



ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

IGAD

Regional Qualifications Framework: Validation meeting

19/10/2022

Qualifications Frameworks – systemic view and global trends

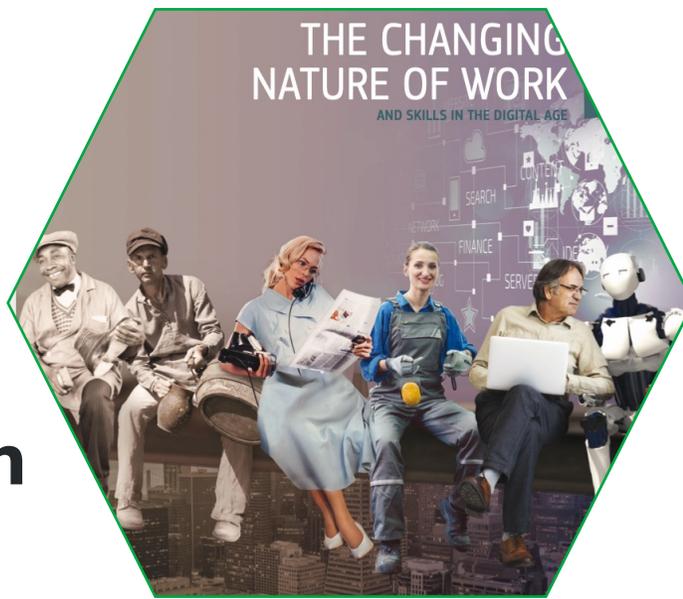
Qualifications frameworks are a global phenomenon. More than 150 countries have developed NQFs and many have advanced their implementation. But NQFs do not work in isolation. A broad overview of characteristics and trends.

Speaker: Eduarda Castel-Branco

Congratulations

- Congratulations to IGAD, and to its member states and people on such an important event.
- Your determination to endow your region with a framework and instruments supporting better skills and qualifications for the people, and mutual trust among your national systems is coming to a most fundamental milestone - the political validation.
- A milestone signaling the end of a section of the road, and the beginning of a long but rewarding new section.
- You are about to start the avenue of action and implementation. Turning intentions, pledges, and guidelines into reality, both at national and at regional levels.
- It is all about the people of these eight countries endowed with many treasures. It is about the learners of all sub-systems; teachers and trainers shaping new skills and competences; the workers of all sectors (formal and informal); the employers and innovators; the people seeking a job or a self-employment opportunity and those needing their skills and competences made visible; the courageous migrants challenged by adversity who want to work and a decent life; the children in cities and villages; women, youth, and informal workers who want a new chance to learn and to improve not only the lives of their families, but also of their communities, and the region as a whole.
- The success of IGAD regional qualifications framework will positively impact other regions, neighbouring countries and the African continent as a whole.
- Therefore, this validation meeting concerns IGAD's people and states, but also the other regions and population. Allow me to wish you all fruitful and inspiring debates and experience-sharing.
- Shared values and principles in a diverse region to reach common objectives.

Drivers of change: a work in transformation



Digitisation - Automation - AI

Covid-19

Greening of economy and society

Societal movements: social equity and opportunity, migrations, innovation, geopolitics, democracy

- The future of work arrived ahead of schedule
- “2 years of digital innovation in 2 months”
- Hybrid / Remote work: lasting post-Covid19
- Changing mix of jobs x skills mix
- More rapid workers’ transitions between jobs
- Migration
- Reskilling: 50% of working population 2025 (WEF)
- Learning anytime, anywhere
- Hybrid skills - rising
- New types and forms of qualifications: micro-credentials, digital certificates
- Wave of innovation

'Double-disruption' scenario for workers

Tandem Covid-19 recession x
automation & digitalisation

People - Planet - Peace and Skills & Qualifications

- People Planet Peace are the key mega clusters of sustainable development of our World, wherein national / regional policies, strategies, and actions need to contribute.
- Education and skills strategies and systems are more important than ever, as societies and economies are going through multiples waves of change and crisis, requiring learning, upskilling and reskilling of individuals of all demographics, backgrounds and roles.
- **Lifelong learning** can no longer be just an interesting theoretical concept. It must be part of our lives, and deeply rooted in policy making and implementation, from grassroots to highest political levels. Lifelong learning is an eco-system, in which all forms, modalities and pathways to skills and qualifications are valued and enjoy parity of esteem; where people's invisible learning outcomes from life and work are made visible. For social inclusion, learning progression, decent work, citizenship and peace.
- **And qualifications frameworks – national and regional - are the most effective and natural ally and support of lifelong learning. They go hand in hand.**
- **As said one of ACQF stakeholders: *“NQFs are instruments for Peace. They open pathways, they unlock barriers, they give new opportunities and support fair mobility.”***

ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework



A national qualifications framework (NQF) is 'A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

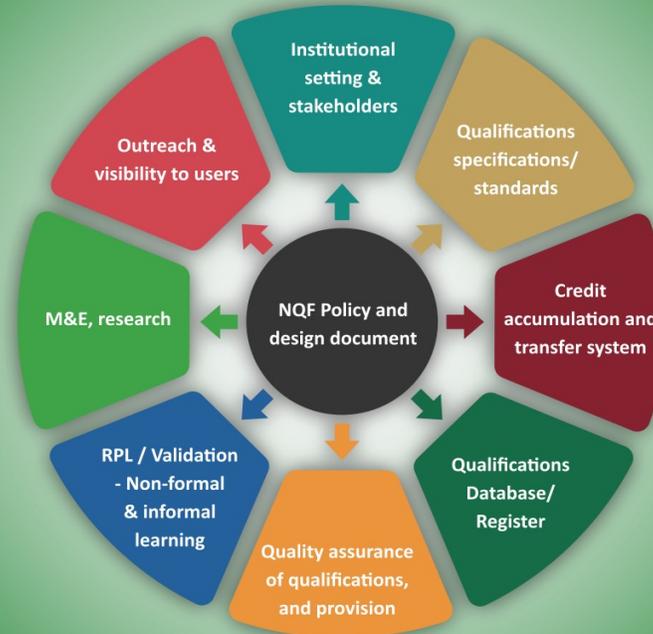
Source: EQF Recommendation

A national qualification system includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These include the means to develop and operationalise national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, **quality assurance processes, evaluation and attribution processes, skills recognition** and other mechanisms linking education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems can be more or less integrated and coherent. One of the characteristics of a qualification system may be an **explicit qualifications framework**.

Source: OECD, Bridges to Lifelong Learning, 2007

A qualification: means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Source: EQF Recommendation.



Level descriptor: A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of a Qualifications Framework that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Source: SAQA, NQFPedia

Learning outcomes: Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal and informal.

Source: Cedefop

A regional qualifications framework (RQF) is a broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region.

A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications **to relate** to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.

Source: ASEAN

QRF: ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, A Practical Guide and All you Need to Know.

Abundant sources on qualifications frameworks - help countries develop and implement NQFs

- ACQF website: library - <https://acqf.africa/resources/library/publications-from-international-sources>
- ACQF Training Modules: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules>
- ACQF Thematic briefs: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs>
- ACQF Mapping study: <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study>
- Cedefop: [Library of publications on NQF](#)
- Cedefop: Handbook on Learning outcomes (second edition, 2021): <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4209>
- Cedefop: Handbook on Learning outcomes (first edition, 2017): <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4156>
- [Cedefop: Online tool on NQFs Europe](#)
- Cedefop: [European Database of VNFIL](#) (“RPL”)
- Global Inventory NQF-RQF (every 2 years) – ETF, Cedefop, Unesco
- EQF: webpage at Europass
- EQF: comparison - <https://europa.eu/europass/en/compare-qualifications>
- EQF: evaluation (2 done; new in 2022-2023)
- Agencies, authorities in charge of NQFs

A body of knowledge –
the “science” of NQF?
➤ **Dissemination,
capacity
development!!!**

Qualifications frameworks...

- Over 150 countries globally: developing, implementing – at different stages
- NQF are effective and impactful if they work with the wider eco-system of education and training (embedded)
- NQFs need to be open to innovation and change to remain relevant
- Do not function well in isolation – but as a system
- Must be contextualised and fit-for-purpose
- Qualifications frameworks' **(digital) tools** – important for information-sharing between institutions and for end-users' guidance
- Governance of QF: participative, inclusive, based on technical competence. ***“The NQF belongs to everybody”***
- ***There is much information, research, sources, tools on NQFs and RQFs (“science of NQF”)***

Important trends related to qualifications frameworks

- Learning outcomes-based
- Underpinned by quality assurance
- Growing openness to qualifications and credentials of different types (formal and non-formal; private) and sub-sectors (Basic to Higher...); micro-credentials
- Support access, inclusion, progression, transparency and comparability
- Digitalisation: of qualifications and credentials; registers and catalogues of qualifications
- Connections, experience-sharing, mutual learning
- Support Lifelong learning

NQF is about...

