

ACQF development: people, results, perspectives

19/10/2022

ACQF is an overarching referencing framework

The largest RQF – 55 countries, 8 regions.
Underpinned by the key African Union policies and strategies.

Speaker: Eduarda Castel-Branco



**Africa needs skills
and qualifications**

What is the AfCFTA?

How many countries have ratified?

20?

28?

36?

43?



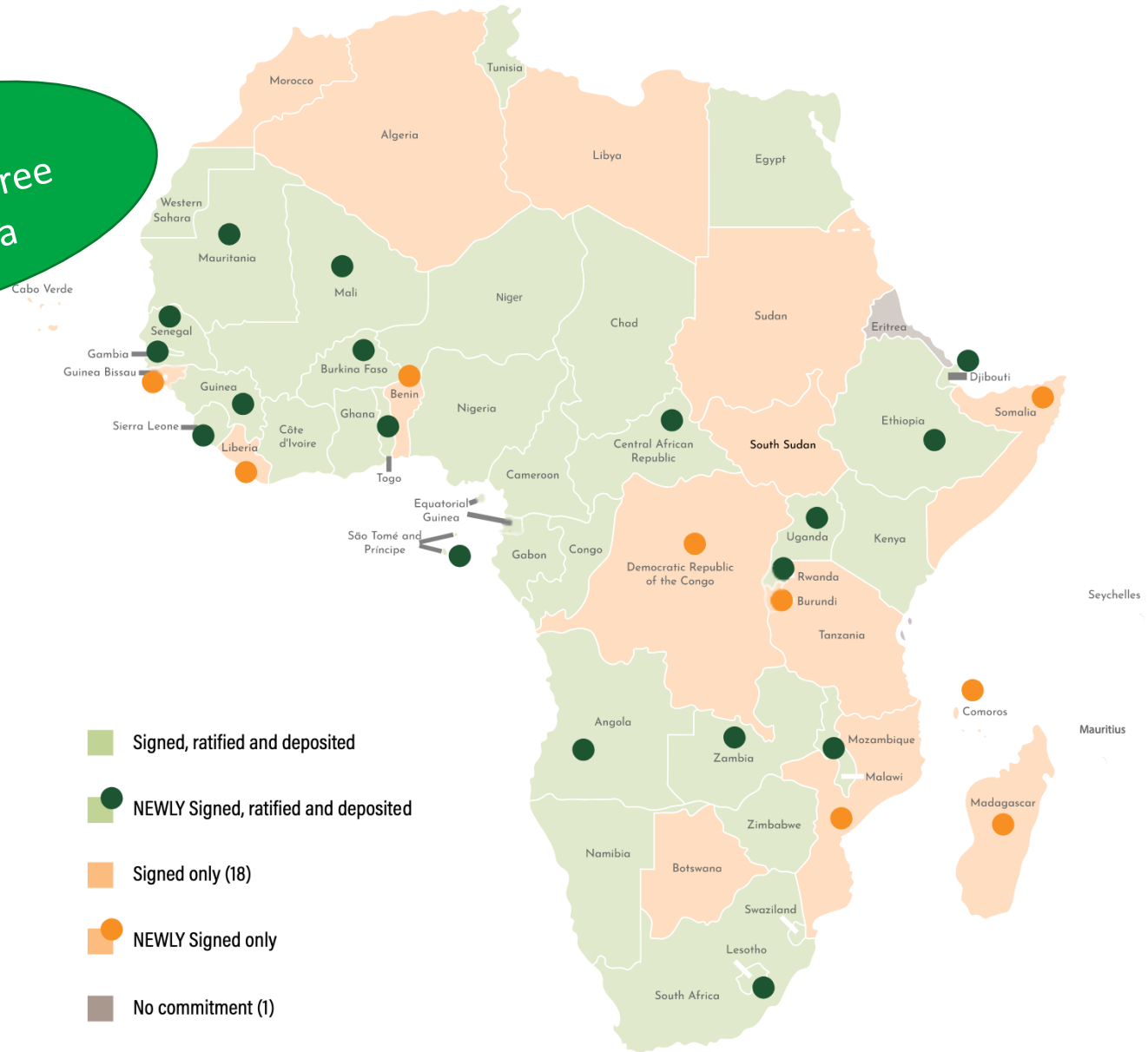
African Continental Free Trade Area

- 55 countries: diversity!
- 1,4 billion population

The youngest continent

- 65% younger than 25 years
- Almost a billion < 35 years
- 541 million < than 14 and 455 million 15-34 years old

