three-year course, as well as the Regional higher vocational training qualifications issued by the training institutions accredited or authorized by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, although referenced to EQF level 6 (and 6.4. NQF), however, do not allow enrollment in the two-year courses for the achievement of a Master Degree, whose learning outcomes are positioned at level 7 of the NQF/EQF.**

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<sup>156</sup> LAW No. 99 of 15 July 2022 establishing the Tertiary System of Higher Technological Education (ITS Academy).

<sup>157</sup> DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE MINISTERS COUNCIL of 25 January 2008.

<sup>158</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREES of 7 September 2011 and of 7 February 2013.

<sup>159</sup> By comparing the learning outcomes of ITS Academy pathways and the competences achieved through similar Degree courses, the LAW 13 July 2015, n. 107 (art. 1 c. 51) recognizes at least 40 university training credits for two-year courses and a minimum of 62 credits for three-year courses.

<sup>160</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE of 16 September 2016, n. 713, art. 1, paragraph 11.

Table 3.4 - Referencing of the qualification system for higher technical training to NQF<sup>161</sup>

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes - ITS Academy	Applied technologies specialization Diploma (two-year course)	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 (IFTS) IT 4.2 IDA	IT 5.4	5
Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes - ITS Academy	Applied technologies Higher specialization Diploma (three-year course)	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 (IFTS) IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4	6

### 3.1.5.2 - Higher education and training

The higher education offer, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of University and Research<sup>162</sup>, is represented by the Italian Qualifications Framework - (QTI)<sup>163</sup> established in 2010 as part of the Bologna Process<sup>164</sup> and of the Dublin Descriptors implementation<sup>165</sup>, for the institution of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area - QF for the EHEA.

During the maintenance phase, the present Report will be further integrated with the self-certification report which will make explicit the QTI self-certification elements on the basis of the reform processes of the educational and tertiary and training systems.

In line with the QTI, Higher Education is divided into three cycles, as defined by the Bologna Process, and includes all the qualifications awarded for each cycle, described both in terms of learning outcomes and in terms of number of credits<sup>166</sup> by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)<sup>167</sup>.

<sup>161</sup> Any qualifications of regulated professions issued in the context of higher technical education are included in paragraph 3.5.1 specifically dedicated to regulated professions.

<sup>162</sup> LAW NO. 240 OF 30 DECEMBER 2010 and MINISTERIAL DECREE No. 270 of 22 October 2004.

<sup>163</sup> The Ministry of Education and Merit, the Ministry of University and Research started working on the QTI implementation process in 2005, in compliance with the procedures established at European level by the QF-EHEA. CIMEA developed the first QTI prototype which was aimed at portraying the reform process which the Italian Higher Education system had undergone since 1999, in line with the Bologna process and the Dublin descriptors. Subsequently, a team formed of technical consultants (Bologna Experts and representatives of the Italian Ministry of Higher Education) was set up and started working on the QTI model. The proposal presented by the technical team underwent a thorough consultation which included internal departments and the relevant General Directorates within the Ministry, the institutional bodies dedicated to consulting and representation (National University Council - CUN, the National Council for Higher Education in Art and Music - CNAM, the National Council of Undergraduates - CNSU, The Conference of Italian University Rectors - CRUI), the social partners and professional associations. The proposal was also submitted to international experts. At the end of the process, the QTI was published in 2010; it is the descriptive tool of the Italian Higher Education system, developed on the QF-EHEA. The QTI official website in the Italian and English version is available at <http://www.quadrodeititoli.it>

<sup>164</sup> <http://www.processodibologna.it/>

<sup>165</sup> BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP (2005). The European Framework defined within the EHEA Framework does not differ from the European Qualifications Framework although the language of the EQF is not perfectly identical to that of the EHEA Framework. The EHEA Framework is divided into three cycles of qualifications, expressed on the basis of the Dublin Descriptors adopted in the EHEA Framework, namely: knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; making judgements; communication skills; learning skills.

<sup>166</sup> Higher education study courses and the Higher Education in Arts and Music are structured in credits (respectively University Educational Credits - CFU and Academic Educational Credits - CFA). The credits normally correspond to 25 hours of student work, including solo study. The average amount of work done in a year by a student is conventionally set at 60 credits. Educational credits can be acquired not only by taking exams: the various universities or departments can determine the recognition of credits obtained through work, internship or laboratories.

<sup>167</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en)

The first cycle, whose minimum access requirement is the Upper Secondary Education Diploma or equivalent, consists of:

- three-year courses divided into degree classes, at the end of which a *Laurea* (Bachelor Degree) is issued, through the acquisition of 180 University Educational Credits (CFU/ECTS). The learning outcomes of the *Laurea* are referenced to level 6 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.5.

The second cycle, whose minimum entry requirement is a *Laurea* (Bachelor Degree) or equivalent qualification includes:

- a. Two-year courses, divided into degree classes, at the end of which a *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* (Master Degree) is issued through the acquisition of 120 CFU. The learning outcomes of the *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* are referenced to level 7 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.5. In compliance with national regulations or EU directives, there are also some *Lauree Magistrali/Specialistiche a ciclo unico* (Single-cycle/integrated Masters) with a duration of 5 or 6 years (corresponding to 300 or 360 credits), at the end of which a *Laurea magistrale a ciclo unico* (Single-cycle Master Degree) is issued and whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 7 of the NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.5<sup>168</sup>.
- b. First level permanent and recurrent graduate courses consisting in advanced scientific courses or higher continuing education studies lasting at least one year (corresponding to 60 CFU) that can be accessed with a *Laurea* (Bachelor Degree) or equivalent qualification, at the end of which a *Master universitario di primo livello* (First level University Post Degree) is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 7 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.5. Unlike the *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica*, the *Master universitario di primo livello* does not allow access to *Dottorato di ricerca* (PhD) since this type of course does not belong to the general requirements established at national level, but it is offered under the autonomous responsibility of each university.

According to their autonomy and beyond the national regulation, university institutions, also provide Advanced Courses, generally lasting one year, which meet cultural needs and aimed at deepening certain field of study or at professional updating and retraining, as well as for continuing learning purposes<sup>169</sup>. These courses can be accessed by academic qualification (*Laurea, Laurea magistrale/specialistica*) and end with the release of a *Diploma di corso di perfezionamento* (Higher Specialization Diploma) whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 7 of the NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.5.

Third cycle courses include:

- a. Courses lasting at least three years for which admission requires a *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* (Master Degree) or equivalent qualification and the passing of an entry exam. At the end of these courses, *Dottorato di Ricerca* (PhD) is awarded, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 1 as shown in Table 3.5;
- b. Second level permanent and recurrent postgraduate courses consist in advanced scientific courses or higher continuing education studies that can be accessed with a *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* (Master Degree) or equivalent qualification, with a minimum duration of one year (corresponding to 60 CFU), at the end of which a *Master universitario di secondo livello* (Second level university post degree) is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF, with the sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.5. Alongside *Master universitario di primo livello*, the *Master*

<sup>168</sup> Prior to Decree on 3 November 1999, n. 509, a *Diploma di laurea* (pre-Bologna qualification) could be achieved at the end of a 4-6-year learning pathways (depending on the discipline) after passing a variable number of exams (from 19 to 58). This criterion has been replaced with university training credits system. For the purposes of public competitions, *Diploma di Laurea* are equivalent to the current *Diploma di Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* (Master Degree), according to specific standards. For information on the framework of qualifications awarded under the previous system: <http://www.quadrodeititoli.it/titolistudio.aspx?IDL=2>

<sup>169</sup> In case of specific regulation, e.g. in the health sector, courses are defined based on general criteria outlined by the Ministry of University and Research, in agreement with the competent administrations.

*universitario di secondo livello* does not allow access to *Dottorato di ricerca* (PhD) since this type of course does not belong to the general requirements established at national level, but it is offered under the autonomous responsibility of each university;

- c. Specialization courses, of variable duration depending on the disciplinary sector, from a minimum of two to a maximum of six years (from 120 to 360 CFU) whose admission required a *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* (Master Degree) or equivalent qualification and the passing of an entry exam. At the end of these courses, the *Diploma di Specializzazione* (Specialization Diploma) is issued whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF, with the sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.5.

Access to study programs is subject, for some courses, to the completion or passing entry tests.

At an organizational level, public and private academic institutions<sup>170</sup>, i.e., universities, equivalent institutes, and legally recognized on-line universities (as well as their decentralized offices and individual courses of study), are accredited by the Ministry of University and Research on the basis of precise national accreditation criteria<sup>171</sup> and they operate autonomously according to the Constitution, thus adopting autonomous systems within the limits established by law.

The higher education offer is defined annually by the universities on the basis of the regulations<sup>172</sup>: the National University Council - CUN, i.e. the representative body of the academic system with consultative and advisory duties of the Ministry of University and Research, provides Guideline for the definition of didactic systems, updated every year on the basis of the current standards<sup>173</sup>.

Table 3.5 - Referencing of the qualifications system for higher education to NQF<sup>174</sup>

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of University and Research	Universities	Laurea (Bachelor Degree)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.2	6
		Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica a ciclo unico (Single-cycle Master Degree)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 7.2	7
		Laurea Magistrale (Master Degree)	IT 6.2	IT 7.2	7
		Master universitario di primo livello (First Level University Post Degree)	IT 7.2	IT 8.1	8
		Diploma di corso perfezionamento (Higher specialization Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Master universitario di secondo livello (Second level University Post Degree)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Diploma di Specializzazione (Specialization Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8
		Dottorato di Ricerca (PhD)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8

<sup>170</sup> Currently 67 public universities, 29 legally recognized non-State universities, 9 higher education institutes with special status and 11 on-line universities are active on the national territory <https://www.miur.gov.it/il-sistema-universitario>

<sup>171</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE No. 6 of 7 January 2019, and <https://www.anvur.it/attivita/ava/accreditamento-iniziale/>

<sup>172</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE of 16 March 2007.

<sup>173</sup> National University Council (2020) and <https://www.cun.it/homepage/>

<sup>174</sup> Qualifications of regulated professions issued in the context of higher education and training are included in paragraph 3.5.1 specifically dedicated to regulated professions.

### 3.1.5.3 - Higher Education in Arts and Music

Higher Education in Arts and Music System - AFAM, falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of University and Research<sup>175</sup>, and includes State and non-State authorized institutions and, precisely: State Academies of Fine Arts; a National Academy of Dramatic Art; a National Dance Academy; State Music Conservatories; formerly state-recognized Musical Institutes; Higher Institutes for Artistic Industries; legally recognized Academies of fine arts, including historical sites in Genoa, Verona, Perugia, Bergamo, Ravenna; other institutions issuing qualifications with legal validity<sup>176</sup>. Likewise, the academic learning offer, AFAM is divided into three cycles, in line with the Dublin descriptors adopted by the EHEA Framework.

The first cycle, whose minimum entry requirement is the Upper Secondary Education Diploma or equivalent, consists of:

- three-year courses at the end of which a *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First level Academic Diploma) is issued, through the acquisition of 180 Academic Educational Credits (CFA/ECTS). The learning outcomes are referenced to level 6 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.6.

The second cycle courses, whose minimum entry requirement is *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First level Academic Diploma) or equivalent, include:

- a) two-year courses, divided into degree classes at the end of which a *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (Second level Academic Diploma) is issued through the acquisition of 120 CFA/ECTS, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 7 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.6.
- b) Advanced courses or first level post degree courses responding to cultural needs for follow-up in specific study areas or for update needs or professional requalification and permanent education, which can be accessed with the *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First level Academic Diploma) or equivalent qualification, lasting at least one year (corresponding to 60 CFA) at the end of which a *Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (I)* (Higher specialization Diploma or First level post degree Diploma) is awarded, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 7 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.6. Unlike the *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (second level Academic Diploma), these diplomas do not allow access to third cycle courses such as the *Diploma Accademico di Formazione e Ricerca* (Academic Research Training Diploma), because the learning pathway is not nationally regulated and the qualification is issued autonomously by the individual academic institution.
- c) First level specialization courses providing superior professional competences in specific areas, which can be accessed with the *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (first level Academic Diploma) or equivalent qualification, lasting at least two years (corresponding to 120 CFA/ECTS), at the end of which a *Diploma accademico di specializzazione* (First level Academic specialization Diploma) is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 7 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.6.

Third cycle courses include:

- a) courses lasting at least three years for the admission of which the *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (Second level Academic Diploma) or equivalent qualification and the passing of an exam are required. At the end of the pathway a *Diploma accademico di formazione alla Ricerca* (Research Training Academic Diploma) is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 1 as shown in Table 3.6;
- b) Advanced courses or second level post degree courses responding to cultural needs for follow-up in specific study areas or for update needs or professional requalification and permanent

<sup>175</sup> LAW No. 508 of 21 December 1999, and DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 212 of 8 July 2005.

<sup>176</sup> <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/istituzioni-afam-riconosciute>

education, which can be accessed with the *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (Second Level Academic Diploma) or equivalent qualification, lasting a minimum of one year (corresponding to 60 FCA/ECTS), at the end of which a *Diploma di perfezionamento* or *Diploma di Master (II)* (Higher specialization Diploma or Second level post degree Diploma) is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.6. Like the *Diploma di perfezionamento* or *Master (I)*, the *Diploma di perfezionamento* o *Master (II)* does not allow access to *Diploma accademico di formazione alla Ricerca* (Research Training Academic Diploma) because the learning pathway is not nationally regulated and the degree is issued autonomously by the individual academic institution;

- c) Second level specialization courses providing superior professional competences in specific areas, which can be accessed with the *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (Second level Academic Diploma) or equivalent qualification, lasting at least two years (corresponding to 120 CFA), at the end of which a *Diploma accademico di specializzazione di secondo livello* (Second level Academic specialization Diploma) is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 3 as shown in Table 3.6.

Access to study programs is subject, for some courses, to the completion or passing of entry tests.

Pre-academic study courses are also available at public music conservatories, non-public music institutes and dance Academy.

Higher Education in Arts and Music is defined annually and authorized by the Ministry of University and Research on the basis of current standards<sup>177</sup>. Likewise the higher education offer, the National Council for Higher Education in Arts and Music (CNAM), the representative body of the AFAM system with consultative and advisory duties of the Ministry of University and Research, is being recomposed.

Table 3.6 - Referencing of the qualifications system for Higher Education in Arts and Music to the NQF<sup>178</sup>

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Diploma accademico di primo livello (First level Academic Diploma)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.2	6
		Diploma accademico di secondo livello a ciclo unico (Single Cycle Second level Academic Diploma)	IT 4.2 IT 4.2 IDA	IT 7.2	7
		Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second level Academic Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.2	7
		Diploma accademico di formazione alla Ricerca (Research Training Academic Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.1	8
		Diploma accademico di Specializzazione di primo livello (First level Academic specialisation Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (I) (Higher specialization or First level post degree Diploma)	IT 6.2	IT 7.3	7
		Diploma di perfezionamento or Diploma di Master (II) (Higher specialization Diploma or Second level post degree Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8
		Diploma di specializzazione di secondo livello (Second level Academic specialisation Diploma)	IT 7.2	IT 8.3	8

<sup>177</sup> CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES - STUDY SERVICE (2020).

<sup>178</sup> Any qualifications of regulated professions issued in the context of AFAM are included in paragraph 3.5.1 specifically dedicated to regulated professions.

### 3.1.5.4 - Other courses organized by Institutes for special purposes

In Italy, some institutes for special purposes contribute to the academic non-tertiary education and training offer, thus providing professional specializations in different fields; access requires an Upper secondary education diploma or equivalent qualification and the passing of an entry exam. The qualifications issued as part of the academic non-tertiary education and training offer by institutes for special purposes are referenced to level 6, 7 or 8 NQF/EQF and with the related sub-articulation in relation to the access requirements and the learning outcomes of the individual courses, to be determined on the basis of the procedures and referencing criteria defined in Chapter 2 of this Report. By way of example, the Institutes for special purposes include:

- Higher Schools for Language Mediators providing high level language courses, lasting three years, in at least two languages, in addition to Italian, which can be accessed with an Upper secondary education diploma and adequate initial linguistic preparation. The course leads to the *Diploma di mediatore linguistico* (Diploma of linguistic mediator) equivalent to a first-cycle qualification of tertiary level (referenced to level 6 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 2);
- Specialisation institutes in Psychotherapy providing four-year professional training courses suitable for the practice of the profession of psychotherapist, both for individual and group therapy. The course can be accessed with the *Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica* (Master Degree) in Psychology, Medicine or Surgery and through the enrolment in the respective professional orders; the course ends with a *Diploma di specializzazione* (Specialization Diploma) in psychotherapy, equivalent to a specialisation diploma issued by university (referenced to level 8 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 3).

## 3.2 - The adult education system

The public provision of adult education (IDA) in Italy, whose organization falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Merit, is entrusted to the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), autonomous educational institutions with their own staff and of a specific didactic and organizational structure<sup>179</sup>. Each CPIA is configured as a territorial service network divided into a central office and providers (associated and operational offices, which can also be activated in prisons and detention centres), identified within the exclusive competence of the Autonomous Regions and Provinces. The CPIA are in charge of the following activities: adult education formal pathways addressed to adults and people over 16 years of age in possession of specific requirements<sup>180</sup>, initiatives to expand the educational offer, research, experimentation and development activities in the field of adult education<sup>181</sup>.

The CPIA carry out, free of charge, the following formal learning pathways<sup>182</sup>:

- literacy and learning courses of the Italian language for foreign adults lasting 200 hours, aimed at achieving a certification attesting a level of knowledge of the Italian language not lower than level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)<sup>183</sup>, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 1 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 1 as shown in Table 3.7;
- first level educational courses, divided into two teaching periods: the first teaching period lasting 400-600 hours is aimed at obtaining the Final Diploma of the first cycle of education, whose

<sup>179</sup> DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 263 of 29 October 2012.

<sup>180</sup> In particular, the CPIAs courses are addressed to: Italian and foreign adults who have not fulfilled the compulsory education and intend to achieve the final diploma of the first cycle of education; Italian and foreign adults in possession of the final diploma of the first cycle of education who intend to achieve the diploma of the second cycle of education; foreign adults who intend to enroll in literacy and Italian language courses; 16 years old in possession of the final diploma of the first cycle of education, who are not able to attend daily courses. In addition, on the basis of the MINISTERIAL DECREE of 17 May 2018 art. 3 par. 1, letter f) the CPIAs can organize Initial Education and Vocational Training pathways for adults, by agreements between regional School Offices and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces.

<sup>181</sup> For a more detailed description of CPIAs organization, please refer to <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/i-centri-provinciali-per-l-istruzione-degli-adulti>

<sup>182</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE of 12 March 2015.

<sup>183</sup> EUROPEAN COUNCIL (2001) and <https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/home>

learning outcomes are referenced to level 1 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.7. The second teaching period lasting 825 hours is aimed at achieving the Certification attesting the acquisition of basic competences corresponding to the compulsory education<sup>184</sup>, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 2 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 1 as shown in Table 3.7;

- second level educational courses, divided into three teaching periods, each with an overall timetable equal to 70% of that provided for by the corresponding regulations of the technical or vocational schools: the first teaching period (lasting 1518 hours) is aimed at obtaining the Certification for admission to the second teaching period, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 2 NQF/EQF with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.7; the second teaching period (lasting 1518 hours) is aimed at achieving the Certification for admission to the third teaching period, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 4 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 1 as shown in Table 3.7. The third teaching period (lasting 759 hours) is aimed at achieving a technical, vocational or artistic upper secondary education Diploma, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 4 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 2 as shown in Table 3.7.

The CPIA can expand the learning offer by entering into agreements with local authorities and other public and private bodies, with particular reference to training institutions accredited by the Regions; these are initiatives to enhance the citizenship and employability competences of the whole population.

To enhance the cultural and professional heritage of adults, the CPIA, on the basis of an individual study pact, guarantee the personalization of pathways through:

- credits recognition starting from prior learning for admission to the pathways offered;
- reception and guidance activities, aimed at defining the individual study pact, for a maximum of 10% of the total number of hours of the pathway;
- use of distance learning for a part of the planned pathway, as a rule, for a maximum of 20% of the total number of hours.

Table 3.7 - Referencing of the qualifications system of adult education to NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certificate attesting the achievement of a level of knowledge of the Italian language at level A2 of the CEFR	-	IT 1.1	1
		Final Diploma of the first cycle of education	IT 1.1 IT 1.1 IDA	IT 1.2	1
		Certification attesting the acquisition of basic competences corresponding to the compulsory education	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.1	2
		Certification for admission to the second teaching period of second level	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.2	2
		Certification for admission to the third teaching period of second level	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 leFP IT 2.2 IDA	IT 4.1	4
		Technical, vocational or artistic upper secondary education Diploma	IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.4 leFP	IT 4.2	4

<sup>184</sup> This certification specifically refers to the activities and subjects foreseen in the curricula common to all branches of technical and vocational schools.

### 3.3 - The regional vocational training system

In addition to vocational education and training pathways (para. 3.1.3), higher technical education and training (para. 3.1.4) and higher technological institutes (see para. 3.1.5.1), the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces are responsible for vocational training through qualifications organized in one or more regional repositories and addressed to young people and adults who fulfilled compulsory education and who fulfilled, or are simultaneously fulfilling, the right-duty to education and training<sup>185</sup>.

