

# **LAW ON THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

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## **I. BASIC PROVISIONS**

### **Subject Matter**

#### **Article 1**

This Law shall regulate the National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter: the Qualifications Framework), the levels and sub-levels of qualifications, types of qualifications, the volume of qualifications, as well as the competences of the bodies responsible for proposing, adopting, and classifying qualifications.

### **Definition**

#### **Article 2**

The Qualifications Framework is an instrument for the classification of qualifications by level descriptors expressed through knowledge, skills, and competences. It aims to link and harmonise individual subsystems of qualifications and to enhance the transparency, accessibility, progression, and quality of qualifications, in line with the needs of further education, the labour market, and society as a whole.

### **Principles**

#### **Article 3**

The Qualifications Framework is based on the following principles:

- learning outcomes are expressed through knowledge, skills, and competences;
- classification of qualifications by levels and sub-levels;
- credit transferability;
- comparability with the European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter: EQF);
- quality assurance in the process of acquiring and developing qualifications;
- cooperation of all relevant stakeholders;
- transparency.

### **Objectives**

#### **Article 4**

The Qualifications Framework aims to:

- clearly define learning outcomes;
- evaluate various qualifications within the overall qualifications system;
- encourage and develop lifelong learning;

- demonstrate clear links between different parts of the system;
- indicate pathways for progression and mobility (horizontal and vertical) through and
- within the education and training system;
- ensure international comparability of qualifications;
- promote the importance of key vocational competences;
- ensure quality within the qualifications system.

### **Use of Gender-Sensitive Language Article 5**

All terms used in this Law to refer to natural persons in the masculine gender shall be understood to include the corresponding terms in the feminine gender.

### **Glossary Article 6**

Certain terms used in this Law have the following meanings:

1. Level descriptors are measurable indicators of the complexity of knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through learning and demonstrated after the learning process;
2. Learning outcomes are statements that confirm what an individual knows, understands, and is able to do at the end of a learning process, regardless of how the learning occurred, and are defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences;
3. Knowledge is a set of acquired and interrelated information resulting from learning. It comprises data, principles, theories, and practices related to a specific field of work or study. In the context of the Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual;
4. Skills refer to the ability to apply knowledge to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive or practical;
5. Competence is demonstrated by the ability to use knowledge and skills, as well as personal, social, and/or methodological abilities in a work or learning environment. In the context of the Qualifications Framework, competences are defined based on autonomy and responsibility;
6. The Montenegrin Credit Transfer System (MCTS) is a process that allows learning outcomes achieved in one context to be recognised in another. It is based on procedures of verification, validation, and recognition, and is aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for higher education and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET);
7. Credit value of a qualification (credit, credit point) is a quantitative determination of the scope of a qualification, reflecting the total effort and workload required from an individual to complete an educational or learning programme;

8. Credit (credit point) is a key element of the MCTS, allocated to individual education programmes or their parts (courses/modules/subjects), as well as to other forms of education or learning (projects, seminars, research, fieldwork, teaching practice, homework, seminar papers, practical work, library work, etc.), and reflects the amount of effort each requires in relation to the total effort needed to achieve a specific qualification;
9. Module is a structured and organisational unit of an educational or study programme, comprising a set of functionally connected knowledge, skills, attitudes, or competences expressed through learning outcomes and implemented through various forms of instruction (theoretical teaching, exercises, practical teaching);
10. Formal education is an organised educational process implemented according to a publicly recognised educational or study programme, or part thereof (module, learning unit, etc.), upon completion of which a qualification at a certain educational level or one or more vocational qualifications is awarded.

## **II. QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

### **Subject of the Qualifications Framework**

#### **Article 7**

The subject of the Qualifications Framework is a qualification of a defined scope acquired through the process of verification and assessment of learning outcomes, validation, or recognition of the qualification, in accordance with a specific regulation.

#### **Qualification Standard**

#### **Article 8**

The qualification standard referred to in Article 7 of this Law consists of:

- the name of the qualification;
- the type of qualification;
- the level or sub-level of the qualification;
- the qualification code;
- the credit value of the qualification;
- a description of the qualification;
- the content of the qualification (admission requirements, number of compulsory and elective subjects or modules, methods of assessment, and criteria for assessment of learning outcomes).

The qualification standard may also include other elements necessary for specific qualifications.

#### **Structure of the Qualifications Framework**

#### **Article 9**

The Qualifications Framework includes:

- levels and sub-levels of qualifications;
- level descriptors and learning outcomes for each level and sub-level of qualifications;
- types of qualifications and documents certifying the acquired qualifications;
- the volume of the qualification.