- Signed, ratified and deposited
- NEWLY Signed, ratified and deposited
- Signed only (18)
- NEWLY Signed only
- No commitment (1)

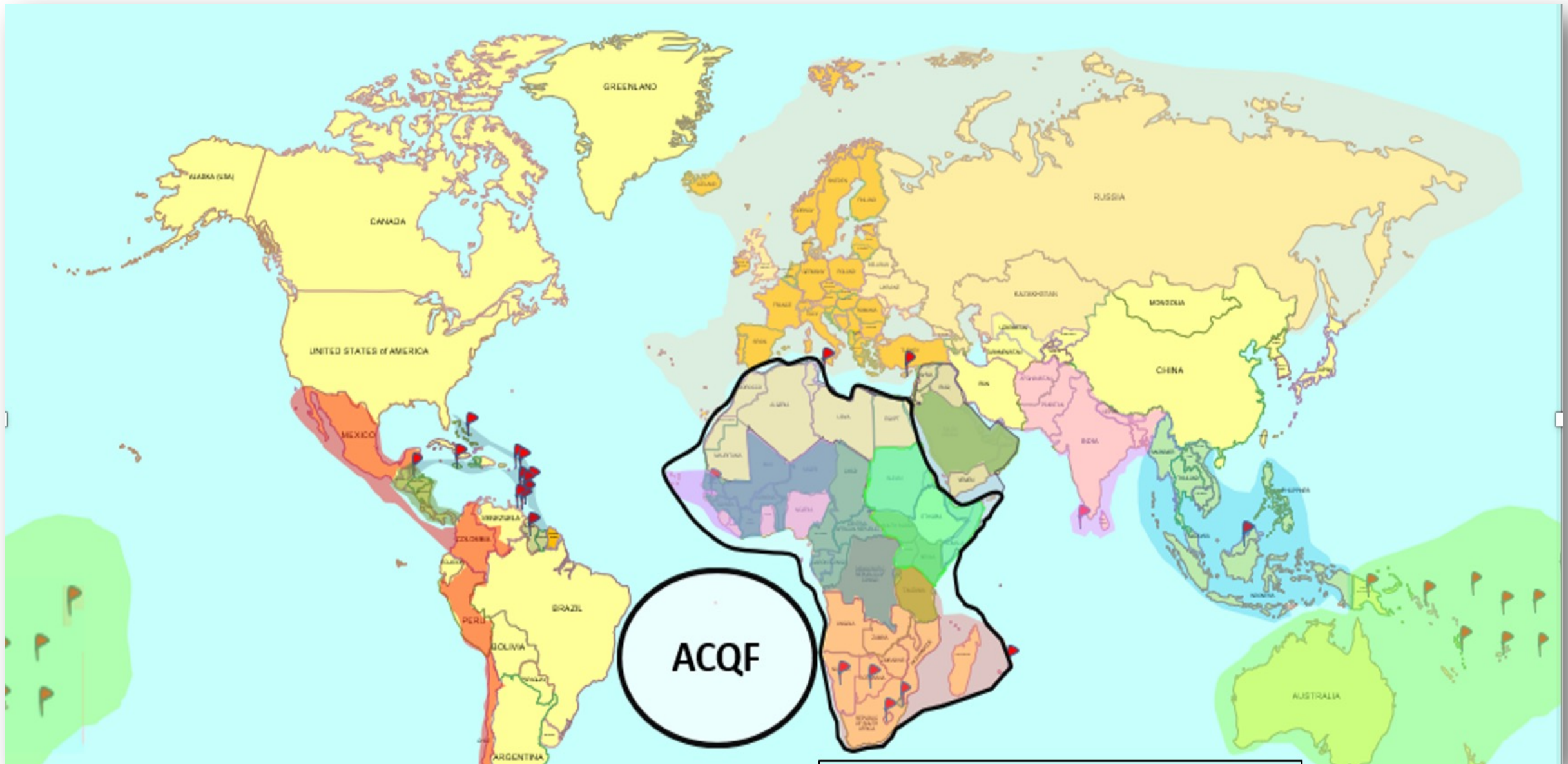


AfCFTA sets new demands on skills and qualifications

- National industrial policies need to adapt to the **new environment provided by the AfCFTA**.
- Tailoring skills policies to technical needs and emerging trends is crucial for attracting investment and increasing linkages with lead firms. **Talent and skills rank among the top four determinants driving foreign direct investment to developing economies (World Bank)**.
- Upskilling and re-skilling will be crucial to meet sector-specific needs and new requirements for **Africa's digital and green transformation**.
- Enhancing policy dialogue between policy makers, the private sector and training institutions will help to **identify skills needs and design appropriate training programmes** at the sectoral level.
- National governments and the private sector can also pool resources into regional centres of excellence, such as the African Masters in Machine Intelligence, to train **African researchers and engineers**.
- Supporting **intra-regional skills mobility** can help alleviate skill shortages in some sectors.

[Africa's Development Dynamics 2022. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1127_1127899-pk0g8ydolw&title=Africa-s-Development-Dynamics-Overview](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1127_1127899-pk0g8ydolw&title=Africa-s-Development-Dynamics-Overview)

- African Union Policy Initiative
- Based on AU policies (CESA, AU Free Movement Protocol, AfCFTA)



ACQF

ACQF is underpinned by AU policies and strategies

- Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan
 - CESA 16-25
 - AfCFTA
 - AU Free Movement Protocol
 - PAQAF
-

