

PLA Comparison of the EQF and third country qualifications frameworks –

- what have we learned?
- how can we take it forward?

29-30 October 2024

ETF, Turin, Italy and online

Housekeeping



Please keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking



You are welcome to comment and ask questions, by using chat or raising hand.

Introduce yourself when you take the floor



The meeting is recorded (for internal use)

Day 1

9.00 – 9.20 *Registration and welcome coffee*

Testing online connection

9.20 – 11.00 **Welcome and setting the scene**

**Face to face
and online**

Welcome and practical information

Manuela Prina, ETF and Koen Nomden, DG EMPL

Starting points for comparisons

Moderation by Michael Graham, ETF and Tiina Polo, DG EMPL

- Participant's expectations – PLA participants in room and online
- Reasons for comparisons, principles of a comparison, how to prioritise comparisons – Koen Nomden, DG EMPL and Elin Danielsson, DG HOME
- Introduction of the procedures and comparison topics - Eduarda Castel-Branco, ETF

11.00 – 11.20 **Coffee break**

Day 1 continues

11.20 – 13.30

Looking back at experiences gained thus far

Face to face
and online

Moderated by Maria Rosenstock, ETF and Koen Nomden, DG EMPL

- Survey results from participants in comparisons – Arjen Deij, ETF
- Reflections on the process from the pilot comparisons
- Panel discussion moderated by Eduarda Castel-Branco, ETF
 - Yuriy Rashkevych, NQA Ukraine
 - Amilcar Mendes, UC-SNQ, Cape Verde
 - Fiona Ernesta, CEO SQA Seychelles, Southern African Development Community
- Presentation on the bilateral comparisons conducted in Member States
Moderator Tiina Polo DG EMPL
 - Andrina Wafer, QQI, Ireland,
 - Sabine Tritscher-Archan, ibw, Austria
- Discussion on the EQF and bilateral comparisons – what are the links and implications?
- What is the role of qualifications frameworks in recognition seen from ENIC-NARICs perspective - Chiara Finochietti CIMEA, President of ENIC NARIC Network

Poll and discussion in plenary – moderated by Anatolii Garmash, ETF and Tiina Polo, DG EMPL /Mentimeter

13.30 – 14.30

Lunch break

Day 1 workshops (face to face)

14.30 – 17.30

This session is
only face to face

Improving the process and outcomes of comparison – parallel workshops in World Café style

1. How to prepare an effective and result-oriented process and how to conduct the comparison with a lean process? How to engage EQF AG members more?
Tiina Polo, DG EMPL – moderator and Michael Graham, ETF – rapporteur
1. Are there better ways to document and communicate the outcomes? What possible tools could we use to disseminate the outcomes?
Arjen Deij, ETF – moderator and Zelda Azzara, Cedefop – rapporteur
1. How to measure and support the use of the comparison? How to keep the results up to date and continue cooperation with third countries?
Koen Nomden, DG EMPL – moderator and Maria Rosenstock, ETF – rapporteur

World café style: Participants will be divided in 3 groups (except moderators and rapporteurs) and circulate the three themes and work on the results of the previous group(s). The first group gets most time to look at the theme (80 minutes), second round 60 minutes, third round 40 minutes.

17.30

Closure of the 1st Day

Day 2

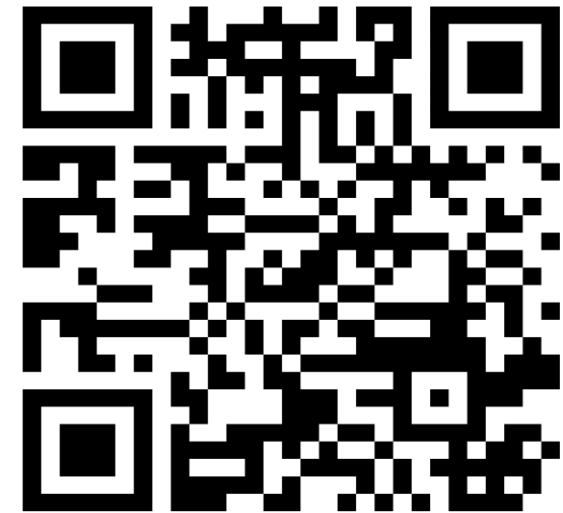
9.00 – 9.30	Registration and welcome to the 2nd Day
9.30 – 11.00	Reporting from the workshops
Face to face and online	<p>Moderators: Tiina Polo, DG EMPL and Eduarda Castel-Branco, ETF</p> <p>Workshops report with suggestions on possible changes and updates on the comparison process, documentation of comparison, dissemination tools and follow-up</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Leaner and more effective process – Michael Graham, ETF2. Documentation and communication of the results – Zelda Azzara, Cedefop3. Assessing outcomes and follow up – Maria Rosenstock, ETF <p>Poll and plenary discussion after each workshop report</p>
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee break
11.30 – 13.00	Way forward: suggestions for a road map for future comparisons
Face to face and online	<p>Moderated by Maria Rosenstock, ETF and Tiina Polo, DG EMPL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defining the way forward and suggested road map for future comparisons – participants provide actions for years 2025-2029• What does this all mean for recognition and future work of the new Commission? Chiara Finochietti and Koen Nomden <p>Conclusions by the European Commission and ETF</p> <p>Manuela Prina, ETF – Koen Nomden, DG EMPL</p> <p>Closure of the PLA</p>

Starting points

path forward challenges
identification eqfs mutual understanding
follow up dialogue dissimilarities
providers reports comparable qualifications
similar outcomes mobility trust disseminate relationship
enic s narics talent partnerships maturity
nqfs learning outcomes skills
context citizens similarities levels
rqfs same recognition rationale
development lisbon recognition agr platform work
divergence diversity process- data link
international agreements evidence
transparency evaluate experience visibility
voluntary reflect comparison outcomes

Mentimeter

- **What do you expect from this PLA?**
- Share your thoughts in Mentimeter by your mobile phone or laptop joining the address or scanning the QR code
- <https://www.menti.com/alg212ke2ef>



Policy context, background

Reasons for comparison, principles, how to prioritise comparisons

Background

EQF Recommendation 13:

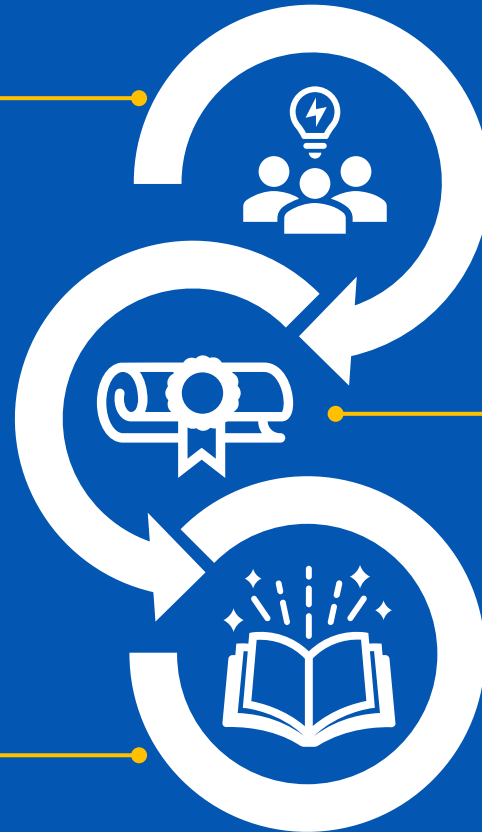
- *Recommends Commission and Member States to explore possibilities for development and application of criteria and procedures to enable, in accordance with international agreements, comparison of third countries' national and regional qualifications frameworks with the EQF*

Why to compare?

- Many people come to EU for study or work from outside the EU. EU companies work outside the EU, and services are delivered in the EU by platform workers working from their countries.
- The skills and qualifications of these people are not always well understood, and as a consequence many work below their capacities, or can not progress in their studies, while there is an increased need for qualified workers.
- Comparison of the EQF with other national and regional qualifications frameworks will facilitate the understanding of qualifications from other national and regional qualifications frameworks in Europe and vice versa.
- A better understanding of qualifications will also make their use and recognition easier.

Skills and Talent Mobility Package

**An EU Talent Pool
Regulation**



**Recommendation on the
recognition of third country
nationals' qualifications**

**Recommendation on
Learners' Mobility**

Key labour market challenges



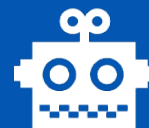
Geopolitics: A skilled workforce is key to the EU's competitiveness and capacity for growth and innovation



Green: The green transition will create 1-2.5 million additional jobs by 2030



The solution starts at home: but work to upskill, reskill and activate the domestic workforce will not alone be enough



Digital: still 11 million short of the EU target of employing 20 million ICT professionals by 2030



Demographic changes: Europe is an ageing society



The Commission has identified **42 EU-wide shortage occupations**

Additional actions in the Communication



The need for a targeted approach with skills intelligence as a springboard

Strategic approach to skills intelligence, use of latest labour market data
Engaging with Member States and PES



Boosting information on recognition procedures and comparability of qualifications

Interoperable databases
Online resource hubs on skills and qualifications
EU-level tool generating statements of comparability
Extending NARICs to VET



Building trust in qualifications and skills gained in third countries

Guidance on qualifications frameworks
Comparison with EQF
Assessments on accreditation and quality assurance
Translation of EU tool facilitating skills assessments



Cooperation with third countries in the framework of Talent Partnerships

Targeted analysis of qualifications frameworks
Capacity building with support of Erasmus+
Information and cooperation on recognition of qualifications

Developing and piloting a procedure to comparison

- A project group on the third dimension of the EQF was established in 2019 to develop procedures, criteria and topics for comparison.
 - EQF Advisory Group (DE, IE, HR, FI, LV, PL), Commission Services, the Council of Europe, Cedefop and ETF.
- Prior to the work of the project group and series of pilot comparisons, first experiences were collected in benchmarking exercises with Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong 2014-2016.
- By October 2024, the project group had met 13 times, and the comparison methodology proposed by the group (note EQF AG 55-4, Annex A) has so far been used in comparisons with three qualifications frameworks:
 - NQFs of Ukraine and Cabo Verde
 - RQF of the Southern African Development Community.

What are the objectives of comparison?