Benefits for
the People

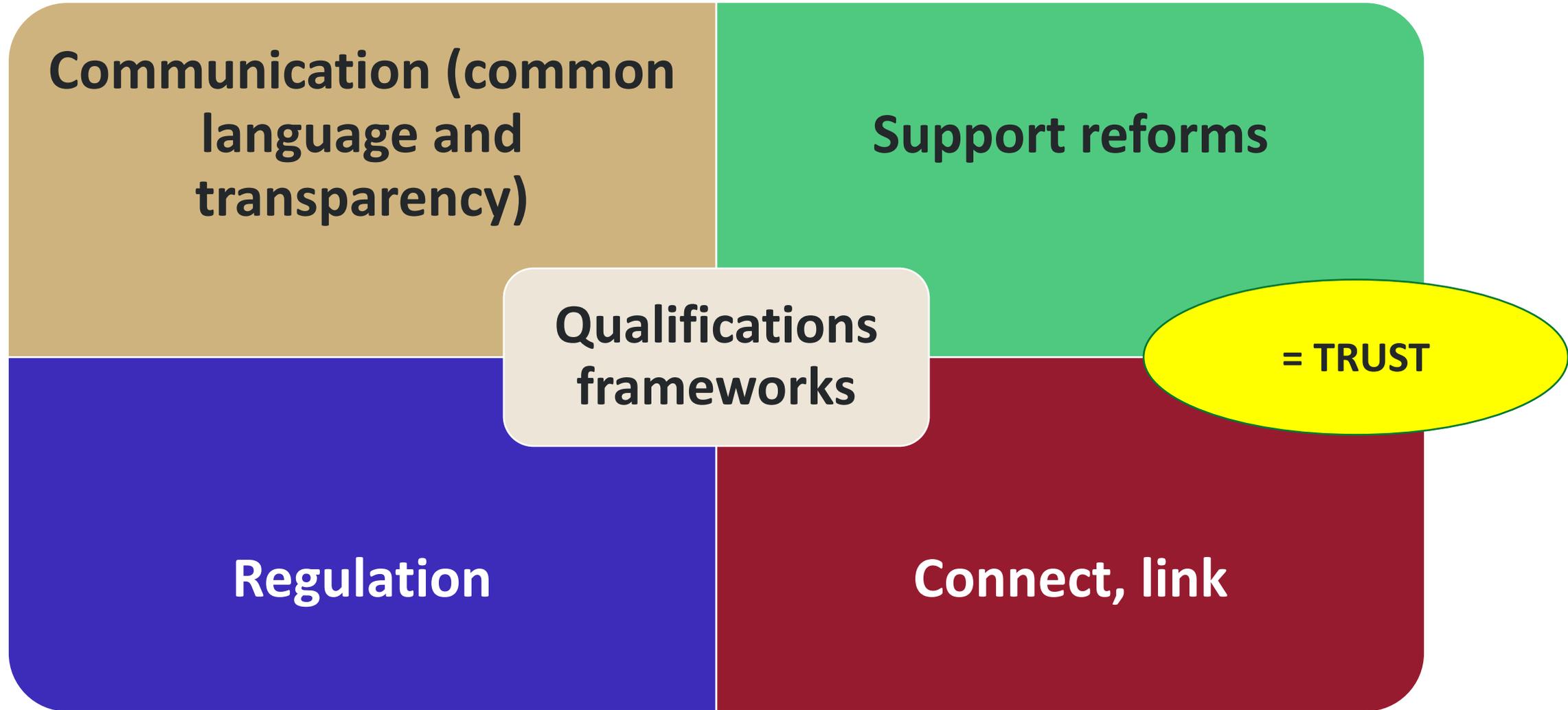
Mutual trust

Body of
knowledge,
experience

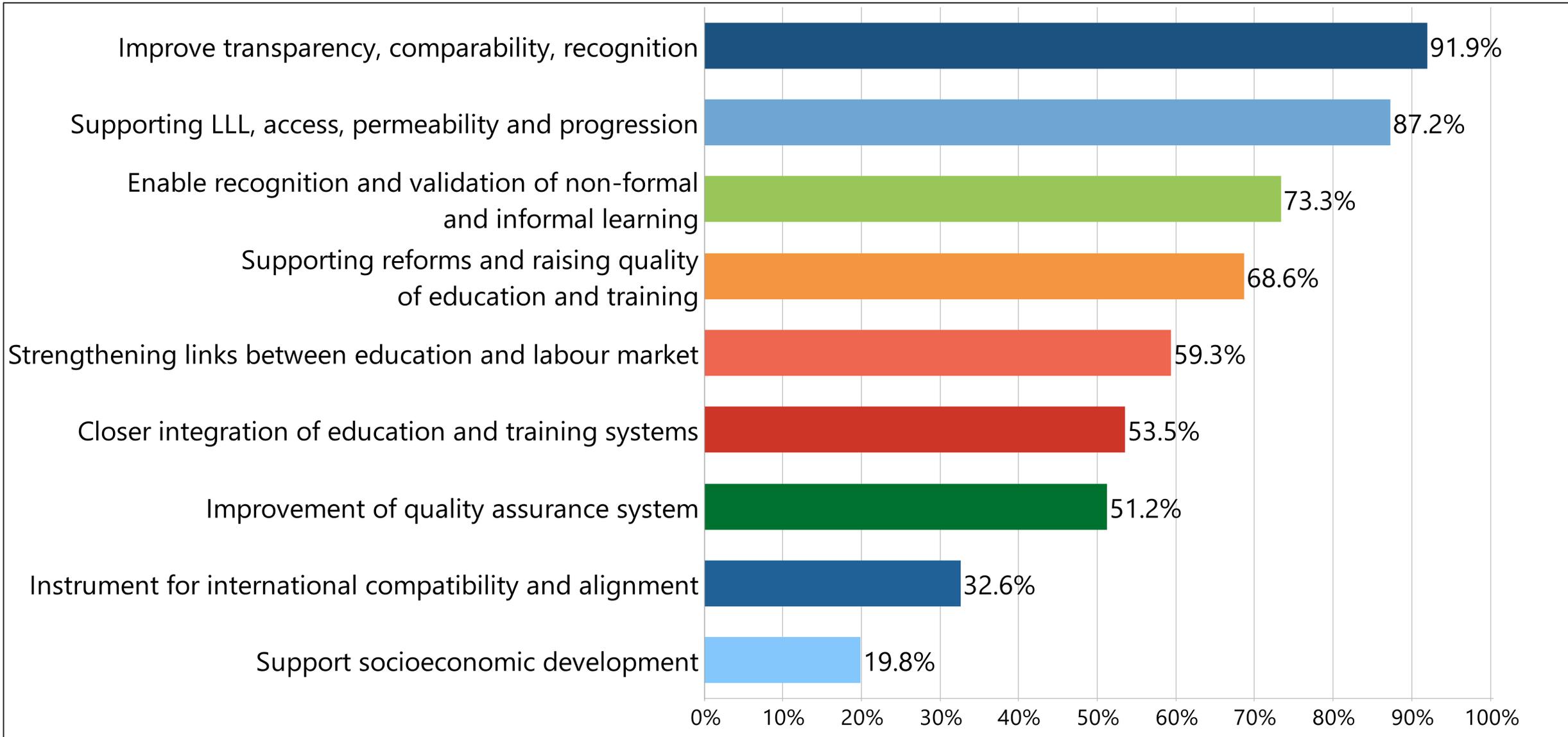
Outreach and
use

Action and
improvement

Wider purposes of qualifications frameworks

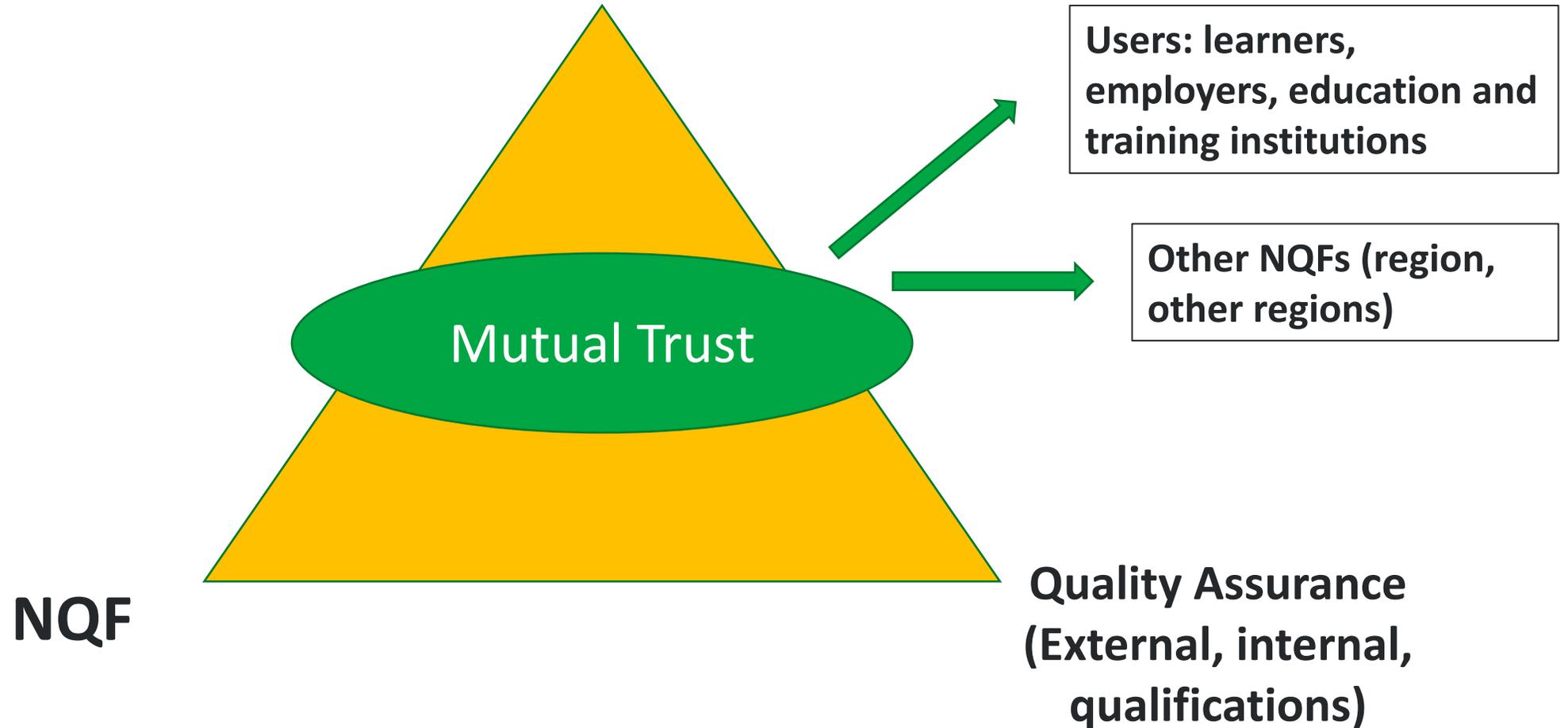


Shared objectives of NQFs (study of 87 countries)



NQF for mutual trust

Recognition of qualifications



Transparency and trust in qualifications

Transparency and trust in qualifications is key in a context of widespread international learner and labour mobility, and rapid transformation of types of qualifications and credentials for different needs and contexts of lifelong learning.