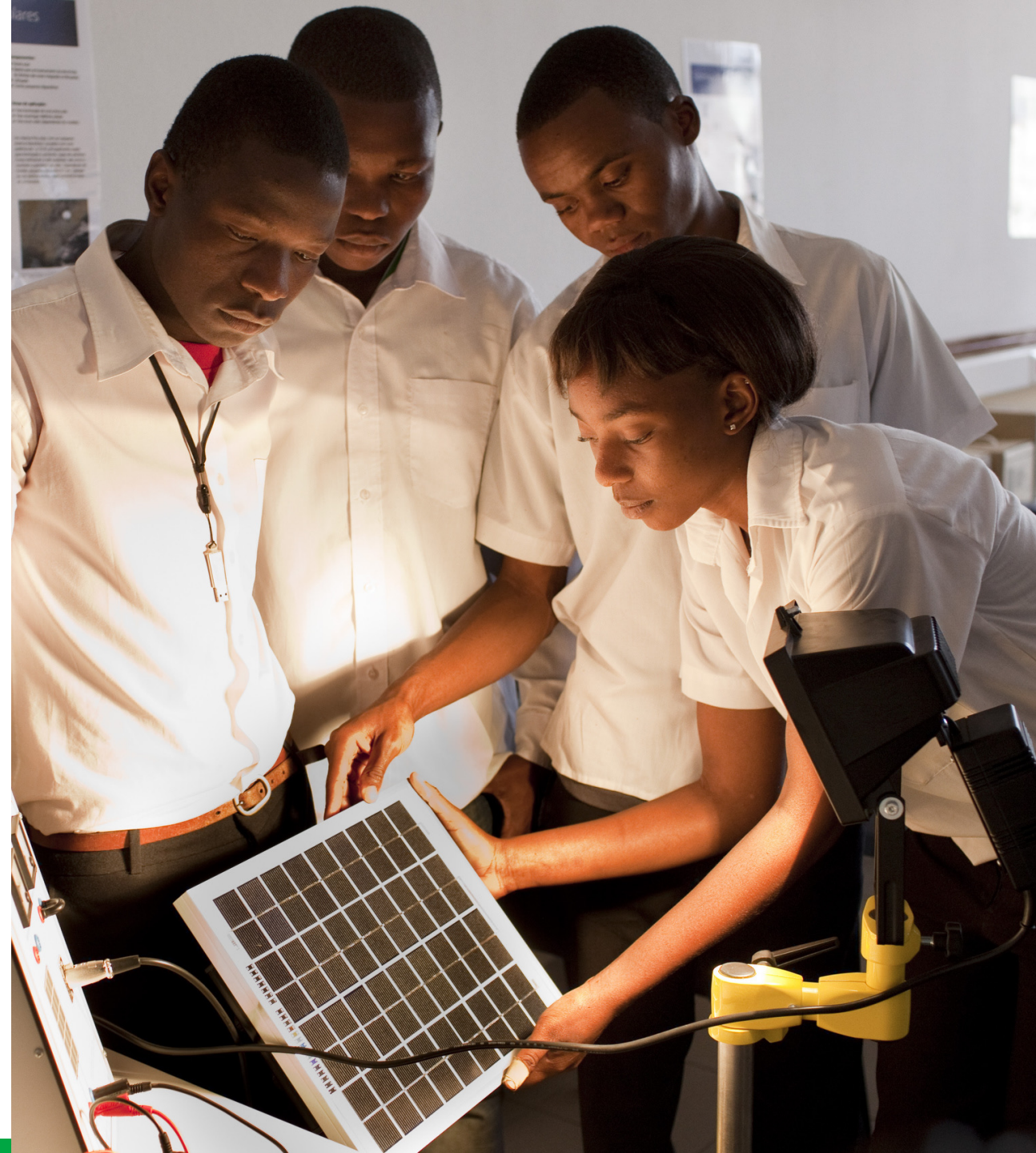


CESA-2025

12 strategic objectives: wide range of dimensions and drivers of change.

Strategic objective 4 has 2 goals directly related to NQF-ACQF

- c) Set up **national qualification frameworks (NQFs) and regional qualification frameworks (RQFs)** to facilitate the creation of multiple pathways to acquisition of skills and competencies as well as mobility across the sub-sectors.
- d) Develop **continental qualifications framework** linked to **regional qualifications and national qualification frameworks** to facilitate regional integration and mobility of graduates.



Building the ACQF: drivers and enablers



- AUC support (political)
- ACQF Advisory Group: created and involved from 1st launch workshop in 09/2019 Addis
- ACQF Team : practical NQF expertise; multi-lingual; all regions
- Process combined technical-analytical component with working and networking with people
- Learning and capacity development
- Support to countries and cooperation with RECs
- Networking: NQF authorities and departments; relevant regional associations; Addis convention committee;
- International / EU linkages and networking