- Comparison is a process that should enable trust in the quality and level of qualifications of qualifications frameworks in order to support recognition and the international mobility of learners and workers.
- Objectives of comparison are
 - Enhance transparency for individuals, employers and education providers
 - Support international mobility and migration
 - Support the international positioning and use of the EQF

Added value to different target groups



For citizens, companies, and education providers

Understanding how qualifications compare



For credential evaluators, quality assurance offices, and other specialised services in member states

Detailed background information on comparison of systems



For EU services and member states

Link to association agreements – link to other policies

How comparison of frameworks is done?



Comparison takes place on equal merits in a dialogue in relation to a set of mutually agreed topics and supporting questions to be covered.



Comparison can connect qualifications frameworks around the globe and contribute to the international transparency of qualifications



Comparison helps to understand similarities and differences in the qualifications frameworks and do not try to align them

When can we start the comparison?

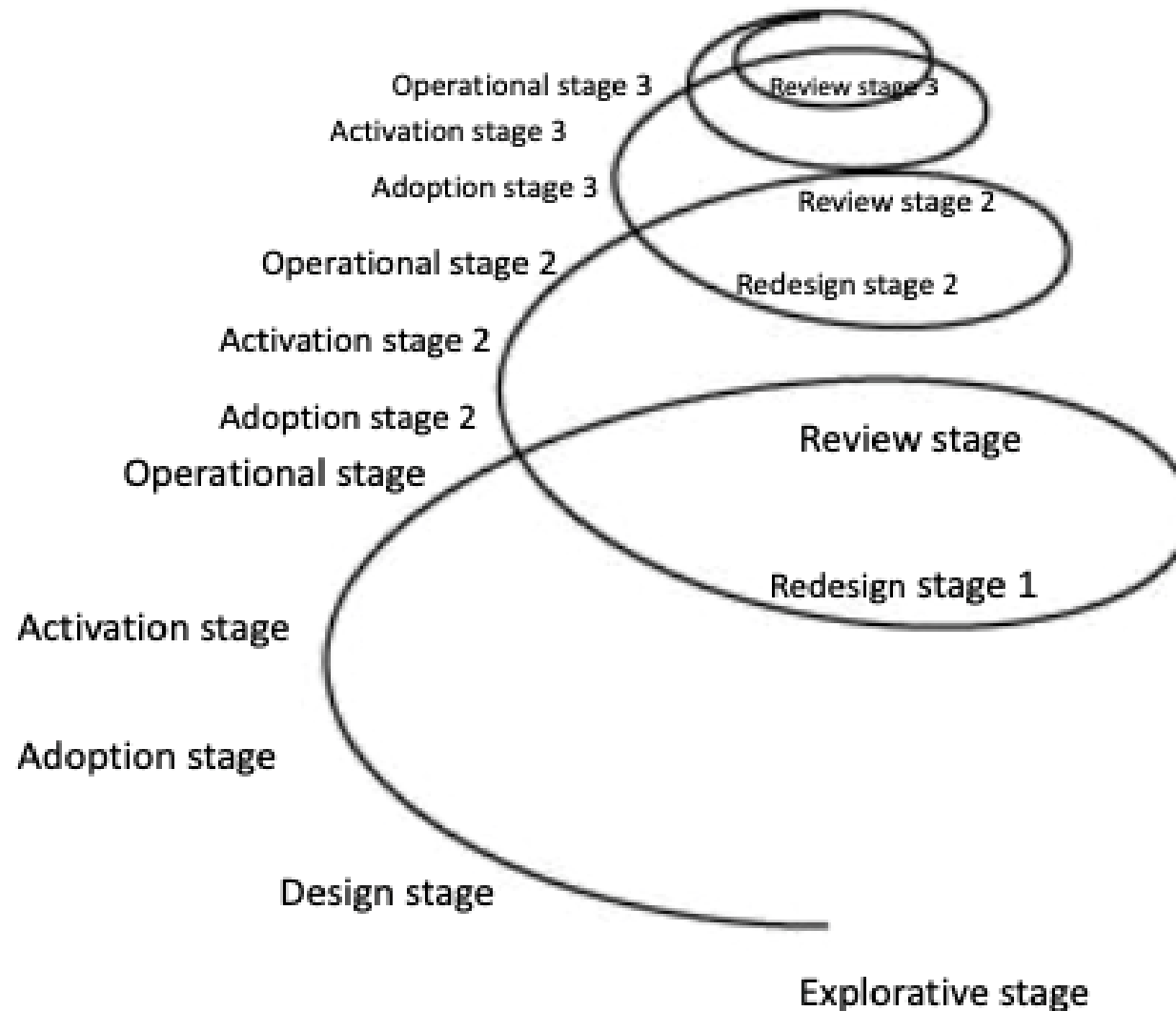


POLICY RELEVANCE

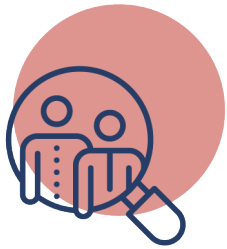


**THE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
OF THE QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK**

Development stages of the qualifications frameworks



Talent Partnerships



Tailor-made cooperation to address **labour market & skills' needs** in the Member States & partner countries in mutually beneficial way



Combining **direct support** for **mobility schemes** for work or training, including **vocational training & professional exchange schemes**



Targeting all skills levels in **various economic sectors**

Introduction to Comparison approach

Procedures, methodology, topics

Comparison is based...

On a **defined process** and agreed conditions

Agreed **set of comparison topics** – used with flexibility in terms of scope

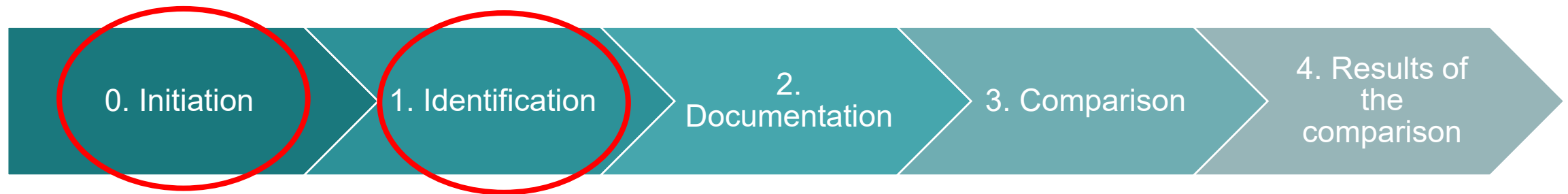
Evidence: technical preparation is key

Dialogue & Mutual learning – for mutual trust

➤ **Equal merits in a dialogue in relation to a set of mutually agreed topics and supporting questions.**

Comparison process (1)

- **Phase 0:** assessing the readiness of 3rd country NQFs or RQFs, alignment of EU internal and external policies, mutual interest and policy dialogue, added value of the comparison
- **Phase 1:** establishing a team of experts and stakeholders, defining the purpose and scope of the dialogue and building mutual trust, discussing the benefits and risks of comparison work and defining the topics and supporting questions, defining overall plan and timetable



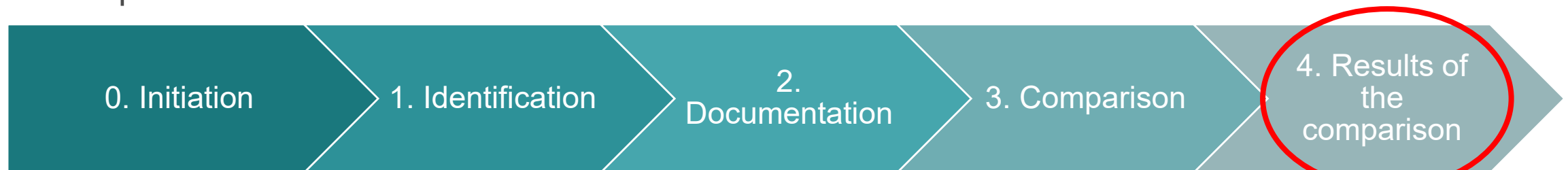
Comparison process (2)

- **Phase 2:** identifying possible sources and collecting evidence regarding the topics and supporting questions, preparing descriptions for each topic to be used as input for phase 3
- **Phase 3:** working group with representatives from both frameworks (the EQF AG and the third country/region in question) comes together online to work on the actual comparison, commonalities are identified and differences discussed



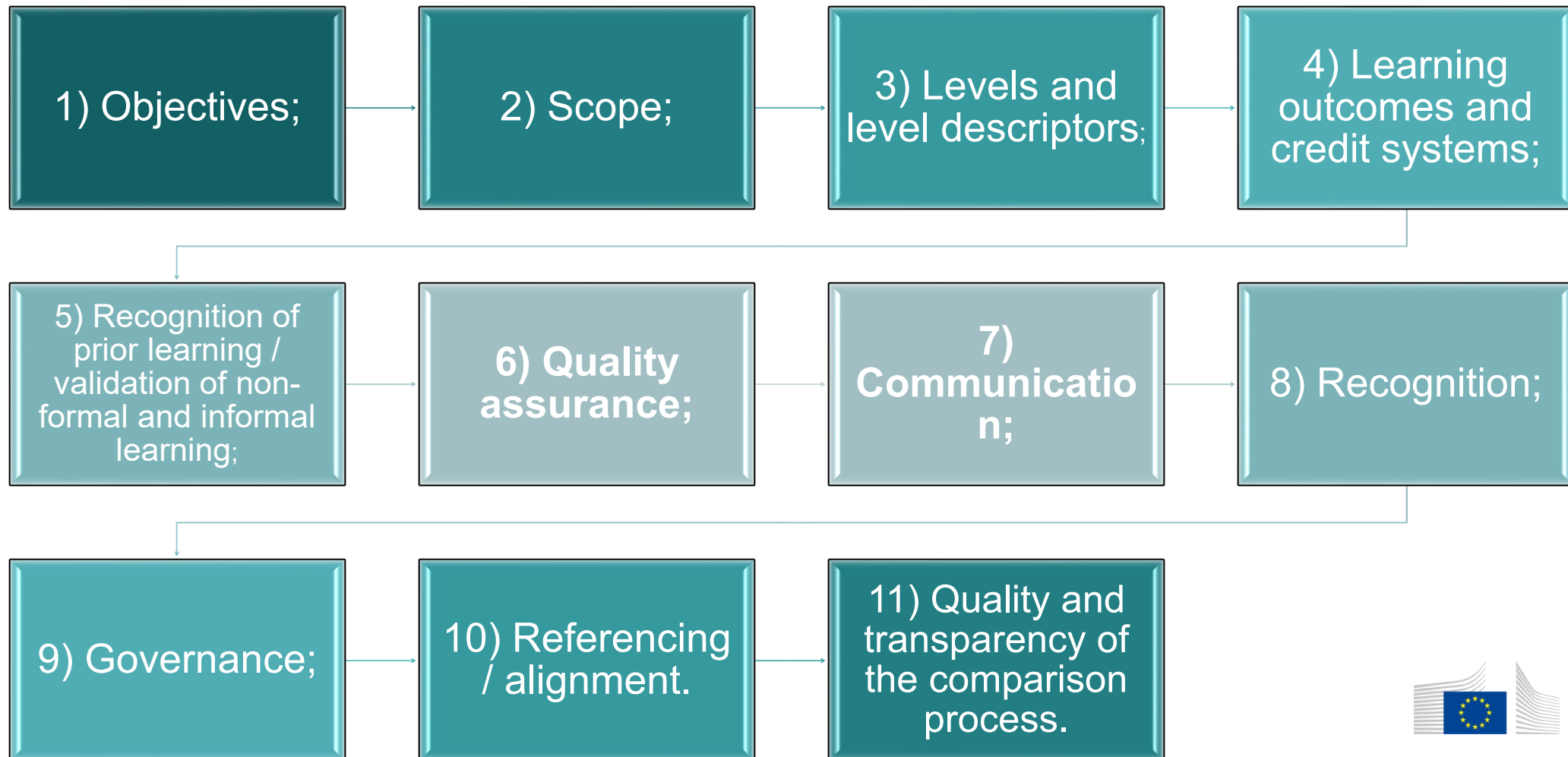
Comparison process (3)

