

ColegauCymru's NCP work

Context

The European Union has developed tools to make the different national qualifications systems in use across Europe more understandable to people in other countries. The main tool is the eight level, learning outcomes-based, European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Wales was one of the first countries to reference its qualifications framework to the EQF that is still regarded as one of the leading countries in the development of frameworks. Following the EU Referendum in June 2016, Ministers in Wales agreed to continue alignment between the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and the EQF.

The EQF does not stand alone as it interacts with other European level tools such as the European Credit System for VET (ECVET), European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET) and Europass. These tools support the comparison, transparency and portability of qualifications across EU countries and promote quality mobility opportunities overseas for vocational learners, apprentices & staff through programmes like Erasmus+.

The validation of non-formal and Informal Learning (VNIFL) is of particular interest in Wales with the focus on engaging adults in education, retraining and workforce & community engagement.

Countries outside the EU are also exploring the possibility of aligning their qualification frameworks to the EQF (Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia are known as 'third countries') so that their qualifications can be recognised within the EU. With Brexit negotiations underway, the UK may well become a 'third country' and it will be important for Wales to be able to continue to reference the CQFW to the EQF.

What ColegauCymru does for the Welsh Government

Since 2013, ColegauCymru has acted in an advisory capacity for the Welsh Government as the National Contact/Coordination Point (NCP) in Wales for the EQF and ECVET. It has also acted as the National Reference Point (NRP) for EQAVET.

ColegauCymru has also responded to survey requests and updates to reports from organisations/agencies such as Refernet and Cedefop.

The key deliverables are to:

- (a) Act as the EQF National Coordination Point for Wales, represent the Welsh Government at EQF Advisory Group meetings and undertake subsequent EQF project work, including development of policy in line with Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning;
- (b) Act as the EQAVET National Coordination Point for Wales and to raise awareness within the EQAVET quality network, including ReferNet and Cedefop activity;
- (c) Act as the ECVET National Coordination Point for Wales;
- (d) Report to the Welsh Government on EUVET activity, including, the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive and others, as appropriate;
- (e) Coordinate the Wales National Coordination Point Steering Group and Secretariat;
- (f) Co-ordinate the re-referencing of the CQFW to the EQF;
- (g) Undertake associated work such as
 - Provide EUVET advice,
 - attend and represent Welsh Government officials at EUVET meetings across Europe, as required,
 - analyse papers,
 - write reports,
 - review reports for the purpose of drawing out the key ramifications for Wales,
 - disseminate information on the EUVET tools to stakeholders,
 - liaise with key agencies and other UK administrations,
 - complete restricted calls from Europe for additional funding, as appropriate
- (h) Maintain content on the Skills for Europe website
<http://www.sgiliauiewrop.cymru> <http://www.skillsforeurope.uk/>

Additional funding

ColegauCymru has also used its role as the NCP for these European frameworks and tools to leverage other grant funding from the European Commission. It has used this funding to further its research and activity in respect of the transparency, portability and recognition of qualifications and skills across Europe.

In 2018, ColegauCymru was successful in securing a grant of €167,000 on behalf of the EQF NCPs in the UK. ColegauCymru will coordinate the three-year grant that will enable Wales and Scotland to re-reference their NQFs to the EQF. Wales will be working closely with Qualifications Wales to deliver the re-referencing report. The grant will also enable the UK VET Coordinating Group to be reformed and for the UK to be represented at EQF Advisory Group meetings in Brussels.