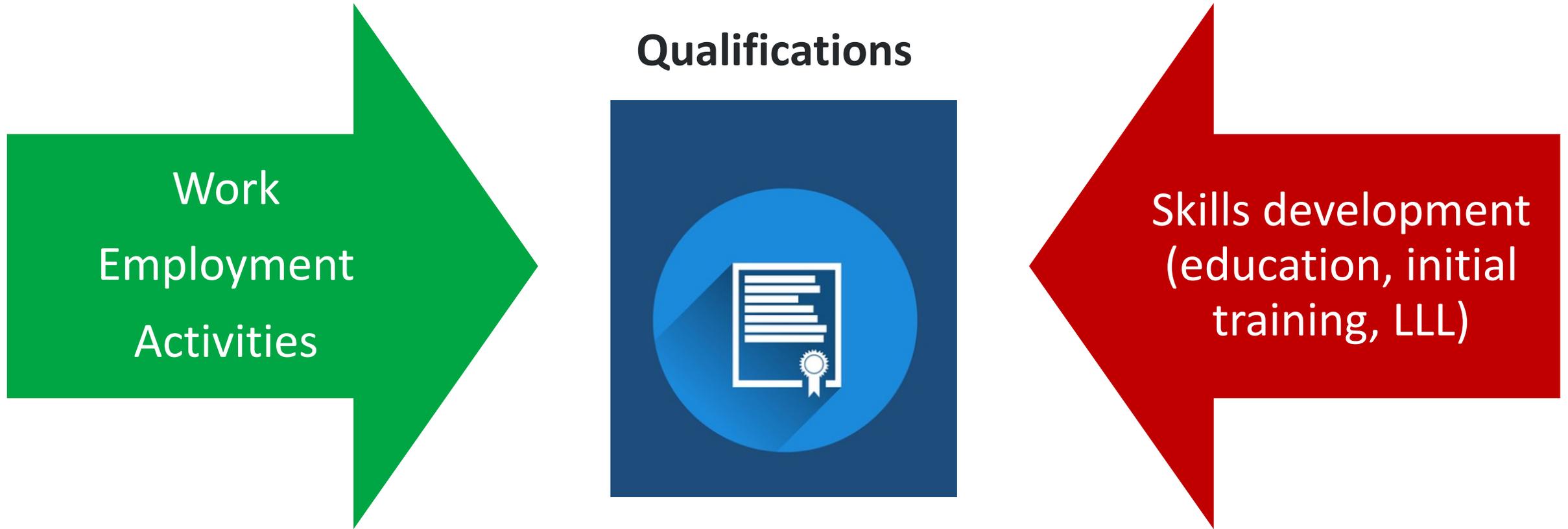
Quality assurance – as part of a range of measures by governments and institutions – increases **transparency and should underpin trust in the relevance and quality of learning outcomes** (that is, learners' knowledge, skills, autonomy, and responsibility, as certified by qualifications).

QA at the system level

QA at the provider level

Such **trust in learning outcomes** is, in turn, based on **trust in the quality of the institutions and providers of education and training** at all levels and in all subsectors.

Qualifications: between the world of work and the world of education and training



Information on demand in labour market

Professional standards

Qualifications standards

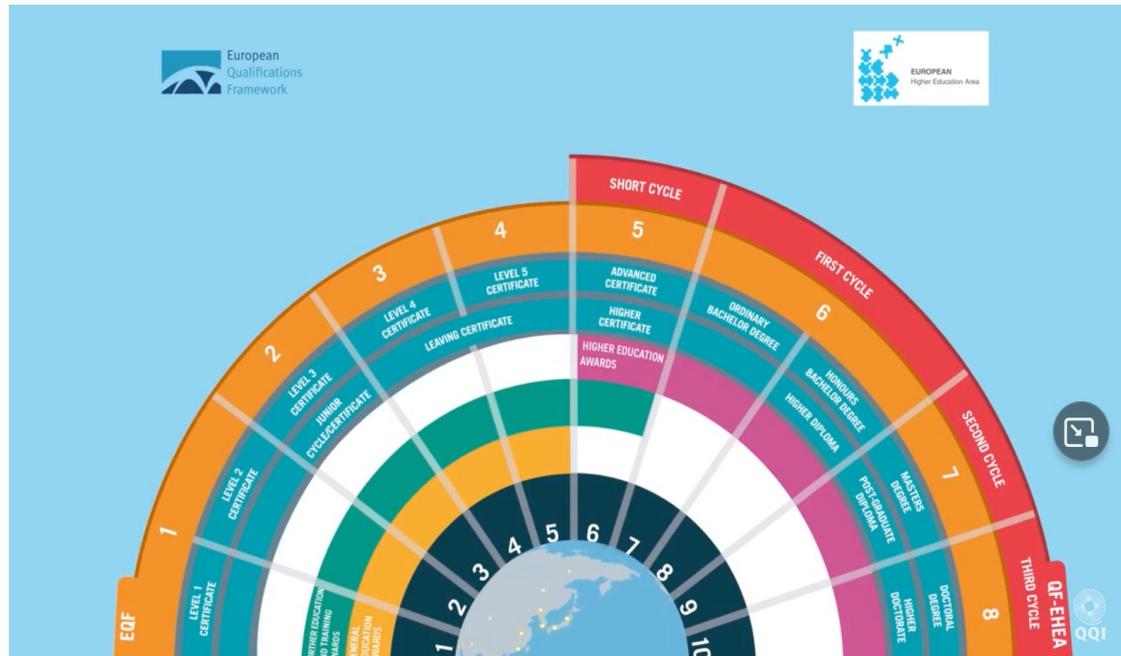
Develop Training Programmes

Delivery training

Assessment and certification

M&E - performance

Learning outcomes: central piece of NQFs



National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) help

- To make qualifications easier to understand and compare.
- They can also encourage countries to rethink and reform national policy and practice on education, training and lifelong learning.

Learning outcomes: a fundamental principle

- NQFs classify qualifications by level, based on learning outcomes - that is, what the holder of a certificate or diploma is expected to know, understand, and be able to do.
- The learning outcomes approach also ensures that education and training subsystems are open to one another.
- Thus, it allows people to move more easily between education and training institutions and sectors.
- Learning outcomes-based qualifications: essential for RPL

<https://youtu.be/qK15HlhDbo4>

Learning outcomes: GPS of qualifications system?

1. Structure

- As building blocks of qualifications policy
- As common currency that enhances transparency

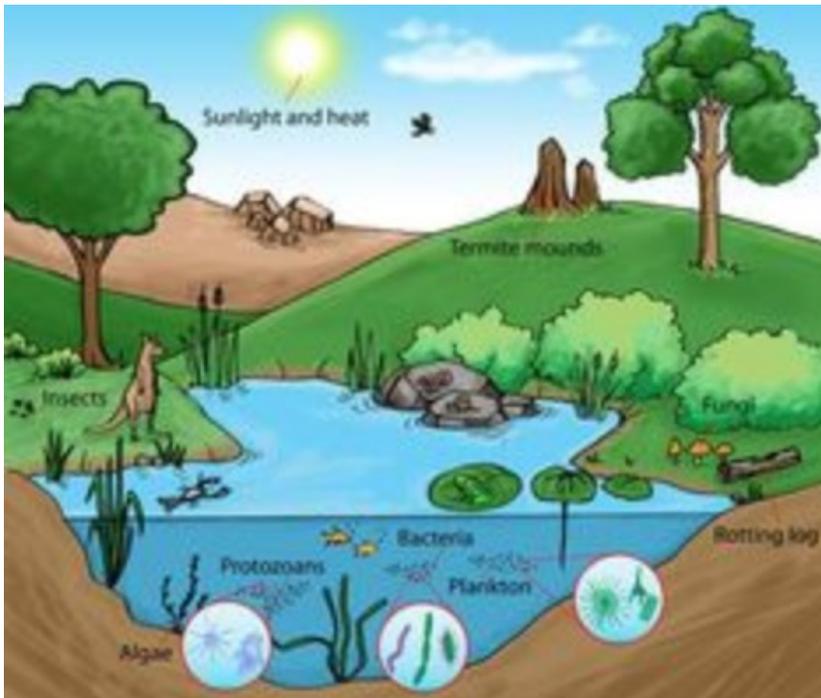
2. Guide for coherence

- Classification of qualifications in the NQF/ NQS
- Learning outcomes statements
- Teaching and learning (curriculum, modules)
- Assessment
- Certification