- **Phase 4:** presenting the results of the comparison in a joint report including a joint action plan, agreeing on the next steps, bringing the joint report to discussion of EQF Advisory Group and presenting the results on the Europass Portal
- Joint Action Plan could include:
 - (1) continued policy dialogue
 - (2) communicating and raising awareness on the results of comparison
 - (3) further steps and monitoring measures in order to ensure comparison will result in the expected benefits



Topics of the comparison

Standard – but
flexibility in
scope



Topics – flexibility in scope, coverage

- **Topic 2: Scope of QFs (EQF-NQF-RQF)**

- ✓ All levels
- ✓ Formal, non-formal and informal learning
- ✓ Geographical scope
- ✓ New elements and concepts: micro-credentials
- ✓ Reference to Registers of Qualifications
- ✓ EHEA - Bologna Process

- **Topic 4: Learning outcomes**

- ✓ Learning outcomes - different use cases in QF
- ✓ CATS - ECTS

Comparison working groups: diverse composition

- **EQF-NQF:**

- ✓ EQF AG Members
- ✓ NQF lead institutions
- ✓ Relevant ministries: education, labour, finance and enterprise promotion
- ✓ TVET
- ✓ Higher education
- ✓ General education
- ✓ Recognition institutions
- ✓ Civil society

- **EQF-RQF (SADCQF):**

- ✓ EQF AG Members
- ✓ SADC Secretariat
- ✓ NQF lead institutions, Ministries from 13 countries (out of 16)

Process

Transparent, dynamic comparison meetings

Dialogue:
structured; agreed
plan of meetings -
all comparison
topics

Technical report for
each meeting + PPT
- 2-3 comparison
topics

Joint presentations
on each topic

Discussion all
issues, differences,
unclear matters
during meetings

Collection of
clarifications and
complementary info
- between meetings

Open questions:
next meeting

Surveys: collect
views, information –
for Conclusions and
Recommendations

Case: Main steps of the comparison EQF-SADCQF

7 meetings with Working Group, from 28 Nov 2023 to 29 April 2024

Technical note for each meeting addressing the topics – growing into one report

Drafts of the comparison report:

- Comprehensive draft submitted at meeting 5 – without: Executive Summary; Conclusions and Recommendations
- Survey online collected your views and suggestions for Chapter Conclusions and Recommendations. Integration in complete version
- Draft 1.2 complete: Discussed at meeting 6 – focus on the Executive Summary
- Draft 1.3 complete: Integrated all comments of meeting 6 – shared for discussion at meeting 7.

Contextualisation and discovery

- **EQF – RQF (SADCQF)**: first case comparison dialogue 2 metaframeworks
- **Focus of comparison**:
 - ✓ On the 2 metaframeworks (EQF and SADCQF)
 - ✓ Complemented and illustrated by information, cases, examples on the associated NQF
- **“Substantial differences** mean significant differences between the qualifications and the level descriptors of the Frameworks which would most likely prevent the framework from succeeding in alignment and comparability.”

- **“Differences”** between EQF and SADCQF: agreed to consider them as “diversity of responses within the diversity of contexts, histories, and capacities”. Mutual understanding and acceptance of this diversity is source of inspiration and enriches both frameworks.
- **Concept of “harmonisation”**– in SADCQF no substantial difference in relation to the concept and practice of voluntary cooperation in the EQF context supporting comparability, transparency and mutual trust between NQFs / systems.
- **Definition of “third countries”** – **demande**d. A country that is not a member of the European Union as well as a country or territory whose citizens do not enjoy the European Union [right to free movement](#), as defined in Art. 2(5) of the [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/399 \(Schengen Borders Code\)](#). This definition has no relation with concepts on the status of socio-economic development of countries.

Documentation from the 3 comparison pilots

Inventory of NQFs in
SADCQF – refreshed from
ACQF mapping studies
and inventory 2022-2023

Collection of legal and
regulatory texts,
methodologies, guidelines –
NQF and RQF

Results of surveys

Draft reports; summaries;
templates for comparison
Topic 3 (levels);
qualifications maps;
analysis of qualifications
registers; PPTs

Case studies

Video recordings all
Comparison meetings
(EN-UA; EN-PT; EN-FR-
PT)

Some conclusions

1. On robustness and quality
2. On efficiency
3. On follow-up actions

Evidence collected and used

- **From Policies and Legislation – to Implementation support instruments:**
 - Wider Policy and legal basis
 - NQF legislation, regulations and guidelines
 - RPL and CATS legislation, guidelines
 - Level descriptors and qualifications map
 - Methodologies and technical support documents
 - NQF Registers of qualifications, occupational standards
 - QA / Accreditation instruments, incl. digital platforms
 - Thematic Case studies – drafted by the involved countries (Germany, Ireland, Portugal, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe)
 - Statistics: education & training; RPL; recognition of foreign qualifications
 - **Mapping reports and inventories of NQFs and related policies – ACQF: they were key for comparisons Africa**

Example: Comparison EQF-SADCQF and Cabo Verde

ACQF data and evidence:

- ACQF Mapping reports 2021
- Updated report Cabo Verde 2022
 - Report “Review of SADCQF implementation and Annex - Inventory NQFs - 2022-2023
- Updated Inventory NQFs SADC 2024
- NQF Maps: Snapshots ACQF website
 - RPL Survey Africa 2024
 - NQF Survey Africa 2024
- Micro-credentials Survey Africa 2024
- 2 onsite workshops SADCQF (2023-2024)

Efficiency of comparison: a defined goal with some achievements

Process: Number of comparison meetings

- 1st Pilot - Ukraine: over 15
- 2nd Pilot - Cabo Verde: 8
- 3rd Pilot - SADCQF: 7

Outputs: Comparison reports

- Cabo Verde: complete draft at the 7th meeting – for comments and finalisation
- SADCQF: complete draft at the 6th meeting – discussed and commented at 7th meeting; presented and validated by SADCQF Governance body (TCCA) 2 weeks after (10/May 2024, Johannesburg – meeting co-organised SADC-ACQF, funded by ACQF-II project; participation of AU Commission).

Follow-up actions

Report comparison EQF-SADCQF:

- Comparison with EQF and Referencing to ACQF - are part of the new SADCQF Roadmap 2023-2026
- Approved by TCCA, May 2024 – to be presented to Joint Ministerial Meeting ESTI 2025, Harare – Zimbabwe, for validation
- SADC Secretariat initiated review and update of 2 major Guidelines: on RPL and CATS – work started
- Policy decisions at national level: reforms, new policies

Report comparison EQF-Cabo Verde NQF:

- Joint meetings and plans all sub-sectors – towards enhanced implementation of comprehensive NQF and RPL

Looking back at gained experiences

Panel: representatives of the 3 pilot comparison QFs (2 NQF and 1 RQF)

Bilateral comparisons

Survey results from participants in comparisons

15 RESPONSES: NOT REPRESENTATIVE

17 responses 1 double and 1 empty which means 15 responses

Of these

- 9 responses from UA, some in English but most in Ukrainian
- 4 Responses from SADC, all in English
- 2 EU, one from editor of the first report who was an observer and one from EU MS

NONE FROM CAPE VERDE, COMMISSION SERVICES OR ETF !!!

ANSWERS ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE SO LET US FOCUS MORE ON THE QUALITATIVE INPUTS

Survey results from participants in comparisons

What did the survey cover?

RESULTS AND PERCEIVED IMPACT	PROCESS - DIALOGUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most important results and perceived impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dialogue – balanced and unbiased?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefits – expected, achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topics for comparison
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Readiness of QF to be compared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mutual understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time and resources used
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roles and participants
REPORT AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS	FOLLOW UP

Survey results from participants in comparisons

RESULTS AND PERCEIVED IMPACT

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS?

- UA: Understanding the NQF EQF relationship and how to bring them closer together, what homework was still important
- SADC: Establishing how similar RQFs were and what that could mean for recognition and mobility
- EU: Learning from the exercise and its complexity

Only one participant mentioned an unexpected result :

Key role of the qualifications register

Survey results from participants in comparisons

3. Do you consider that the comparison will clearly contribute to one or more of the outcomes below?

Please select all relevant responses

- ☒ Mutual trust between the qualifications framework from the country/ region outside the EQF and EQF countries
- ☒ Comparability of qualifications based on the levels and learning outcomes and quality assurance processes.
- ☒ Participating countries are encouraged to complete the development of their QFs and move forward to operational QFs
- ☒ Recognition of qualifications between the countries and regions concerned is made more efficient
- ☒ Dissemination, visibility and access to information on qualifications and qualifications frameworks
- ☒ More people understand the components of NQFs and the RQFs concerned.
- ☒ Opening up of collaboration projects on skills and qualifications
- ☒ Mobility of workers and learners
- ☐ Other outcomes? Please suggest.