- “Quick wins” (such as the 15 Peer Learning Webinars – now transformed in a platform of learning videos)

Building the ACQF (2020-2022)

Analysis, technical
work

Policy document and
action plan

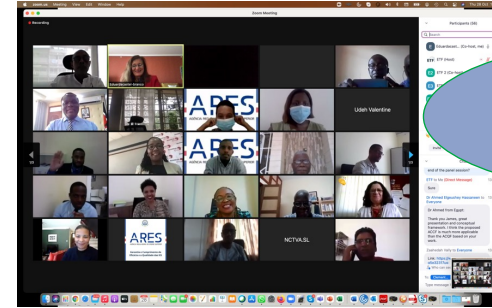
ACQF-AfCFTA study

10 Guidelines and 10
Training Modules

Feasibility study

Scenarios of ACQF

ACQF Mapping Study



People,
networking

Training programmes

Support to countries

Working with RECs (SADC)

Networking with AQVN

Peer Learning Webinars

ACQF community - network

Outputs of ACQF development project (2020-2022)

- ACQF Policy Document
- ACQF Level descriptors
- Action Plan
- 10 technical and synthesis Guidelines
- 10 Training Modules



- ACQF Website
- Analysis, research: ACQF mapping study collection, feasibility study ACQF, study and handbook on Competence-based training (TVET), study on links ACQF-AfCFTA
- Capacity development programme and Learning Management System (LMS)
- 2 Training Weeks
- 15 Peer Learning Webinars
- 5 Advisory Group meetings
- Work together with RECs: SADC, EAC, IGAD
- Work with countries on NQF development
- Many participations in international conferences (UNESCO, EAC, IGAD, SADC)