### **Levels and Sub-Levels of Qualifications Article 10**

General theoretical and practical knowledge, skills, and competences are defined through the general description of the level or sub-level of qualifications.

Qualifications are classified based on the complexity of the achieved learning outcomes, described in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences, across eight levels of the Qualifications Framework, as follows:

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>SUBLEVEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Level I</b>	<b>Sublevel one (I1)</b>	- Qualification obtained by completing part of the elementary education programme (at least the first cycle of elementary education or a functional literacy programme); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification with at least one MCTS credit.
	<b>Sublevel two (I2)</b>	- Qualification of completed elementary education; - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.
<b>Level II</b>		- Qualification of lower vocational education (120 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.
<b>Level III</b>		- Qualification of secondary vocational education (180 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>SUBLEVEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Level IV</b>	<b>Sublevel one (IV1)</b>	- Qualification of secondary general and vocational education (240 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.
	<b>Sublevel two (IV2)</b>	- Master qualification (60 MCTS credits).
<b>Level V</b>		- Qualification of higher vocational education (120 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least MCTS credit.
<b>Level VI</b>		- Qualification of higher education (completed undergraduate studies of 180 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.
<b>Level VII</b>	<b>Sublevel one (VII1)</b>	- Qualification of higher education (completed undergraduate studies of 240 MCTS credits or postgraduate specialist studies of 60 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.
	<b>Sublevel two (VII2)</b>	- Qualification of higher education (completed postgraduate master studies of 60 or 120 credits, or integrated undergraduate and master studies of 300 or 360 MCTS credits); - Vocational qualification, or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.
<b>Level VIII</b>		- Qualification of higher education (completed doctoral studies of 180 CSPK credits); - Vocational qualification or part of a vocational qualification, or micro-qualification, with at least one MCTS credit.

The level descriptors and sub-level descriptors of qualifications shall be determined by a regulation of the state administration authority responsible for education affairs

(hereinafter: the Ministry), based on the prior opinion of the council competent for the respective qualification level.

### **Type of Qualification Article 11**

The types of qualifications are:

- qualification corresponding to an education level;
- vocational qualification;
- micro-qualification;
- other qualifications.

### **Acquisition of Qualifications Article 12**

A qualification corresponding to an education level shall be acquired by completing a publicly valid education programme and attaining the required volume of the qualification, following the prescribed assessment process and issuance of proof of the acquired education level, or one or more vocational qualifications, in accordance with a special regulation.

A vocational qualification shall be acquired by completing part of a publicly valid education programme (module, course), or a special education programme, and following the assessment of knowledge to achieve the required volume of the qualification, or by recognition of a foreign certificate, in accordance with a special regulation.

A micro-qualification shall be acquired by completing an education programme and undergoing the prescribed assessment to achieve the required volume of the qualification. It may be recognised in the process of acquiring a vocational qualification or a qualification corresponding to an education level.

Other qualifications are qualifications acquired outside the programmes referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Article, in accordance with special regulations.

### **Types of Documents Article 13**

A diploma shall serve as proof of a qualification corresponding to an education level.

By way of exception to paragraph 1 of this Article, a certificate shall serve as proof of completed elementary education, or of a qualification corresponding to level one or sub-level I2 of education.

A certificate shall serve as proof of an acquired vocational qualification; a confirmation shall serve as proof of an acquired micro-qualification or part of a

vocational qualification; and an attestation shall serve as proof of an acquired other qualification.

The documents referred to in paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of this Article shall be issued in accordance with a special regulation.

### **Volume of Qualification Article 14**

The volume of a qualification shall be determined by the number of credits.

A specific number of credits shall be allocated to a learning unit, course, module, or programme.

The minimum number of credits allocated in accordance with paragraph 2 of this Article shall not be less than one.

The volume of a qualification corresponding to an education level shall be defined as a minimum of 60 credits within the Montenegrin Credit Transfer System (hereinafter: MCTS), which corresponds to one school or academic year (in formal education).

### **Sectors of Qualifications Article 15**

Depending on the field of activity of the qualifications, besides type, level, and volume, qualifications are classified within the Qualifications Framework by sectors.

The sectors of qualifications are:

- 1) Education and training;
- 2) Humanities and arts;
- 3) Natural sciences;
- 4) Social sciences;
- 5) Engineering, manufacturing technologies (mechanical engineering and metal processing, electrical engineering and automation, etc.);
- 6) Construction and spatial planning;
- 7) Economics and law;
- 8) Agriculture, food production, and veterinary;
- 9) Health care and social protection;
- 10) Tourism, trade, and hospitality;
- 11) Transport and communications;
- 12) Services;
- 13) Interdisciplinary fields;
- 14) Mining, metallurgy, and chemical industry;
- 15) Information technology.