For the purposes of referencing to the NQF, the regional vocational training offer can be conventionally divided into the following three areas:

1. an operational area characterized by regional vocational training courses addressed to learners in possession of a qualification referenced to minimum level 1.2 NQF/EQF or learners who are ascertained an appropriate entry level of competences through specific identifying or re-training procedures. At the end of these courses, a regional vocational training qualification for operational area is issued whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 2 or 3 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4 for both levels as shown in Table 3.8, to be determined on the basis of the referencing procedures and criteria defined in Chapter 2 of this Report;
2. a technical area characterized by regional vocational training courses addressed to learners in possession of a qualification referenced to minimum 3.4 NQF/EQF level or at learners who are ascertained an appropriate entry level of competences through specific identifying or re-training procedures<sup>186</sup>. At the end of these courses, a regional vocational training qualification for technical area is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 4 or 5 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4 for both levels, as shown in Table 3.8, to be determined on the basis of the referencing procedures and criteria defined in Chapter 2 of this Report;
3. a higher vocational training characterized by courses addressed to learners in possession of a qualification referenced to minimum 4.2 or 4.4 NQF/EQF level or at learners who are ascertained an appropriate entry level of competences through specific identifying or re-training procedures of competences. At the end of these courses, a regional higher vocational training qualification is issued, whose learning outcomes are referenced to level 6 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4, as shown in Table 3.8, to be determined on the basis of the referencing procedures and criteria described in Chapter 2 of this Report. Regional vocational qualifications 6.4 NQF/EQF level allow access to learning pathways aimed at achieving a 7.3 NQF/EQF level regional vocational training qualification.

The continuing training pathways (para. 3.4) and those of regulated education and training for access and practice of professions or professional activities reserved by law (para. 3.5.1) complete the offer of the vocational training provided by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces.

In addition, regional training foresees micro qualifications<sup>187</sup> whose individual units of competence can be separately certified and included within regional repositories and in the National Repository<sup>188</sup>.

The regional vocational training courses are provided by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces as follows:

- directly;
- through public or private educational institutions subject to an accreditation procedure adopted by each Region and Autonomous Province, in accordance with the reference criteria identified at national level<sup>189</sup>;

<sup>185</sup> Compulsory Education (para.3.1) can be fulfilled with the achievement of the Certification of competences at the end of primary school or exonerated, if, at the completion of the sixteenth year of age, the student demonstrates that he has complied with compulsory education for at least 10 years.

<sup>186</sup> The technical area pathways can also be accessed with a 4.1 NQF level of adult education, as it prefigures a level of competences higher than the minimum NQF/EQF level access requirements established (IT 3.2).

<sup>187</sup> For the definition of micro qualification, see paragraph 2.2.4.

<sup>188</sup> For this kind of micro qualifications, Regions and Autonomous Provinces can, as described in para. 2.2.4, submit referencing proposals indicating the relevant NQF/EQF level with sub-articulation 0, as stated in table 3.8.

<sup>189</sup> MINISTERIAL DECREE No. 166 of 25 May 2001 and THE STATE/REGIONS CONFERENCE UNDERSTANDING of 20 March 2008.

- through subjects specifically authorized on the basis of the provisions adopted by each Region and Autonomous Province (this procedure also concerns self-financed courses).

The accreditation and authorization procedure represents the main tool for quality assurance of the regional training offer. To receive public funding or the approval to carry out self-financed courses, the training institutions must be previously accredited or authorized by the Region, thus demonstrating the possession of a number of predefined requirements, also in line with the criteria of the EQAVET Framework, as illustrated also in the National Plan for Quality Assurance (para. 2.2.11).

The courses for the achievement of a regional vocational training qualification are planned in response to the training and professional needs emerging from the territories and have a variable duration in relation to either learning objectives and the typology of beneficiaries, or the learning methods and contexts. The vocational training design is characterized, in fact, by an important component of experiential learning and by the personalization of the course, also through the educational credit systems<sup>190</sup>. Normally, participation in a curricular internship is envisaged as part of the course. The attendance of the courses can be free of charge and it can also foresee a participation allowance for the learners. At the same time, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces also authorize self-financed vocational training courses, aimed at achieving a regional vocational qualification.

The regional vocational training qualifications have national validity as in 2015, within the implementation of NSCC and of the National Repository, the National Reference Framework of regional qualifications (NFRQ)<sup>191</sup>(para. 1.1) was set up for the correlation and progressive standardization of regional qualifications and related competences.

Table 3.8 - Referencing of the qualification system for regional vocational training to the NQF<sup>192</sup>

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Autonomous Regions and Provinces	Accredited/ Authorized educational institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for operating area	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.4	2
			IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 3.4	3
		Regional vocational training qualification for technical area	IT 4.2 IT4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA IT 3.4 FP IT 3.4 leFP	IT 4.4	4
			IT 4.2 IT4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA IT 3.4 FP IT 3.4 leFP	IT 5.4	5
		Regional higher vocational training qualification	IT 4.2 IT 4.4 FP IT4.4 leFP IT 4.4 IFTS	IT 6.4	6
			IT 6.2 IT 6.4 FP IT 6.4 ITS Academy	IT 7.3	7

<sup>190</sup> In this context, starting from 2008, various experiences of participation in pilot activities have also materialized in the context of transnational projects funded by the European Commission for the implementation of ECVET.

<sup>191</sup> INTERMINISTERIAL DECREE of 30 June 2015.

<sup>192</sup> Any qualifications of regulated professions duly issued in the context of regional vocational education are included in paragraph 3.5.1 specifically dedicated to regulated professions.

### 3.4 - The continuing training for workers

With reference to the public system, the continuing training for workers is entrusted:

- to the Regions and Autonomous Provinces which develop and plan the offer with their own resources or with resources derived from the European Social Fund (ESF) or from other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for continuous training interventions in the local area, carried out by accredited training institutions (or specially selected by the regional administrations) or by the enterprises;
- to the social partners, which operate mainly through the Joint Interprofessional Funds for Continuing Training, for interventions mainly at supra-regional, national and sectoral level, through a fixed share of payroll costs for compulsory insurance against involuntary unemployment paid by enterprises to State<sup>193</sup> and returned to the Funds, in proportion to the voluntary participation of enterprises in each fund.

The Joint Interprofessional Funds for Continuing Training, established in 2000<sup>194</sup>, are private-sector organizations, set up as an association through agreements signed between trade unions and employers' organisations most representative at national level, subject to authorization by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and to supervision by the ANPAL<sup>195</sup>. The Joint Interprofessional Funds may cover all economic sectors or jointly several sectors: industry, agriculture, service sector and handicraft. There is also a specific funds section and memberships for the training of managers, as well as a fund for training and income support for temporary and permanent workers with leasing contracts<sup>196</sup>.

The Joint Interprofessional Funds finance enterprise, sectoral, local and individual training plans mainly through:

- the public notice, according to public procedures similar to those adopted by the Regions in the planning and management of European resources for training (ESF). Through the notice, more resources than those actually paid can be redistributed to individual enterprises, thus also allowing micro enterprises to access training initiatives, which would otherwise not be financed with the only mandatory contribution. Another analogy with the regional tool concerns the selective character and the creation of rankings for access to funding based on the evaluation of plans and proposing subjects. This tool is mainly used by small and medium-sized enterprises that do not have their own operational units dedicated to training processes management and, for these reasons, they use the training institutions (in many cases, the same bodies accredited for regional vocational training). Financing derived from this tool is subject to the State Aid regulations;
- the training account, that consists in making available to the single enterprise a share (generally ranging between 70% and 90%) of the amount paid in a given period of time. Funds generally "authorize" enterprises to use their account under certain conditions, such as a minimum of consecutive years of payment (usually three) and the achievement of a minimum amount of resources, also depending on the number of employees for which the obligatory contribution is paid.

With respect to the planning of the Funds, regional administrations and Autonomous Provinces are often geared towards different forms of plans:

- complementary, for example by favouring interventions addressed to weakest target groups or specific types of employees;
- integrated, for example by addressing interventions, within enterprises, to employees that cannot be financed by the Funds, such as professionals, collaborators, self-employed workers, entrepreneurs;

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<sup>193</sup> The tax contribution of 0.30% was established with LAW No. 845 of 21 December 1978, Art. 25.

<sup>194</sup> LAW No. 388 of 23 December 2000, Art. 118. The first Joint Interprofessional Funds have been in operation since 2004; currently there are 19 operating funds.

<sup>195</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 150 of 14 September 2015, Art. 17.

<sup>196</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 276 of 10 September 2003. The fund is funded with a contribution of 4% of the gross salaries given to the temporary workers, paid by the Employment Agencies.

- strategic, for example by focusing attention on the relaunch of traditionally 'typical' economic systems or by promoting local development processes.

In addition to these two structural systems of continuing training, there are initiatives that may also involve the training for workers in the context of nationally managed programs, for example: the national ESF operational programs or industrial innovation programs, promoted or coordinated mainly by the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy.

Continuing training has always been characterized, given the specialized contents and the necessity to meet the business needs, by the promotion of short-term courses concerning both the interventions financed by the Funds, and those financed by the regional administrations and the Autonomous Provinces. For this reason, experiential, work-based or through e-learning platforms initiatives are widely spreading, accessible at different time from working hours and with a strong personalization of training pathways, methods and contents. Due to these content and duration specific features, the continuing training is characterized by its own particular complexity both in terms of procedures for identifying, standardizing and referencing competences and qualifications, and in terms of assessment and certification of the learning outcomes.

Overall, both the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces and the Joint Interprofessional Funds redesign training contents and methods, thus innovating the learning offer and guaranteeing the spendability of the competences acquired, in a perspective of portability and incrementality of qualifications<sup>197</sup>.

Due to these peculiarities, the system of providing continuous training for workers, at present, does not have its own national or regional qualifications frameworks to be referenced to the NQF.

### 3.5 - The system of professions

Similarly, to the education and vocational training system, the professions system is placed in an area of shared competence between the State and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces. The functions of identifying and regulating specific professions by virtue of justified reasons of general interest<sup>198</sup>, as well as the establishment of new associations and orders of professions, are reserved to the State. The Regions have the legislative power to regulate and organize vocational training courses where they are identified by the standard as a requirement for access to professions.

For the purposes of the NQF and on the basis of the definition of "regulated profession" taken from the European Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications and implemented in Italian law<sup>199</sup>, the organization of the Italian system of professions can be divided into:

- regulated professions;
- unregulated professions.

This distinction is functional for the purposes of referencing regulated professions to the NQF, since the qualifications required for access to the regulated professions are full-fledged included in the National

<sup>197</sup> For example, Regions and the Autonomous Provinces organize their repositories (see paragraph 3.3) in modular and flexible way for planning training courses aimed at achieving single unit of competence (micro qualifications), subject to validation or certification. Similarly, the joint interprofessional funds are increasingly promoting both training activities based on units of competence and the linking between learning outcomes and training and professional standards, as defined by NSCC. The unit of competences criteria aim at issuing certifications recognized by the Public Competent Authorities or at issuing transparency documents in the perspective of their portability within the identification and validation services, also in terms of credits.

<sup>198</sup> (EU) DIRECTIVE 2018/958 of 28 June 2018 implemented with LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 142 of 16 October 2020.

<sup>199</sup> The recognition of professional qualifications in Italy is regulated by Legislative Decree No. 206 of 6 November 2007, which implements the European Directive 2005/36/EC. On 18 January 2016, Directive 2013/55/EU was implemented in Italy with Legislative Decree No. 15 of 28 January 2016, which updates and amends Directive 2005/36/EC by introducing some innovations to facilitate the mobility of professionals in EU Countries, including the European Professional Card referred to in the Implementing (EU) Regulation 2015/983 of 24 June 2015.

Repository and the administrations responsible for their issuing are Public Competent Authority of the respective qualifications. Therefore, although taking into account the distinctive specificities that characterize the system of professions with respect to the system of education and vocational training, the procedure for referencing these qualifications to the NQF concerns both qualifications that can be immediately assimilated to learning pathways (such as of regulated training) and qualifications not comparable to traditionally understood qualifications, such as, for example, public competitions for permitting the practice of the profession.

In this regard, it should be specified that, within the NSCC's implementation phase, the services for identifying, validating and certifying competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, do not apply to the qualifications of regulated professions, even if Public Competent Authorities might regulate the introduction of these services on an experimental basis for their relevant qualifications and according to specific sectoral rules.

### 3.5.1 - The regulated professions

Regulated professions are those activities or set of activities whose access and practice, also by means of a professional certificate, are directly or indirectly subordinated, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative rules, to the possession of a qualification issued by a central or regional authority of the State. The regulated professions include:

- professions organized into associations<sup>200</sup> that also include the health professions sector, access to which is subject to the possession of certain educational and professional requirements (for example, the possession of specific qualifications or regulated training) and in most cases to passing a State exam;
- the professions reserved for members of lists and registers, which also include some auxiliary arts of the health professions and the professions of health interest, whose access is subject to the possession of certain training and professional requirements established by law, in some cases, also by passing an exam.

The regulated professions in Italy are included in a list on the portal of the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy<sup>201</sup> sorted according to:

- the Italian legislation;
- the competent Italian authority;
- information on the recognition procedure in application of the European regulations and related forms.

The main references of the governance of regulated professions are:

- the central government administrations responsible for regulating the profession, identifying the reserved activities and the professional access requirements; they are also the public competent authorities issuing the qualification within the NSCC for the purposes of the referencing procedure to the NQF;
- the Department of European policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers as national coordination and assistance centre for the implementation of the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications also through the drafting of the National Plan for the reform of professions<sup>202</sup>;

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<sup>200</sup> The regulatory reference for professions organized into associations is Article 2229 of the Italian Civil Code.

<sup>201</sup> <http://www.impresainungiorno.gov.it/web/l-impresa-e-l-europa/elenco-professioni-regolamentate>. The regulated professions in the other EU Countries, the European Economic Space (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Switzerland and the related Competent Authorities are listed on the European Commission website: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=homepage>

<sup>202</sup> PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS - DEPARTMENT FOR EUROPEAN POLICIES (2016).

- the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, for certain professions reserved for those enrolled in lists and registers, which are responsible for organizing and providing training, thus carrying out theoretical and practical exams for access to professional qualification and promoting refresher and retraining professional courses. As regards the referencing to the NQF of these qualifications, the regional administrations are the public competent authorities being delegated by the competent central administrations, pursuant to specific sector laws;
- other national, local (i.e., Municipalities) or territorial (i.e., Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicrafts and Agriculture - CCIAA) public bodies that carry out territorial regulation tasks, service to citizens, registration or authorization for specific professional, artisanal or entrepreneurial activities. As regards the referencing of these qualifications to the NQF, these bodies can be public competent authorities being delegated by the competent administrations, pursuant to specific sector laws.

According to the national legislation establishing the regulated professions, the referencing of the relative qualification to NQF can be submitted through a single application, according to the procedure referred to in paragraph 2.2.4.

The learning pathways for accessing to regulated professions<sup>203</sup> result in a qualification of regulated profession whose learning outcomes are referenced to, as shown in Table 3.9, level 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 NQF, in relation to the entry level competences requirements and learning outcomes achieved at the end of each path, to be determined on the basis of the procedures and referencing criteria defined in Chapter 2. The sub-articulation of level varies from 1 to 4, according to the type of qualification.

Table 3.9 - Referencing of the qualifications system of regulated professions to the NQF

Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualifications	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level and sub-articulation	EQF
Competent authority	entitled Body by the competent authority	Qualification of regulated profession	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	IT 3.4	3
				IT 4.2 e IT 4.4	4
				IT 5.4	5
				IT 6.2 e IT 6.4	6
				IT 7.2 e IT 7.3	7
				IT 8.1 e IT 8.3	8

### 3.5.2 - The non-regulated professions

Non-regulated professions are those whose activities are not reserved or typical of regulated professions by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative rules, i.e., whose access is free. Non-regulated professions are generally organized into professional associations which identify the profession and ensure their members and clients from any improper exercise. Membership in these associations is always optional.

In 2013, Italy enacted a law that contains some provisions on non-regulated professions<sup>204</sup>, identifying with the definition of "profession not organized into associations and orders" the economic activity, even organized (practised in individual, associated, corporate, cooperative form or as employee), aimed at providing services or products in favour of third parties, habitually and mainly through intellectual work, or in any case with its contribution, with the exclusion of: activities reserved by law to subjects enrolled in associations and orders; health professions and related activities typical or reserved by law; and the crafts, commercial and public activities governed by specific regulations.

<sup>203</sup> In the regulated professions qualifications are only included the ones corresponding to the definition of regulated education and not the qualifications recognized in various ways equivalent to the corresponding regulated education. The information related to the correspondence of a qualification to a qualification of a regulated qualification, where present, are object of a communication from the Public Competent Authorities in the request for the referencing of the qualification.

<sup>204</sup> LAW No. 4 of 14 January 2013.

This legislation defines the minimum obligations of information and ethical conduct of professionals and the role of professional associations (and the related forms of federation in aggregate form) is recognized, made up of professionals on a voluntary basis and without restrictions of exclusive representation, with the goals of: enhancing the skills of professionals; ensuring compliance with the ethical rules; facilitating the choice and protection of consumers in compliance with competition rules.

Professional associations can ask to be registered in special lists published by Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy on its website<sup>205</sup>: registration does not have the value of regulation or recognition of the profession, but of transparency of professional contents, functions and services carried out by associations, in favour of both registered professionals and consumers.

The standard also promotes two methods of certification of quality and professional qualification of professionals that are not a necessary requirement for the exercise of the profession:

- the certificate of quality and the professional certificate of the services provided by professional members that are a second party certificate that validates the regular registration of the professional to the association and the necessary requirements for participation in the association, the qualitative and professional standards required for the registration to the association and its maintenance as well as the guarantees provided by the association, such as the activation of a desk for the consumer and the possible possession of the insurance policy for professional liability;
- the certificate of compliance with the technical regulations of the profession UNI ISO, UNI EN ISO, UNI EN and UNI<sup>206</sup> (hereinafter referred to as UNI technical regulations), where defined. This certificate constitutes a third-party certification issued, at the request of the professional even if not registered with any association, by the certification bodies accredited by the Italian National Accreditation Body ACCREDIA<sup>207</sup>.

The system of non-regulated professions does not currently have own national or regional frameworks of qualifications to be referenced to the NQF.

### 3.6 - The offer of non-formal learning

Alongside the formal learning offer, there is a wide range of non-formal learning offer, funded both by public and private resources, characterized by different purposes, contents, contexts, promoters and recipients. The Italian strategy for lifelong learning integrates the two offers aimed at increasing and diversifying the learning opportunities and enhancing the spendability and portability of competences acquired.

The following lists the different types of non-formal learning opportunities, which can be considered as complementary to the formal learning opportunities:

1. *The occupation-oriented or trade contract* (Box 2 of this chapter): it is part of the non-formal learning offer since it is aimed at being classified in the contractual qualification enclosed in the contract and not at the achievement of a qualification included in the national system of the formal learning offer. Nevertheless, all the contractual qualifications of the occupation-oriented apprenticeship are classified under the Atlas of Work and Qualifications.
2. *The extracurricular internship*: it is an active policy measure aimed at creating direct contact between an enterprise and a trainee in order to improve professional guidance, the acquisition of professional competences and the integration or reintegration into the labour market (Box 1 of this Chapter). Although extracurricular internships are not aimed at acquiring a qualification of the NSCC, they are designed and implemented on the basis of the descriptive and classification

<sup>205</sup> <https://www.mise.gov.it/index.php/it/component/content/article?id=2027474:professioni-non-organizzate-in-ordini-o-collegi-elenco-delle-associazioni-professionali>.

<sup>206</sup> (EU) DIRECTIVE No. 765/2008 of 9 July 2008.

<sup>207</sup> (EU) REGULATION No. 765/2008 of 9 July 2008.

standards of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications.