Participants saw many possible consequences of comparison

Survey results from participants in comparisons

Mutual benefits of the process before and during the process have **not always sufficiently addressed**

QF advanced enough for comparison, for some participants **at least on most topics**, and for one respondent not advanced enough

Participants were happy with the outcomes, but one participant had **concerns about the consequences for NQFs that were linked to a RQF** - can the results be generalised in case of RQF-RQF comparison especially **if NQFs are at different stages of development?**

Survey results from participants in comparisons

REPORT AND DISSEMINATION OF THE RESULTS

Most participants were **happy with** the (100 – 150 pages) **reports**, some wanted more detail on critical issues to make the reports more robust, only one participant said the report was too long

We did not get many suggestions on how to improve the reports and on other **tools to disseminate the results**

Focus on the reports stressed the **critical issues** where **more detail is important**

On the **dissemination**, the **how was stressed** (use more websites, social media, targeting specific users with an email to disseminate existing reports) **but no suggestions on packaging the results differently**

Survey results from participants in comparisons

Dialogue highly appreciated, most participants thought **number of meetings were adequate**, although a few respondents complained that time did not allow to get to the core of the topics.

Comparison is also an **instrument for peer learning**. Participants very happy to **learn from experiences and about tools and information sources** in the other frameworks and to deepen out aspects of their own QF.

The **approach** was generally considered **very inclusive**, with **all relevant stakeholders involved**, with possibly some **rare exceptions**

Some **participants** felt a bit at a loss about their **own role**, which was caused partially by **uneven level of understanding** and information about the 3rd country QF or the EQF

DIALOGUE PROCESS

Survey results from participants in comparisons

FOLLOW UP

Participants indicated that the **follow up needs to be clearer**, there is a need for clearer mechanisms on **how to use the comparison**, **address possible gaps** to support QF development, **keep comparisons up to date** to avoid that they loose value.

Session: Looking back at gained experiences – Panel discussion

- Yuriy Rashkevych, NQA Ukraine
- Amilcar Mendes, Coordinator of the UC-SNQ, Cape Verde
- Fiona Ernesta, CEO SQA Seychelles, Southern African Development Community

Panel discussion: questions

- **Group 1 - Benefits of comparison:**

1. What key benefits for your country or for the region / continent, especially for the NQF and its connected policies (RPL, CATS, Recognition, Register), can you highlight from the comparison process with the EQF?
2. What have been the most significant insights and new dimensions regarding the EQF and your NQF / RQF gained or emphasised through the pilot comparison processes?
3. What do you think can be the benefits and learnings for the EQF and its international dimension from this process of comparison with different NQFs and RQFs?

- **Group 2 - Process:**

1. How have you found the process and how did you approach it? Were there any surprises and challenges for the lead NQF body and the involved stakeholders?

- **Group 3 - How to capitalise more on the outcomes?**

1. What outcomes of the comparison process should be further leveraged, strengthened, communicated and used for the benefit of all sides? And how to do it - please share your practical proposals.
2. What additional support or resources would be beneficial for sustaining and bringing forward the relationship between the EQF and the NQFs and the RQFs (incl. ACQF)?

Youriy Rashvitch - Ukraine

- Member of the National Qualifications Agency since 2019, Deputy Minister on Higher Education (2017-2019). Participated in the development and initial implementation of the NQF since the very beginning in 2011.
- Major author of the NQF self-certification report in the framework of Bologna process and active member of the national joint working group responsible for the implementation of the Joint action plan based on the results of the comparison of Ukrainian NQF with EQF and its further modernization and broader implementation.



Amílcar Mendes

- Bacharelato in Electronics
- Licenciatura in Physics; Teacher/trainer in TVET for 7 years
- SNQ technical team for more than 10 years with experience in the management of NQF, CNQ, Professional Equivalence; RVCC; Experience in the design of competence-based qualifications / Learning Outcomes
- Coordinator of UC-SNQ since 2022



Fiona Ernesta

Ms. Fiona Marie Ernesta, from Seychelles, holds two Master's degrees and three postgraduate qualifications, including one in Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Her career began as a lecturer at the Teacher Training Institution, later advancing to Assistant Director for Studies. She has held key leadership roles such as Director of the Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre in 2003 and Director General for Technical and Further Education in 2007.

Since 2012, Ms. Ernesta has served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA), where she has contributed to significant developments, including Recognition of Prior Learning in Seychelles, ratification of the Addis Convention in 2019, the development of the SQA Act 2021, and the review of the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework and National Qualifications Framework Regulations which were both approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2024.

Ms. Ernesta joined the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation as Member, representing Seychelles in 2013 and has been an active member since. She played a crucial role in the aligning pilot between the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework (SNQF) with the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) and, as a member of the ACQF, participated in the comparison pilot between the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the SADCQF.



Bilateral comparisons

CASE Ireland, Andrina Wafer, QQI

Learning from Framework comparisons

Andrina Wafer



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

National Framework of Qualifications

Frameworks are not neutral, nationally, locally or regionally

Nationally significant instrument, for coherence and transparency- 'face' of multiple underlying systems, particularly QA

Implementation impacts the construction and purposes of comparison and the actors engaged

2003 Foundation documents- (under review)

"The single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards."

Vision

- Lifelong learning
- Relevant throughout life, values learning, primarily an awards framework
- Supports awards coherence
- Centrality of the learner
- Participative
- Knowledge as a strategic resource necessary for economic prosperity
- A framework understood by everyone, accessible to all



Ireland- New Zealand and Hong-Kong

Why?

Technical instrument

- The development and maintenance of the NFQ is dynamic, internationally informed, peer reviewed, *relational*
- A significant instrument for development and reform nationally and internationally- enriched, clarified through dialogue with reference to Bologna, EHEA, EQF for LLL, LRC
- National culture of international orientation- foreign direct investment, globalization both in industry and education- EQF as helpful reference point
- Conscious of our *community of practice*, authentic deep development and NFQ implementation

Mutual interests

- Promote mutual recognition of qualifications- 'zones of trust' - transparency
- Facilitate the mobility of learners and employees
- Deepen interagency relationships and learning opportunities
- Supporting higher education institutional interests, working with ENQA



Why Hong Kong?

- Gateway to Asia, China, considerable mobility for learning and business



Why New Zealand?

- Conceptually interesting work, shared heritage and language



Scope, topics, focus

New Zealand- QQI(NQAI)

Three phases since 2010: Levels 7-10, Levels 1-6, then 2017 [comparing-qualifications-in-ireland-and-new-zealand.pdf](#)

Focus- levels, compatibility of learning outcomes achieved, Bologna Framework (EHEA), EQF for LLL, LRC principles



Hong Kong- QQI

Focused on the communication of results about level-to-level correspondence between qualifications included in the HKQF and NFQ

Facilitating recognition of qualifications in both jurisdictions

Strengthening framework implementation

[comparing-qualifications-in-ireland-and-hong-kong.pdf](#)



Reflections

Memorandum of Understanding /of Cooperation

EQF mutual referencing- translation

Assists with level relationships- sometimes high-level agreement in principle rather than detail

Really interested disagreement/non-alignment (food for thought)

QQI has many MoU: [National and International Organisations | Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#)

Supportive ethos- quality assurance, recognition, two address QFs, staff exchange and development opportunities, participation in governance structures. Bilaterals are valuable.



MoU at the Outset



MoC at the Outset

Irish NQF	EQF	HK
10	8	
9	7	
8	6	
7	5	
6	4	
5	3	
4	2	
3	1	No 1

EQF - Translation Grid



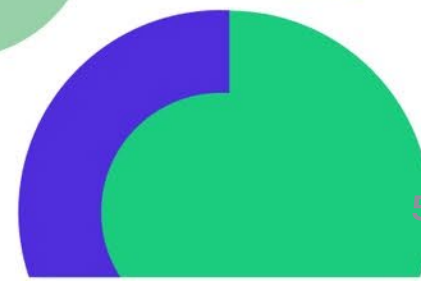
Level-to-Level Relationship Between QFs



Comparing Qualifications in Ireland and Hong Kong: User guide



Comparing Qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand: Guide



Methodologies, approach

New Zealand

‘independent comparative process’-
MoC

Bologna process (EHEA), defined principles and criteria for referencing national qualification levels to the EQF, also LRC with reference to ‘substantial difference’. Technical reports evaluate with reference to compatibility- weak, moderate or strong.

Framework experts, national stakeholder expert panels and networks, including Institutions and Professional Bodies, VET

Hong Kong

MoU
Comparability Study to EQF- 2015

User Guide on Comparing Qualifications (2018) QQI – peer networks to support recognition and understanding- QA and regulatory bodies, recognition authorities, policy leads at government level

Reflections

Broadly similar, focus on transparency, understanding, requirements of systems

Nature of dialogue and groups involved- building trust and relationship

Technical work- requires investment, personnel, stakeholder engagement, consideration.



Challenges, management, impacts

New Zealand

NZQF Level 8 (including Bachelor's degrees, post graduate diplomas and certificates)- have no real correspondence to EQF Level 6/7

Additional research carried out- ultimately the EQF published an additional annex report assisting e.g. credential evaluators.

