

## **Problems and Ways of Implementing the Erasmus+ NURSLING Project: “National Qualifications Framework: Guidelines for the Development and Recognition of Qualifications”**

**E. Imamov,<sup>a</sup> A. Khodjaev,<sup>b</sup> A. Karimkhodjaev,<sup>c</sup> I. Khmelinskii<sup>d</sup>**

a – Tashkent University of Information Technologies, Uzbekistan

b – Ministry for Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, Uzbekistan

c – The National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek,  
Uzbekistan

d - University of Algarve, Portugal

In Uzbekistan, the qualification requirements for graduates of higher educational institutions are determined [1] by the corresponding State Educational Standards (SES). Qualification requirements are formed for each area of undergraduate and graduate specialties allowing a quick and dynamic response to the requirements of the labor market and employers, to the implementation of new equipment and technologies, to the updates in economic trends, and to the changes in the structure and level of requirements towards specialists. Constant development of the modern world established a need to continuously improve educational structures to train specialists regardless of their initial place of studies to respond immediately to ever-increasing requests and demands of our time.

Improvement in educational structures revealed the need for development of new educational doctrine, unifying the diversity of approaches in different countries. In Europe, concept of a qualification framework (EQF) containing 8 educational levels became a key document of such doctrine. Based on this, almost all countries of the European Union, as well as other neighboring countries, have developed their national qualification frameworks (NQF).

Nevertheless, the EQF is not a canonical model, which all countries should follow. It shows flexibility and considers the particularities of educational policy in each country. The common and necessary procedure is to compare the NQF levels of a specific country with the levels of the EQF. Comparison is carried out through two main descriptors of EQF and NQF levels: **learning outcomes** and **graduates' competence**.

In the framework of the NURSLING project: “National Qualifications Framework: Guidelines for the Development and Recognition of Qualifications” (561742-EPP-1-2015-1-PT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP) of the Erasmus + program (Coordinator- University Algarve, Portugal), we are developing the national qualification framework of Uzbekistan.

For the successful implementation of the project it was necessary first to:

- develop a methodology for creating of the NQF in the System of Continuing Education Republic of Uzbekistan (SCE RUz) and determine algorithm for its implementation;

-prepare the draft for NQF SCE RUz for discussion and approval in the National Coordination Council for NQF;

- study the Bologna process and specifics of the European higher education;

- compare the NQF SCE RUz with the EQF;

- in the light of implementation of Decree of the President of the RUz of "On the Strategy for Action for the Further Development of the RUz" consider innovative changes of the system of continuous education in Uzbekistan in the field of higher and vocational education;

- analyze the specifics of the educational policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan during all years as independent country.

Prior to development of the NQF SCE RUz, corresponding General Provisions were created serving as a base for the project on Qualification Framework in the System of Continuing Education, Republic of Uzbekistan - QF SCE RUz (i.e., NQF RUz). When preparing the project NQF RUz, we benefited from the previous experience of developing similar descriptors in 20 Eurasian countries. We also considered the results of intensive and fruitful development and improvement in the System of Continuing Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan along the independence years (i.e., end of the 20<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries).

Based on the comparative analysis of the NQF SCE RUz and EQFs, we developed methodology of “self-certification”, using which the competent authorities of other countries can confirm that the NQF SCE RUz is compatible with the comprehensive framework of the EHEA. This methodology complemented with the project “Diploma Supplements” will allow to significantly simplify the procedure of comparison and recognition of Diplomas

When analyzing the NQF SCE RUz, we covered the following points: current state of higher and postgraduate education; the quality of higher education in modern society within scientific and technical progress and innovation development; problems with academic staff; the need to expand the universities autonomy, as well as improving the management structure; possible structure of a modern university.

In the light of the implementation of the Decree "On the Strategy for Action for the Further Development of the RUz" and the need of considering the ongoing innovative changes in the System of Continuing Education in Uzbekistan in the field of higher and vocational education, we also developed Dublin descriptors for graduates of Bachelor and Master programs. These descriptors are also important for conducting a comparative analysis of the educational policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan with foreign systems of higher education. The Dublin descriptors will be an integral part of the sectoral qualification frameworks for Informatic Technologies, as indicated in the corresponding principles for development, prepared within the outline of the NURSLING project.

A pilot (experimental) model of the system for monitoring and evaluating the level of assimilation of the studied material was developed based on the credit system. A similar model was introduced to the Tashkent University of Information Technologies in the academic year 2018-2019 on experimental basis following a government resolution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Development and implementation of the qualification frameworks leading to a mutual competitive environment both in obtaining qualifications and in employment will allow to:

- evaluate a specialist by his/her qualifications, learning outcomes and gained competence at the moment of evaluation and not by the graduating institution and independently of the his/her age;
- expand significantly the area for the job search and increase the chances of employment in both countries with unified qualification frameworks and in foreign companies in the territory of their country;
- rank institutions of professional and higher education by the level of demand for their staff.

Within the framework of research topics and surveys, the authors of the NURSLING project developed a comparative model that allows assessment of the European (EQF) regarding to the Uzbek (NQF SCE RUz) qualifications frameworks.

EQF	1		2	3	4	5		6	7	8	
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
NQF RUz	1	2		3	4	4a	5a	5	6	7	8

During the project implementation we experienced several problems, which led to a delay in fulfilment of the objectives:

- European Agency (EACEA) provided the project grant with a delay of 3 to 4 months;
- the University of Koblenz-Landau – financial coordinator of the NURSLING - left the project after 6 months since the official start, returning their budget to the University of Algarve with a delay of 8 months;
- the implementation of the Decree "On the Strategy for Action for the Further Development of the RUz" caused series of innovative transformations in the system of continuing education in Uzbekistan. This especially influenced the field of higher and vocational education. Hence, many tasks to develop national educational structure that were completed during the first year and a half of the project had to be changed, re-written and adopted to the European qualification framework.

These obstacles led to a delay in the agreement for the sectoral qualification frameworks within 9 areas of education in Information technology. Moreover, due to the incompatibility of Portuguese legislation with fiscal requirements for financial transactions, the equipment acquisition for Uzbek partners was postponed from 2016 to the end project period.

Considering these delays, the NURSLING Consortium agreed to request the project extension and the EACEA granted permission for 6 more months, until April 15, 2019. To our regret, the Agency did not approve the equipment acquisition, which would allow performing Database testing.

To date, the NURSLING team had prepared a large methodological material for an extensive discussion during the Final Conference that will be held on the week of April 1-5, 2019 in Tashkent, as well as during numerous local and international scientific conferences.

#### LITERATURE

1. Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 3 from January 10, 2015 (On introducing amendments and additions to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers from August 16, 2001 No. 343 “On approval of the SES HE”).