3. *The universal civil service - SCU<sup>208</sup> and volunteering<sup>209</sup>*: the SCU is an active citizenship pathway, lasting 8-12 months, which offers young people aged 18 to 28 the opportunity to participate in a project, at a non-profit organization, in Italy or abroad, characterized by general and specific training and voluntary service in the fields of assistance, civil protection, environmental, historical, artistic and cultural heritage, education and promotion of culture and sport, agriculture and biodiversity, peace between peoples, protection of human rights and development cooperation. Volunteering is an activity, governed by law, carried out in a personal, spontaneous and freeway, through a third sector entity, in the context of activities of general interest for the non-profit pursuit of civic, solidarity and social utility purposes. The reform of the SCU and voluntary service states the competences acquired by the volunteers are subject to identification and documentation procedures in order to promote their use both in education and vocational training and in workplace. The guidelines and practices of transparency in the field of voluntary work and the SCU are the operational reference valid for the broader and more comprehensive panorama of the non-formal learning offer provided in the context of third sector entities and associations (such as, by way of example: voluntary organizations, social promotion associations, philanthropic bodies, social enterprises and social cooperatives, mutual aid enterprises, recognized or unrecognised associations, amateur sports associations, third age universities, non-governmental organizations, foundations and cultural centres, university colleges of merit, etc.).
4. *The offer of non-formal learning promoted by Public Competent Authorities and other public bodies*: in addition to offering formal learning, Public Competent Authorities promote and organize a wide range of non-formal learning opportunities, especially in the context of increasingly interconnected public investment policies and sectors, such as: policies to tackle early school leaving and educational failure; active labour market policies; policies to contrast poverty; policies for reskilling and upskilling the adult population; policies to support innovation and the competitiveness of businesses and the digital, energy and green transitions. In this context, different subjects promote and organize a wide range of non-formal learning opportunities: education and training institutions<sup>210</sup> and other public bodies (e.g., CONI - School of Sports<sup>211</sup> or ANPAL - ESF Management Authority) at national level, and CIAA<sup>212</sup>, employment agencies, social welfare services, municipal libraries, museums and cultural activities at local level.
5. *The offer of non-formal learning and third-party certification carried out with private resources*: in the broad, varied and heterogeneous context of the self-financed offer, based on the criterion of complementarity with the public offer of formal learning, by way of example, three macro areas are identified:
  - i. the learning promoted by issuing bodies of business, workers, and professional associations, including bilateral bodies set up on the initiative of one or more employers' and workers' associations<sup>213</sup>;
  - ii. the offer of "market" training, with increasingly significant shares of e-learning or blended training, aimed both at enterprises in the context of corporate training plans<sup>214</sup> and at individuals, especially for training in foreign languages and digital skills, in relation to community frameworks<sup>215</sup> or other proprietary or open standards;

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<sup>208</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 40 of 6 March 2017, as amended.

<sup>209</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 112 of 3 July 2017, as amended and LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 117 of 3 July 2017, as amended.

<sup>210</sup> By way of example, both some Regions and universities have created MOOC e-learning platforms to support and integrate the formal learning offer.

<sup>211</sup> The National Olympic Committee - CONI is a public non-economic entity, supervised by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, associating the national sport federations and associate sport disciplines. For the School of Sports see the website <https://www.coni.it/it/scuola-dello-sport.html>. In 2018, CONI also adopted a general referencing framework for the achievement of qualifications of sport workers called National Qualification System of sport workers - NQS

<sup>212</sup> The Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture, in the framework of the duties attributed by the LAW No. 580 of 29 December 1993, in particular Art. 2.

<sup>213</sup> LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 276 of 10 September 2003, Art. 2, para. 1, subpara. i)

<sup>214</sup> Large companies in particular in recent years have made huge investments with their own resources for the creation of corporate e-learning platforms to support the training, updating and management of human resources processes.

<sup>215</sup> For the European reference frameworks, please refer to what is described in paragraph 2.2.6.

- iii. the offer of continuous training promoted for the professions<sup>216</sup> with particular reference to: the obligation of continuous and constant updating required by law with regard to professions organized in associations and orders<sup>217</sup>; the updating provided for some regulated professions not organized into associations, such as compulsory, continuous and structural training aimed at permanent teachers of the public education system<sup>218</sup>; the training and periodic updating offered in the context of non-regulated professions, also for the purposes of the certificates issued by professional associations both in the presence and in the absence of a UNI technical standard<sup>219</sup>. In this context there are also certifications attesting compliance of the professional with a number of requirements defined by UNI technical standards or procedures and issued by bodies accredited by ACCREDIA. Although these certifications do not necessarily represent the outcome of a training pathway, they are comparable to private qualifications relating to competences acquired in different context and may be valid as a third-party certification for the purposes of attestation of quality for non-regulated professions. The standardization criteria, on the basis of which the individual UNI technical standards of the professions are defined, take voluntary reference to the construction criteria, the descriptors and level taxonomies defined through the NQF.

The complementarity of non-formal learning offer is based on three main elements:

- competence-based training activities and the linking of learning outcomes to the standards defined by the NSCC, also through specific agreements with the Public Competent Authorities;
- updating of the standards of the NSCC through the direct involvement of public and private bodies (paragraph 2.3)
- referencing of qualifications issued by bodies other than the Public Competent Authorities, referred to in paragraph 2.2.6.

### **3.7 - The Italian qualification systems: schematic diagrams, NQF visual identity and referencing synoptic table**

For the purpose of a wider and more widespread dissemination of the NQF, all the qualification systems described in this Chapter are graphically represented and identified through four distinct colours:

- Blue for the national Primary, Secondary and Higher Education systems;
- Green for the Vocational Education systems of Regions and Autonomous Provinces;
- Yellow for the Adult Education system;
- Red for the system of the regulated qualifications and professions.

In particular:

- the schematic diagrams of the main pathways of the Italian education and training systems structured according to the age of the attending students and the duration range in terms of hours/years of study with relative NQF and ISCED levels (2011) (Fig. 3.1);
- the NQF visual identity, also available in interactive version on the institutional website of the EQF PCN [link], and readable through the QR Code integrated in the NQF logo;
- the NQF/EQF referencing synoptic table (tab. 3.10) of all Italian qualifications systems sorted by EQF level, including, for each qualification typologies issued within the NSCC, the indication of: the Public Competent Authority, the Public Entitled Body, the name of the qualification, the EQF level attributed by Italy in 2012 (where present), the minimum NQF/EQF level access requirements (and possible further continuation), and the link to the Italian mapping to ISCED-P and ISCED-A (2011) classifications.

<sup>216</sup> These are mostly learning opportunities organized in credits and carried out with private resources although, depending on the qualification systems, incentive measures are provided, such as the tax deductions introduced with the LAW No. 81 of 22 May 2017, or the vouchers for permanent teachers of the public education system, introduced with LAW No. 107 of 13 July 2015.

<sup>217</sup> PRESIDENTIAL DECREE No. 137 of 7 August 2012

<sup>218</sup> LAW No. 107 of 13 July 2015, Art. 1, paragraph 124.

<sup>219</sup> LAW No. 4 of 14 January 2013.

Figure 3.1 - Schematic diagrams of the Italian NQF systems Figure 3.2 - NQF visual identity

**INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING** *Age of the students*

0-6	7-11	12-14	15-16	17	18	19
Compulsory Education						
Right-Duty to Education and Training						
Pre-Primary	Primary Education	Lower Secondary Education	Vocational Institutes/Technical Institutes/Lycée			
ISCED = 0	NQF = 1.1 ISCED = 1	NQF = 1.2 ISCED = 2	NQF = 2.2	NQF = 4.2 ISCED = 3		
			IeFP		IFTS	
			NQF = 2.2	NQF = 3.4 ISCED = 3	NQF = 4.4 ISCED = 3	NQF = 4.4 ISCED = 4

**HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTES** *(starting from 19 years of age)*

*Durata dei percorsi in anni*

1	2	3
Applied technologies specialization Diploma (two-year course)		Applied technologies Higher specialization Diploma (three-year course)
NQF = 5.4 ISCED = 5		NQF = 6.4 ISCED = 5

**ACADEMIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING** *(starting from 19 years of age)*

*Duration of the courses in years*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bachelor Degree			Master Degree		PhD		
NQF = 6.2 ISCED = 6			NQF = 7.2 ISCED = 7		NQF = 8.1 ISCED = 8		
Single-cycle Master Degree					Specialization Diploma		
NQF = 7.2 ISCED = 7					NQF = 8.3 ISCED = 7		
				First Level Master Degree or Higher specialization Diploma	Second level University Post Degree		
				NQF = 7.3 ISCED = 6	NQF = 8.3 ISCED = 7		

### HIGHER EDUCATION IN ARTS AND MUSIC (starting from 19 years of age)

Minimum duration of the courses in years

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
First level Academic Diploma			Second level Academic Di-ploma		Research Training Academic Diploma		
NQF = 6.2 ISCED = 6			NQF = 7.2 ISCED = 7		NQF = 8.1 ISCED = 8		
Single cycle second level Academic diploma					First level Academic Specialization Di-ploma		
NQF = 7.2 ISCED = 7					NQF= 7.3 ISCED = 6		
					Second level Academic Specialization Diploma		
					NQF = 8.3 ISCED = 7		
			Higher special-ization Diploma or First level post Degree Diploma		Higher special-ization Diploma or Second level post Degree Diploma		
			NQF = 7.3 ISCED = 6		NQF = 8.3 ISCED = 7		

### ADULT EDUCATION (starting from 17 years of age)

Duration of the courses in hours

200h				
Literacy and Italian language courses				
NQF = 1.1 ISCED = 1				
400-600h	825h	1518h*	1518h	759h
I liv. – I teaching period	I liv. – II teaching period	II liv. – I teaching period	II liv. – II teaching period	II liv. – III teaching period
NQF = 1.2 ISCED = 2	NQF = 2.1	NQF = 2.2	NQF = 4.1	NQF = 4.2 ISCED = 3

### REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING (starting from 17 years of age)

Variable duration of the courses

Operating Area	Technical Area	Higher training Area
NQF = 2.4; 3.4	NQF = 4.4; 5.4	NQF = 6.4; 7.3

### REGULATED PROFESSIONS QUALIFICATIONS (starting from 17 years of age)

Variable duration of the courses

Regulated profession qualification
NQF = 3.4; 4.2; 4.4; 5.4; 6.2; 6.4; 7.2; 7.3; 8.1; 8.3

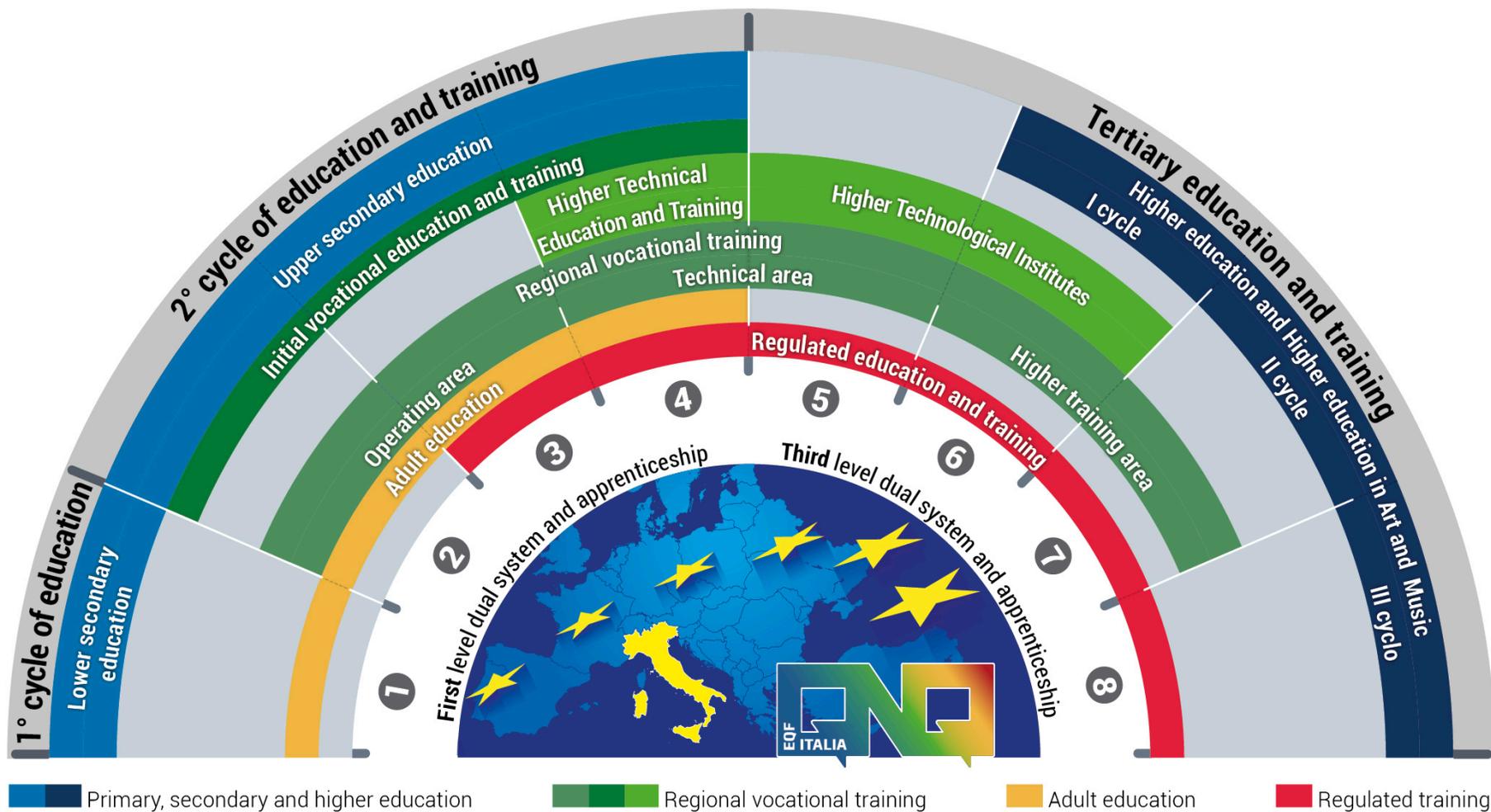


Tabella 3.10 - Referenziazione dei sistemi italiani delle qualificazioni al QNQ - Tavola sinottica

EQF Level 2022	Public Competent Authority	Public Entitled Body	Name of qualification	Mapping ITALY ISCED 2013		EQF level 2012	NQF level and sub-articulation	Minimum NQF level access requirements	NQF level of possible continuation
				ISCED P 2011	ISCED A 2011				
-	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Pre-primary education	020	020	-	-	-	-
1	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Certification of competences at the end of primary school	100	100	-	<b>IT 1.1</b>	-	IT.1.2 IT 1.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Final diploma of the first cycle of education	244	244	1	<b>IT 1.2</b>	IT 1.1	IT 2.2 IT 2.2 leFP IT 2.4 FP IT 3.4 FP IT 2.1 IDA IT 2.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certificate attesting the achievement of a level of knowledge of the Italian language at level A2 of the CEFR	100	030	-	<b>IT 1.1</b>	-	IT 1.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Final diploma of the first cycle of education (IDA)	244	244	-	<b>IT 1.2</b>	IT 1.1 IT 1.1 IDA	IT 2.4 FP IT 3.4 FP IT 2.1 IDA IT 2.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate	-	-	2	<b>IT 2.2</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 leFP IT 4.4 leFP IT 4.1 IDA
2	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate (leFP)	-	-	2	<b>IT 2.2</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 leFP IT 4.4 leFP IT 4.1 IDA
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for operating area	-	-	-	<b>IT 2.4</b>	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 3.4
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certification attesting the acquisition of basic competences corresponding to the compulsory education (IDA)	-	-	-	<b>IT 2.1</b>	IT 1.2 IT 1.2 IDA	IT 2.2 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certification for admission to the second teaching period of second level	-	-	-	<b>IT 2.2</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.1 IDA
	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Compulsory education certificate	-	-	2	<b>IT 2.2</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.2 IT 3.4 leFP IT 4.4 leFP IT 4.1 IDA

3	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Initial education and vocational training certificate (IeFP)	353	353	3	<b>IT 3.4</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.2
								IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for operating area	-	-	-	<b>IT 3.4</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	<b>IT 3.4</b>	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-
4	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Upper secondary education diploma (technical, vocational)	354	354	4	<b>IT 4.2</b>	IT 2.2	IT 6.2
								IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.4 FP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 5.4 FP IT 5.4 ITS Academy IT 6.4 ITS Academy
	Ministry of Education and Merit	State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Upper secondary education diploma (lycée)	344	344	4	<b>IT 4.2</b>	IT 2.2	IT 6.2
								IT 4.4 FP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 5.4 FP IT 5.4 ITS Academy IT 6.4 ITS Academy	
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Initial education and vocational training diploma (IeFP)	353	353	4	<b>IT 4.4</b>	IT 1.2	IT 4.2
								IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.4 IFTS IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP IT 4.2 IDA
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited training institutions State institutions and independent with parity educational institutions	Higher technical specialization certificate (IFTS)	453	453	4	<b>IT 4.4</b>	IT 4.2	IT 5.4 ITS Academy IT 6.4 ITS Academy
								IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	
	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for technical area	-	-	-	<b>IT 4.4</b>	IT 4.2	IT 5.4 FP
								IT 3.4 IeFP IT 3.4 FP IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA	

4	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Certification for admission to the third teaching period of second level (IDA)	-	-	-	<b>IT 4.1</b>	IT 2.2	IT 4.4 FP IT 5.4 FP	
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Provincial Centres for Adult Education - CPIA	Technical, vocational or artistic upper secondary level diploma (IDA)	354	354	-		<b>IT 4.2</b>	IT 2.2 IeFP	IT 4.2 IDA
									IT 2.2 IDA	
							IT 4.4 IeFP		IT 6.2	
Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	<b>IT 4.2</b> <b>IT 4.4</b>	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-		
5	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Accredited/authorized training institutions	Regional vocational training qualification for technical area *  <i>* Level 5.3 vocational training courses for technical area can also be accessed with a 4.1 level of vocational education and training or adult education.</i>	-	-	-	<b>IT 5.4</b>	IT 4.2	.	
	Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes – ITS Academy	Applied technologies specialization Diploma (two-year course)	554	550	5		<b>IT 5.4</b>		IT 3.4 IeFP IT 3.4 FP
										IT 4.1 IDA IT 4.2 IDA
							IT 4.2		IT 6.4 FP IT 6.4 ITS Academy	
Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	<b>IT 5.4</b>	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-		
								IT 4.4 IFTS IT 5.4 FP IT 5.4 ITS Academy IT 6.4 ITS Academy		

6	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Bachelor Degree (Laurea)	665	660	6	IT 6.2	IT 4.2	IT 7.2 IT 7.3 MASTER	
								IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4 FP IT 7.3 FP	
	Ministry of University and Research	Istituzioni AFAM	First level Academic diploma (Diploma accademico di primo livello)	665	660	6	IT 6.2	IT 4.2	IT 7.2 IT 7.3 MASTER	
								IT 4.2 IDA	IT 6.4 FP IT 7.3 FP	
	6	Ministry of Education and Merit	Higher Technological Institutes – ITS Academy	Applied technologies higher specialization Diploma (three-year course)	554	550	5	IT 6.4	IT 4.2	IT 7.3 FP
									IT 4.4 IFTS	
IT 4.2 IDA										
6	Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Istituzioni formative accreditate/ autorizzate	Regional higher vocational training qualification	-	-	-	IT 6.4	IT 4.2	-	
								IT 4.4 IeFP IT 4.4 IFTS IT 4.4 FP		
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Qualification of regulated profession	-	-	-	IT 6.2 IT 6.4	Livelli minimi delle relative qualificazioni	-	
7	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Single-cycle Master Degree (Laurea Magistrale/Specialistica a ciclo unico)	766	760	7	IT 7.2	IT 4.2	IT 8.1 IT 8.3	
								IT 4.2 IDA		
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Single-cycle Second level Academic diploma (Diploma accademico di secondo livello)	766	760	7	IT 7.2	IT 4.2	IT 8.1 IT 8.3	
								IT 4.2 IDA		
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Master Degree (Laurea Magistrale/ Specialistica)	767	760	7	IT 7.2	IT 6.2	IT 8.1 IT 8.3	
	Ministry of University and Research	Istituzioni AFAM	Second level Academic diploma (Diploma accademico di secondo livello)	767	760	7	IT 7.2	IT 6.2	IT 8.1 IT 8.3	
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	First level University post degree (Master universitario di primo livello)	667	660	7	IT 7.3	IT 6.2	-	
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Higher specialization Diploma (Diploma di corso di perfezionamento)	667	660	7	IT 7.3	IT 6.2	-	
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	First level Academic specialisation diploma (Diploma accademico di specializzazione di primo livello) Higher specialization diploma or First level post degree (Diploma di perfezionamento o Master di primo livello)	667	660	7	IT 7.3	IT 6.2	-	
Regions and Autonomous Provinces	Istituzioni formative accreditate/ autorizzate	Regional higher vocational training qualification	-	-	-	IT 7.3	IT 6.2 IT 6.4 FP IT 6.4 ITS Academy	-		
	Qualification of regulated profession	Ente titolato dall'Autorità competente	Qualificazione di professione regolamentata	-	-	-	IT 7.2 IT 7.3	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-	

8	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Research Doctorate - PhD (Dottorato di ricerca)	864	860	8	<b>IT 8.1</b>	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Research Training Academic Diploma (Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca)	864	860	8	<b>IT 8.1</b>	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Second level University post degree (Master universitario di secondo livello)	768	760	8	<b>IT 8.3</b>	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	Higher specialization diploma or Second level post degree	767	760	8	<b>IT 8.3</b>	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	AFAM institutions	(Diploma di corso di perfezionamento o Master di secondo livello)	767	760	8	<b>IT 8.3</b>	IT 7.2	-
	Ministry of University and Research	University institutions	Specialization Diploma (Diploma di specializzazione)	768	760	8	<b>IT 8.3</b>	IT 7.2	-
	Qualification of regulated profession	Public Entitled Body by the Competent Authority	Second level Academic specialisation diploma (Diploma accademico di specializzazione di secondo livello)	-	-	-	<b>IT 8.1</b> <b>IT 8.3</b>	Minimum levels of the corresponding qualifications	-

## CHAPTER 4 - *Synthesis of the results of the institutional confrontation debate and of the national and international consultation*<sup>220</sup>

Beyond the legal, technical, methodological and procedural framework described in the previous chapters outlining the link and the comparability between NQF and EQF and the levelling of the Italian qualifications systems, the referencing process went through a complex confrontation debate involving all the Public Competent Authorities. In addition to that, a public consultation with the main stakeholders at national and international level also started.