3. Quality assurance

- Continuous improvement
- Expected outcome
- Achieved outcome
- Feedback loop

Learning outcomes:
GPS of the
qualifications
system



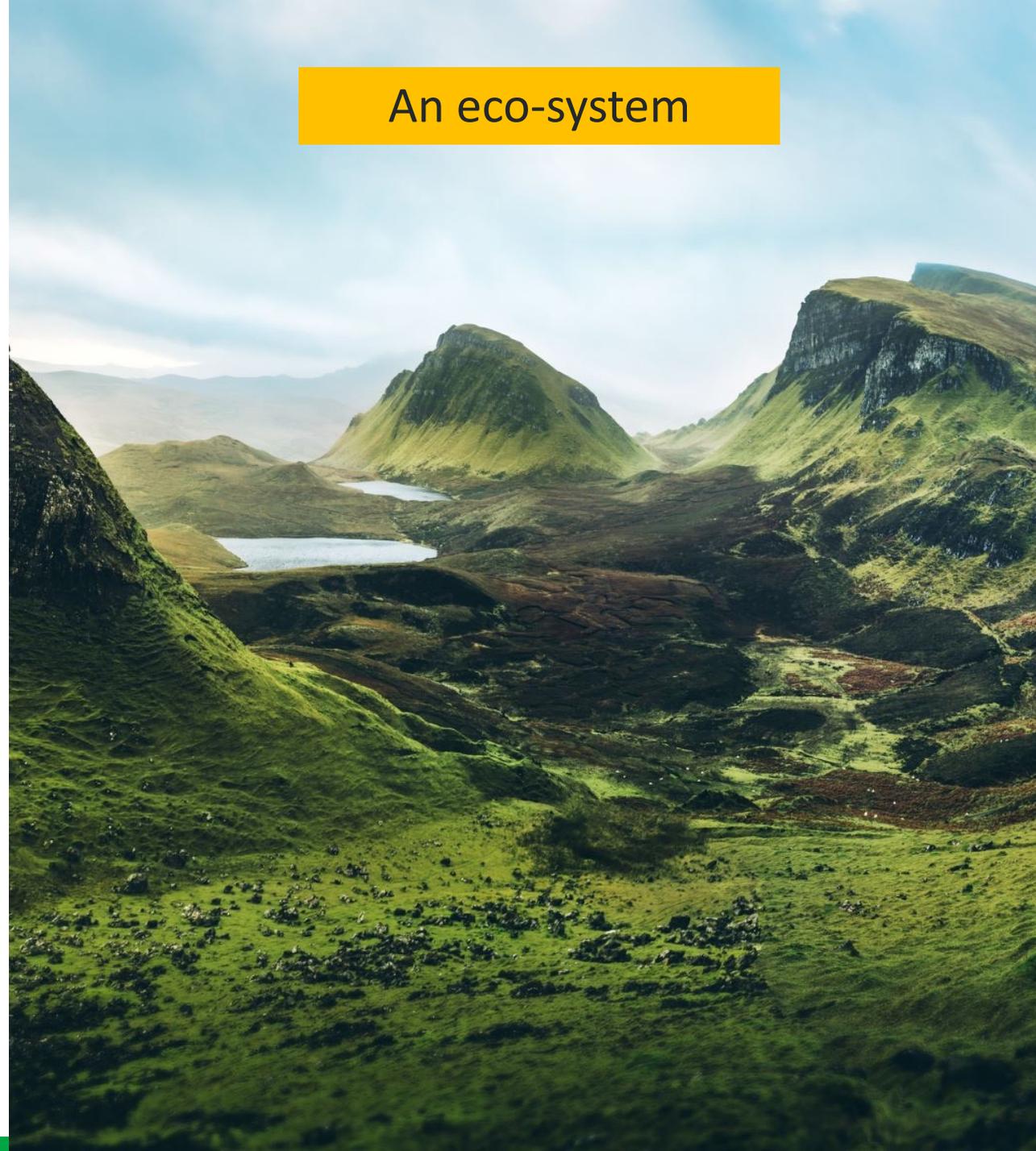
NQF: systemic view

- **NQF cannot function in isolation:
national, regional & international
linkages are key**

1. The systemic view of NQF



An eco-system

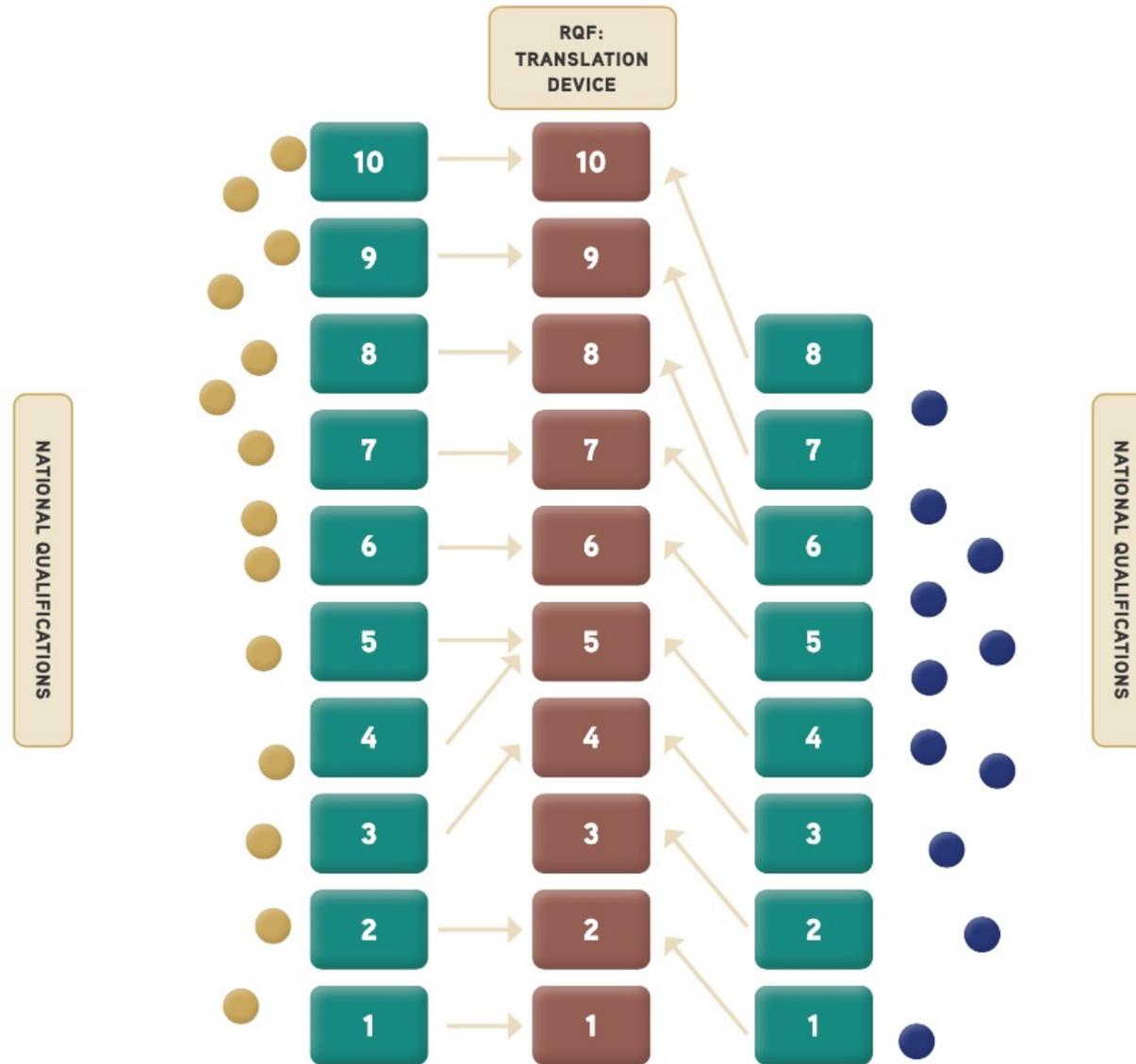


2. NQF linkages within a qualifications system

The strength of an NQF is derived by its linkages and strategies deployed.

- **National (and international) initiatives**, e.g., lifelong learning, facilitation of learning pathways, emerging skills and jobs, youth employment, digitalisation, technology and innovation, internationalisation of education, social inclusion (validation and recognition of all learning - formal, non-formal, informal), green economy and green skills...
- **Governance: strategies, role and functions, stakeholders, visibility**
- **Quality assurance arrangements:**
 - Quality assurance of qualifications (utilising qualification quality standards, policies, guidelines, stakeholders' involvement)
 - Quality assurance of providers and their programmes leading to a qualification (utilising quality standards, policies, guidelines)
- **Registers/databases of qualifications approved onto the NQF**