Hong Kong

Communications less challenging than building the technical knowledge base and getting buy in



Reflections and impacts

Anomalies

Sophisticated work- takes time to build technical skills

Stakeholder buy-in for the process and outcomes

Relationships are valued- continued project work, engagement, expert exchanges, critical friends- keynote at #NFQ20 ([20 Years of the NFQ | Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#)) Development of MoU

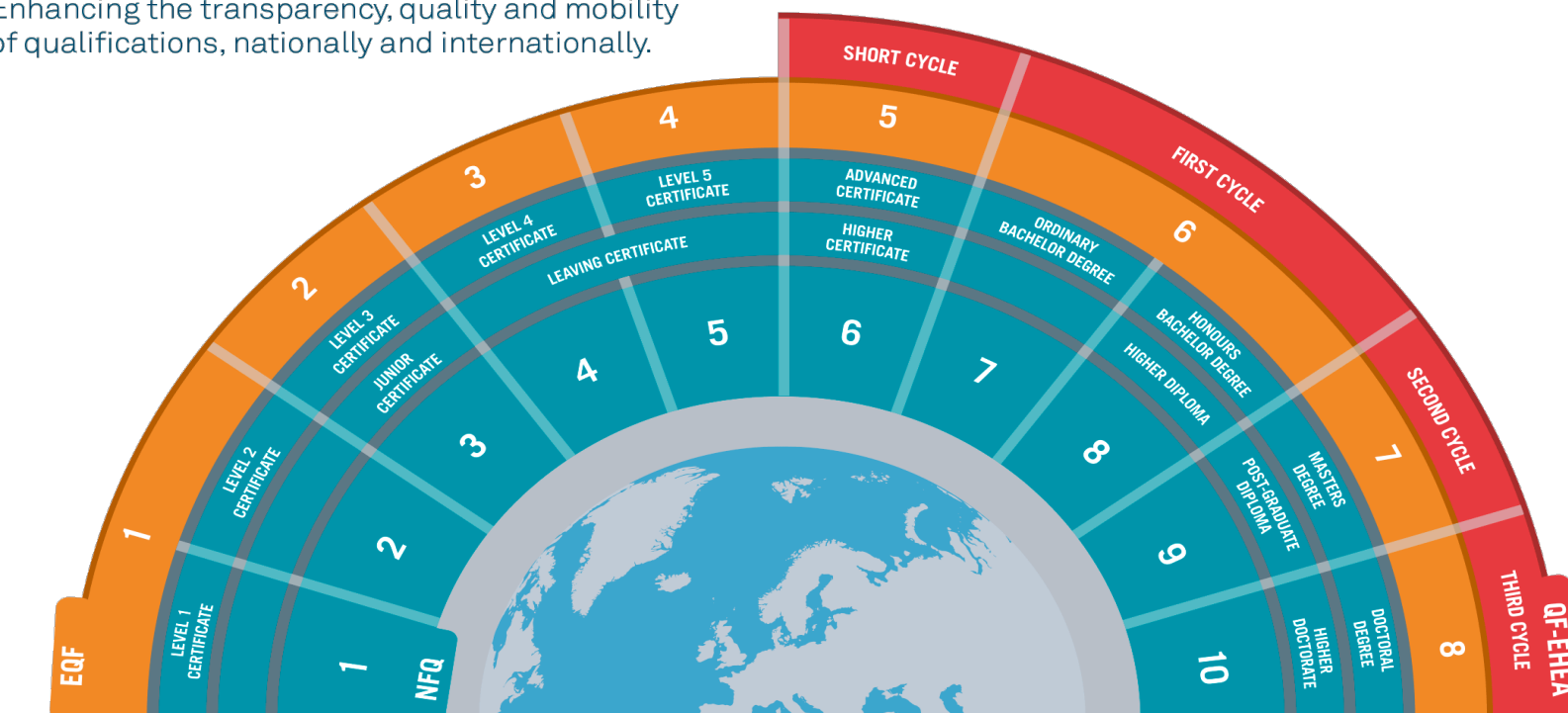
2025- Strategy: Priority- National Framework of Qualifications- review of award types, Access, Transfer and Progression, RPL, inclusion of other Awarding Bodies, IRQ, TRUSTEd (International Education Mark)...(will yield comprehensive data for the first time) [What is TrustEd Ireland? | Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#)

NFQ interrelationship informed recognition and Quality Assurance work – e.g. Automatic Recognition

Global Citizens 2030, Ireland's International Talent and innovation Strategy

Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global

Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility of qualifications, nationally and internationally.



- NFQ
- EQF
- QF-EHEA

Irish National Framework of Qualifications
European Qualifications Framework
Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area



For further information consult: www.nfq.ie www.QQI.ie

©QQI 2015



Thank you!

Discussion

Role of qualifications frameworks in recognition

**Chiara Finochietti CIMEA, President of ENIC NARIC
Network**

Role of Qualifications Frameworks in recognition from ENIC-NARIC perspective

Comparison of the EQF and third country qualifications frameworks
– what have we learned from pilots - how can we take it forward?
29 October 2024

Chiara Finocchietti



The role of
ENIC-NARIC



QF has
evolved
through a
holistic
approach



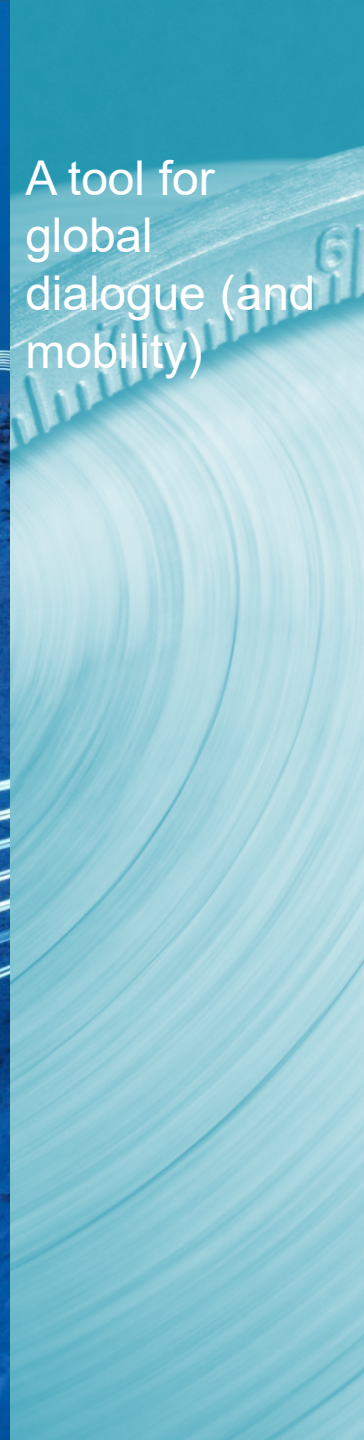
Serves as a
tool of
transparency



Shaped by 25
years of
cooperation



One of the
conditions for
automatic
recognition



A tool for
global
dialogue (and
mobility)



Continues to
adapt



The establishment of ENIC-NARIC to support international academic mobility

1

NARIC establishment

The European Commission creates the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) network in 1984. NARIC aims to remove obstacles to the recognition of qualifications across borders, supporting mobility and contributing to build a Europe of citizens.

2

ENIC Establishment

The European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) were established in 1994 under the aegis of Council of Europe and UNESCO

3

1999: Beginning of the Bologna Process

Development of the concept of a systems of comparable qualifications

4

2008: EQF Recommendation adopted

Increasing international dialogue and development of regional qualification frameworks beyond Europe. Support full implementation and use and of European instruments at the service of mobility and internationalisation of higher education in Europe (Lisbon Recognition Convention, QF, ECTS, quality tools, etc). New recommendation in 2017.



Higher Education Initiative

The concept of qualification frameworks was implemented within the Bologna Process, driven by universities through initiatives like the *Magna Charta Universitatum*. This laid the foundation for a shared understanding of degree structures across European higher education institutions.



EU broadening the scope

The EU, upon request of Ministers in 2002, expanded the scope of qualification frameworks beyond higher education, encompassing all levels and types of education and training. This approach aimed to create a comprehensive system that could facilitate lifelong learning and mobility across different educational sectors.



Stakeholder Dialogue

Dialogue between diverse actors within and across countries. Better understanding and consensus on the value of the qualifications (between different sectors within a same country, improved transparency at international level)

Qualification Frameworks as transparency tools

Defining the value of qualifications

The development and implementation of qualification frameworks rely on extensive knowledge sharing among stakeholders. This collaborative process is crucial for creating frameworks that are both comprehensive and widely accepted.

Supporting international mobility

By providing a common language for describing qualifications, frameworks facilitate international mobility for students and professionals. They enable easier comparison and recognition of qualifications across borders.

Human capital enhancement

Frameworks promote permeability within national education systems and serve as important instruments for dialogue at the national level. This enhances human capital by creating clearer pathways for progression and skill development.

Trust in the value of qualifications

Qualification frameworks foster trust in the value of qualifications through referencing processes, international independent evaluation, community engagement, peer support approach for quality assurance across different QF and educational systems.



Facilitating Recognition

While qualification frameworks are not a tool for automatic recognition per se, they represent an important condition for automatic recognition.

They offer a structured way to compare qualifications across different systems, aiding credential evaluators in their assessments



Elements for automatic recognition in Europe

Quality assurance
Level
Workload
(Profile
Learning outcomes)



Professional standards

Information provision, knowledge sharing, training are essential

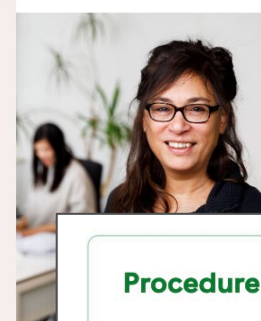
Information provision and knowledge sharing

ENIC-NARIC



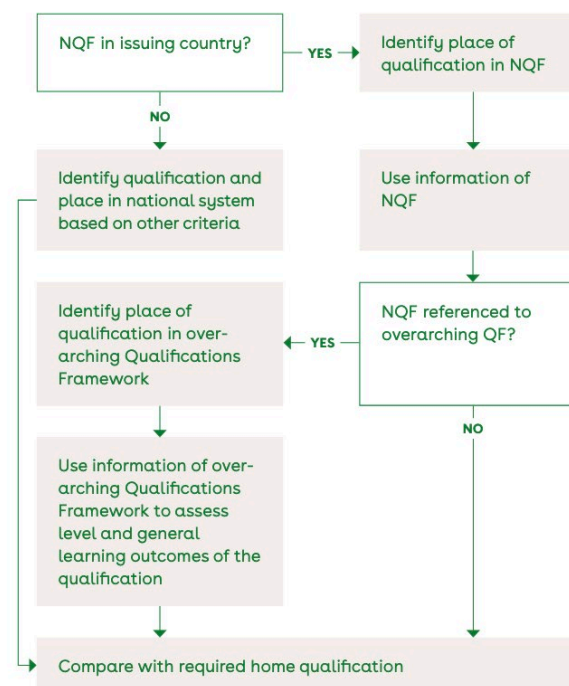
EAR manual 2023

nuffic



EAR MANUAL

Procedure qualifications Frameworks



Qualifications Frameworks: Level of Qualifications

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a useful tool for the description of some Sectorial Qualifications Frameworks or all qualifications within a national/sub-national system. Such NQFs may also be used as tools to compare different national systems through overarching meta-frameworks. They are transparency tools to promote comparability, compatibility and mutual trust between different systems, and cross-border mobility, fair recognition and lifelong learning across Europe. NQFs may also be used to understand the overall structure of an education system.

NQFs offer a classification of qualifications through a system of levels, each of which is differentiated based on descriptors called 'learning outcomes'. These refer to the outcomes, in terms of skills, knowledge and abilities, which the holders of the qualifications at a given level will have acquired on successful completion of the qualification.