As mentioned in the foreword, the updating of the Referencing Report is based, on three different approaches that are elected as a general method of the process: the cooperative approach among the public administrations involved; the progressive approach aimed at valorising the consolidated experiences; the substantial approach endorsing the maximum sustainability, timeliness and cost-effectiveness, of the referencing procedures.

In order to involve all Public Competent Authorities responsible for their own qualifications system at different level of governance, in 2020 the EQF NCP drafted a technical proposal for the updating of the Referencing Report as a discussing base for a wide institutional consultation process, either at national or international level. More in details, in agreement with the Ministry of Labour and social policies, the institutional debate and the consultation process concerned:

- sharing and reviewing the technical proposal drafted by the EQF NCP together with the central and regional administrations (par. 4.1);
- consultation with international experts, according to criterion 7 of the EQF Recommendation (par. 4.2);
- the launch of an on line public consultation addressed to end users and interested organizations, similarly to the main consultation processes carried out at European level for the adoption of Recommendations, Decisions , etc. (par. 4.3).

Furthermore, as part of the joint activities of the NCPs (EQF, Euroguidance and Europass) located at ANPAL a coordinated multi-channel communication and dissemination strategy was implemented, aimed at maximizing the dissemination and sharing of EU transparency tools and their implementation at national level (including the EQF referencing process), and at reaching the main target audiences, including end users<sup>221</sup>.

<sup>220</sup> For the definitions on *Lifelong Learning, Atlas of Work and qualifications, Competence, Credits, Public Competent Authority, Identification and validation of competences, National Qualifications Framework, Qualification, Referencing, National Repository of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications, Learning Outcomes, National System for certification of competences*, see Glossary of Legal definitions in Annex 4 of the present Report.

<sup>221</sup> In particular, the following activities were organized: nine joint seminars addressed to school, VET and university staff, to guidance counselors and to chambers of commerce; a final online conference held on 24 March 2021 for the presentation of the results of the activities conducted by the three NCPs (including the presentation of the Referencing Report) and which was attended by the main institutional actors (ANPAL, Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Ministry of Education and Merit; Ministry of University and Research); workshops addressed to professionals and operators and end users, as part of the main national fairs on orientation and work. In addition, videos, brochures and promotional material were implemented, including the development of a brand identity (SkillON - Showcase your skills) for reaching wide target by means of social media.

## 4.1 - Main findings of the confrontation debate with national and regional public competent authorities

As foreseen by the Decree establishing the NQF, the technical proposal was drafted by the EQF NCP and shared on July 2020 with INAPP, as independent evaluator of the referencing process. The drafting of the technical proposal followed the requirements outlined in the EQF Recommendation, the content of the First Referencing Report, as well as a wide range of national and European provisions (see Annex 4 of the present Report) and all normative, technical and methodological references adopted for the implementation of the NSCC.

The technical proposal was formally presented on 23 October 2020 to the National Technical Committee, the institutional governance site responsible for the implementation of the NSCC. At the same time, a dedicated Working Group was set up with the aim of handling the discussions between the national and regional Public Competent Authorities for the review and finalization of the draft proposal. The working group was led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies with the involvement of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University and Research, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano. The group was also participated by the EQF NCP, INAPP and CIMEA as technical body of the Ministry of University and Research, along with Tecnostruttura of Italian Regions for the ESF, as technical support for Regions and Autonomous Provinces and for their coordination at national level.

The methodology adopted by the Working Group for leading the discussion of the technical proposal presented to the National Technical Committee was built on a cooperative approach mainly carried out through:

- plenary session meetings devoted to the comparative analysis, the extensive discussion around transversal aspects, and to the sharing and finalization of the Report itself;
- restricted session meetings, aimed at deepening specific descriptive contents and elements of the different qualifications systems for referencing to NQF.

The discussion with the national and regional Public Competent Authorities took place between November 2020 and July 2021. Within the Working Group a total of 4 plenary and 6 restricted on line meetings have been carried out for the purpose of the reviewing and finalization of the technical proposal, on the basis of the proposal of amendments provided by the Public Competent Authorities.

A dedicated in-depth analysis was aimed at defining the nature and the scope of the updated Italian Referencing Report. In this view, it was agreed that the Report not only provides a comparable description of the Italian qualifications systems and their referencing to EQF, but it also contributes in setting a perspective lifelong learning governance framework, aimed at promoting the transparency, spendability, portability and quality assurance of qualifications and competences within the NSCC through the implementation of NQF and the referencing procedure.

Specific attention was paid for improving and homogenizing the correct use of shared terms and definitions, so as the completeness, clearness and correctness of the description of each qualifications system (in terms of learning paths, access requirements, verticalization, target groups and typology of qualifications issued), also taking into account the recent legislative and technical innovations introduced in Italy regarding the lifelong learning system. The complex activity of revision and integration of the text considered and adopted all the technical requests raised by the representatives of the Public Competent Authorities, with the aim of highlighting both the specific cultural and professional identities and the comparability among different qualifications systems.

Under a more technical-methodological aspect, the discussion within the Working Group concerned the following items:

- methodological criteria for levelling the different typologies of qualifications to NQF, by adopting solutions compliant with the EQF Recommendation's leading criterion of "learning

outcomes", as fundamental element for levelling and making qualifications comparable. Other potential useful information for a better balancing and contextualization of learning outcomes descriptors were also taken into account;

- the use and allocation of sub-articulations of level, according to the NQF Decree, with the aim of providing additional qualitative (not hierarchical) information for improving transparency of qualifications referenced to the same level and for a better understanding of the specificities of the different qualifications systems;
- the introduction of micro-qualifications (according to the European Commission's approach on micro credentials within the Skills Agenda<sup>222</sup>) to be referenced to NQF as foreseen for qualifications. The definition agreed within the Working Group, consistent with the legal framework of the NSCC, was conceived for ensuring a wide and inclusive use of micro-qualifications in many fields of the public lifelong learning offer, also taking into consideration the opportunities provided by the services of recognition, validation and certification of competences, in a tailored learning pathways perspective;
- a comprehensive and up to date description of the tools for the recognition and spendability of qualifications and competences in Italy and abroad, in order to provide a general overview, not necessarily linked to single cases;
- the need to represent and include, in a periodic updating and maintenance perspective of the Italian Referencing Report, specific typologies of qualifications not part of the National Repository, such as the international qualifications (explicitly mentioned in the NQF Decree and in the EQF Recommendation), and sectoral qualifications with legal value issued by public bodies other than the Public Competent Authorities.

Finally, a special attention was given to the possible impacts that the implementation of NQF might have in Italy, not only in terms of transparency of the qualifications, but also for their attractiveness and accessibility by means of the activation of the referencing procedure, described in para. 2.2.4, and the subsequent development of the Italian Register of referenced qualifications fully interoperable with the Europass platform and with the main national databases on education, training and employment (above all the SIU - Unitary Information System of labour policies). On this purpose and on the basis of a participative project model, stakeholders involved have agreed their availability in piloting the referencing procedure, together with the technical support of EQF NCP and INAPP. The pilot activity will regard the Italian qualifications typologies included in the synoptic table 3.10 of the Report.

In addition to that, with particular reference to those subjects who will recur to the Report for the description and referencing of the qualifications, it has been furtherly considered the approach of using action verbs as descriptive elements of the eight NQF levels alongside the respective performance outcomes (as outlined in the NQF synthetic table 2.3 ), starting from the CEDEFOP literature on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes<sup>223</sup>. This step is to be considered a milestone for finalizing the future operational guide that EQF NCP will implement for both supporting the qualifications design and the referencing procedure to the NQF.

<sup>222</sup> Note for the attention of the Members of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, - Skill Agenda action 10 - Micro Credentials, May 2021.

<sup>223</sup> CEDEFOP (2017).

## 4.2 - Main results of the international consultation

According to criterion 7 of the EQF Recommendation, an international consultation was carried out involving 4 members of the EQF Advisory Group and/or as EQF NCPs Coordinators, representing 3 different countries (Ireland, Slovakia and Spain) and dealing at national level with the implementation process of the EQF Recommendation and of the lifelong learning strategies. Experts involved have been:

- John O'Connor - Head of Qualifications and Skills Policy by the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) - IRELAND;
- Ildikó Pathóová - Counselor of the Lifelong Learning Department by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports, and L'ubica Gálová Vice-Director for Lifelong Learning by the State Vocational Education Institute – SLOVAKIA;
- Ana Maria Rodriguez Gil - Technical Advisor of the Cabinet of the General Secretariat for Vocational Training by the Ministry of Vocational Training - SPAIN.

The international consultation was a step-by-step exercise that implied a gradual improvement in terms of completeness, comparability and transparency of the technical proposal of the Report.

As a first step, on 28-29 September 2020 a Peer Review activity was conducted, involving two of the three above mentioned countries (Spain and Slovakia). The peer review aimed at discussing and sharing the state of play and the overall structure of the technical proposal, along with the roadmap of referencing and the future actions to be undertaken for the implementation of the Report. The general structure and the main features of the technical proposal were widely appreciated by the international experts and they encouraged Italy in implementing further the draft proposal, while highlighting some specific aspects for the finalization of the proposal, such as:

1. the involvement of social partners and students' associations within the national public consultation, so as to have wide representative rate of the end-users;
2. the importance of quality assurance for the inclusion of the qualifications in the NQF;
3. the greater visibility of the learning outcomes approach by providing concrete examples also for a better understanding, at international level, of qualifications levelling.

Following the considerations above, together with those emerged at national level during the confrontation debate with the central and regional Public Competent Authorities (par. 4.1), in February 2021 the technical proposal was presented in the EQF Advisory Group chaired by the European Commission. During this session, the EQF NCP showcased a more advanced state of play with respect of the technical proposal, sharing with the Advisory Group the objectives, functions, phases of the referencing procedure, future perspectives and expected impacts within the country after the final update of the Report.

Several feedback were provided by the EQF Advisory Group, in particular by Cedefop, the European Council, Ireland and France, mainly regarding the coherence of the report to the 10 EQF referencing criteria (e.g. the inclusion of the *self-certification report* in the EHEA framework introduced in Italy in 2010 with the Bologna process on the basis of the Italian Qualification Framework for Higher Education - QTI), as well as technical aspects such as the referencing of regional qualifications by means of the QNQR and the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and the activation of the referencing procedure on the basis of the results of the Report.

At a later stage, on 27 April 2021, in parallel with the national public consultation completed on 30 June 2021 (cfr par. 4.3), the international consultation on the technical proposal was launched for collecting written feedback from the international experts mainly on the coherence of the Report with the 10 EQF referencing criteria (see Annex III).

Experts agreed about the adherence to 10 referencing criteria, outlining, though its complexity, the completeness of the Report when describing the Italian Education and Training system in terms of organizational structure, governance and institutional actors. According to experts' opinion, the Report is clear, even to non expert readers, as it provides both relevant information concerning the systems and

sub-systems of the national public lifelong learning offer, and about the role and responsibilities that institutional actors hold within the referencing process to NQF/EQF. In addition, the proposal appears well structured and exhaustive in describing the rich legislative framework and the institutional steps towards the second phase of the referencing process: the progressive adoption of the NSCC and the establishment of the NQF.

One of the most appreciated aspect of the proposal concerned the importance that institutional cooperation performs in the Italian context as a ground step for the updating of the Report. According to experts' opinion, the Italian Report offers an interesting perspective and an example for those countries with similar governance and/or systems as, by going beyond the referencing process to EQF, it places itself in the broader strategic framework of the education, training and active labour market and social inclusion policies. More in details, the experts particularly appreciated:

- the extensive consultation approach which involved all institutional actors at different level of governance (international, national, regional and local) meaning, in the experts' opinion, quality and transparency assurance of the whole process;
- the ambition of NQF to represent an institutional coordination tool for promoting transparency, accessibility and portability of qualifications and competences, and act as an instrument of governance of the overall Italian lifelong learning strategy;
- the introduction of sub-articulation of levels as innovative elements for transparency which give a more accurate representation of the qualifications systems;
- the strong integration between the NQF implementation and the progressive adoption of the Italian legislative framework on validation of non formal and informal learning, started in 2012 with the establishment of the NSCC and followed in 2021 by the adoption of the national Guidelines on VNFIL;
- the role of "supervisor" given to the EQF NCP for the finalization of the referencing process, and, in a functional way, for the implementation of the NSCC, in accordance with the European strategy for the transparency of qualifications and competences;
- the existence of informative systems, such as the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications, the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and (in perspective) the future Italian Register of referenced qualifications to EQF, aimed at a greater comparability and accessibility of the information.

The reports of the international experts also provided few suggestions for further describe the normative framework the referencing process refers to. In a general way, experts suggested to use a more coherent wording/terminology with the EQF Recommendation (e.g. "referencing to EQF" and "inclusion to NQF"; and "comparability" and "permeability" of qualifications), as well as the introduction of infographics of qualification systems as to complement the Report and make it more readable at European level.

Additional punctual feedback were then provided by the experts aimed at enriching the contents of the Report and making it further coherent with the 10 EQF referencing criteria. In particular:

- with reference to Criterion 6, experts suggested a wider and more explicit remind to the systems for Quality Assurance, starting from the QA National Plan;
- with reference to Criterion 3 on validation issue, experts proposed to provide further information on the documentation and supporting phase to the users, especially for what concerns the counselling service.

EQF NCP took into consideration all the feedback provided; in most cases, and where possible, feedback were integrated in the text of the proposal.

With reference to Criterion 8, the integration of the *self-certification report* within the EHEA qualifications framework will be managed during the next maintenance phase of the referencing Report, as already outlined in Chapter 3.

The complete feedback reports provided by the international experts are available in Appendix II of the present Report.

### 4.3 - Public on line consultation

In order to assess the capability of the updated Report to represent, at the national and European level, the Italian qualification system, an on line open consultation was launched by the EQF NCP on 27 April 2021. The online consultation was addressed to public and private subjects operating within the education and training systems, and more in general within the framework of lifelong learning offer. The consultation was organized in cooperation with Eurodesk Italy, partner of the "Italian Cooperation 4 Transparency of Skills & Mobility" project - VP/2017/017. The consultation was consistent with the Italian Guidelines on public consultation<sup>224</sup>.

The consultation run until 30 June 2021 on the basis of an on line questionnaire (Annex 7 of the present Report) aimed at investigating: the level of knowledge and use of the Qualifications Frameworks established both at national level (NQF and -QTI) and at European level (EQF and the QF-EHEA); the completeness and clearness of the information contained in the new Referencing Report to EQF and its usability referring to the main NQF implementation areas in Italy.

Respondents were totally 69. General education, Vocational education and training institutes, and Higher education, were mostly represented, followed by central and regional administrations and public bodies and agencies.

On the whole, it emerges that respondents have a medium/high level of knowledge and usage of the NQF and EQF and nearly two thirds of the respondents consider that the adoption of the First Referencing Report (2012) significantly improved and enhanced the transparency and spendability of the Italian qualifications in Europe. With reference to the other qualifications frameworks taken into account it emerged a lower level of knowledge and use.

As concerns the level of completeness and clearness of the new referencing Report, almost all the respondents considered the information provided within the Report clear, complete and transparent with particular reference to the description and representation of the education and training systems, NQF and related referencing procedures, and the synoptic table showing the referencing of the Italian qualifications systems to NQF/EQF.

In the end, the majority of respondents identified the potential use of the new Report in the three following NQF implementation areas:

- portability and spendability of the qualifications at national and European level;
- validation and certification of competences in non formal and informal contexts;
- support to the recognition of qualifications or part of them (e.g. in terms of credits).

In addition, all the Quality Assurance bodies for Education and Training systems were directly involved in the consultation (National Network of Regional Research, Experimentation and Development Centers for Adult Learning, ANVUR, CIMEA, EQAVET-INAPP, INDIRE, INVALSI). Coherently with other respondents, the above mentioned QA bodies considered the information contained in the new Report complete and clear, while the arguments supporting the fulfilment of the 10 EQF referencing criteria are exhaustive and transparent. With regard to the usability of the Report, similarly to the other respondents, the QA bodies consider the portability and spendability of qualifications at national and European level and the validation and certification of competences acquired in different contexts, as the main areas of development and interest. In addition to these areas, and in accordance with the European Commission on recommendations on the publication of qualifications on the Europass Portal, the QA bodies also highlighted the importance of the accessibility, transparency and permeability of qualifications and of the qualifications design based on learning outcomes. To this regard, some of the QA bodies suggested periodic monitoring activities, aimed at evaluating the main impacts of the NQF adoption with respect to the full implementation of the NSCC and to the education/training/employment services and policies development.

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<sup>224</sup> PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS - CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT (2017)

As already mentioned in para 4.1., the Uni-Accredia accreditation entities also took part in the on-line national consultation. They outlined the new Report as a complete and innovative tool, aligned with the technical norms for the certification of professions, so far implemented. In addition to the consultation, the Uni-Accredia entities also drafted a position paper on certifications issued within Uni-Accredia voluntary standardization schemes.

Where possible, the results of the public consultation were considered both for improving the current Report and for its future maintenance.

## ANNEX 1 - Annexes to the eqf recommendation (2017)

### Annex II - Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Responsibility and autonomy</b>
	In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)	In the context of the EQF responsibility and autonomy is described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility
<b>Level 1</b>	basic general knowledge	basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
<b>Level 2</b>	basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	work or study under supervision with some autonomy
<b>Level 3</b>	knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study
<b>Level 4</b>	factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to solve specific problems in a field of work or study	exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
<b>Level 5</b>	comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change review and develop performance of self and others
<b>Level 6</b>	advanced knowledge of a field of work or study involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study	manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups

<p><b>Level 7</b></p>	<p>highly specialized knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research</p> <p>critical awareness of knowledge in a field and at the interface between different fields</p>	<p>specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</p>	<p>manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches</p> <p>take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>
<p><b>Level 8</b></p>	<p>knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between different fields</p>	<p>the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</p>	<p>demonstrating substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</p>

## ***Annex III - Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)***

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competences of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.
3. The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this recommendation.
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing report shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.
8. The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.
9. Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.
10. Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

## ***Annex IV - Quality assurance principles for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)***

All qualifications with an EQF level should be quality assured to enhance trust in their quality and level.

In accordance with national circumstances and considering sectoral differences quality assurance of qualifications with an EQF level should:

1. address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach;
2. ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification;
3. consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement;
4. involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process;
5. be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review;
6. be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level;
7. be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines;
8. be supported by appropriate resources;
9. include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance;
10. include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results.

## **Annex V - Principles for credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)<sup>225</sup>**

The EQF and national qualifications frameworks or systems, by using the learning outcomes approach, should better support individuals when moving (i) between various levels of education and training; (ii) within and between sectors of education and training; (iii) between education and training and the labour market; and (iv) within and across borders. Without prejudice to national decisions to (i) make use of credit systems; and (ii) relate them to national qualifications frameworks or systems, different credit systems, where appropriate, should work together with national qualifications frameworks or systems to support transitions and facilitate progression. To this aim, credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems where appropriate, should respect the following principles:

1. Credit systems should support flexible learning pathways, for the benefit of individual learners.
2. When designing and developing qualifications, the learning outcomes approach should be systematically used to facilitate the transfer of (components of) qualifications and progression in learning.
3. Credit systems should facilitate the transfer of learning outcomes and progression of learners across institutional and national borders.
4. Credit systems should be underpinned by explicit and transparent quality assurance.
5. The credit acquired by an individual should be documented, expressing the acquired learning outcomes, the name of the competent credit awarding institution and, where relevant, the related credit value.
6. Systems for credit transfer and accumulation should seek synergies with arrangements for validation of prior learning, working together to facilitate and promote transfer and progression.
7. Credit systems should be developed and improved through cooperation between stakeholder at the appropriate national and Union levels.

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<sup>225</sup> These common principles are fully compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

## Annex VI - Elements for data fields for the electronic publication of information on qualifications with an EQF level

DATA			Required/Optional
Title of qualification			Required
Field (*)			Required
Country/Region (code)			Required
EQF level			Required
Description of the qualification (***)	Either:	Knowledge	Required
		Skills	Required
		Responsibility and autonomy	Required
	Or:	Open text field describing what the learner is expected to know, understand and able to do	Required
Awarding body or competent authority (**)			Required
Credit points/notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes			Optional
Internal quality assurance processes			Optional
External quality assurance/regulatory body			Optional
Further information on the qualification			Optional
Source of information			Optional
Link to relevant supplements			Optional
URL of the qualification			Optional
Information language (code)			Optional
Entry requirements			Optional
Expiry date (if relevant)			Optional
Ways to acquire qualification			Optional
Relationship to occupations or occupational fields			Optional
(*) ISCED-F 2013			
(**) The minimum required information on the awarding body or the competent authority should facilitate to find information about it, which would include its name, or if applicable the name of the group of awarding bodies or competent authorities, completed with a URL or contact information.			
(***) This description shall consist of open text fields, with no prescribed use of standard terminology and no obligation for the Member States to translate the description into other EU languages.			