3. NQF - Regional Qualifications Frameworks

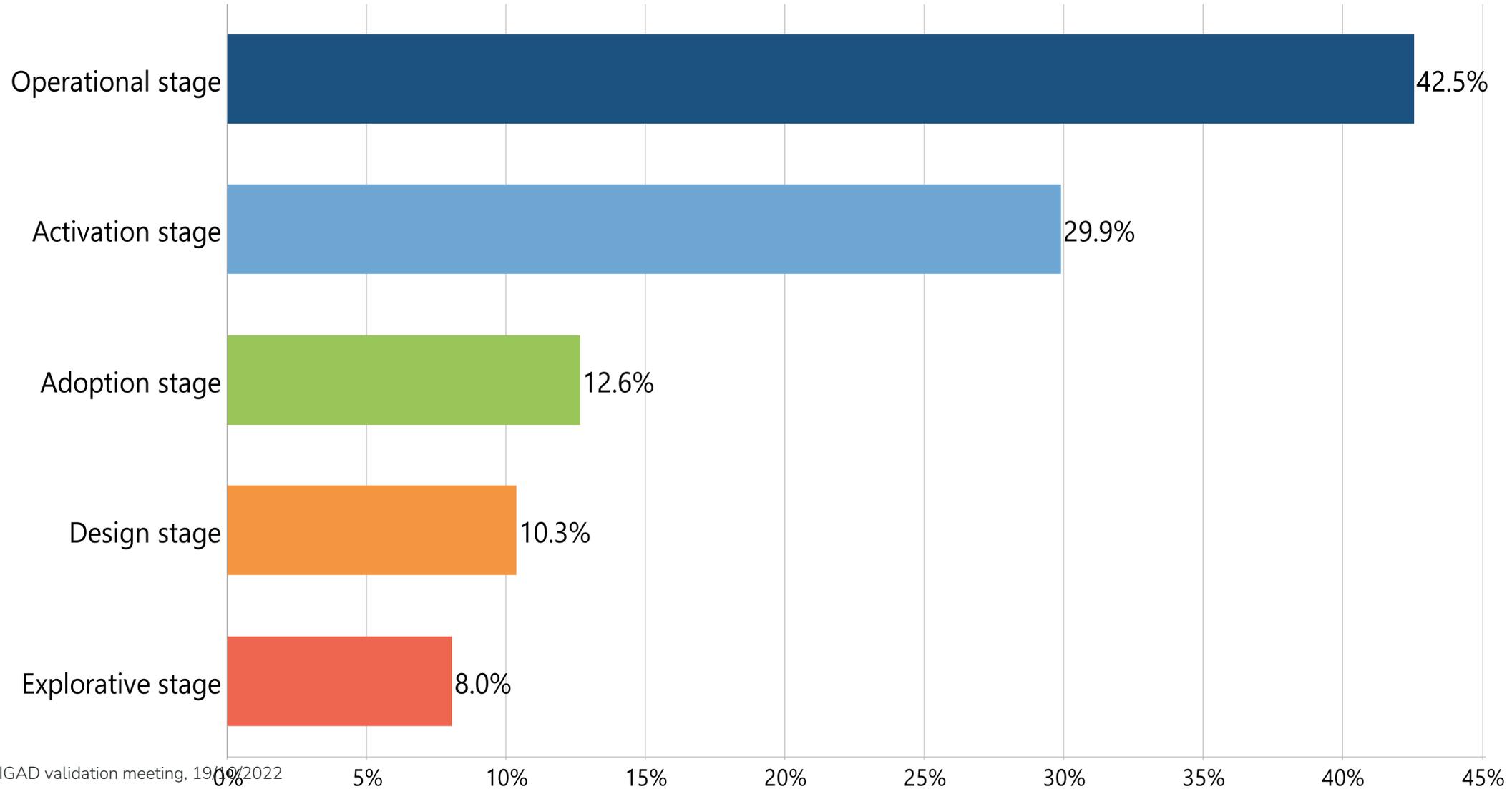


- Referencing to RQF:**
- Transparency
 - Comparability
 - Mobility
 - Trust

NQF trends in the world

Focus: Africa

Stages of the NQF (study: 87 countries)



RQF in the world: 15 initiatives (+ EQF)

RQF initiatives identified and investigated	
1. African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)	9. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa
2. Arab Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (AQF; ANQAHE Model)	10. Marco de cualificaciones Alianza del Pacífico (Pacific Alliance) (MCAP)
3. ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)	11. Marco de Cualificaciones para la Educación superior centroamericana (MCESCA)
4. CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF)	12. Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards/Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF)
5. Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement supérieur (CAMES) ³	13. Southern African Development Community (SADC) Qualifications Framework
6. ECOWAS Regional Qualifications Framework of West Africa	14. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Regional Qualifications Framework
7. East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE)	15. Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (TQF VUSSC)
8. Gulf Qualifications Framework (GQF)	

African trends

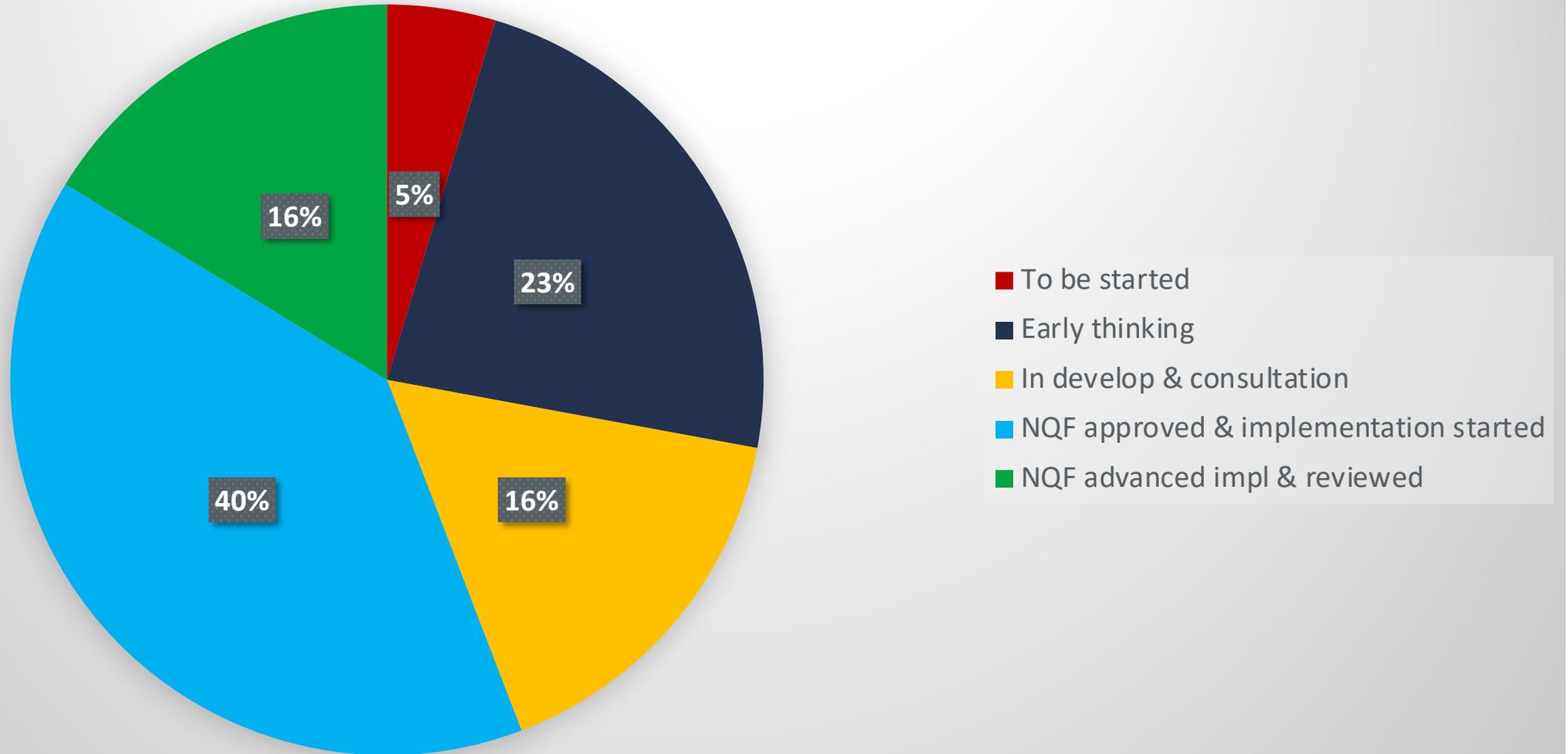
- Growing number of NQFs approved and implementation started, incl. credit systems, RPL, registers
- New RQFs in development – different models and scope
- **But! Need to monitor and evaluate status of implementation and outcomes**



NQF development and implementation phase	Countries
Start of NQF development — 2	Chad, Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan
NQF – early thinking — 8	Burkina Faso, Union of Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • São Tomé and Príncipe started step 1 — political commitment, basic analysis, dialogue • Guinea-Bissau has started : basic analysis, working group, roadmap
NQF under development and consultation — 8	Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malawi is developing the comprehensive NQF — draft concept discussed, legal act MAQA for approval • Mozambique: advanced, integrated/comprehensive consultation in the NQF; at type approval
Legal act of the NQF adopted, start of implementation * Grey-shaded countries: Sectoral NQFs under implementation (TVET/ES)	Egypt, Swaziland, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egypt approved the amendments to the NFQ-related legislation in 2021. • Rwanda approved the integrated NQF on Oct/2021
NQF at an advanced stage of implementation and review (7)	Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia

NQFs in Africa by stages: new dynamics

NQFs in Africa: by 5 stages of development and implementation (2022). Number: 43 countries



Angola: a new NQF / NQS is born

Presidential decrees of 23/07/2022

- Statute of the National Qualifications Institute: presidential decree N° 208/2022



- Legal base of the SNQ: presidential decree N° 210/2022
 - ✓ NQF
 - ✓ National Catalogue of Qualifications

Start
implementation – a
long road ahead

Trends: NQFs in Europe

EQF

Europe

Main trend:

EQF is the central hub linking all NQFs across Europe (38 countries) – an tangible achievement in a context of diversity of systems and voluntary (non-binding) cooperation

10 years of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

European Commission

What is the EQF and how does it work?

2008 **Launched**
The EQF is a common reference framework of eight levels based on learning outcomes.

2017 **Reviewed**

2018 **10th anniversary**

Framework of eight levels

The EQF covers all types and levels of qualifications, and serves as a translation device between the different National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) of participating countries.

What are the EQF's objectives?

The EQF aims to improve the transparency and comparability of people's qualifications.

It also aims to:

- modernise education and training systems,
- increase the employability, mobility and social integration of individuals,
- link all types of learning and support the validation of learning outcomes.

What are learning outcomes?

- Learning outcomes express what a person is expected to know, understand and is able to do.
- They describe the content of qualifications, clarifying what is expected from a learner.
- They support progression in learning, making it possible to compare and combine learning from different contexts (formal, non-formal or informal).