ACQF is...mutual learning, mutual trust

Outputs by September 2022

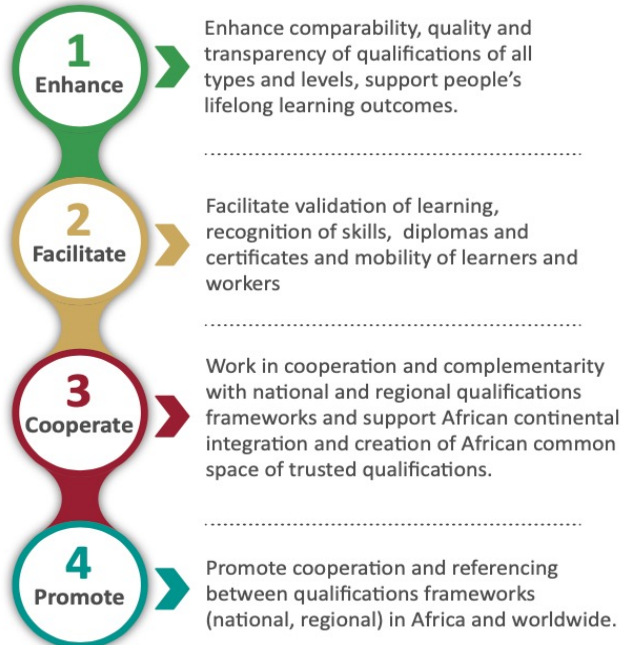
ACQF Advisory Group	ACQF website	15 peer learning webinars (PLW) in 2020-2022	+ 40 country cases presented in PLW
2 training programmes – 1 online, 1 hybrid	10 Technical Guidelines	10 Training modules	40 training presentations on all NQF themes
11 Thematic Briefs	Newsletter	13 country and regional mapping reports on NQFs	Continental Mapping NQFs
1 report review implementation SADCQF + 1 NQF inventory SADC	1 mapping report on African school curriculum	3 reports support to countries in NQF development path	International conferences and experts' meetings

ACQF Policy Document



ACQF: underpinnings, purposes, principles

PURPOSES OF ACQF



UNDERPINNINGS



PRINCIPLES





**ACQF is underpinned by
Quality Assurance**

Transparency and Trust in
Qualifications
Includes processes and
procedures to ensure
qualifications, assessment
and programme delivery
meet high standards

- **Metaframework:** translation device for referencing, comparison, cooperation between different NQFs
- **Comprehensive scope:** all levels, modes of learning
- **10 levels:** whole continuum of education and training
- **Level descriptors** expressed as learning outcomes
- **Domains of learning:** Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility
- **Learning outcomes orientation** supports:
 - Improve **transparency and comparability** of qualifications of different national systems
 - **Transparency and credibility of RPL** and validation of outcomes from experience, access to quality RPL
 - **Application of credit accumulation and transfer systems** in different academic and vocational pathways.
 - *Access, learning progression, lifelong learning, flexibility,*
 - *In design of qualifications: facilitate transfer of components of qualifications*

REFERENCING NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS OR SYSTEMS TO ACQF



ACQF aims at **connecting** the national (and regional) qualifications frameworks of the community of African Union (AU) member states. This core function is based on the process of **referencing to ACQF**.



Referencing: process aimed at comparing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the ACQF following criteria and procedures.



At **national level**, referencing contributes to self-assessment of the status of the national qualifications framework or system to identify areas for reform and improvement



At **continental level and between countries**, referencing to the ACQF of a significant and increasing number of national qualifications or systems leads to the creation of a common area of trusted qualifications and enables the transformative potential of the ACQF for the continent.

7 main areas of activity

“ACQF creates mutual trust”

Areas - as per ACQF Policy Document



Referencing NQF / NQS to ACQF



Support **Recognition of Prior Learning**



ACQF **Qualifications Platform and MIS**



Qualifications: common profiles for priority sectors AfCFTA / continental integration