## **ANNEX 2 - Interministerial Decree on 8 January 2018 establishing the National Qualification Framework - NQF**

Establishment of the national qualifications framework issued as part of the national system for certification of competences referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013.

*(Omission)*

### Art. 1 - Establishment of the National Qualifications Framework

1. With this decree, the National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as NQF) is established as a tool for the description and classification of qualifications issued under the National System for certification of competences referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013.

2. The NQF is the national tool for referencing Italian qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework referred to in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017, with the aim of linking the Italian qualifications system to those of the other European Countries.

3. The NQF also aims at coordinating and strengthening the various systems that contribute to the public offer of lifelong learning and the services for the identification, validation and certification of competences.

a) by improving the accessibility, transparency and permeability of qualifications;

b) by facilitating the use of qualifications at national and European level, also for geographical and professional mobility purposes;

c) by promoting the centrality of the person and the enhancement of individual experiences, also through the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, including those acquired in work-based learning contexts;

d) by contributing to the quality of learning and the growth of competences acquired by individuals in a perspective of personal, civic, social and occupational growth.

4. To this end, the referencing of the qualifications of the public lifelong learning offer to the NQF implements the application of the provisions of Art. 8, paragraph 3, subpara. d), of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 2013, for the purpose of the inclusion of the qualifications in the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications referred to in the aforementioned decree.

### Art. 2 - Definitions

*(Omission)*

### Art. 3 - Structure of the National Qualifications Framework

1. In line with the European Qualifications Framework, the NQF:

a) refers to three descriptive dimensions of competences in terms of: knowledge; skills; autonomy and responsibility. These dimensions are structured in descriptors that functionally explain the above-mentioned dimensions, in order to adapt them to the National system for certification of competences;

b) is structured on eight levels describing the growing complexity of learning with respect to the dimensions referred to in subpara. a).

When updating the Italian referencing Report, where required by the specificity of the qualifications, internal sub-domains may be envisaged at the eight levels.

2. The dimensions, descriptors and levels referred to in paragraph 1 are developed in coherence and continuity with the European Qualifications Framework: each of the eight levels of the NQF corresponds to the homologous level of the European Qualifications Framework. Qualifications issued pursuant to Art. 6 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 2013 indicate the referencing level by adopting "EQF level".

3. The NQF with the descriptors specified for the three dimensions and structured on eight levels is described in the document "Italian National Qualifications Framework: structure, functions and principles of consistency with the European criteria for referencing qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework", of which in Annex 1.

#### Art. 4 - Referencing qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework

1. The referencing to the NQF, based on the comparison between the competences required for the issue of a qualification and the dimensions and descriptors referred to in Art. 3, is mandatory for all qualifications for the purposes of validation and certification within the National system for the certification of competences.

The qualifications are referenced according to the procedure set out in Art. 5.

2. All qualifications referenced to the European Qualifications Framework as part of the first referencing report referred to in the State-Regions Undertaking of 20 December 2012 and implemented by Interministerial Decree of 13 February 2013, are already referenced to the corresponding NQF level.

3. For the purposes of accessibility, transparency and permeability of the qualifications referred to in paragraph 1, the descriptors of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications are referenced to the NQF levels as unitary references for the process of correlation and equivalence between the qualifications.

4. Qualifications referenced to NQF and meeting the minimum standards referred to in Art. 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013, are included in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications in the appropriate section "National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications".

5. The qualifications referenced to NQF for which the statistical reference codes of economic activities (ATECO) and the classification of professions (CP ISTAT) is not applicable, are categorized in the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications" with the wording "General education and training qualifications"; for the purpose of job guidance or continuing study or training, these qualifications are assigned, where possible, to one or more professional economic sectors.

6. Without prejudice to the value of a public deed reserved exclusively to qualifications issued by Public Competent Authorities in compliance with the minimum standards and essential levels of services defined by Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013, international qualifications referred to in Art. 2, paragraph 1, subpara. c), issued by bodies other than Public Competent Authorities can be referenced to the NQF, according to the procedure set out in Art. 5 and be included in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications, in a section named "Qualifications referenced to the National Qualifications Framework not included in the National Repository".

#### Art. 5 - Referencing procedure

1. The referencing procedure is managed by the EQF National Coordination Point at ANPAL, relying on the independent evaluation by INAPP on the referencing proposals. The EQF National Coordination Point provides from time to time the active involvement, throughout the process referred to in paragraph 2 below, of the Public Competent Authority or the subject referred to in Art. 4, paragraph 6, submitting the referencing request.

2. The referencing process is divided into four phases:

a) start-up phase: Public Competent Authority or a body pursuant to Art. 4, paragraph 6, submits an application to the EQF National Coordination Point complete with the descriptive elements of the qualification, including a proposal for referencing the qualification to the EQF level;

b) preliminary phase: the EQF National Coordination Point examines the referencing proposal;

c) independent evaluation phase: INAPP formulates an independent evaluation of the referencing proposal and draws up a mandatory non-binding opinion pursuant to Law No. 241 of 7 August 1990;

d) approval and publication phase: EQF National Coordination Point, at the end of the phases b) and c), undertakes the referencing to NQF and includes the qualification in the National Repository of education and training qualifications and vocational qualifications or in the section "Qualifications referenced to the National Qualifications Framework not included in the National Repository", pursuant to Art. 4, paragraph 6.

3. For the purposes of the referencing process referred to in this article, the EQF National Coordination Point also coordinates, in accordance with the procedures referred to in paragraph 2, the procedures for updating the National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 and those, as per Art. 9 of the Inter-ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015, falling within the competence of the Technical Group together with the EQF National Coordination Point and with the representatives of the Presidency of the Council - Department for European Policies, as national coordination at the European Commission and assistance centre for the recognition of professional qualifications, pursuant to Art. 6 of Legislative Decree No. 206 of 2007.

4. In order to ensure accessibility, transparency and traceability of the procedure referred to in paragraph 2, a section for the submission of applications, the monitoring of the process and the verification of the results is available in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications.

5. The referencing process is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of 22 May 2017 and in compliance with the "Minimum criteria for the referencing of Italian qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework" referred to in Annex 2.

6. The EQF National Coordination Point adopts, starting from the minimum criteria referred to in paragraph 5, on the basis of technical proposals developed by INAPP, an "Operational guide for the preliminary analysis, description and referencing of the qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework", aimed at offering all parties concerned information, training and operational support elements for the definition of qualifications, in line with the indications set out in this Decree.

7. For matters not provided for in this Decree, for the completion of the procedures referred to in this article, please refer to the organizational modalities that the EQF National Coordination Point approves through internal regulations.

8. Every six months ANPAL reports the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies on the progress of the activities relating to the referencing to NQF.

## Art. 6 - Final provisions

1. In order to implement the referencing of the NQF to the European Qualifications Framework, also in implementation of Art. 9 of the Interministerial Decree of 30 June 2015 and in accordance with the provisions of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017, the EQF National Coordination Point is entrusted with the task of updating the "Italian referencing report of the qualifications to the European qualifications framework". The update will take place in accordance with the provisions of Annex 3, "Integration of the criteria for referencing the Italian qualifications system to the European qualifications framework".

2. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies periodically informs the National Technical Committee referred to in Art. 3 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 2013 in relation to the activities referred to in Art. 5 as well as any update of the annexes to this Decree.

3. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies makes sure of the implementation of the provisions referred to in this Decree.

4. The adoption of this Decree does not result in new or greater charges for public finance.

5. The Regions with special statutes and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano ensure the implementation of this Decree within the scope of their competences and responsibilities and in accordance with the provisions of their respective statutes.

*(Omission)*

Annex 1 - National Qualifications Framework: structure, functions and principles of consistency with the European criteria for referencing qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework.

1. The National Qualifications Framework (hereafter referred to as NQF) is a framework of learning outcomes descriptors expressed in terms of competences. It is based on the European Qualifications Framework whose structure is, though, wider. The NQF is a component of the technical infrastructure of the National Repository of Education and Vocational Training Qualifications, aimed at facilitating its relation with the European Qualifications Framework.

2. The NQF adopts the concept of competence as a proven ability to use, in work, study or professional and personal development contexts, a structured set of knowledge and skills acquired in formal, non-formal or informal contexts, in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013.

3. In line and continuity with the European Qualifications Framework, the NQF is structured on eight levels, each specified through descriptors intended as:

a) elements that express the minimum expected results as regards what the individual knows and is able to do in relation to a given qualification;

b) references aimed at guiding the positioning of qualifications in relation to each level;

c) broadly descriptive so as to be applicable to the different learning contexts and whose information elements are compatible with work and study context and able to refer to the different education, training and work systems.

4. The level descriptors, which adopt knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy referred to the EQF Recommendation (2017) as reference dimensions, are implemented and integrated into the NQF through the following criteria:

a) the implicit dimensions of the European Qualifications Framework are made explicit;

b) the explicit descriptive dimensions of the European Qualifications Framework are being adapted to the Italian qualifications system;

c) further descriptive dimensions for making the descriptors more inclusive with respect to the different types of national qualifications are added.

5. The descriptors and dimensions of the NQF are defined as functional parameters for the description of qualifications according to a qualitative approach and, therefore, in the referencing process are to be understood as:

a) typical but not necessarily exclusive to a given level;

b) correlated but independent, in their progression, with respect to the other descriptors and dimensions.

6. Knowledge is explained with reference to the following descriptors:

a) *conceptual and/or factual dimension*, which expresses the transition from a dimension of knowledge that is purely concrete and anchored to facts (levels 1 and 2), towards a conceptual and abstract dimension that emerges starting from level 3 and unfolds in subsequent levels. Between levels 4 and 8, knowledge is understood to be integrated with respect to this dimension;

b) *Extent and depth*, which respectively express the horizontal and vertical extension of knowledge. Width develops progressively between levels 1 and 3; the dimension of depth at level 4 acquires relevance, and it is expressed starting from level 5 in terms of progressive specialization and innovation;

c) *Understanding and awareness*, which expresses the interpretative capacity and the level of "awareness" with respect to knowledge. This dimension is made explicit starting from level 3 in terms of interpretation capacity and at level 5 in terms of awareness of the areas of knowledge, and then develops as critical thinking.

7. Skills are explained with reference to the following descriptors:

a) *the practical component* is characterized by different skills: *procedural, technical, professional* and *context specific* ones. The descriptor places in a progressive way those that mainly resort to an operational action (materials and tools) from level 1 to level 5, and those relating to the procedural component (methods, procedures and protocols) starting from level 3. In the progression of the levels, the different level of "action" is also described: in levels 1-2 the only "application", in levels 3-5 "the use also through adaptations, reformulations and reworking" and in levels 6-8 respectively "transferring, integrating and innovating" knowledge, materials, tools, methods and procedures, according to the incrementality described above;

b) the "cognitive" component, understood as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete complex activities, is expressed with references to three groups of skills:

- i. cognitive skills, that allow a correct interpretation and integration of reality;
- ii. social interaction skills, related to interaction with other individuals;
- iii. activation skills, in relation to the ability to face and solve problems.

Within each descriptor, some reference "typical skills" have been identified, "elective" for that specific level.

8. The dimensions of autonomy and responsibility focus on aspects of competence necessary for its more effective "description" and not fully expressed by the other two descriptors; these elements, which mainly concern the complexity of the context wherein the competence is acted, the level of control over one's own action and results and those of others, are understood as follows:

a) the Context, which expresses increasing levels of uncertainty and complexity within which study, social and work life activities are carried out and represents the environmental and relational conditions within which the other dimensions of competence relating to responsibility and autonomy are acted;

b) Responsibility is the decisional component that a subject applies and puts in place to achieve a result. It expresses progressively according to the tasks performed, i.e. starting from routine to more complex tasks and is carried out in ensuring the compliance of the expected result (level 3). Starting from level 4, one gradually enters the dimension of controlling the results of others. Between levels 4-5 the responsibility for coordinating activities and resources and verifying the results achieved according to the assigned goals is expressed. From level 6, responsibility expresses as the ability to define aims, to provide evaluation and the development of results and resources and to promote transformation and innovation;

c) Autonomy expresses the level of independence in carrying out the activity. It gradually expresses between levels 1-3 in the progressive independence of the activity from the supervision of others. Between levels 4-5, the activity is expressed in particular in the function of controlling and supervising the work of others, in order to ensure the conformity of the results and the correct application of the procedures provided. Between levels 6-8, after having achieved a wide independence from supervision, the activity is characterized by the gradual transition from the management level to that of the development and transformation of the activity.

9. Table A shows the Italian NQF for the eight levels of the dimensions and descriptors referred to in this annex. (Table A is reproduced in Table 2.2).

## Annex 2 - Minimum criteria for referencing Italian qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework.

1. The referencing of the qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as NQF) referred to in Art. 4, paragraph 4, is carried out on the basis of the following:

- a) general minimum criteria for inclusion in the NQF;
- b) minimum criteria for positioning to specific levels.

2. The criteria referred to in section 1, supara. a), relating to the preliminary conditions for the referencing process of a qualification, are:

a) the qualifications must be included in repositories approved and published in accordance with the provisions of Art. 8, paragraph 3 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013, and meeting the minimum standards referred to in subparas. a), b) and c) of the same article;

b) the qualifications must be described in terms of one or more competences according to the descriptive language consistent with that of the European Qualifications Framework, with the indications established pursuant to and for the purposes of Legislative Decree No. 13, as well as with the dimensions and descriptors referred to in this Decree;

c) the qualifications must be included within a regulatory framework adopted in accordance with the minimum service standards and the essential levels of performance defined pursuant to and for the purposes of Legislative Decree No. 13.

3. The criteria referred to in Section 1, subpara. b), relating to the positioning of the qualification within the NQF, are:

a) the comparison and consistency between the descriptive elements of the qualification and the dimensions and descriptors referred to in Art. 3;

b) the comparison and consistency between the descriptive elements of the qualification and the qualifications already included in the NQF, starting from the first "Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European qualifications framework";

c) the comparison and consistency between the descriptive elements of the qualification with the indications on the level included in the current standards;

d) the comparison and consistency between the descriptive elements of the qualification with the results of the comparison at a European or international level (for example, on the positioning of similar qualifications, in the cases of types of qualifications common to several Countries).

In the event that the qualification involves skills with different levels with respect to the dimensions or descriptions of the NQF and, in any case, in the more comprehensive process of the comparative and consistency assessments referred to in this section, the referencing must always take place based on qualitative prevalence, thus attributing the most recurrent level to the qualification.

4. The referencing of international qualifications to NQF referred to in Art. 4, paragraph 6, is carried out, starting from the application, on the basis of the following:

- a) general minimum criteria for inclusion in the NQF;
- b) minimum criteria for positioning to specific levels.

5. The criteria referred to in section 4, subpara. a), relating to the preliminary conditions for the referencing process of a qualification, are:

- a) the qualifications must be formally adopted, valid, in force and the related contents publicly and freely accessible without charges for the citizen;
- b) the qualifications must demonstrate proven international, national or sectoral diffusion and representativeness;
- c) the qualifications must be described in terms of one or more competences according to the descriptive language consistent with that of the European Qualifications Framework, with the indications established pursuant to and for the purposes of Legislative Decree No. 13, as well as with the dimensions and descriptors referred to in this Decree;
- d) the definition and issue of qualifications must comply with codified and internationally recognized standards, qualitatively comparable with the minimum service standards defined pursuant to and for the purposes of Legislative Decree No. 13 and, in any case, based on publicly accessible, transparent and formalized quality assurance mechanisms.

6. The positioning criteria referred to in section 4, subpara. b) relating to the placement of the qualification within the NQF, are the same as those referred to in section 3.

7. As part of the implementation process of the Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning - EQF of 22 May 2017, qualifications will also be progressively referenced to the international classification of education and training sectors.

Annex 3 - Integration of the criteria for referencing the Italian qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework

*(Omission)*

## Annex 3 - Interministerial Decree on 5 January 2021 for the adoption of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the National Competent Authorities of the National System for Certification of Competences - NSCC

### GUIDELINES FOR THE INTEROPERABILITY OF THE PUBLIC COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

(omissis)

#### INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines are aimed at defining, pursuant to Article 3, paragraph 5, of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013, the technical specifications for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities and the related functions within the services of identification and validation and certification of competences.

(omissis)

The Guidelines, therefore, represent the provision that makes the national system for certification of competences operational as established with the above-mentioned Legislative Decree No. 13.

(omissis)

The implementation of the services for the identification and validation and certification of competences, in legal systems and policies, is an essential tool for raising the levels of qualification and employability of individuals, for the competitiveness and productivity of businesses and professions and for the modernization and effectiveness of services and active employment policy measures. Competences identification and validation and certification services help the innovation of education and training systems, thus encouraging the customization of learning in order to reduce failure and dispersion and facilitating the transitions from study to work.

(omissis)

#### INTRODUCTION: DEFINITIONS OF THE NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES

(omissis)

#### 1. INDICATORS, THRESHOLDS AND METHODS FOR MONITORING, EVALUATING AND ASSESSING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS, ALSO FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE ESSENTIAL LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE AND GUARANTEE OF THE SERVICES

##### 1.1 The services for the identification and validation and certification of competences

The services for the identification, validation and certification of competences are divided into:

- a) Identification and validation process:** the service aimed at the recognition, by an Entitled Body, according to its own system, of the competences acquired by the person, through a reconstruction and evaluation of non-formal or informal learning. For the purposes of identifying competences, those acquired in formal contexts are also considered.

The identification and validation process can be completed with the issue of a document, however named according to the rules in force at the respective Public Competent Authorities, as "**Validation document**" with the value of a public deed and two-party certification, or it can continue with the certification procedure.

In the context of their own legal systems, the Public Competent Authorities may articulate the identification and validation processes in one or more services, provided that the identification process includes, at least, the requirements referred to in paragraph 1.2.1, subpara. a) below.

Persons who demonstrate or self-declare that they have acquired learning experiences in any context can access the identification and validation service, as long as they are adequate and relevant to one or more qualifications included in the repositories of the identification and validation process and also continue with Public Competent Authorities to which they submit the request for access to the service.

- b) **Procedure for the certification of competences:** the service aimed at issuing a document, however named according to the regulations in force at the respective Public Competent Authorities, identifiable as "**Certificate**" certifying the competences acquired by the person. The certification procedure is carried out both as a result of an identification and validation process, referred to in section a), and as a result of a formal learning path. The "**Certificate**" is a third-party certificate, with the value of a public deed.

In the phase of access to the services for identifying and validating and certifying the competences, the recipients are ensured information and guidance measures aimed at guaranteeing both equal opportunities in the use of the services, and the preliminary verification of the needs and requirements for access to the service.

## **1.2 Common operational references for minimum process standards (Article 5 of Legislative Decree No. 13/2013)**

*(omissis)*

### **1.2.1 Identification and validation process**

*(omissis)*

### **1.2.2 Certification procedure**

*(omissis)*

## **1.3 Common operational references for minimum certification standards (Article 6 of Legislative Decree No. 13/2013)**

*(omissis)*

## **1.4 Common operational references for the minimum system standards (Article 7 of Legislative Decree No. 13/2013)**

*(omissis)*

In compliance with the distinction of the regulatory functions from those of service provision, the Public Competent Authorities, within the scope of their regulations, may delegate part of their functions to another Public Competent Authority in charge, to their supervised bodies as well as to regional administrations or local entities. The functions of guidance and regulation in the implementation of the law, of representation in institutional settings and of sanctioning authority are an exception.

In Annex D of these Guidelines, the minimum service standards of the National System for Certification of Competences are listed in summary form.

### **1.5 Essential levels of benefits**

In the regulation, organization and control of the services for the identification and validation and certification of the competences, the Public Competent Authorities ensure compliance with the essential levels of performance as summarized in Annex E of these Guidelines.

## **2. CRITERIA FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATING OF THE NATIONAL REPOSITORY**

### **2.1 National Repository**

The National Repository is made up of all the repositories of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications codified by a Public Competent Authority at national, regional or autonomous province level, publicly recognized and meeting the minimum standards referred to in Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 and consistent with the operational references specified in this paragraph and in particular with:

- a) the referencing of education and training qualifications, education and vocational training, or professional qualifications making up the National Repository (henceforth collectively referred to as qualifications) together with the related competences to the expected Learning Outcomes identified in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and, through it, to the national statistical codes in compliance with the provisions of Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 and in line with the criteria set out in paragraph 2.2 of these Guidelines. The qualifications and competences, referenced to the National Qualifications Framework, for which the association with the expected results of the Classification of economic-professional sectors is not applicable, are categorized in the National Repository with the wording "General education and training qualifications" and associated with the Atlas of Work and Qualifications in a specific section dedicated to them.
- b) the identification and description of qualifications and related competences in accordance with the criteria referred to in paragraph 2.3 of these Guidelines;
- c) the referencing of qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, carried out in compliance with the procedures, criteria and descriptors defined with the Inter-Ministerial Decree of 8 January 2018 on the "Establishment of the National Framework of qualifications issued under the National system for certification of competences referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013".