How was the EQF developed?

Stakeholders from the world of education/training, employment and civil society are involved in the development and implementation of the EQF and of NQFs.

All qualifications with an EQF level are underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms to ensure their content and level can be trusted.

Which countries participate in the EQF?

39 countries currently participate in the EQF.

34 have already related their own NQFs to the EQF.

Social Europe

What is the EQF?

- A **translation grid** for qualifications across countries
- Defined in terms of **learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills, responsibility & autonomy)
- 8-Level reference framework, covering **all types and all levels of qualifications**



EQF Objectives



Transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications

Employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners

Linking formal, non-formal and informal learning

Supporting the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings

Contributing to modernising education and training systems

Contribution of the EQF



CEDEFOP

National Qualifications frameworks (NQFs) online tool

Introduction Overview Countries Frameworks comparison Qualifications comparison About Contact

Welcome

Frameworks help make qualifications easier to understand and compare. They can also encourage countries to rethink and reform national policy and practice on skills, qualifications and lifelong learning. By offering information on qualifications through their databases and on certificates, diplomas and supplements, they are extending their outreach to stakeholders and the wider public, ultimately also beyond their borders.

National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) classify qualifications by level, based on [learning outcomes](#). This classification reflects the content and profile of qualifications - that is, what the holder of a certificate or diploma is expected to know, understand, and be able to do. The learning outcomes approach also ensures that education and training sub-systems are open to one another. Thus, it allows people to move more easily between education and training institutions and sectors.

The main catalyst for the development of comprehensive national qualification frameworks in Europe has been the [European qualifications framework for lifelong learning \(EQF\)](#). 38 countries committed to the EQF are developing or implementing national qualifications frameworks mostly covering all levels and types of qualifications: the 27 Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey.

The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe also reflects the [Bologna process](#) and the agreement to implement qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA). All countries implementing the EQF are participating in this process.

Overall progress by 2022 ~

Overview of national qualifications frameworks in Europe

European **inventory** on national qualifications frameworks across **38 countries**

Compare national qualification frameworks

Compare national qualifications levels to the **EQF**

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An Agency of the European Union

Use the table and the filters below to gain an overview of NQF developments in Europe. It is possible to compare countries based on reporting year, stage of development and whether the NQF has been linked to EQF.

NQF linked to EQF: - Any - Reporting year: 2020 Apply

COUNTRY	REPORTING YEAR	SCOPE OF THE FRAMEWORK	NUMBER OF LEVELS	LEVEL DESCRIPTORS	LEGAL BASIS/STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	NQF LINKED TO EQF	NQF/EQF WEBSITE	QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER/DATABASE
Albania	2020	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and lifelong learning qualifications for adults and people undertaking specialised courses for professional development.	Eight	knowledge, skills, wider competences	NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018) (in Albanian) Activating stage		Website	VET register
Austria	2020	Designed as a comprehensive NQF; currently includes qualifications awarded in formal education and training (higher education and VET qualifications); qualifications under the responsibility of other ministries such as defence and health. First non-formal/non-regulated qualifications included.	Eight	knowledge, skills, competence	Federal Law 14/2016 on the NQF (in German) Operational stage	2012	Website	Qualifications register
Belgium-DE	2020	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight		Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German)			
Belgium-FL	2020	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and from the professional qualifications system.	Eight	knowledge / skills, context / autonomy, responsibility	Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch) Operational stage	2011, 2014 update	Website	Qualifications database
Belgium-FR	2020	Designed as a comprehensive framework; including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system. It currently includes vocational and secondary general education qualifications and qualifications awarded through validation at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5, as well as HE qualifications at levels 6 and 7.	Eight	knowledge / skills, context / autonomy / responsibility	Decree on cooperation agreement between the three francophone governments on the creation and management of CFC (2015) (in French) Activating stage	2013	Website	Qualifications register
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2020	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong	Eight	knowledge, skills,	Decision of the CoM on the adoption of		Website	

Other key Milestones - reached

Objective	Achievement	Countries
EQF levels on qualifications documents (upon referencing to EQF)	33 countries on diplomas, certificates (out of 36 referenced countries)	BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, CY, FI, LT, LV, MT, NL, HU, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE
EQF levels on qualifications databases	23 countries	
Transparency of information on NQF: inclusion in the tool to compare NQFs / EQF	30 countries	
Transparency of information on NQF: connecton of national registers to publication of qualifications in Europass platform	18 countries	BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, HU, PL, PT, SI, SE

- Technical comparison with NQFs of:
 - Australia
 - New Zealand
 - Hong-Kong

- **New approach to comparison:**

- Basis: Article 13 of the EQF Recommendation 2017
- Pilot phase (2021-2022): Ukraine (almost completed), Cape Verde (preparatory steps), SADCQF (agreed with SADC Secretariat)
- After analysis of lessons from pilot phase: more countries and RQFs

Article 13

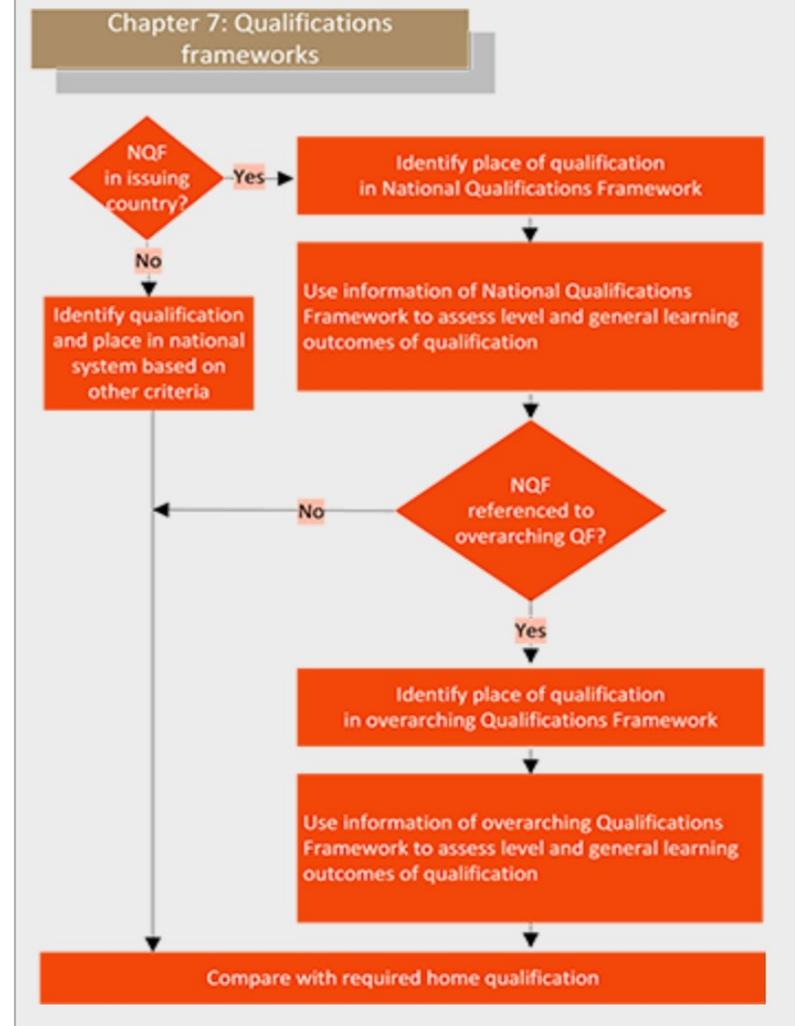
Explore possibilities for the development and application of criteria and procedures to enable, in accordance with international agreements, the comparison of third countries' national and regional qualifications frameworks with the EQF

Use of information on NQF-EQF to facilitate recognition of qualifications

- EAR Manual: <http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/>
- This manual has been developed as part of the European Area of Recognition Project (EAR).
- It contains standards and guidelines on all aspects of the recognition of foreign qualifications and aims to provide the credential evaluators from the European National Information Centres network and National Academic Recognition and Information Centres network (www.enic-naric.net) with a practical tool to assist them in their daily recognition work.



FLOWCHART



Lessons for IGAD

Conclusions

- NQFs cannot operate and reach their objectives if not part of a broader ecosystem, the qualifications system. NQFs are intrinsically linked to their quality assurance arrangements and a range of associated structures (e.g. registers) and strategies (e.g. RPL), and need to be part of a coherent response within the system.
- Qualifications frameworks should have at their core:
 - Accessibility for all citizens
 - Formal recognition regardless of how or where the learning was gained; formal, nonformal and informal learning
 - Transparency of learning outcomes as well as of quality assurance arrangements
 - Relevance to the needs of the country and citizens; not just limited to labour needs but relevant to the broader social and community needs, innovation and response to new demands
 - Quality assurance arrangements so that qualifications are recognised and accepted as an accurate reflection of what an individual knows, understands and can do.

Summing-up on NQFs

1. Comprehensive and inclusive NQFs are becoming genuine maps for lifelong and life-wide learning and guidance
2. NQFs are emerging as tools for trust in qualifications
3. NQFs cannot not work in isolation, but as part of the overall eco-system of education-training-qualifications
4. NQFs are becoming social systems – governance with partnerships, stakeholders
5. NQFs cannot be “documents”; but actions for impact and benefits for the People
6. NQFs must be understood, communicated to generate buy-in, use and visibility
7. NQFs need resources, tools and technical competence
8. NQFs are evolving and adapting to new demands, new types of qualifications
9. NQFs are speaking with each other globally, regionally
10. NQFs are “not quick fixes” (NQF) for all problems

Summing-up on RQF

- Contextualise to region's integration and development strategy and priorities
- RQF is a catalyst for development of NQFs. And complements (add value) national policies and systems. Does not supersede / replace NQFs and NQS. Does not impose one single model.
- RQF – invest in training, capacity and institutional development (national and regional levels) to ensure sustainability and quality.
- Communicate, document, disseminate – use the power of all digital tools and means
- Create a robust methodological and knowledge basis – and disseminate it!
- Facilitate synergy with other relevant regional policies (free trade, free movement, migration, industrialisation...) so that RQF demonstrates its value in wider terms!
- Network and link with other RQFs (Africa and beyond)
- Learn and be open to change!
- Nurture the RQF's culture and identity!