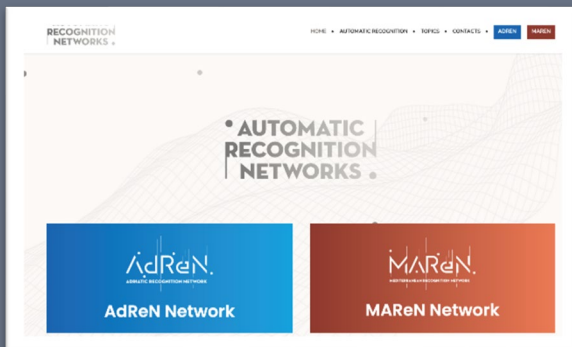
Each higher education system is divided into different cycles/levels: as a result of the Bologna Process, the majority of European countries have adopted a three-cycle structure for their higher education systems. Importantly, the divisions within each cycle, the types of qualifications placed within each cycle, the periods of study associated with these qualifications, and the use of learning outcomes vary within each national system. So, while the level or cycle of studies may be a useful indicator for a final assessment of a qualification or period of studies, this should not be taken as the only criterion used to make a full assessment of a qualification.

It should be noted that the qualifications of different systems placed at the same cycle/level are not directly equivalent between them: the number of levels within National Qualifications Frameworks varies according to the

ENIC-NARIC GIVE INFORMATION ON RECOGNITION TO

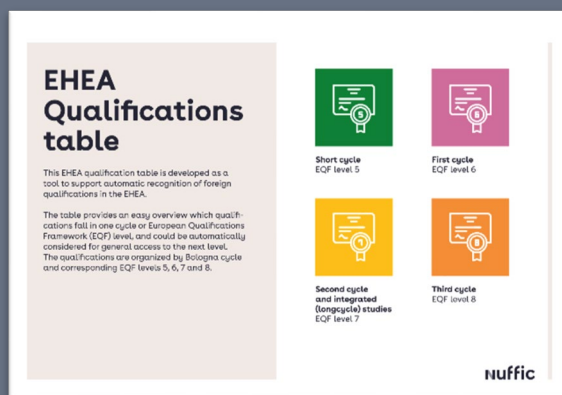
- Individuals wishing to study/work abroad
- credential evaluators
- higher education institutions
- employers

ADREN MAREN



<https://automaticrecognitionnetworks.info/>

EHEA QUALIFICATION TABLE



<https://www.nuffic.nl/sites/default/files/2023-08/ehea-qualifications-table.pdf>

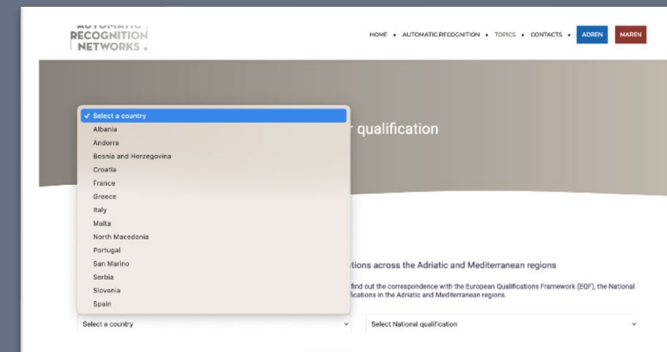
Cooperation Matching tools

Matching tools

Higher education qualifications to compare with the European Qualifications Framework

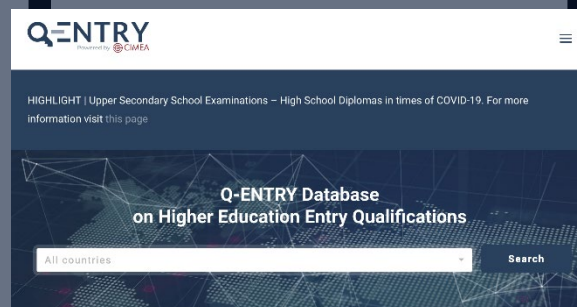
<https://www.enic-naric.net/page-recognition-tools-projects>

MATCH YOUR QUALIFICATIONS



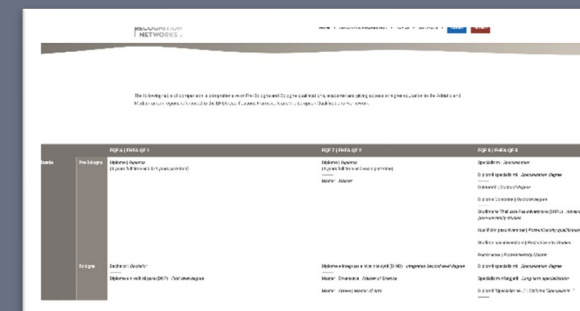
<https://automaticrecognitionnetworks.info/compare/page-compare-nqf>

Q-ENTRY



<https://www.q-entry.eu/>

TABLE OF COMPARISON



<https://automaticrecognitionnetworks.info/table-of-comparison/>

Cooperation

Matching tools

Matching tools

Higher education qualifications to compare with the European Qualifications Framework

- [Automatic Recognition Network Match your qualification | MAREN - Mediterranean Automatic Recognition Network; AdReN - Automatic Recognition in the Adriatic Region](#)

The Match Your Qualifications tool, result of the EU co-funded AdReN and MAREN projects, allows to match the issuing country and its national qualifications to find out the correspondence with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the National Qualifications Frameworks and same level of national qualifications in the Adriatic and Mediterranean regions.

[See Project](#)

- [EHEA qualification table | I-AR - Implementation of Automatic Recognition in the Networks](#)

The EHEA qualification table provides an easy overview of which qualifications fall in one cycle or European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level, and could be automatically considered for general access to the next level. It was created in the framework of the EU co-funded project I-AR.

[See Project](#)

- [Automatic Recognition Networks Table of comparison | MAREN - Mediterranean Automatic Recognition Network; AdReN - Automatic Recognition in the Adriatic Region](#)

The table of comparison, results of the EU co-funded AdReN and MAREN projects, is comprehensive of Pre-Bologna and Bologna qualifications, academic and schools leaving qualifications in the Adriatic and Mediterranean regions referenced to the EHEA Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework.

[See Project](#)

Automatic Recognition Networks

HOME • AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION • TOPICS • CONTACTS • ADREN • MAREN

Select a country

Select National qualification

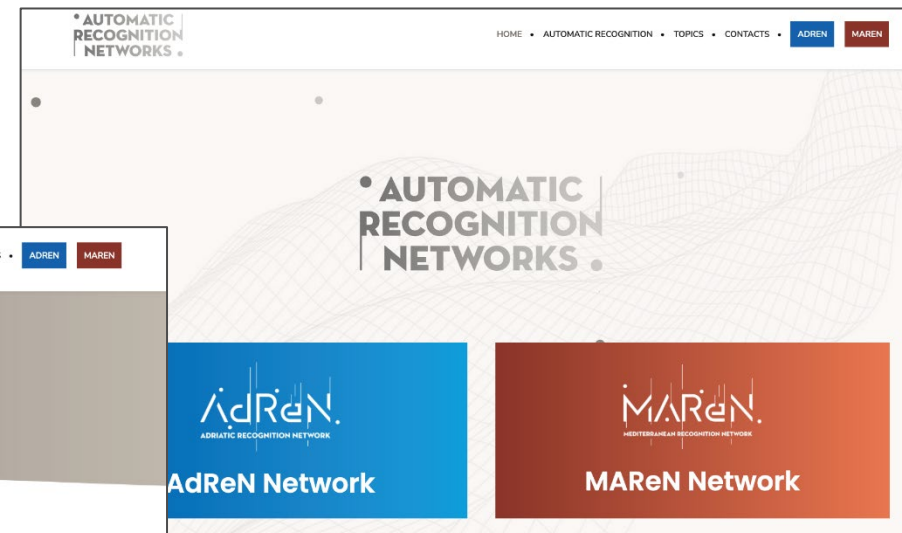
COMPARISON

EHEA Qualifications table

This EHEA qualification table is developed as a tool to support automatic recognition of foreign qualifications in the EHEA.

The table provides an easy overview which qualifications fall in one cycle or European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level, and could be automatically considered for general access to the next level. The qualifications are organized by Bologna cycle and corresponding EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8.

nuffic



EQF 6 EHEA QF 1	EQF 7 EHEA QF 2	EQF 8 EHEA QF 3
Diploma (Diploma) (3 years full time or 3.5-4 years part time)	Diploma (Diploma) (4 years full time or 5 years part time)	Specialist (Specialization)
	Master (Master)	Diploma specialist (Specialization degree)
		Doktorat (Doctoral degree)
		Diploma Doktorat (Doctoral degree)
		Studium in Theology / Pastoral Studies (SPM) / Advanced post-university studies
		Kvalifikacija posredovanje / Post-university qualification
		Studium posredovanje / Post-university studies
		Postmaster / Post-University Master
Bologna	Bachelor (Bachelor)	Diploma specialist (Specialization degree)
	Diploma (Diploma) (3 years full time or 3.5-4 years part time)	Specialist (Specialization)
	Master (Master)	Specialist (Specialization)
	Master (Master)	Diploma (Diploma)
	Master (Master)	Doktorat (Doctoral degree)
	Master (Master)	Specialist (Specialization)

Q-ENTRY Database on Higher Education Entry Qualifications

Search



<https://nawa.gov.pl/en/recognition/system-kwalifikator>

Kwalifikator

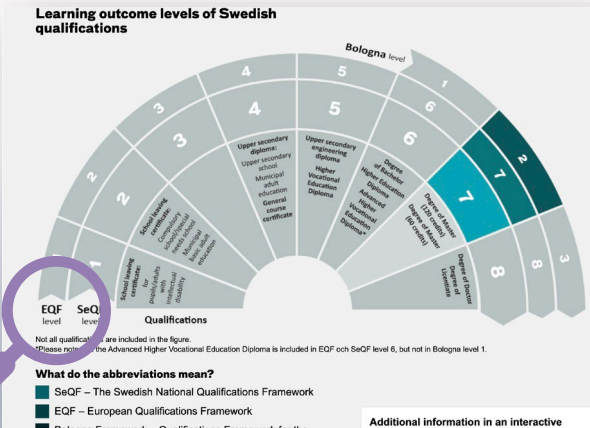
NAWA NARODOWA AGENCJA WYMIANY AKADEMICKIEJ
Information generated: www.kwalifikator.gov.pl
Legal statement

RECOGNITION STATEMENT
(to be used only with valid diploma)

Document/qualification:	DIPLOMA UNIVERSITARIO
Country of issue:	Italy
Level of education in the country where the degree was obtained:	First cycle studies
Diploma in Poland:	

Qualifications Assessment Tool - Swedish Council for Higher Education

<https://www.uhr.se/en/start/recognition-of-foreign-qualifications/qualifications-assessment-tool/>



Comparison tools

- 1 QUALIFICATION SEARCH
- 2 EVALUATION
- 3 STATEMENT OF CORRESPONDENCE



<https://ardi.cimea.it/en>

Automatic Recognition Database: ARDI

Automatic Recognition Database - Italia

The Automatic Recognition Database - Italia (ARDI) describes the main qualifications of the countries signatory to the Lisbon Convention and suggests a level correspondence with Italian qualifications.