Capacity development



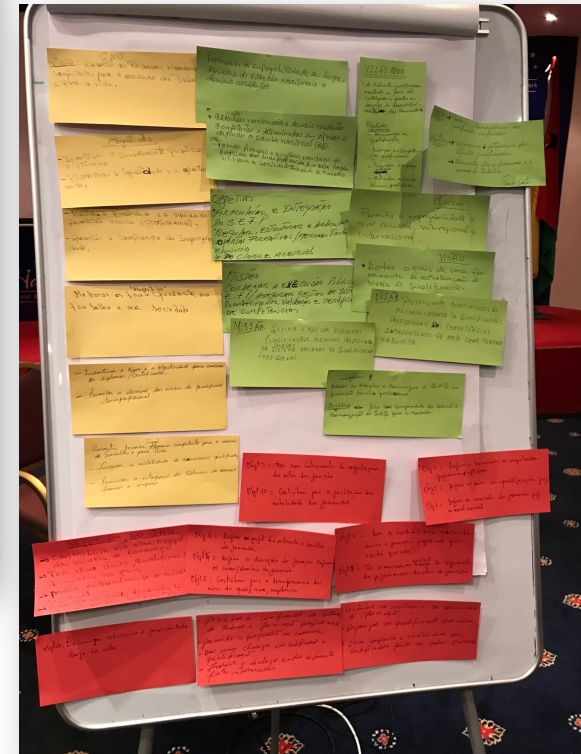
Networking and cooperation



Analysis, monitoring and evaluation

Support to countries

Guiné-Bissau – 1st NQF workshop, July 2022



Going forward: 2023-2026

Building on the outputs / outcomes of the current ACQF project



Follow-up: new project supporting implementation

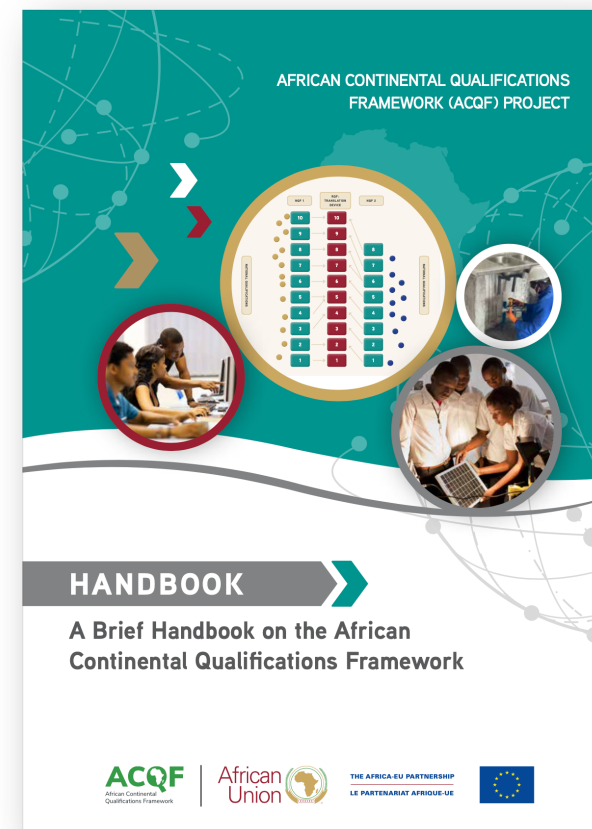


Diverse levels of cooperation – national, regional and continental

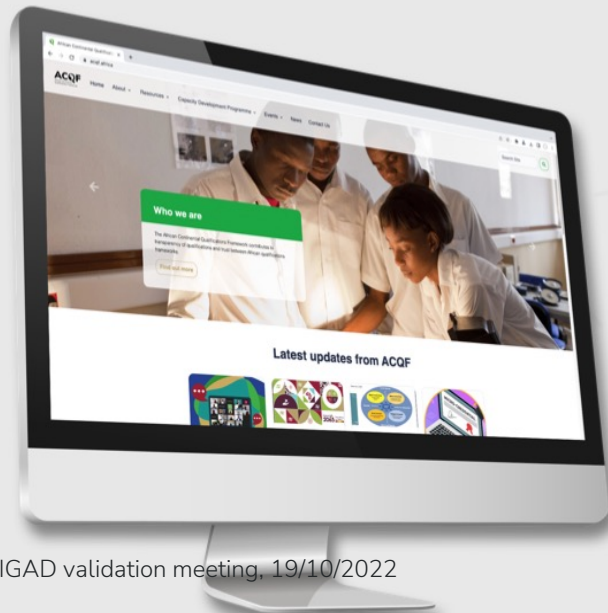
ACQF ACQF Infographics



ACQF Guidelines and Handbook



And much more on ACQF website for stakeholders, policy makers, education and training providers, learners and experts interested in themes and issues related to national and regional qualifications frameworks and their related systems, tools and governance.