The National Repository is, within the National System for Certification of Competences, the unitary reference for the purposes of competence-based training design, the identification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts, and the customization of lifelong learning paths, certification and transparency, usability and recognition of qualifications at national and EU level.

The qualifications pertaining to the National Repository, consisting of a single competence or aggregates of competences, can be obtained through the certification of competences acquired in a formal learning context or through a certification procedure following a process of identification and validation of acquired competences in non-formal and informal learning contexts.

### **2.2 Technical specifications of the National Repository**

In order to facilitate the readability, consultation and portability of qualifications and competences for lifelong learning within the national system for certification of competences, the National Repository, also based on its progressive reorganization, adopts the Atlas of Work and Qualifications as a tool for

the systematization of information. The Atlas of Work and Qualifications is composed of two ordering tools:

- the **National Qualifications Framework**, which performs a relationship and correlation function between the qualifications in order to a descriptive taxonomy of the community, national and regional systems of the formal lifelong learning offer also in order to identify the different levels of complexity.
- The **Classification of economic-professional sectors**, which carries out a function of relationship and correlation between qualifications with regard to a description of job content and professions, also to promote a better response to the needs for change and innovation expressed by the labour market;

The National Repository is made publicly accessible through the Atlas of Work and Qualifications.

The National Qualifications Framework is based on the European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as EQF) and develops and expands its structure, constituting a component of the technical infrastructure of the National Repository and the Atlas of Work and Qualifications, aimed at harmonizing two tools. The Inter-Ministerial Decree of 8 January 2018 and the related technical annexes determine the structure, descriptors and procedures for referencing qualifications. As foreseen in Article 4 paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned Decree for the purposes of accessibility, transparency and permeability of qualifications, the descriptors of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications are associated with the levels of the National Qualifications Framework as unitary references for the process of correlation and equivalence between qualifications.

The Classification of economic-professional sectors is the unitary technical reference for the description of the contents of work and professions divided into 23 economic-professional sectors to which a sector is added defined as "common area: organizational processes of management and support for the production of goods and services" (Annex F of these Guidelines).

*(omissis)*

### **2.3 Criteria for the identification and description of qualifications and competences for referencing to the National Qualifications Framework for inclusion in the National Repository**

*(omissis)*

### **2.4 Procedures for updating the National Repository and maintaining the Atlas of Work and Qualifications**

*(omissis)*

### 3. MINIMUM INFORMATION ELEMENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNCTIONAL CONNECTION OF THE SINGLE INFORMATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Public Competent Authorities ensure the registration of "**Validation documents**" and "**Certificates**", in accordance with the procedures and standards for providing data defined by the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL), also for the purpose of the employee's electronic file referred to in Article 15 of Legislative Decree No. 150 and in connection with the unitary information system.

The management of the minimum information elements is the responsibility of the Public Competent Authorities, through their own information systems that must be interoperable with the single information backbone. For the purposes of monitoring, evaluation of control, traceability and storage of the certificates issued, the minimum elements must include:

- the personal data and tax code of the recipient of the service for the identification and validation and certification of the competences;
- the data of the Entitled Body with indication of the regulatory references of authorization or accreditation;
- the type of certification;
- the attested competences, indicating, for each of them, at least the name, the repository and the qualifications of reference. For the latter, the name, description, EQF/NQF level must be specified;
- the reference to the codes of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications, where applicable, for the purpose of recognition within the national system of certification of competences;
- the ways of acquisition of skills and competences
- the procedures for assessing competences;
- the date of issue of the certificates.

#### Annex A - Transparency Document Scheme (omissis)

#### Annex B - Validation Document Scheme (omissis)

#### Annex C - Certificate Scheme (omissis)

#### Annex D - Minimum service standards of the national system for certification of competences

MINIMUM STANDARDS	Regulatory ref. Legislative Decree No. 13/13	Observation modes	Operational references for compliance with standards	Threshold
<b>A) Guarantee the implementation of one or more repositories of qualifications</b>	<i>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. a)</i>	- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures	In the context of their legislative and organizational competences for the areas they are responsible for, the Public Competent Authorities guarantee the operation of one or more Repertories of qualifications in their respective fields, duly included in the national Repository, in accordance with the provisions referred to in Legislative Decree 16 January 2013, n. 13 and with the operational references referred to in these Guidelines.	Compliant presence: SI

<p><b>B) Guarantee a uniform regulatory framework of the conditions of use and guarantee of the service and related standardized formats and procedures</b></p>	<p><i>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. a)</i></p>	<p>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures</p>	<p>In the context of their legislative and organizational competences for the areas they are responsible for, the Public Competent Authorities guarantee the operation of a uniform regulatory framework of the conditions of use and guarantee of the service and related standardized formats and procedures, in accordance with the provisions referred to in Legislative Decree 16 January 2013, n. 13 and with the operational references referred to in these Guidelines.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>
<p><b>C) Adoption of information measures on the identification, validation and certification services</b></p>	<p><i>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. b)</i></p>	<p>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures - Verification of institutional website</p>	<p>The Public Competent Authorities guarantee the adoption of information measures including the publication on the institutional website of a section dedicated to the "National System for certification of competences", with the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• description of the services and related procedures;</li> <li>• reference national Legislation;</li> <li>• reference implementation Regulation and related forms;</li> <li>• active link of the Repertory or Repertories of qualifications to the National Repository.</li> </ul>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>
<p><b>D) Personnel assigned to the supply of services, with professional requirements suitable for the supervision of the aspects of curricular, professional content and evaluation methods;</b></p>	<p><i>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. c)</i></p>	<p>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures</p>	<p>Public Competent Authorities guarantee the personnel assigned to the supply of services, with professional requirements suitable for the supervision of the aspects of curricular, professional content and evaluation methods. In the identification, validation and certification services of nonformal and informal learning, three functions are also indicated to oversee the different phases in the process, namely "accompaniment and support for the identification and transparency of competences"; planning and implementation of evaluation activities, with reference to procedural and methodological aspects"; "performing of sectoral technical assessment tests of competences", whose descriptive reference is in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and which are identified and designated by each Competent Authority in the areas of their respective competence and in compliance with their own regulations.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>

<p><b>E) Functionality of an interoperable information system in the context of the single informative infrastructure, for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation, traceability and storage of the documents issued</b></p>	<p>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. d)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures</li> <li>- Verification of institutional website</li> </ul>	<p>Public Competent Authority guarantee the availability of an informative system for the purpose of the monitoring, evaluation of the services and registration and maintenance of the "Validation documents" and "Certificates", starting from the minimum informative elements referred to in paragraph 3 of the Guidelines, in accordance with the procedures and standards for providing data defined by the National Agency for Active Labor Policies (INAPP), also for the purpose of the employee's electronic file referred to in Article 15 of Legislative Decree No. 150 and in connection with the unitary information system.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>
<p><b>F) Compliance of procedures with provisions on simplification, access to administrative documents and protection of personal data</b></p>	<p>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. e)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures</li> </ul>	<p>Access to services for the identification and validation and certification of competences is based on a formal and explicit request from the person. Public Competent Authorities, within the regulation and organisation of the identification, validation and certification services, ensure the compliance of procedures with provisions on simplification, access to administrative documents and protection of personal data.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>
<p><b>G) Provision of conditions that ensure collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence in the phases of the identification and validation process and of the procedure of certification of competences and within the evaluation commissions</b></p>	<p>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. f) Art. 3 para. 4 lett. a)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures</li> </ul>	<p>In the organization of services for the identification and validation and certification of competences, the Public Competent Authorities that run the assessment procedures, as proof of possession of the competences to be validated or certified, in compliance with the principles of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality, independence and completeness and methodological correctness, according to the definitions set out in these Guidelines.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>
<p><b>H) Adoption of devices that govern criteria, thresholds and methods of verification, monitoring and supervision referring to the subjective, structural, financial and professional areas in order to ensure the minimum provision standards of the services by the entitled bodies</b></p>	<p>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. g)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verification of regulatory acts and of the related technical and procedural measures</li> </ul>	<p>In order to guarantee the reliability of the system, the Public Competent Authorities, within their regulatory framework, ensure the adoption of tools that, in compliance with the choices made by each Public Competent Authority, govern criteria, thresholds and verification, monitoring and supervision methods related to the subjective, structural, financial and professional areas in order to ensure the minimum standards of service provision by the Entitled Bodies, in accordance with the provisions of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 and with the operational references referred to in these Guidelines.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>
<p><b>I) Adoption of a publicly accessible list of Public Entitled Bodies and electronically available.</b></p>	<p>Art. 7, para. 1, lett. g)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verification of institutional website and communication plans</li> </ul>	<p>Public Competent Authorities ensure, on the institutional website, the accessibility and publication of the updated list of the respective Entitled Bodies for the provision of services for the identification, validation and certification of competences.</p>	<p>Compliant presence: SI</p>

## Annex E - Essential levels of performance of services for the identification and validation and certification of competences

ELP	Regulatory ref. Legislative Decree No. 13/13	Description	Output/Outcome
A) Reception and preliminary information	Art. 5, co. 1, lett. b)	<p>This phase is aimed at informing and receiving the candidate, at verifying the service access requirements and at identifying an actual need for the service.</p> <p>In the access to the services of identification and validation and certification of competences, the recipients are ensured information and guidance measures aimed at guaranteeing both equal opportunities in the use of the services, and the preliminary verification of the needs and requirements for access to the service.</p> <p>This phase can be handled by those working by accredited or authorized structures, in a presence mode (e.g. desk service, group or individual information sessions) or remotely (e.g. by means of a web platform). Persons who demonstrate, or self-declare, they have acquired learning experiences in any context can access the identification and validation service, as long as they are adequate and relevant to one or more qualifications included in the repertoires the Public Competent Authorities are responsible for, and to which they submit the request for access to the service.</p>	<p><b>Output:</b> Acceptance of the application for access to the service and preparation of a participation document to the procedure (e.g. service agreement), or rejection of the application and orientation to another service.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Person informed about the services and opportunities offered by the services, both from the perspective of job search and job keeping, and from the perspective of personalized and targeted training</p>
B) Identification and validation of competences	Art. 2, co. 1, lett. i)	<p>Service aimed at the recognition, by a Public Entitled Body and according to its own regulatory system, of the competences acquired by the person, through the reconstruction and the evaluation of non-formal or informal learning. For the purposes of the identification of the competences, those acquired in formal contexts are also taken into account.</p> <p>The identification and validation process is divided into the stages referred to in Article 5 of Legislative Decree 16 January 2013, no. 13 and in line with the operational references referred to in these Guidelines. The process can be completed with the issue of a document, however named according to the rules in force at the respective Public Competent Authorities, as "<b>Validation document</b>" with the value of a public deed and two-party certification, or it can continue with the certification procedure. The issue of the "<b>Validation document</b>" is optional and takes place at the request of the person if the identification and validation process is completed with the procedure for the certification of competences, without interrupting the procedure.</p> <p>The public bodies, within their own legal systems, may provide for the possibility of articulate the identification and validation processes in one or more services, as long as the identification process ends with the processing of a document in any case named according to the rules in force at the respective Public Competent Authorities, identifiable as "Transparency document", as summary of the results of the identification phase, which is released in the event of interruption or delay of the service, or at the request of the user in the event that the subsequent evaluation phase is not carried out by the same Entitled Body.</p>	<p><b>Possible identification output:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Transparency document" (first party certificate value)</li> <li>• Recognition of credits</li> <li>• Qualitative profiling, e.g. service agreement</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible validation output:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Validation document" (value of a second party certificate)</li> <li>• Recognition of credits</li> <li>• Qualitative profiling, e.g. service agreement</li> <li>• Direct access to the certification of competences service</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Person activated in strengthening his/her own employability profile and for the inclusion in personalized and targeted training courses</p>
C) B) Certification of competences	Art. 2, co. 1, lett. l)	<p>Service aimed at issuing a document, however named according to the regulations in force at the respective Public Competent Authorities, identifiable as "Certificate" certifying the competences acquired by the person. The certification procedure is carried out both as a result of an identification and validation process, referred to in section a), and as a result of a formal learning path. The procedure is divided into the stages referred to in Article 5 of the Legislative Decree 16 January 2013, no. 13 and in line with the operational references referred to in these Guidelines. The "Certificate" is a third-party certificate, with the value of a public deed.</p>	<p><b>Output:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification of competences (third party certificate value)</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Improvement of the level of person's qualification for the purposes of entering/re-entering the world of labour or personalized and targeted training courses</p>

## Annex F - Classification of economic-professional sectors (omissis)

## ANNEX 4 - Glossary of definitions

### (A)

*"Italian national accreditation body"*: the national accreditation body designated by Italy while implementing the (EC) Regulation No. 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 - Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 OF 16 January 2013

*"Atlas of Work and Qualifications"*: the classification and informative tool supporting the National Repository of education and vocation training qualifications, based on the descriptive sequences of the economic-professional sectors, also pursuant to Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 2013 and an integral part of the information systems referred to in Articles 13 and 15 of Legislative Decree No. 150 of 14 September 2015 - Source: DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 8 January 2018.

*"First party attestation"*: the document whose validity of the information contained is given by the person's self-declaration and implemented through predefined procedures and forms - Source: DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 5 January 2021.

*"Second party attestation"*: the document issued by the Entitled Body that provides services for the identification and validation and certification of competences pursuant to and for the purposes of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 - Source: DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 5 January 2021.

*"Third party attestation"*: the document issued by the Public Competent Authority, with the support of the Entitled Body providing the services of identification and validation and certification of competences, pursuant to and for the purposes of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013. The certification and qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authority, also through their respective bodies, are a third-party certificate - Source: DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 5 January 2021.

*"Public Competent Authority"*: the public, central, regional administration and of autonomous provinces responsible, by law, for the services of identification and validation and certification of competences. Specifically, the following are intended as public bodies: 1) the Ministry of Education, University and Research, regarding the identification and validation and certification of competences of the General education and the university system; 2) the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, regarding the identification and validation and certification of competences related to qualifications issued within their respective competences; 3) the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, regarding the identification and validation and certification of competences referring to the qualifications of professions not organized in associations or boards, except for those relating to the competent authorities referred to in section 4 below; 4) the Ministry of Economic Development and other competent authorities pursuant to Article 5 of Legislative Decree No. 206 of 9 November 2007, regarding the identification and validation and certification of competences referring to qualifications of regulated professions pursuant to the same decree - Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013

*"Reserved activities"*: form of regulation of the profession according to which access to a professional activity or a group of professional activities is reserved, directly or indirectly, by virtue of laws, regulations or administrative provisions, to those who exercise a regulated profession, in possession of a specific professional qualification, even if the activity is common to other regulated professions - Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 142 OF 16 October 2020.

### (C)

*"Classification of economic-professional sectors"*: the classification system that, starting from the ISTAT statistical classification of economic activities (ATECO) and professions (CP), makes it possible

to aggregate all activities and occupations operating on the labour market. The economic-professional sectors are divided according to a descriptive sequence that provides for the definition of: work processes, areas of activity, activities, expected results and practical cases. - Source: *DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 5 January 2021*.

*"Certifiable competence"*: the competence referring to a qualification of a repository recognized by a Public Competent Authority and included in the National Repository, referred to in Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013. For the purposes of interoperability and portability between the Public Competent Authorities, validated or certified competences are assessed and possibly recognized as credit also by Public Competent Authorities different from those certifying them, according to their relevant regulations– Source: *DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 5 January 2021*.

*"Certification of competences"*: the procedure of formal recognition, by the Entitled Body of the competences acquired by the person in formal contexts, even in case of early school leaving, or validated ones acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. The procedure for the certification of competences is based on the general rules, of the essential levels of performance and the minimum standards referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013, and ends with the issue of a certificate compliant to the minimum standards referred to in Article 6 of the above-mentioned Decree - Source: *LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 OF 16 January 2013*

*"Competence"*: the proven ability to use, in work, study or professional and personal development situations, a structured set of knowledge and competences acquired in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts; (the terms "Competence", "Unit of Competence" or the acronym "UC" are synonymous) - Source: *LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 OF 16 January 2013*

*"Credits"*: confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes - Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the European EQF Framework of 22 May 2017*.

*"Credit systems"*: a transparency tool for facilitating the recognition of credit(s). These systems can comprise, inter alia, equivalences, exemptions, units/modules that can be accumulated and transferred, the autonomy of providers who can individualise pathways, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning- Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017*.

*"Credit transfer"*: the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context - Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017*.

## **(E)**

*"Entitled Body"*: the public or private subject, including chambers of commerce, industry, handicrafts and agriculture, authorized or accredited by the Public Competent Authority, or delegated according to State or regional law, including educational institutions, universities and institutions of higher education in Arts and Music, to provide all or part of services for the identification and validation and certification of competences, in relation to the responsibility frameworks of the relevant public competent authorities; *LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013*

## **(F)**

*"National reference Framework for regional qualifications"*: part of the National Repository relating to regional qualifications as a common reference for their correlation and their progressive standardization, as well as for the identification, validation and certification of qualifications and competences, also in terms of European training credits. It is organized on the basis of the classification of the economic-professional sectors and represents a reference for the repositories of regional

qualifications, approved and published by each region and autonomous province of Trento and Bolzano and meeting the minimum standards referred to in Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 - Source: *DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 30 June 2015*.

*"National Qualifications Framework"*: the national tool for referencing the Italian qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework referred to in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 with the aim of linking the Italian qualifications system to the systems of other European Countries. The National Qualifications Framework also aims at coordinating and strengthening the various systems that contribute to the public offer of lifelong learning and the identification and validation and certification of competences - Source: *DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 08 January 2018*.

#### **(I)**

*"Identification and validation of competences"*: the process of recognising the competences acquired by the person in a non-formal or informal context. For the purposes of the identification of competences, those acquired in formal contexts are also considered. The process is carried out by the Entitled Body according to the general rules, the essential levels of performance and the minimum standards referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013. The validation of competences can be followed by the certification of the competences or ends with the release of a validation document compliant with the minimum standards referred to in Article 6 of the above-mentioned Decree - Source: *LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 OF 16 January 2013*.

#### **(K)**

*"Knowledge"*: the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual - Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017*.

#### **(L)**

*"Formal Learning"*: the learning that takes place in the education and training system and in universities and institutions of higher education in Arts and Music, and that ends with the achievement of a degree or a qualification or a professional diploma (also during apprenticeship), or a recognized certification, in compliance with the current General education and university regulations - Source: *LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraph 52*.

*"Informal Learning"*: the learning achieved by the person in everyday life activities within the context of work, family and spare time - Source: *LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraph 54*.

*"Non-formal Learning"*: the learning characterized by an intentional choice of the person, which takes place outside the formal learning systems, in any organization that pursues educational and training purposes, including voluntary work, the national civil service and the private social sector and in businesses - Source: *LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraph 53*.

*"Lifelong Learning"*: any activity undertaken by the person in a formal, non-formal and informal way, in the various stages of his/her life, in order to improve knowledge, skills and competences, in a perspective of personal, civic, social and occupational growth - Source: *LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraph 51*.

#### **(O)**

*"Learning outcomes"*: statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and - Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017*.

## **(P)**

*"Professions not organized in associations and orders":* the economic activity, also organized, aimed at providing services in favour of third parties, exercised mainly through intellectual work or, in any case, with the contribution thereof, with the exclusion of activities reserved by law to persons enrolled in registers or lists pursuant to Article 2229 of the Italian Civil Code, of the health professions and related activities typical or reserved by law, and of the activities and handicrafts, commercial and public exercise governed by specific regulations - *Source: LAW No. 4 of 14 January 2013.*

*"Regulated professions":* 1) the activity or the set of activities, whose exercise is permitted only following registration in Associations or Boards or in registers and lists kept by administrations or public bodies, if registration is subject to the possession of professional qualifications or to ascertain specific professional competences; 2) employed work, if access is subject, by legislative or regulatory provisions, to the possession of professional qualifications; 3) the activity exercised by means of a professional title, whose use is reserved for those with a professional qualification; 4) the activities related to the health sector where the possession of a professional qualification is a determining condition for the remuneration for the services provided or for reimbursement; 5) the professions exercised by the members of an association or an organization referred to in Annex I of Legislative Decree No. 206 of 9 November 2007 - *Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 206 of 09 November 2007.*

## **(Q)**

*"Qualification":* the education and training qualification, including that of education and professional training, or professional qualification issued by an Entitled Body in compliance with the general rules, the essential levels of performance and the minimum standards referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 - *Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 OF 16 January 2013.*

*"International qualification":* a qualification awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body - *Source: EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017.*

*"Micro qualifications":* qualifications, consisting of one or more competences, constitutive of broader qualifications, issued, within the NSCC, as a result of short-term learning paths, also of a flexible, personalized and modular nature - *Source: Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework*

*"Protected professional qualification":* a form of regulation of a profession according to which the use of the qualification of a professional activity or a group of professional activities is subordinated, directly or indirectly, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions, to the possession of a specific professional qualification, and according to which the improper use of this qualification is subject to sanctions - *Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 142 OF 16 October 2020.*

## **(R)**

*"Referencing":* the institutional and technical process that reference the qualifications issued under the National system for certification of competences to one of the eight levels of the National Qualifications Framework. The referencing of Italian qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework guarantees their referencing to the European Qualifications Framework - *Source: DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 08 January 2018.*

*"Regulated training":* any training that, according to the regulation in force, is specifically oriented to the exercise of a specific profession and consists of a cycle of studies completed, possibly, by professional training, a professional internship or a professional practice, according to the modes established by law - *Source: LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 206 of 09 November 2007.*

*"National Repository of education and vocational training qualifications"* the common reference framework, referred to in Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013, for the certification of competences that takes place through the progressive standardization of the essential elements of education and vocational training qualifications, also on the basis of a common system for the recognition of credits. It consists of all the repositories of education and training qualifications, including those of vocational education and training, and professional qualifications - Source: *LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013*.