Thank you

IGADQF is about to become a reality

Eduarda Castel-Branco

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Session 14.30-15.00

ACQF

**Africa needs skills
and qualifications**

What is the AfCFTA?

How many countries have ratified?

20?

28?

36?

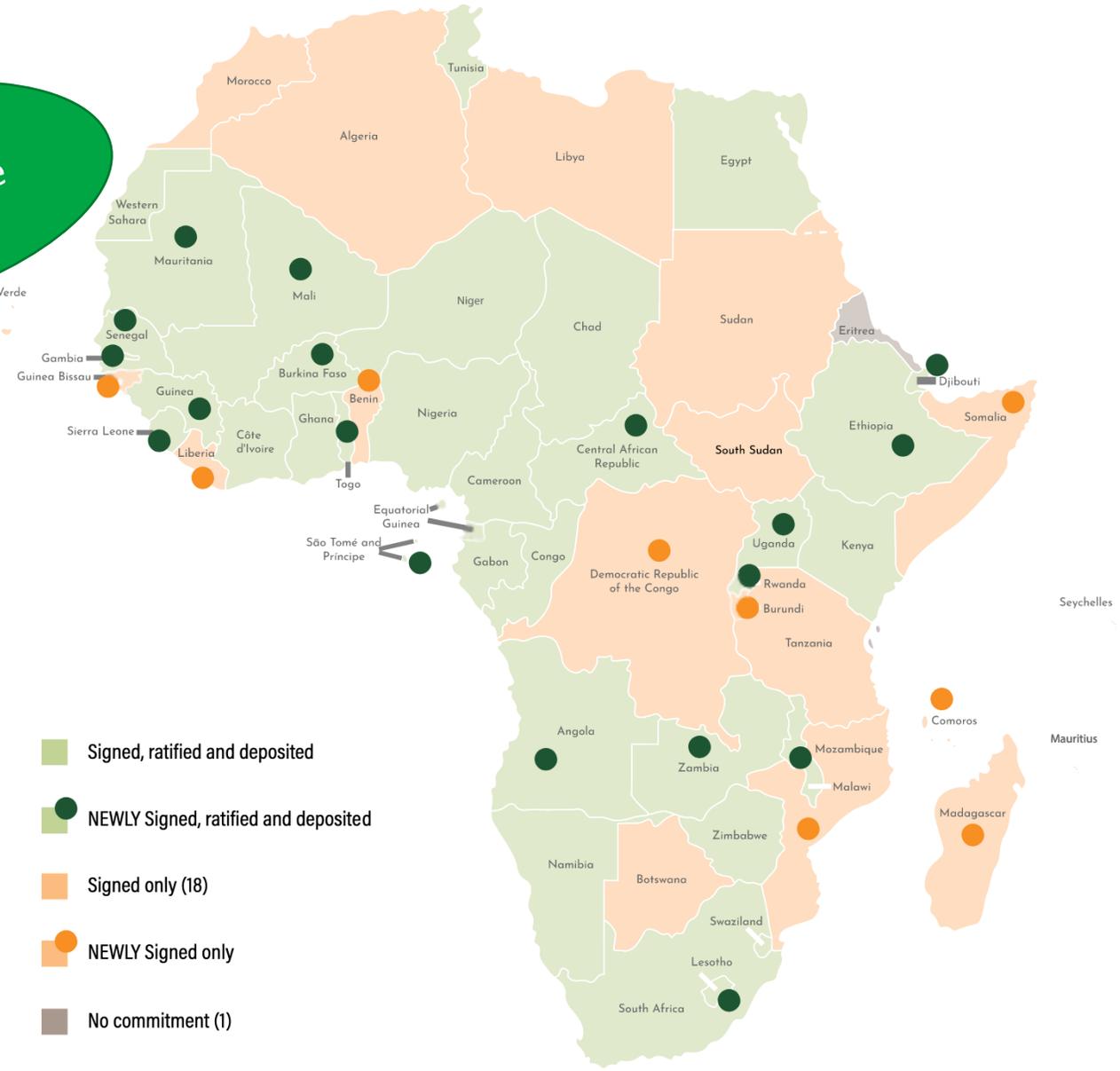
43?



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



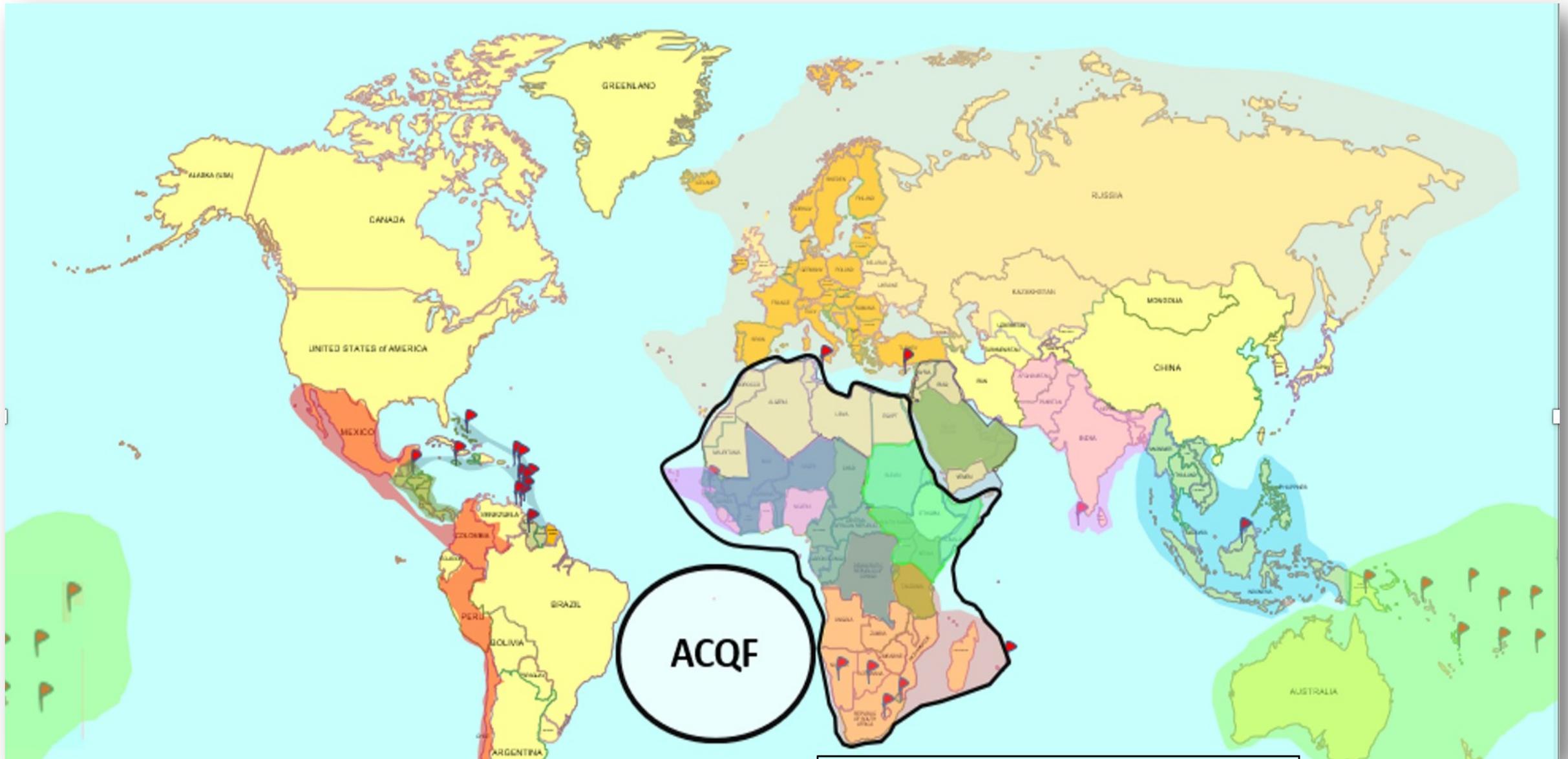
ACQF AfCFTA sets new demands on skills and qualifications

- 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)

A very large RQF

- 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
-



Building the ACQF

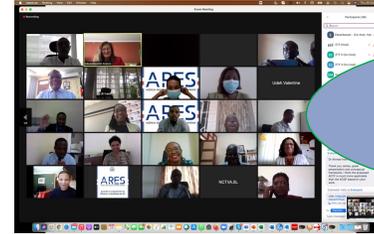
- AUC support (political)
- ACQF Advisory Group: created and involved from 1st launch workshop in 09/2019 Addis
- ACQF Team : practical NQF expertise; multi-lingual; all regions
- Networking: NQF authorities and departments; relevant regional associations; Addis convention;
- International / EU linkages and networking
- Process combined technical-analytical component with working and networking with people
- Learning and capacity development
- “Quick wins”

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 (2020-2022)

Analysis, technical work



People, networking

Policy document and action plan

Training programmes

ACQF-AfCFTA study

Support to countries

10 Guidelines and 10 Training Modules

Working with RECs (SADC)

Feasibility study

Networking with AQVN

Scenarios of ACQF

Peer Learning Webinars

ACQF Mapping Study

ACQF community - network

Outputs of ACQF development project (2020-2022)

- **ACQF Policy Document**
- **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

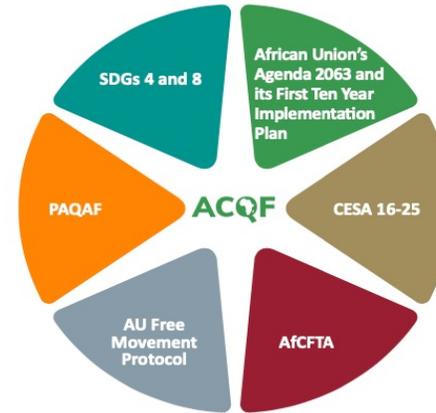


ACQF: underpinnings, purposes, principles

PURPOSES OF ACQF

- 1 Enhance** → Enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications of all types and levels, support people's lifelong learning outcomes.
- 2 Facilitate** → Facilitate validation of learning, recognition of skills, diplomas and certificates and mobility of learners and workers
- 3 Cooperate** → Work in cooperation and complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks and support African continental integration and creation of African common space of trusted qualifications.
- 4 Promote** → Promote cooperation and referencing between qualifications frameworks (national, regional) in Africa and worldwide.

