
The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a translation grid for qualifications around Europe. It has two principal purposes: (1) to promote mobility between countries, and (2) to facilitate lifelong learning. Both are indispensable for achieving more and better jobs and growth, as Europe faces the challenges of becoming an advanced, knowledge-based economy.

At the core of the EQF are its eight reference levels, covering basic to most advanced qualifications. These describe what a learner knows, understands and is able to do, regardless of the system in which the learner’s qualification was acquired. The EQF therefore shifts the focus away from learning inputs (such as the length of a learning experience, or the type of institution), to learning outcomes.

Shifting the focus towards learning outcomes brings significant advantages:

➔ it supports a better match between education and training provisions and the needs of the labour market (for knowledge, skills and competences);
➔ it facilitates the validation of non-formal and informal learning; and
➔ it facilitates the transfer and use of qualifications across different countries and education and training systems.

As an instrument for promoting lifelong learning, the EQF encompasses general and adult education, vocational education and training, as well as higher education. The eight EQF levels cover the entire span of qualifications from those achieved at the end of compulsory education, up to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional or vocational education and training.

The Recommendation approved by the European Parliament foresees that Member States relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010, and that individual certificates or diplomas should bear an EQF reference by 2012.