*"Responsibility and autonomy"*: the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility - Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017*.

**(5)**

*"Skills"*: the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (including manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) - Source: *EU RECOMMENDATION on the EQF of 22 May 2017*.

*"National education and training system"* consisting of: - pre-primary school; - first cycle of education (divided into primary school (5 years) and lower secondary school (3 years)) - second cycle of education (the upper secondary education system (5 years) and vocational education and training, with courses lasting three and four years); - higher education (University education and training, Higher Education in Arts and Music (AFAM) and the learning offer promoted by Higher Technical Institutes<sup>226</sup>); - Adult Education (IDA) (first and second level pathways and literacy and Italian language courses carried out by the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) as territorial networks of services; - Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTTS) Source: *DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 08 January 2018*.

*"National system for certification of competences"*: the set of services for identifying and validating and certifying competences provided in compliance with the general rules, the essential levels of performance and the minimum standards referred to in Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 - Source: *LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 13 of 16 January 2013*.

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226 According to Law No. 99 of 15 July 2022 establishing the Tertiary System of Higher Technological Education, the Higher Technical Institutes were named Higher Technological Institutes (ITS Academy).

## ANNEX 5 - Index of legislative references

CONSTITUTION OF ITALIAN REPUBLIC

ITALIAN CIVIL CODE

### 1978

LAW No. 845 of 21 December 1978, on vocational training (GURI No. 362 of 30 December 1978), as amended.

### 1980

DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 382 of 11 July 1980, on the reorganization of university teaching. (GURI No. 209 of 31 July 1980).

### 1989

LAW No. 168 of 9 May 1989, on the establishment of the Ministry of University and scientific and technological Research (GURI No. 108 of 11 May 1989).

1990

LAW No. 241 of 7 August 1990, on the definition of new rules on administrative procedure and on the access to administrative documents (GURI No. 192 of 18 August 1990), as amended.

1993

LAW No. 580 of 29 December 1993, on the reorganization of the Chambers of commerce, industry, handicrafts and agriculture (GURI No. 7 of 11 January 1994).

1997

LAW No. 196 of 24 June 1997, on the rules for the promotion of employment (GURI No. 154 of 4 July 1997).

### 1998

DECREE OF THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND WELFARE IN CONCERT WITH THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND THE MINISTER OF UNIVERSITY AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH No. 142 of 25 March 1998, on the rules for the implementation of the principles and criteria referred to in Article 18 of Law No. 196, on training and orientation internships (GURI No. 108 of 12 May 1998).

DIRECTIVE 98/34/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 22 June 1998 Laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations and of rules on Information Society services (GUUE No. 204 of 21 July 1998), as amended.

### 1999

DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 275 of 8 March 1999, on the autonomy of educational institutions, pursuant to art. 21 of Law No. 59 of 15 March 1997 (GURI No. 186 of 10 August 1999).

LAW No. 144 of 17 May 1999, on measures relating to investments, delegation to the Government for the reorganization of employment incentives and the legislation governing the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Workplace - INAIL, as well as provisions for the reorganization of social security institutions (GURI No. 118 of 22 May 1999).

## **2000**

LAW No. 388 of 23 December 2000, on provisions on the annual and multiannual State budget (2001 Budget Law) (GURI No. 302 of 29 December 2000), as amended.

## **2001**

DECREE OF THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND WELFARE of 25 May 2001 on "Accreditation of training and guidance centres" (GURI No. 162 of 14 July 2001).

## **2002**

LAW No. 148 of 11 July 2002, on ratification of the Agreement on the recognition of qualifications of higher education in the European Region, signed in Lisbon on 11 April 1997, and rules on the adaptation of the internal regulation (GURI No. 173 of 25 July 2002).

## **2003**

LAW No. 53 of 28 March 2003, on delegation to the Government for the definition of general rules on education and essential levels of performance (GURI No.77 of 2 April 2003).

DECREE-LAW No. 105 of 9 May 2003, on urgent provisions for universities and research institutions as well as for the exercise professional activities (GURI No. 110 of 14 May 2003) converted into LAW No. 170 of 11 July 2003.

LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 276 of 10 September 2003, on implementation of delegation in employment and the labour market, pursuant to Law No. 30 (GURI No. 235 of 09 October 2003), as amended.

## **2004**

DECREE OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH No. 270 of 22 October 2004, on amendments to the regulation on the autonomy of universities, approved by Decree of the Minister of University and scientific and technological Research No. 509 of 3 November 1999 (GURI No. 266 of 12 November 2004).

## **2005**

LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 76 of 15 April 2005, on the definition of the general rules on the right and duty to education and training, pursuant to article 2, paragraph 1, subpara. c), of Law No. 53 of 28 March 2003 (GURI No.103 of 5 May 2005).

LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 77 of 15 April 2005, on the definition of the general rules on school-work alternation, pursuant to Article 4 Law No. 53 of 28 March 2003 (GURI No. 103 of 05 May 2005).

DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 212 of 8 July 2005, on regulations governing the definition of the didactic regulations of the Higher Education in Arts, Music and Dance, in accordance with Article 2 of Law No. 508 of 21 December 1999 (GURI No. 243 of 18 October 2005).

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LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 226 of 17 October 2005, on general rules and essential levels of performance relating to the second cycle of the education and training system, pursuant to Article 2 of Law No. 53 of 28 March 2003. (GURI No. 257 of 4 November 2005), as amended.

## 2006

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## 2007

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## 2008

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## 2009

DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC No. 89 of 20 March 2009, on the revision of the regulation and organization of pre-primary school and of the first cycle of education, pursuant to Article 64, paragraph 4, of Decree-Law No. 112 of 25 June 2008, converted into Law No. 133 of 6 August 2008 (GURI No. 162 of 15 July 2009).

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020") (GUUE No. 119 of 28 May 2009).

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## 2011

DECREE of the Minister of Education, University and Research in agreement with the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 7 September 2011 adopted pursuant to Law No. 144, art. 69, paragraph 1, laying down general rules concerning qualifications of Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) and related national profiles, the identification and certification the competences, referred to in Articles 4, paragraph 3, and 8, paragraph 2, of Decree of President of the Council of Ministers of 25 January 2008.

## 2012

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COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (GUUE No. 398 of 22 December 2009).

## **2013**

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## **2014**

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## 2015

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## 2016

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (GUUE No. 484 of 24 December 2016).

## 2017

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## **2018**

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## **2019**

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final certification formats of Education and Vocational Training pathways, as per the Agreement in the State-Regions Conference of 27 July 2011 (Repository No. 155 of the State-Regions Conference of 1 August 2019).

## **2020**

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## **2021**

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Ruhl C. (2021), Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Classification System in TeachersSupport

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UNESCO (2014): ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013): Manual to Accompany the International Standard Classification of Education 2011.

UNESCO (2015): International Standard Classification of Education: Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013) - Detailed Field Descriptions.

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## ANNEX 7 - Sitography

ANPAL <https://www.anpal.gov.it/>

ANVUR <https://www.anvur.it/>

ATLAS OF WORK AND QUALIFICATIONS: <https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>

CEDEFOP <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/it>

CIMEA <http://www.cimea.it/it/index.aspx>

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES <https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/home>

CONI –SCHOOL OF SPORTS <https://scuoladelloSPORT.coni.it/>

CUN <https://www.cun.it/homepage/>

ENIC-NARIC NETWORK: <http://www.enic-naric.net>

EQAVET NETWORK <https://inapp.org/it/eqavet>

EUROPEAN E-COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK <https://www.ecompetences.eu/it/>

EUROPASS PORTAL <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/it>

EUROPEAN REGULATED PROFESSION DATABASE <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=homepage>

EURYDICE NETWORK ITALIA: <https://eurydice.indire.it/>

EURYDICE NETWORK UE: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/>

ESCO PROGRAM: <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home?resetLanguage=true&newLanguage=it>

INAPP <https://inapp.org/>

INDIRE <http://www.indire.it/>

INVALSI <http://www.invalsi.it/>

ISTAT (ATECO) <https://www4.istat.it/it/strumenti/definizioni-e-classificazioni/ateco-2007>

ISTAT (CP 2011) <http://professioni.istat.it/sistemainformativoprofessionioni/cp2011/>

LIST OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS NOT ORGANIZED IN BOARDS AND ASSOCIATIONS <https://www.mise.gov.it/index.php/it/component/content/article?id=2027474:professioni-non-organizzate-in-ordini-o-collegi-elenco-delle-associazioni-professionali>

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND MERIT <http://www.miur.gov.it/>

MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL POLICIES <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/>

MINISTRY OF UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH <http://www.miur.gov.it/>

MINISTRY OF ENTERPRISES AND MADE IN ITALY <http://www.mise.gov.it/>

PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS - DEPARTMENT FOR EUROPEAN POLICIES <http://www.politicheeuropee.gov.it/it/>

QTI - Italian Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education <http://www.quadrodeitoli.it>

REFERNET NETWORK CEDEFOP: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/it/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

REFERNET NETWORK ITALIA: <https://www.inapp.org/it/refernet/Refernet%20Italia>

REGULATED PROFESSIONS <http://www.impresainungiorno.gov.it/web/l-impresa-e-l-europa/elenco-professioni-regolamentate>

SCUOLA IN CHIARO <https://cercalatuascuola.istruzione.it/cercalatuascuola/>

TECNOSTRUTTURA <https://www.tecnostruttura.it/>

TECHNICAL COORDINATION OF REGIONS AND AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES - IX COMMISSION for EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LABOR <https://www.regioni.it/>

UNIVERSITALY <https://www.universitaly.it/>

## ANNEX 8 - Questionnaire for the national public consultation



### EQF NATIONAL COORDINATION POINT

#### PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE ITALIAN REFERENCING REPORT OF QUALIFICATIONS TO THE EQF

The *European Qualifications Framework* - EQF established with the Recommendation of 2008 and updated in 2017, is the common reference framework for the transparency and comparability of qualifications in the EU Member States and in participating Countries. Italy adopted the EQF Recommendation from the very beginning, thus publishing in 2013 the "First Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework".

Italy is currently implementing the second phase of the referencing process of the EQF Recommendation, following a deep and complex interinstitutional cooperation work which led, in 2018, to the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the single tool for referencing Italian qualifications to the EQF and for describing and classify national qualifications issued within the National System for the certification of competence .

These innovative elements led to the drafting of a technical proposal of the Updated Referencing Report, currently being shared with all the administrations concerned, developed by the National Coordination Point of the EQF (EQF NCP) set up at the National Agency for Active Labor Policies - ANPAL by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies.

In order to assess the capacity of the new Referencing Report to represent, at national and European level, the Italian qualifications systems, the EQF NCP, as part of the joint project "Italian Cooperation 4 Transparency of Skills & Mobility" of the EQF, Euroguidance and Europass National Coordination Points has launched, in collaboration with project partner Eurodesk Italy, an online public consultation based on a questionnaire lasting about 10 minutes structured in 5 sections<sup>227</sup>:

- a) Personal data
- b) Knowledge and use of Qualifications Frameworks
- c) Completeness and clarity of the information contained in the new Italian Referencing Report of qualifications to the EQF
- d) Usefulness of the new Report and use of the NQF
- e) Follow up

The consultation is addressed to: public and private bodies operating in the education and training system, employers and trade union organizations, employers, non-governmental organizations, consultants and experts, teachers, learners and workers, and, more generally, the scientific community. The public consultation will last 8 weeks.

The results of the public consultation will be considered, even if not binding, and published in the last chapter of the Report. No identification of any kind of the respondents will be guaranteed.

For any information on the national public consultation, please contact the EQF NCP at [eqf\\_italia@anpal.gov.it](mailto:eqf_italia@anpal.gov.it)

<sup>227</sup> The consultation was realized on the basis of the National guidelines on public consultation edited by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and by the Minister of Public Administration of 9 March 2017.

In order to ensure the participation of all parties concerned, it is possible disseminate the questionnaire through the main communication channels below: e-mail, Facebook; LinkedIn; Twitter.

The authorization for the processing of personal data is requested.

I DECLARE THAT I HAVE READ THE PRIVACY POLICY

The organizers are authorized to use the data provided by completing this form for informative purposes exclusively, in compliance with and pursuant to EU Regulation 2016/679 ("GDPR"). More information can be found at : [http://www.eurodesk.it/2018\\_privacy](http://www.eurodesk.it/2018_privacy)

Publication of the answers provided

- I authorize the publication of the answers in anonymous and aggregate form

**Questions marked \* are mandatory**

## **SECTION A - Personal data**

**NAME\*** \_\_\_\_\_

**SURNAME\*** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL\*** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARTICIPATING AS:**

**Organization** (please specify \_\_\_\_\_) \*

**Individual** (please specify, i.e., consultants, experts, operators, teachers, learners... \_\_\_\_\_) \*

**SECTOR\*** \_\_\_\_\_

**OCCUPATION\*** \_\_\_\_\_

**Region\*** \_\_\_\_\_ **Province\*** \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION B - Knowledge and use of Qualifications Frameworks

### B.1 Please range the level of knowledge on a scale of 1 to 4 for each of the frameworks of the qualifications listed

Where 1 = low level knowledge and 4 = high level knowledge

1. European Qualifications Framework - EQF	1 2 3 4
2. National Qualifications Framework (Decree of 8 January 2018)	1 2 3 4
3. Qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area - QF EHEA	1 2 3 4
4. Italian Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education - IQF	1 2 3 4
5. Other national qualifications frameworks (third Countries)	1 2 3 4

### B.2 Which of the following Qualifications Frameworks do you use the most?

Where 0 = low usage and 4 = high usage

1. European Qualifications Framework - EQF	1 2 3 4
2. National Qualifications Framework (Decree of 8 January 2018)	1 2 3 4
3. Qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area - QF EHEA	1 2 3 4
4. Italian Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education - IQF	1 2 3 4
5. Other national qualifications frameworks (third Countries)	1 2 3 4

### B.3 For the purposes of mobility and usability of Italian qualifications in Europe, the First Italian referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF of 2013 has sustained the transparency and recognition processes of qualifications

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

## **SECTION C - Completeness and clarity of the information provided by the updated Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF**

**C.1 Does the updated Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the EQF describe in a clearly, pertinent and transparent way the national and regional education and training systems? \* Max. 1 answer**

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

**C.2 Is the description of the National Qualifications Framework and the procedures for referencing qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework clear, complete and exhaustive? \* Max. 1 answer**

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

**C.3 Is the methodology adopted (main referencing criteria and sub-articulation of levels) for referencing the Italian qualifications to the NQF/EQF clear and transparent? \* (Max. 1 answer)**

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

**C.4 Is the synoptic table 3.10 summarizing the referencing of the Italian qualifications systems to the NQF/EQF clear, transparent and complete? \***

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

**C.5 Are the arguments supporting the fulfilment of the 10 referencing criteria stated by the EQF Recommendation (Annex III) clear, complete and exhaustive?**

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

**C.6 Does the updated Italian Referencing Report to the EQF describe in a clear and comprehensive way the main impacts of the establishment of the NQF at the national level?**

- Very                       Somewhat                       Not much                       Not at all

It is possible to clarify the answer provided in the box below (optional -max. 500 Characters)

## **SECTION D - Usefulness and application of the updated Referencing Report of Italian qualifications to the EQF**

**Q. 1 In your opinion, what will be the area of main application of the updated Referencing Report to the EQF? \* (max. 3 answers)?**

1. Coordination of education and vocational training systems
2. Qualification design based on learning outcomes approach
3. Accessibility, permeability and transparency of qualifications
4. Portability and usability of qualifications at national and European level
5. Support for transition paths
6. Validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts
7. Reception and guidance
8. Quality assurance of qualifications
9. Skill needs analysis and personalization of pathways
10. Recognition of qualifications or part of them (i.e., training credits)
11. Issue of the Certificate Supplement/Diploma Supplement
12. Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_\*)

## **SECTION E - FOLLOW UP**

**E.1 Are you available for providing more details about your answers or for further initiatives of this kind?**

1. YES
2. No

Thank you for participating in the public consultation on the Referencing Report of Italian qualifications to the EQF. An email will automatically be sent to you with the answers you have provided. We will provide you with the results of the consultation and with the finalization of the updated Report.

## APPENDIX I - List of public authorities consulted for their respective

- **Ministry of Labour and Social Policies** - Social Welfare and Training Directorate General;
  - **Ministry of Education and Merit** - Education and Training System Department, Directorate General for the Education and Training Order and for the assessment of the national Education system;
  - **Ministry of University and Research** - Higher Education and Research Department;
  - **Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy** - Directorate General of the Labour Market, Competition, Consumer, Supervision and technical legislation;
  - **Ministry of Economics and Finance** - State General Accounting Department - IGF;
  - **Ministry of Justice** - Judicial Affairs Department, Directorate General of Civil Justice;
  - **Ministry of Health** - Directorate General of Health Professions and Human Resources of the National Health Service;
  - **Ministry of Culture** - Directorate General of Education and Research, Directorate General of Tourism;
  - **Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry** - Department of Competitive Policies, Agri-Food Quality, Horse Racing and Fisheries;
  - **Ministry of Transport** - Transport, Shipping, General Affairs and Human Resources Department - D.M.V. Directorate General; General Command of Port Authorities; Coast Guard/Unit II;
  - **Ministry of the Interior** - Public Safety Department; General Administration Office;
  - **Excise, Customs and Monopolies Agency** - Legal and Litigation Central Management;
  - **Presidency of the Council of Ministries** - European Policies Department; Public Administration Department; Sports Office;
  - **Italian National Olympic Committee** - Sports professions
- 
- **Region Piemonte**
  - **Region Valle d'Aosta**
  - **Region Lombardia**
  - **Autonomous Province of Bolzano**
  - **Autonomous Province of Trento**
  - **Region Veneto**
  - **Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia**
  - **Region Liguria**
  - **Region Emilia Romagna**
  - **Region Toscana**
  - **Region Umbria**
  - **Region Marche**
  - **Region Lazio**
  - **Region Abruzzo**
  - **Region Molise**
  - **Region Campania**
  - **Region Puglia**
  - **Region Basilicata**
  - **Region Calabria**
  - **Region Sicilia**
  - **Region Sardegna**

## APPENDIX II - *International experts' reports*

### Dr. John O'Connor, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

#### General Observations

I welcome the opportunity to offer a perspective on the approach taken by the Italian authorities in preparing a draft Italian updated EQF referencing report and to provide comment on the evidence presented in support of respective criteria and procedures for EQF referencing. I am not particularly familiar with the Italian qualification system or the national policy and institutional framework. Accordingly, my comments are informed by my familiarity of EQF referencing practice in several participating countries and based on my responsibility for the Irish EQF-NCP and as a member of the EQF-AG.

The Italian education, training and qualifications system is complex. It is not unique in this regard and the report acknowledges as much and presents an accessible account of the various education and training sub-systems and the unique regional and institutional features that play an important role in the Italian system. It is instructive to read the original EQF referencing report (2012) and the current report to arrive at a good appreciation of the NQF journey in Italy.

There are many notable features and elements to be commended in the report. These include:

- An extensive public consultation and inter-institutional collaboration seeking to engage all relevant stakeholders in the EQF referencing exercise. This was also a feature of the 2012 exercise.
- The ambition set for the Italian NQF in the context for national ambitions for lifelong learning.
- The use of this EQF referencing report to 'launch' the implementation of the Italian NQF. The NQF is given a prominent role in the national 'governance system' for promoting transparency, stability and portability of qualifications and competences within the national system. The ambition for the NQF to act as a coordinating mechanism seems significant.
- The prospects of a single, comprehensive NQF capable of classifying all relevant qualifications, including qualifications not included in the 2012 Italian referencing report.
- The establishment of ANPAL - National Agency for Active Labour Policies, and its lead role in implementing the Italian NQF and as EQF-NCP
- The 2018 legislation establishing the Italian NQF offer a strong statutory basis for NQF implementation and oversight.
- Parallel developments in the national system for the certification of competences (NSCC) compliment the most recent NQF developments.
- The national information system around qualifications, including the national repository, the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and the Italian Register of Qualifications, seem well interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Before offering my opinion on the extent to which the report addresses each of the respective criteria and procedures for EQF referencing, I wish to highlight three sources of information that I relied on in forming my opinion.