Want to know more about ACQF?

Visit our website:
<https://acqf.africa/>

**For your further reading:
micro-credentials**

Lifelong learning is essential



[Access the video](#)

An effective culture of lifelong learning is key to ensuring that everyone has the knowledge, skills and competences they need to thrive in society, the labour market and their personal lives.

It is essential that people can access **quality and relevant education and training, upskilling and reskilling throughout their lives**. Lifelong learning opportunities should be part of the long-term strategy of education and training institutions to improve their responsiveness to the fast-changing needs of employers and learners. This would enable a more diverse body of learners to upskill and reskill.

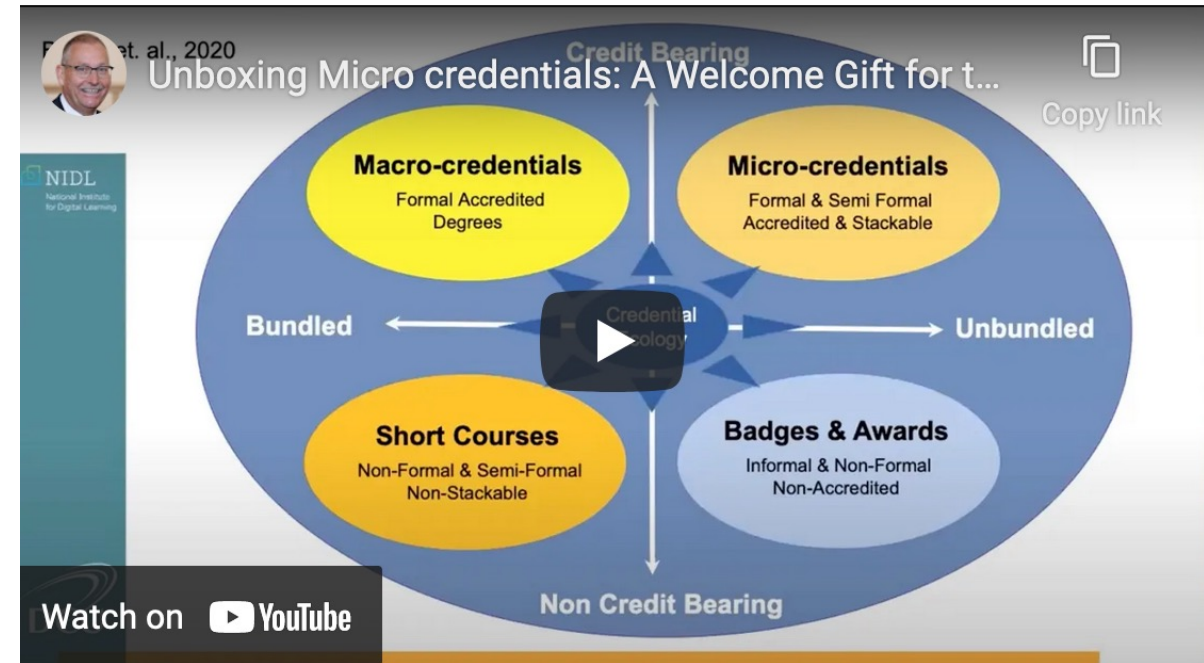
Higher education institutions, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, adult learning providers and other providers of micro-credentials, including employers – need to cooperate and integrate the latest research findings in the design and update of learning opportunities.

Micro-credentials can help **certify the outcomes of small, tailored learning experiences**.

They make possible the **targeted, flexible acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences** to meet new and emerging needs in society and the labour market and make it possible for individuals to fill the skill gaps they need to succeed in a fast-changing environment, while not replacing traditional qualifications.

They can, where appropriate, complement existing qualifications, providing added value while not undermining the core principle of full degree programmes in initial education and training.