UNDERPINNINGS



PRINCIPLES

Inclusiveness:
all levels and types of qualifications, all modes of lifelong learning

Innovation:
future-proof, new demands - emerging skills, green skills, transversal skills

Openness:
to participation of all stakeholders, good practice, lessons learned (African, global)



**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

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

This project is co-funded by the European Union and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

ACQF African Continental Qualifications Framework

African Union

THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

german cooperation

GIZ

ETF European Training Foundation

**AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF):
CREATING MUTUAL TRUST. A SNAPSHOT**

WHAT IS THE ACQF

an overarching referencing qualifications framework of continental scope to deliver on the objectives of ...

- enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications
- mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for lifelong learning in Africa
- common reference framework – translation device between qualifications and their levels

ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework

The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is...

- Connecting national qualifications frameworks and systems and creating mutual trust between countries
- A website rich in information for qualifications institutions and stakeholders
- A continental mapping study collection

10 ACQF Guidelines and 10 Training Modules
10 ACQF Guidelines: learning outcomes, level descriptors, referencing to ACQF, validation of learning, registers of qualifications, monitoring and evaluation of NQF, innovation and technology, communication and outreach and a systemic view on NQF.

- Snapshots on national and regional qualifications frameworks in Africa
- 12 thematic briefs for different users
- 15 peer learning webinars: experience-sharing among stakeholders of African qualifications frameworks and systems
- Two training weeks and a pool of trained African experts

- 5 peer learning webinars with stakeholders and experts of AQVN
- Support to countries and regions developing their qualifications frameworks and systems
- First continental school curriculum mapping study – in partnership with African Curriculum Association (ACA)

Discovering and supporting RPL
And a range of activities going forward supporting countries, regions and the continent.
Know more and use the ACQF website
<https://acqf.africa/>

African Union

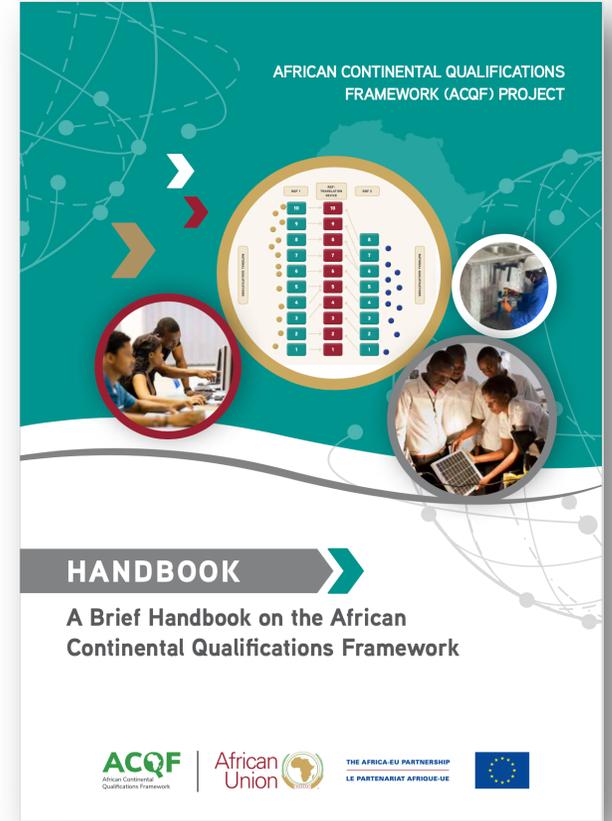
THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
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german cooperation

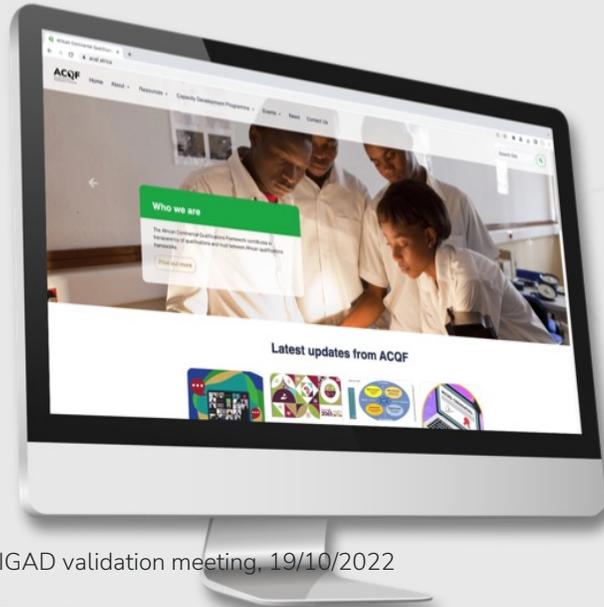
GIZ

ETF European Training Foundation

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.

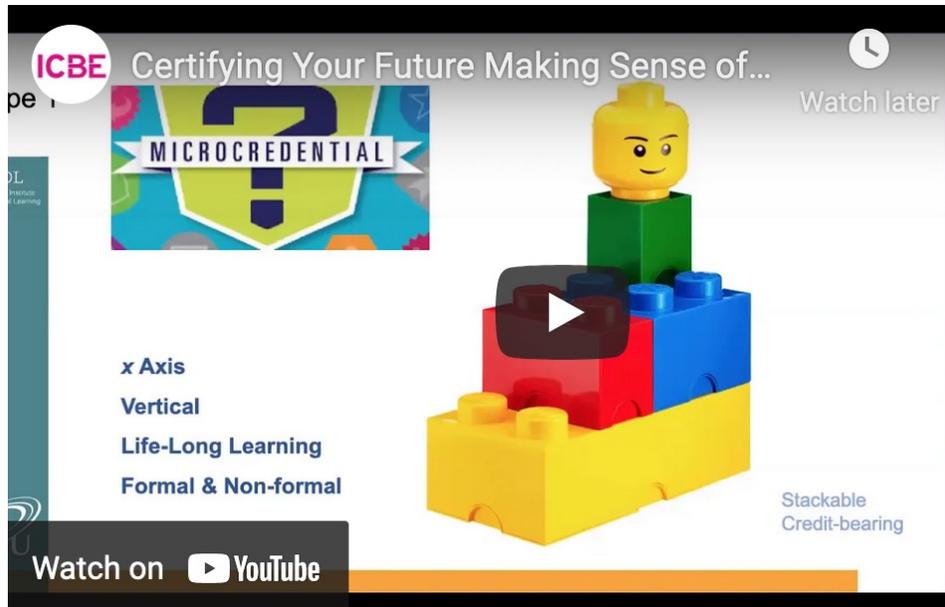


Want to know more about ACQF?

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)

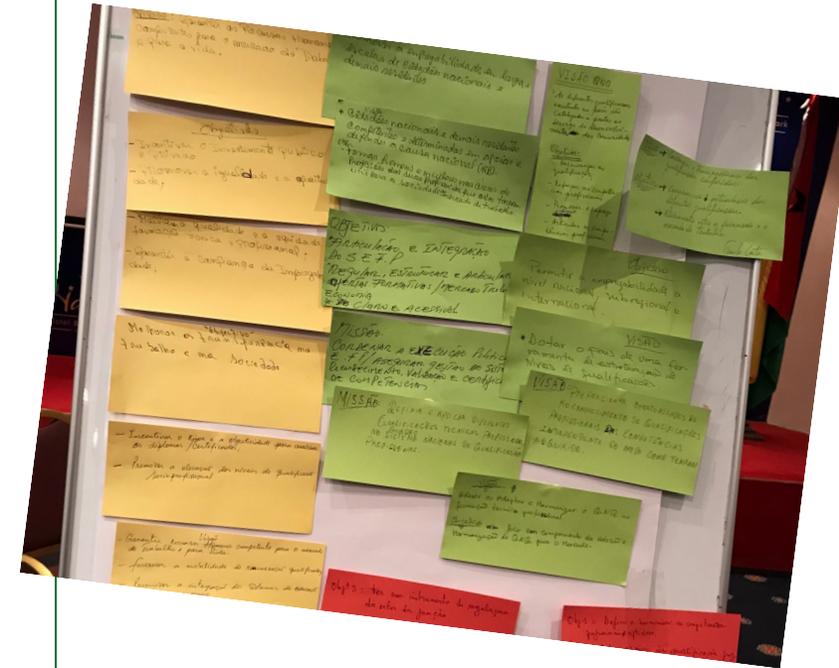


[Access the video](#)

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