Choose the country of interest

Choose your education

Choose your level

Search



Recognition of Foreign Qualification QQI

<https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-academic-recognition-information-centre>

11 Qualifications from Italy of Higher Education

Diploma Universitario (pre-Bologna)

Ordinary Bachelor Degree

Irish Award Class: Ordinary Bachelor Degree

NFQ Level: 7

Country: Italy

Dottore / Laurea(L) / Diploma (awarded post 1999)

Bachelor Degree

Irish Award Class: Honours Bachelor Degree

NFQ Level: 8

Country: Italy

European



Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Skills and training

Knowledge and skills on QF as part of the professional profile and regular training of credential evaluator and admission officers

PRASSI DI RIFERIMENTO UNI/PdR 120:2021

Non-regulated professional activities - Credential evaluator - Requirements for knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibilities

Attività professionali non regolamentate - Profilo professionale del credential evaluator - Requisiti di conoscenza, abilità, autonomia e responsabilità

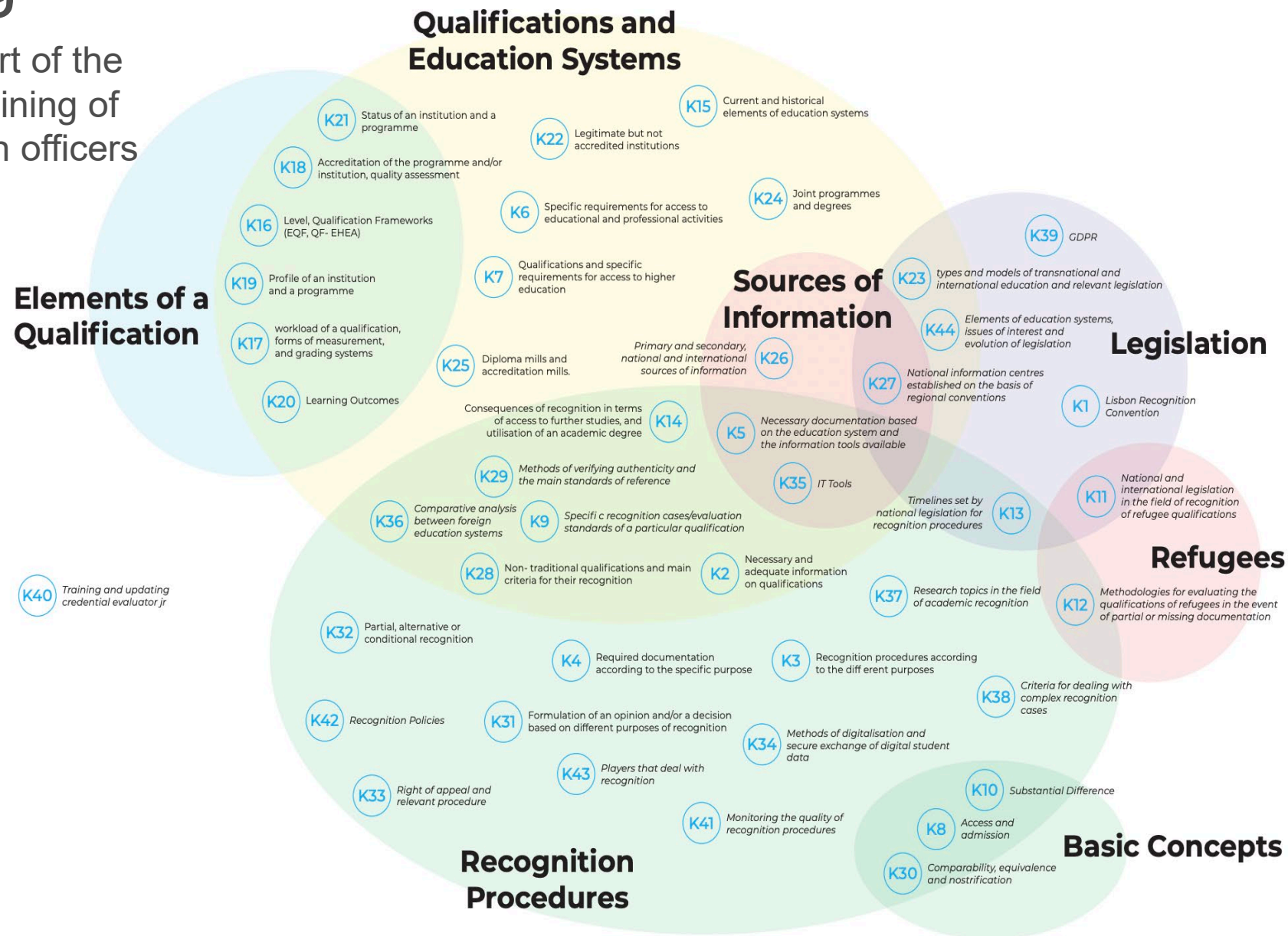
This document specifies the requirements relating to the professional activity of the credential evaluator, i.e. the expert in the evaluation and recognition of academic and professional qualifications. The credential evaluator has advanced professional skills in the management of recognition procedures and in the evaluation and comparison of qualifications, with knowledge of the different models of education and training at national and international level. These requirements are specified, starting from the specific tasks and activities and the identification of the related contents, in terms of knowledge and skills, to also clearly identify the level of autonomy and responsibilities in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Published on 22 October 2021 ICS 03.040






KNOWLEDGE AREAS (K- AREAS)





A country example: microcredentials for credential evaluators in Italy (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023)

Scope: to gain advanced professional skills in the management and resolution of problems arising from the evaluation of qualifications and recognition procedures.

- around 200 participants coming mainly from student offices and international relations offices of Italian HEIs.
- A way to build awareness and to push the recognition of micro-credentials in the HE sector.
- **QF part of the training.**



Going global



Global Convention

The UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education emphasises the role of qualification frameworks in facilitating fair and transparent recognition practices worldwide.



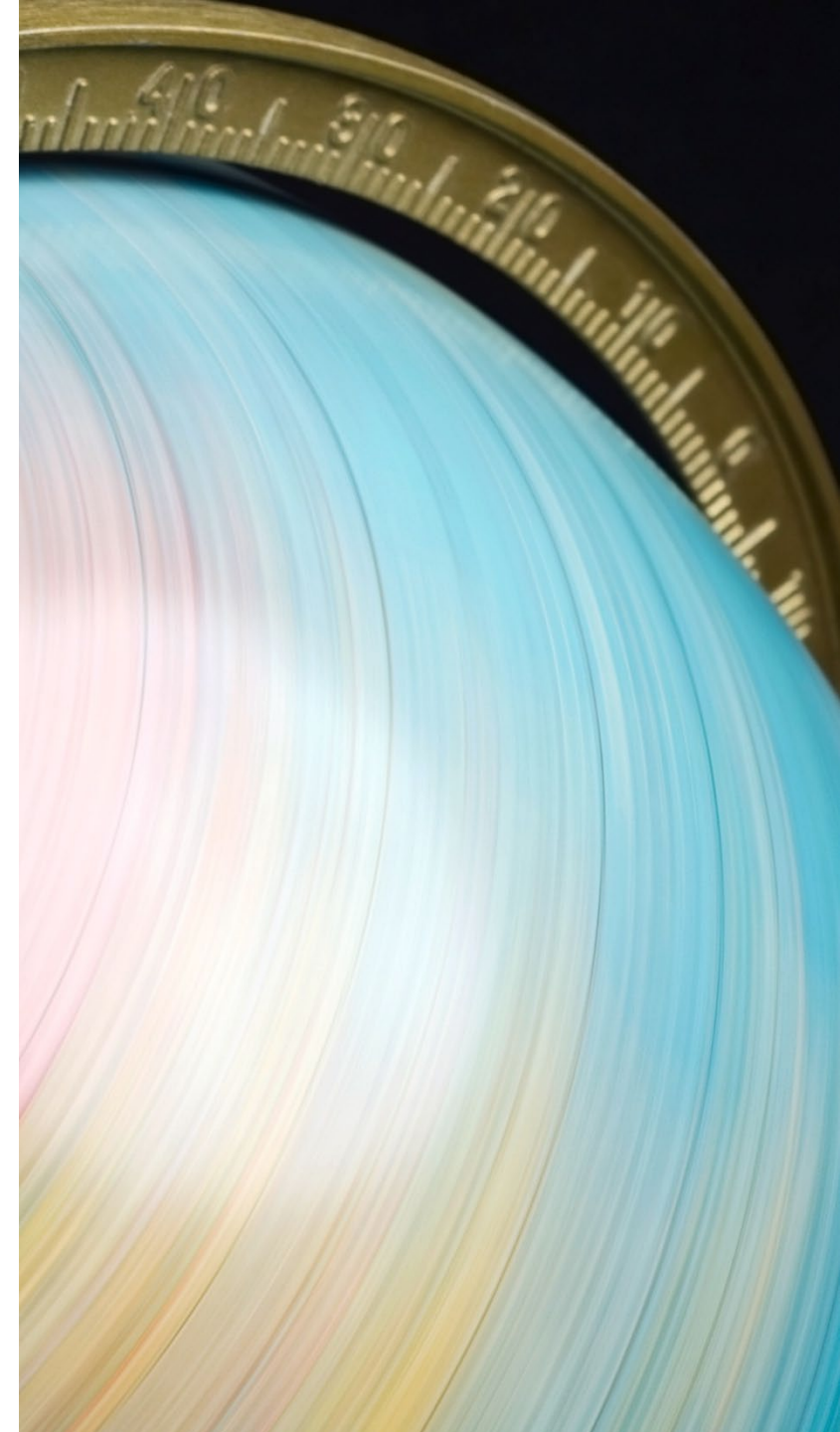
(Inter-)Regional Cooperation

Explore the possibility of connecting regional meta-frameworks to facilitate mobility and recognition across geographical regions ([ASEAN QF](#); [African Continental Qualifications Framework](#); [US Qualifications Framework](#)).