Sectors of qualifications include subsectors, fields, and subfields.

### III. COMPETENCES OF AUTHORITIES AND BODIES

#### **Article 16**

The authorities and bodies responsible for developing, verifying, adopting, recognising, and classifying qualifications within the Qualifications Framework shall be:

- the Ministry;
- the state administration authority responsible for labour affairs;
- the Centre for Vocational Education;
- the Institute for Education;
- the Examination Centre;
- educational institutions/education providers;
- the administrative authority responsible for statistics;
- the Council for Qualifications ;
- the National Education Council;
- a legal entity performing quality assurance in higher education in accordance with special law (hereinafter: the Agency);
- sectoral commissions.

#### **Council for Qualifications**

#### **Article 17**

For the purpose of improving the qualifications system, and for the approval and classification of qualifications within the Qualifications Framework, the Government of Montenegro shall establish the Council for Qualifications (hereinafter: the Council).

The Council shall consist of at least 11 members appointed for a four-year term, representing:

- The Ministry;
- The state administration authority responsible for labour affairs;
- Universities;
- The Employment Agency of Montenegro;
- The Chamber of Economy of Montenegro;
- The representative employers` association;
- The representative trade union organisation;
- The Centre for Vocational Education;
- The Institute for Education;
- The Examination Centre.

The President of the Agency`s Accreditation Board and the President of the National Education Council shall serve as ex officio members of the Council.

The Founding Act of the Council shall specify its detailed composition, the number of members, decision-making procedures, and other operational matters relevant to the Council`s work.



The organisation and working methods of the Council shall be further regulated by its Rules of Procedure.

### **Member of the Council Article 18**

A person who, as a rule, meets the following criteria may be appointed as a member of the Council:

- higher education qualifications;
- at least five years of vocational or scientific experience;
- expertise in qualifications framework development.

Council members may be reappointed.

A member`s term may end prior to its expiration:

- upon personal request;
- upon termination of employment or membership in the nominating entity listed in Article 17, paragraph 2 of this Law;
- for neglect or misconduct, upon proposal by the Council President or the nominating entity.

### **Responsibilities of the Council Article 19**

The Council shall:

- adopt decisions on classifying qualifications within the Qualifications Framework;
- propose the development and improvement of qualifications to the competent institution;
- adopt decisions on aligning existing qualifications for inclusion in the Qualifications Framework;
- monitor the development of the Qualifications Framework as a whole;
- adopt methodological documents for qualification classification;
- establish criteria for selecting members of sectoral commissions;
- adopt guidelines and instructions for the work of sectoral commissions, coordinate their activities, and decide on their proposals;
- pass the act on establishing sectoral commissions;
- decide on defining subsectors, fields and subfields within qualification sectors, based on proposals from sectoral commissions;
- review and approve reports on the work of sectoral commissions;
- submit activity reports to the Government of Montenegro;
- perform other tasks in accordance with its founding act.

### **Evaluation of Qualifications Article 20**

The National Education Council or the Agency shall adopt decisions on the evaluation of educational-level qualifications by determining the scope of qualifications for each educational or study programme, by qualification sectors.

The Council shall adopt decisions on the evaluation of education programmes by determining the scope of vocational qualifications, partial vocational qualifications, or micro-qualifications, by qualification sectors.

## **Sectoral Commission Article 21**

The Council shall establish a qualifications commission (hereinafter: the Sectoral Commission) for each sector.

The Sectoral Commission shall consist of at least seven members appointed for a four-year term.

Members of sectoral commissions for qualification sectors under Article 15, paragraph 2 of this Law shall be selected from:

- The state administration authority responsible for the relevant qualification sector;
- The Chamber of Economy of Montenegro;
- The representative employers` association;
- The representative employees` association in that qualification sector;
- Universities or independent higher education institutions;
- The Centre for Vocational Education, the Institute for Education, or other educational institutions;
- The Ministry;
- Relevant professional bodies (e.g., bar associations, engineering chambers, medical chambers).

Sectoral commissions for the qualification sector referred to in Article 15, paragraph 2, items 2, 3, and 4 of this Law, as a rule, do not include representatives referred to in paragraph 3, subparagraphs 2, 3, and 4 of this Article.

The provisions of Article 18, paragraph 3 of this Law shall apply accordingly to the early termination of a sectoral commission member`s term.