Firstly, from the 2017 EQF Recommendation, MS are expected to:

'Use the EQF to reference national qualifications frameworks or systems and to compare all types and levels of qualifications in the Union that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems'

'Review and update, when relevant, the referencing of the levels of the national qualifications frameworks or systems to the levels of the EQF set out in Annex II and using the criteria set out in Annex III, with due regard to the national context'.

It is worth noting, in my opinion, that the original Italian EQF referencing report in 2012 essentially referenced the Italian system of qualifications to the EQF while the 2021 report references the Italian NQF to the EQF. This is an important distinction, recognising the NQF developments in Italy in the intervening years. The distinction also signals a shift from referencing qualifications to the EQF to referencing qualifications **levels** within an NQF to the levels of the EQF.

Secondly, I was guided by the following interpretations contained in the report:

*"National Qualifications Framework": the national tool for referencing the Italian qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework referred to in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 with the aim of linking the Italian qualifications system to the systems of other European Countries. The National Qualifications Framework also aims at coordinating and strengthening the various systems that contribute to the public offer of lifelong learning and the identification and validation and certification of competences*

*"Referencing": the institutional and technical process that reference the qualifications issued under the National system for certification of competences to one of the eight levels of the National Qualifications Framework. The referencing of Italian qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework guarantees their referencing to the European Qualifications Framework - Source: DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies of 08 January 2018.*

Finally, I consulted Note AG 43-4-REV (2018) on the Updating of EQF referencing reports as agreed by the EQF-AG.

**The following are my comments on the extent to which the draft report addresses the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework, as set out in Annex III of the 2017 Recommendation.**

#### **Criterion 1:**

**The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Co-ordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.**

This criterion is addressed. The institutional, legislative and governance arrangements supporting the both the Italian Qualifications Framework are extensively detailed in the report. The report describes an exhaustive and deliberative engagement process to engage all relevant national bodies in the updated referencing process. The role of the Public Competent Bodies in the education, training and qualifications system are a notable feature of the Italian system.

#### **Criterion 2**

**There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.**

This criterion is addressed.

The relationship between qualifications and the EQF levels proposed in 2012 are maintained in the current report. The establishment of the NQF in Italy has facilitated an elaboration of level descriptors and a clear and demonstrable link between the national level descriptors and EQF levels. The use of sub-articulation levels is of interest, reflecting conceptualisations familiar in ISCED levels, and helping to nuance the diversity of qualifications placed at each Italian NQF level.

#### **Criterion 3**

**The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.**

This criterion is addressed.

The report provides good evidence that qualifications are designed with reference to learning outcomes. Time will tell if the NQF and its associated descriptors will become the primary reference point for the development of qualifications included within the NQF. Italy has a strong tradition for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The national system for the certification of competences (NSCC) is the latest testament to this commitment, this system is closely linked with the NQF in a way that promises to contribute to the realisation of national ambitions for lifelong learning. The inclusion of adult education and Regional VET qualifications within the NQF and ultimately assigned to an EQF level is another important achievement. The potential for both frameworks to promote learning outcomes and enable validation practice is evident. The report includes a helpful mapping of credit arrangements in Italy and their compatibility with the principles for credit as set out in Annex V of the 2017 EQF Recommendation.

#### **Criterion 4**

##### **The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent**

This criterion is somewhat addressed.

Transparent criteria and procedures are in place for establishing the relationship between the various categories of Italian qualifications and the NQF. The role of the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP) will be of interest to many countries participating in EQF and looking for examples of independent evaluation of applications for populating NQFs and registers. The prospect of relating international qualifications to the Italian NQF, will be of interest to many other countries. Reference could be made in the report acknowledging the ongoing work in this regard undertaken by the EQF-AG and the emerging protocol on cross border collaboration on the inclusion of international qualifications within NQFs.

My concern with the report under this criterion lies with the use of language. The term referencing is widely used and applies to the relationship between qualifications in Italy and the NQF and to the relationship between the Italian NQF and the EQF. In 2012 Italian qualifications were referenced directly to the EQF. The term positioning is also used in the current report.

The definition of the term referencing used in the report could imply the idea that qualifications may still be described as referenced to the EQF. With the advent of the Italian NQF, it is levels of the NQF that are referenced to the EQF. Qualifications then acquire an EQF status by virtue of their level within the NQF.

The term 'inclusion of qualifications in the NQF' is used sparingly in the report. Any distinction between this term and 'referencing qualifications to the NQF' should be made clear. If there are no differences, perhaps the authors of the report could consider adopting the term 'inclusion within the NQF' and reserve the term referencing for the relationship with EQF. Pg. 33 offers some examples where the different terminology can potentially be confusing to an outsider.

#### **Criterion 5**

##### **The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this Recommendation.**

This criterion is somewhat addressed.

In my opinion the report could benefit from a more explicit mapping of the various sub-system quality assurance arrangements with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV of the EQF recommendation. Such mapping would not need to be exhaustive but sufficient to show the extent to which the agreed principles apply to national practice. The National Plan for quality assurance in education and training (NPQ) seems like a significant initiative, it would be instructive to know more. I did not notice links to ENQA review reports for Italian HE, if available, they add weight to EQF referencing reports.

## Criterion 6

**The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.**

This criterion is addressed.

## Criterion 7

**The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.**

This criterion is addressed.

## Criterion 8

**The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.**

This criterion is addressed.

The report could benefit from further detail and implications of the apparent decision not to include the Italian Qualifications Framework - (QTI) in this EQF referencing exercise. If the HE qualifications Framework in Italy has been self-certified as compatible with the QF-EHEA, links to that report should be included. The 2012 report referred to the Holy See as a national authority for HE, I missed a similar reference in the current report.

## Criterion 9

**Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.**

This criterion is addressed.

Provision for addressing this criterion is clearly evident.

## Criterion 10

**Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g., certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.**

This criterion is somewhat addressed.

The report confirms a reference to NQF on relevant certificates, supplements and register listings. It is less clear what the state of play is, or any intentions, in respect to the visibility of EQF levels on certificates etc. as per this criterion.

June 2020

**Ildikó Pathóová, EQF AG member Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports, Slovakia**

**Ľubica Gálová, EQF NCP State Vocational Institute, Slovakia**

### ***Introduction to the topic***

The first Italian referencing report was adopted back in December 2012 and presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013; it is important to be aware of the fact, that an important part of Italian qualifications was missing then - that was related to regional qualifications. Now, the starting point of the Italian second referencing phase was initiated by the adoption of the new EQF Recommendation and the changes related to the national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills. It is important to mention that this phase of referencing process includes the referencing process of those qualifications that were not included in the first referencing phase (2008-2013) and the allocation of all the qualifications awarded at national and regional level to the EQF levels.

Now, as a result of Italian strategy for lifelong learning launched in 2012, there is a deep and complex interinstitutional cooperation work declared for the successful implementation of the National system for certification. As part of this process, Italy adopted its own National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in 2018 and is now proposing a new "Report (which replaces the previous one), to update the referencing of Italian qualifications to the EQF" (p.6). The new Italian Referencing Report and the connected activities are seen as golden opportunity to be used for the implementation of the Italian strategy for lifelong learning. The adoption of the NQF in fact will not only improve the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications but it will also encourage more and better opportunities of upskilling and re-skilling of the Italian people starting from the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

I wish to highlight some important parts from the content of the Report:

### **Objectives, implementation process and structure of the Report**

At the first place of importance, the real value of the referencing process is the broad national consultation lead by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to the National Technical Committee which consists of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of University and Research, Regions and Autonomous Provinces, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Economic Development, and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

### **CHAPTER 1 mainly deals with the regulatory context for the updating of the Italian Referencing Report of the Qualifications to the EQF:**

- ✓ The Italian strategy for lifelong learning recognizes the individual right to lifelong learning - knowledge, skills and competences of individuals, in a personal, civic, social and occupational perspective.
- ✓ The framework defines five priority measures: partnerships, lifelong guidance, specific needs for specific groups of individuals, tools of transparency, and relevance of education and training.

The system of integrated territorial networks is based on (p. 13) "the centrality of the person (and his/her needs, also in a multidimensional perspective) and is aimed at expanding the audience of beneficiaries of lifelong learning services through: the establishment of synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning systems and between the different subjects of the learning offer; the promotion of transversal actions between the different training offers and services, thus qualifying their specific standards and goals; the integration of the various opportunities for job placement, including through reskilling; the promotion of the apprenticeship contract, also defining its training content; the promotion of shared actions of lifelong guidance and accompaniment aimed at returning to education and training systems or entering or re-entering the labour market; and finally the promotion of continuous training of workers".

Figure 1.1 on page 15 summarizes the services for identifying, validating and certifying competences very clearly.

The unitary reference for the recognition of qualifications at national and EU level is the national Repository, which is made up of all repertoires of education and training qualifications that are based on minimum access standards.

There is the information database called "The Single Unified Information System of Labour Policies" which serves as a platform for interoperability of existing central and territorial databases and is a base for the creation and release of the Worker's Electronic Booklet (formerly the Citizen's training booklet).

The National Qualifications framework within the Italian strategy for LLL has helped to a wide range of reforms. Overview of tools that were adopted to make the NQF visible include tools for transparency and for the readability of qualifications, services for the validation of learning achieved in non-formal and informal contexts, and also provisions of equivalence of qualifications; lastly but not at least, individual procedures and provisions for the recognition of qualifications abroad.

## **CHAPTER 2 deals with the National Qualifications Framework: objectives, structure, procedures, governance and compliance with the ten criteria for referencing to the EQF**

As a reference to the First Referencing Report, there is a table 2.1 on page 24: Referencing of the Italian qualifications to EQF - 2012 displayed - how is this table relevant now, could you please specify? What I consider very important, that the NQF now is embedded into a legal act - Decree establishing the NQF as of 8 January 2018.

**The Italian national qualifications framework** is described as a framework with 8 levels. The learning outcomes are the reference for the description of competence on the basis of three dimensions (knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility) in relation to the achievement of a certain qualification. Compared to the EQF, the Italian NQF expands the set of descriptors with additional level sub-domains.

In order to promote common principles for the description of the qualifications and competences contained in the National Repository the learning outcomes are described in terms of competences and associated with descriptive elements of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and of the NQF, starting from a synthetic description concerning the activities to which it refers, the expected results, the context and the complexity, also in terms of autonomy and responsibility (that is the qualification design).

It is important to mention, that "the referencing procedure of each Italian qualification to the NQF starts following the approval and adoption of this Report. The Report represents the common reference point including all types of qualifications issued in Italy and referenced to the NQF/EQF "(p. 30).

The referencing procedure is planned to be carried out through a specific management application created by ANPAL that automatically draws on the information already available in the existing databases.

The referencing procedure is divided into five phases and the competent authorities should apply for the procedure of referencing their qualifications. The Report states the process of adoption and a periodic update of an Operational guide to support all parties concerned with appropriate information, training and operational elements, both for the definition and description of qualifications and for referencing them to the appropriate levels of the NQF.

Qualifications not included in the National Repository may also be referenced to the NQF. Two types of qualifications fall into this case:

- Qualifications issued by the Public Competent Authorities as part of supplementary and complementary non-formal learning offer;
- Qualifications falling within the definition of "international qualification".

These qualifications are included in the Atlas of Work and Qualifications and in the National Register in a separate section called "Qualifications referenced to NQF not included in the National Repository".

The Report also elaborates two types of positioning qualifications into levels: so, called "full fit" and "best fit" and the expansion of the NQF will be supported through the definition of national reference frameworks of key competences.

The Report also describes (p. 35, table 2.3 Internal sub-articulation of each NQF level) the criterion of the sub-articulation that is based on additional qualitative information in order to distinguish:

- qualifications that allow direct access to next-level learning pathways versus qualifications that do not allow any direct access to next-level learning pathways;
- vocational training and specializing qualifications that respectively allow or do not allow access to next-level learning pathway.

Here the sub-articulation levels 1&2 and also 3&4 look identical. Could you please describe why?

There is also a detailed picture for the NQF logo and its colour variants to be used by Public Competent Authorities. Within the supporting process of the implementation of the NQF and the referencing of Italian qualifications there are also information systems that guarantee the connection with the ESCO Program for the mobility of workers within the EURES network and the release of the Worker's Electronic Booklet.

The governance of the NQF is described in satisfactory detailed manner, on different levels and within its wide and articulated structure of public administrations and qualification systems.

The national quality assurance system is ensured by the technical role of the EQF NCP and by the function of independent evaluator performed by INAPP. In addition, other bodies contribute to the quality assurance process for the respective areas of competence. The main tool for ensuring the quality of the learning offer for the regional vocational training systems is represented by the accreditation of the training institutions in line with EQAVET principles and also by the implementation of the National Plan for the quality assurance in education and training - NPQ (2017). It is also important to mention, that while sharing the aims and advantages related to the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation, "the Ministries of Labour, Education and Universities and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces have agreed on the opportunity to identify a common reference framework for quality assurance in the education and training system, which guarantees homogeneous choices and tools, while also leaving the decisions on further developments and territorial changes to the autonomy of the various stakeholders" (p. 40).

The Italian Referencing Report fully complies with the 10 criteria and procedures for referencing the NQF to the EQF.

**CHAPTER 3** deals with the Italian qualification systems and their referencing to the NQF (also Annex 3 of the Report):

- Qualifications of the first cycle of education are referenced as IT 1.1 and IT 1.2 of NQF to EQF level 1 and are issued by the Ministry of Education (table 3.1 p.49).
- The second cycle of education and training system leads to qualifications levelled at EQF 2 - 3-4 with NQF sub-articulation levels; next to the Ministry of Education, Regions and Autonomous Provinces are entitled as Public Competent Authorities to issue qualifications.
- Post-secondary higher technical education and training is led by Regions and Autonomous Provinces and accredited educational institutions in partnership with universities and enterprises are entitled to issue higher technical specialisation certificates at EQF level 4 (IT 4.4) with the minimum access requirements for qualifications already obtained at levels IT 4.1 and IT 4.2
- Tertiary education and training system provides the learning offer which is provided by the tertiary education and training system and is accessible through the constantly updated

national database available on the portal of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research. Here the two-year course programmes in higher technical education diplomas at level IT 5.4 lead to EQF level 5 qualifications and the three-year course programmes in higher technical education diplomas at level IT 6.4 lead to EQF level 6 qualifications. The Italian Qualification Framework (QTI) is divided into three cycles, as defined by the Bologna Process, and includes all the qualifications awarded for each cycle, described both in terms of learning outcomes and in terms of number of credits through the use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). It is interesting to see that Second level University Post degree qualifications and also Specialisation Diplomas are placed at the same level of EQF as the PhD programmes - EQF 8.

- The adult education system is entrusted to the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) and is configured as a territorial service network divided into a central office and providers, identified within the exclusive competence of the Autonomous Regions and Provinces. The CPIA are in charge of the following activities: adult education formal pathways, initiatives to expand the educational offer, research, experimentation and development activities in the field of adult education. The qualification system of adult education can lead to EQF level 1, 2 and 4 qualifications.
- The vocational training system is the responsibility of Regions and the Autonomous Provinces, the vocational training through qualifications is organized in one or more regional repositories and is aimed at young people and adults. Here as an addition to the existing qualifications, the regional training offer foresees micro qualifications whose individual units of competence can be separately certified and included within regional repositories and in the National Repository. Accredited/Authorized educational institutions are entitled to issue qualifications at EQF levels 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.
- Within the system of professions, the Report deals in detail with regulated and unregulated professions; here it is important to mention that the system of non-regulated professions does not currently have own national or regional frameworks of qualifications to be referenced to the NQF (p. 64).

The synoptic table related to the Referencing of the Italian qualifications systems to NQF provides the very complex picture of the whole system. Thank you for this holistic overview.

**CHAPTER 4** provides the summary of the results of the national and international consultation process that will be updated in line with main findings of the consultation process.

Overall, the Report is consistent with the criteria set up by the EQF Recommendation 2017, which is in summarised in the dense summary in the part 2.3. and through the detailed descriptions of the system and its parts.

**Criterion 1** - the roles of institutions responsible for the referencing process are clearly defined and explained, the legislation framework is provided and the links and relationships between them are described. The system is based on involvement of various institutions as well as stakeholders.

**Criterion 2** - the connection between EQF and NQF is confirmed by a synthetic overview, the national approach of application of sub-descriptors, which broadens understanding of the qualifications characteristics, is justified

**Criterion 3** - using the learning outcomes approach is explained, the concepts of knowledge, skills and competences - as used in the NQF - are analysed

**Criterion 4** - the process, legislative framework and the parties involved, including a strong role of EQF NCP, in inclusion of qualification in NQF is provided. A reference is made to the guiding document supporting the process.

**Criterion 5** - the role of the National Plan for quality assurance in education and training (NPQ) as well as application of the EQAVET principles in the referencing process are presented

**Criterion 6** - involvement of the national quality assurance bodies is demonstrated

**Criterion 7** - international experts are included in the Report preparation, as well as in the preparatory phase of self-evaluation of the NCP EQF self-evaluation (Slovakia, Italy, Spain)

**Criterion 8** - the steps for publication of the Report by national authorities are specified. The report does not include self-certification of the HE system.

**Criterion 9** - the Report declares intention to be published on the Europass portal within 6 months, which is supported by the ready-to-use documentation.

**Criterion 10** - Although the national coding procedure is independent from the referencing process, the report clearly describes assignment of the NQF levels on certificates issued within the national qualifications system (NSCC).

The report is very well structured and written in a clear and exhaustive manner. We appreciate good organization of the references and annexes. In some parts of the text, practical examples would be appreciated (e.g. schemes of institutional structures and hierarchy), but the text is understandable even without explicit examples. Nevertheless, the scheme of the Italian system of education would be helpful in providing the overall picture of its parts and elements.

Innovative and interesting is the use of colour scheme of logo distinguishing different types of qualifications and use of QR code. We appreciate the element of the public consultation of the Report and the questionnaire prepared for this step.

Additional questions and comments related to the processes described in the Report:

#### **Validation**

- The description of the process of validation does not contain information on the phase of documentation and support of participants in the validation process - does any service provide this sort of support? How are counselling services involved in validation?

#### **Referencing process**

- As explained in the chapter, referencing of qualifications will depend on the request of the institutions. What is a volume of qualifications expected to be referenced? What support is given to the institutions in the process of referencing (training, manuals, consultations, ...) - a reference to the Operating manual could be made in the Report
- A note on the process of self-certification could be made.
- EQF NCP has a strong role in the referencing process - does it have any specific legislative base or is it covered and given by the competencies of the Ministry?

#### **2.2.1 - Goals and aims of the NQF**

- In the light of new developments, we suggest to add also **comparability** among the functions of EQF

-“improving the accessibility, transparency and permeability of qualifications;”

#### **2.2.12 - NQF updating process**

- The process of updating NQF is described in a detailed manner. What periodicity of NQF updating is expected?

### 3.2 - The adult education system

- Who are recipients of the adult education courses provided by CPIA - Italians / foreigners/ migrants? Is this a second-chance education or integration of foreigners (or both)?

At this moment, when the report is ready and is presented to EQF AG, it is possible to state that the current updated version of the Italian referencing report follows and fulfils the criteria given by the European Commission, its function is clear for the readers, the whole process of lifelong learning is supported on one hand by the government and on the other by the citizens of the county as well.

It would be very useful to refer to the "old" referencing report in some cases of the "new" report for the purpose of transparency of processes. There is no future goal indicated in the report on how to deal with the reform of the educational system further, to take the challenges of the mentioned changes to the Italian Qualification Framework as a system tool.

Bratislava, 26/06/2021

#### **Ana M.Rodríguez Gil, Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional**

The reading and the analysis of the Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework is a brilliant opportunity to have a deep view of Italian Education and VET System, the governance's process to develop the Referencing process and the innovation procedures is going to be implemented and established. In this sense, the read and analysis of the Report can help to recognize procedures and good practices, which would be profitable for others countries with similar structures (educational, administrative, ...).

I have to say that the initial explanation about what's EQF, his aims and goals shows a sensitive approach to the presentation because that implies to think in a "outsider" reader, not just for the specialist reader that use to manage the European documents about the EQFs, but for the educational, vocational and labour ecosystem. The clearance in the presentation appears, in fact, throughout the Report.

The complexity of a system with different levels, national, regional, and local and the responsibilities these levels developed, is highlighted in the extensive consultation and his institutional reference (p.9, p.38-40), and governance's structure is a testimony of the quality of the Report: all relevant national bodies were involved in the process.

In the other hand, the use of the schemes along the Report is a wise decision: help the reading, if a doubt of comprehension arrives, the visual schemes give you the hand you need to follow the process (for example, p.40).

The relationship between qualifications and the EQF levels proposed in 2012 appears also in this Report; the maintained eight levels and the inclusion of the sub-articulation levels could be consider, without any doubt, another successful decision: it's possible to observe clearly how the Italian System is organized and it's the way to arrive to have a real tool for transparency, usability and portability of qualifications and competences in national and international perspective, because for an Italian user will be easy to understand the European position of his/her qualifications and for a not Italian user can "translate" effectively the Italian qualifications to the European one's. The referencing with the ISCED, like the Report said, "facilitate the connection between the refencing levels of the NQF/EQF classifications of titles and qualifications".

Madrid, 7/7/2021





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