International and Intra-regional Dialogue

Dialogue between national and regional framework: qualifications frameworks are referred in 2 out of 5 regional conventions on recognition of qualifications (Africa, Latin America and Caribbean), but substantial work also in regions where the QF is not referred in the regional Convention (e.g. Europe; [Asia-Pacific](#)).



Digitalisation: to support transparency of information

MARTE

A TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACH

TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS: Connecting micro-credentials, learning outcomes, skills, job profile

OBJECTIVE:

**Verify the practical application of
automatic recognition to micro-credentials**

PROJECT PARTNERS

Associazione CIMEA ENIC-NARIC Italy

Quality and Qualification Ireland ENIC-NARIC Ireland

Stiching Nuffic ENIC-NARIC Netherlands

Third parties

University of Pisa

Iuav University of Venice

Leica



Co-funded by
the European Union



1. Mapping repositories of micro-credentials delivered by HEIs from

- Italy
- Ireland
- Netherlands



2. Applying text-mining on micro-credentials:

- Analyses on repositories of micro-credentials in partner countries
- Verifying the consistency of learning outcomes collected by the project partners by applying the text-mining technology
- Verifying alignment of micro-credentials learning outcomes with labour market needs



3. Designing pilot micro-credentials through the cooperation between a non-academic actor and a HEI
Certifying the micro-credential on the block-chain platform

Testing the recognition process by HEI

Digitalisation: to support transparency of information

MARTE

**A TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACH
TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS:**

Connecting micro-credentials, learning outcomes, skills, job profile

OBJECTIVE:

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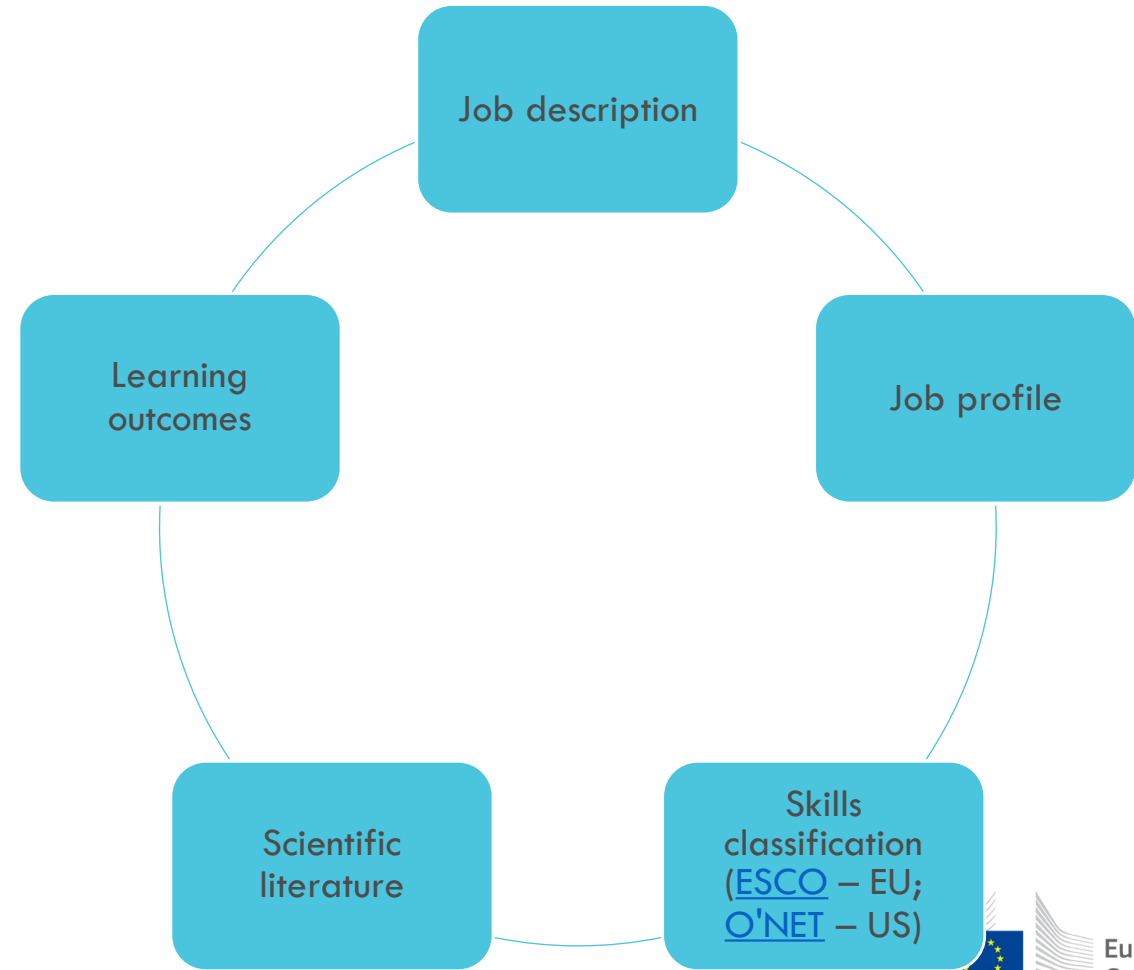
University of Pisa

Iuav University of Venice

Leica



Co-funded by
the European Union



Future Directions: Adapting to Changing Educational Landscapes



Accompanying the shifting concept of qualification



Embracing micro-credentials, lifelong learning and non-formal learning



Dynamic and digital tools: interoperability, AI



Global alignment and cooperation:
Synergies, communication and information provision



Thank you!

Bilateral comparisons

CASE Austria, Sabine Tritscher-Archan, ibw, Monika Auzinger, 3S

Poll and discussion

Mentimeter

Mentimeter poll

1. Are we making enough use of comparison's results?
2. Comparison now requires an operational qualifications framework, but third countries are often in activation stage starting to implement – how can we support transparency of qualifications in this case?
3. We can currently carry out one Comparison per year - what could be done to make the process leaner and more efficient?

Improving the process and outcomes of comparison

Parallel workshops in World Café style

World cafe

- World café style: Participants will be divided in 3 groups (except moderators and rapporteurs) and circulate the three themes and work on the results of the previous group(s).
- The first group gets most time to look at the theme (80 minutes), second round 60 minutes, third round 40 minutes.
- **Café 1: Towards leaner and more efficient process**
- **Café 2: Documentation and communication of the results**
- **Café 3: Assessing outcomes and follow up**

Café 1: Towards leaner and more efficient process

ROOM: SALA EUROPA

- How can we prepare an effective and result-oriented process?
 - How can we conduct the comparison efficiently?
 - What can we do to engage EQF AG members more?
- *DENK Wolfgang, AUSTRIA*
 - *KAHLSON Anna, SWEDEN*
 - *MALAM Florane, BELGIUM*
 - *RAMINA Baiba, LATVIA*
 - *RASHKEVYCH Yuriy, UKRAINE*
 - *SANT Stefan, MALTA*
 - *TALTYNOV Marie, CZECH REPUBLIC*
-
- *Tiina Polo moderator – Michael Graham ETF rapporteur*

Café 2: Documentation and communication of the results

ROOM: SALA ROMA

- Are there better ways to document and communicate the outcomes?
- What possible tools could we use to disseminate the outcomes?
- *CASTEL-BRANCO Eduarda, ETF*
- *DE PINA MENDES Amilcar, CABO VERDE*
- *DUARTE Teresa, PORTUGAL*
- *DUILOVIC Daria, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*
- *ULUSOY Kübra, TURKIYE*
- *VIGE Gro Beate, NORWAY*
- *WAFER Andrina, IRELAND*
- *Arjen Deij moderator – Zelda Azzara rapporteur*

Café 3: Assessing outcomes and follow up

ROOM: SALA VENEZIA

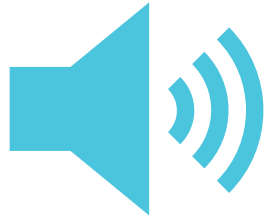
- How to measure and support the use of the comparison?
 - How to keep the results up to date and continue cooperation with third countries?
- *ERNESTA Fiona Marie, SEYCHELLES*
 - *FEDIUK Vasyi, UKRAINE*
 - *FINOCCHIETTI Chiara, ITALY CIMEA*
 - *JANSEN Frederike, NETHERLANDS*
 - *KYRIACOU Kyriacos, CYPRUS*
 - *PAR Lana, EUROPEAN STUDENTS UNION (ESU)*
 - *Koen Nomden moderator – Maria Rosenstock rapporteur*

PLA Comparison of the EQF and third country qualifications frameworks –

- what have we learned?
- how can we take it forward?

Day 2

Housekeeping



Please keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking



You are welcome to comment and ask questions, by using chat or raising hand.

Introduce yourself when you take the floor



The meeting is recorded (for internal use)

Day 2

9.00 – 9.30	Registration and welcome to the 2nd Day
9.30 – 11.00	Reporting from the workshops
Face to face and online	<p>Moderators: Tiina Polo, DG EMPL and Eduarda Castel-Branco, ETF</p> <p>Workshops report with suggestions on possible changes and updates on the comparison process, documentation of comparison, dissemination tools and follow-up</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Leaner and more effective process – Michael Graham, ETF2. Documentation and communication of the results – Zelda Azzara, Cedefop3. Assessing outcomes and follow up – Maria Rosenstock, ETF <p>Poll and plenary discussion after each workshop report</p>
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee break
11.30 – 13.00	Way forward: suggestions for a road map for future comparisons
Face to face and online	<p>Moderated by Maria Rosenstock, ETF and Tiina Polo, DG EMPL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defining the way forward and suggested road map for future comparisons – participants provide actions for years 2025-2029• What does this all mean for recognition and future work of the new Commission? Chiara Finochietti and Koen Nomden <p>Conclusions by the European Commission and ETF</p> <p>Manuela Prina, ETF – Koen Nomden, DG EMPL</p> <p>Closure of the PLA</p>

Reporting from workshops

Café 1: Towards leaner and more efficient process

Café 2: Documentation and communication of the results

Café 3: Assessing outcomes and follow up

Way forward: suggestions for a road map for future comparisons

Conclusions, closing