In cases under paragraph 5 of this Article, a new commission member shall be appointed for the remaining duration of the commission`s term.

## **Responsibilities of Sectoral Commissions Article 22**

The Sectoral Commission shall be responsible for:

- analysing labour market conditions and trends;
- proposing qualifications for the sector from education levels 1 to 8;
- evaluating existing qualifications;

- identifying and defining needs for all types of qualifications in accordance with labour market and societal requirements;
- reviewing proposals for new qualifications;
- recommending priorities for developing new qualifications and modifying existing ones;
- defining core qualification profiles/descriptions;
- providing opinions on the alignment of occupational standards and examination catalogs;
- promoting the qualification sector and its employment opportunities;
- performing other tasks in accordance with its founding act.

### **Administrative and Technical Tasks**

#### **Article 23**

The Ministry shall be responsible for performing administrative and technical tasks to support the work of the Council and sectoral commissions.

#### **Coding**

#### **Article 24**

Qualifications shall be coded for classification within the Qualifications Framework according to their type, level, scope and sector.

Each qualification shall be assigned a code in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article.

Based on the assigned code, the qualification shall be entered into the qualifications information system.

The methodology for assigning qualification codes shall be determined in accordance with methodological documents adopted by the Council.

The coding and entry procedures into the qualifications information system shall be regulated by the competent statistical authority through its regulations.

### **Development of Qualifications**

#### **Article 25**

Qualifications at education levels 1 through 5 shall be developed by the Centre for Vocational Education and the Institute for Education, based on a decision by the competent council.

Qualifications at education levels 6 through 8 shall be developed by higher education institutions and submitted to the Agency for accreditation.

Vocational qualifications and micro-qualifications within education levels 6, 7, and 8 shall be developed by higher education institutions upon proposal by the relevant

sectoral commissions, and submitted to the Council for approval and classification within the Qualifications Framework.

The procedures for developing qualifications under paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of this Article shall be regulated by special regulations issued by the Ministry.

### **Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Article 26**

Quality assurance and quality improvement procedures shall be implemented in accordance with special regulations governing:

- qualification evaluation;
- accreditation and licensing (of programmes, institutions, and bodies);
- teaching process and standards;
- assessment of learners/participants;
- certification issuance;
- education provider evaluation (self-assessment and external evaluation);
- public reporting.

### **IV. TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS Equivalence of Existing Qualifications Article 27**

Qualifications and vocational degrees acquired or recognised under previous regulations before this Law enters into force shall be equivalent to corresponding qualifications in the Qualifications Framework as follows:

- a diploma of the fifth level of vocational education, master craftsman exam, and specialisation within vocational education corresponding to qualification sublevel IV2;
- a diploma of higher education obtained at a university corresponding to qualification level VI, in terms of the acquired knowledge, skills, and competences for performing work-related tasks;
- a Bachelor's degree (180 MCTS) corresponding to qualification level VI;
- a Bachelor's degree (240 MCTS) corresponding to qualification sublevel VII1;
- a diploma of the seventh level of vocational education corresponding to qualification sublevel VII1;
- a Specialist degree (240 MCTS) corresponding to qualification sublevel VII1;
- a Master of Science (MSc) degree corresponding to qualification sublevel VII2.

### **Equivalence of Higher Education Diplomas from Independent Faculties Article 27a**

Higher education diplomas awarded by independent faculties under previous regulations before this Law enters into force shall be considered equivalent to Level VI qualifications in terms of acquired knowledge, skills, and competences for performing work-related tasks.

### **Deadline for Adoption of Regulations Article 28**

The regulation referred to in Article 10, paragraph 2 of this Law shall be adopted within 30 days from the date of establishment of the Council.

The regulations referred to in Article 25, paragraph 4 shall be adopted within six months from the date of entry into force of this Law.

Methodological documents for the classification of qualifications within the Qualifications Framework, and the assignment of qualification codes, shall be adopted within one year from the date of entry into force of this Law.

### **Deadline for Establishment of the Council Article 29**

The Council referred to in Article 17 of this Law shall be established within 60 days from the date of entry into force of this Law.

### **Harmonisation Article 30**

Competent institutions, organisations and authorities shall align their operations and organisational structure with this Law within one year from its entry into force.

### **Repeal of Provisions Article 31**

The provisions of Article 29 and Article 30, paragraph 2 of the Law on National Vocational Qualifications ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 80/08) shall be repealed upon the entry into force of this Law.

### **Entry into Force Article 32**

This Law shall enter into force on the eighth day following its publication in the "Official Gazette of Montenegro".