Micro-credentials could be designed and issued by a variety of providers in different learning settings (formal, non-formal and informal learning settings)

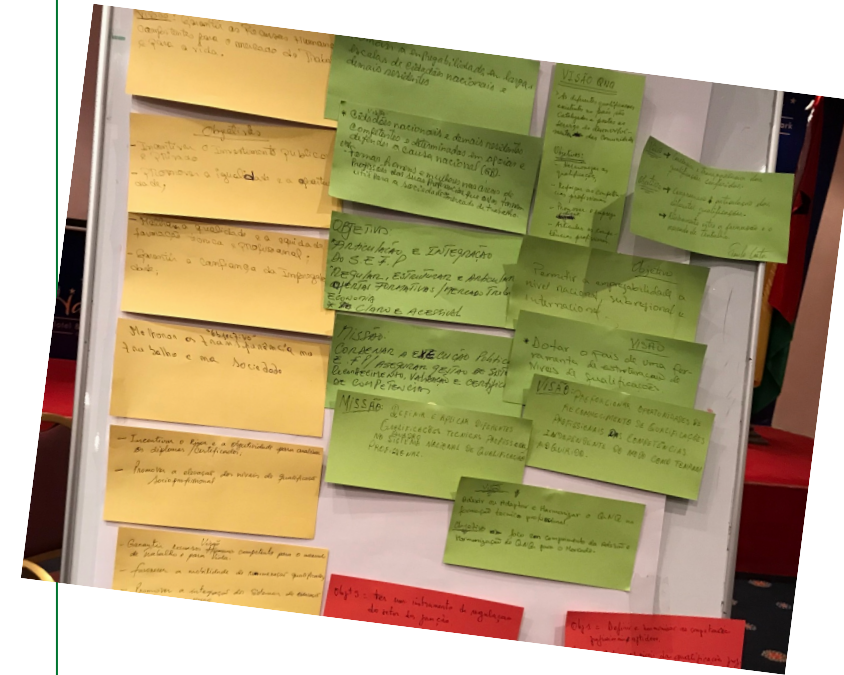


[Access the video](#)

Micro-credentials: elements of a definition

The number and diversity of micro-credential offerings have expanded substantially in recent years, accelerated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Micro-credentials hold promises and challenges.

- Existing definitions (from OECD, European Commission, UNESCO, Australian Government) point to key characteristics of micro-credentials:
 - ✓ Referring to learning over a limited time and/or in a specific area
 - ✓ May form part of or add to formal qualifications
 - ✓ Potentially 'stackable' over time, adding to individual learning careers
 - ✓ Given their limited size and focus, more flexible than traditional qualifications
 - ✓ Based on assessed learning
 - ✓ Frequently delivered in a digital form.



The Australian Government (2021) adopted the National Micro-Credentials Framework, which uses the following definition:

- A micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning or competency, with a minimum volume of learning of one hour and less than an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) award qualification, that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a component part of an AQF award qualification.

What can constitute a micro-credential?

- TVET skill sets or units of competency.
- Modularised, assessed components of existing higher education curriculum or subjects.
- Industry learning that is assessed (such as vendor certifications, professional learning).
- Other forms of assessed learning or competencies (e.g. Vocational Education/Higher Education /Industry courses not currently accredited by a regulatory authority, and those by other providers).

What does not constitute a micro-credential?

- Unassessed learning or courses, including work-integrated learning without an assessment.
- Badges which are obtained through participation only (i.e. without an assessment).
- Formal qualifications within the AQF and macro-credentials, including diplomas, certificates and master's degrees.

EU: Recommendation on European approach to micro-credentials for LLL and employability: 10 principles

“Use micro-credentials, where appropriate, as a tool to strengthen and complement existing learning opportunities, increase participation in lifelong learning”

1. Quality
2. Transparency
3. Relevance
4. Valid assessment
5. Learning pathways

6. Recognition
7. Portability
8. Learner-centred
9. Authentic
10. Information and guidance

Micro-credential Observatory

The Research Observatory on Micro-credentials (ROM) is a NIDL initiative in partnership with the [ECIU University](#). The aim is to provide a curated and regularly updated collection of major reports, policy initiatives and research-related publications on the growth of micro-credentials in higher education and lifelong learning more generally.

- [NIDL Activities](#)
- [NIDL Research](#)
- [Major Policy Initiatives](#)
- [National & International Reports](#)
- [Useful Reading: Articles, Books & Papers](#)
- [Events, Conferences and Webinars](#)
- [Microcredentials Sans Frontières Network](#)



- Many articles published in 2022:
<https://www.dcu.ie/nidl/micro-credential-observatory>

Thank you!

Eduarda Castel-Branco