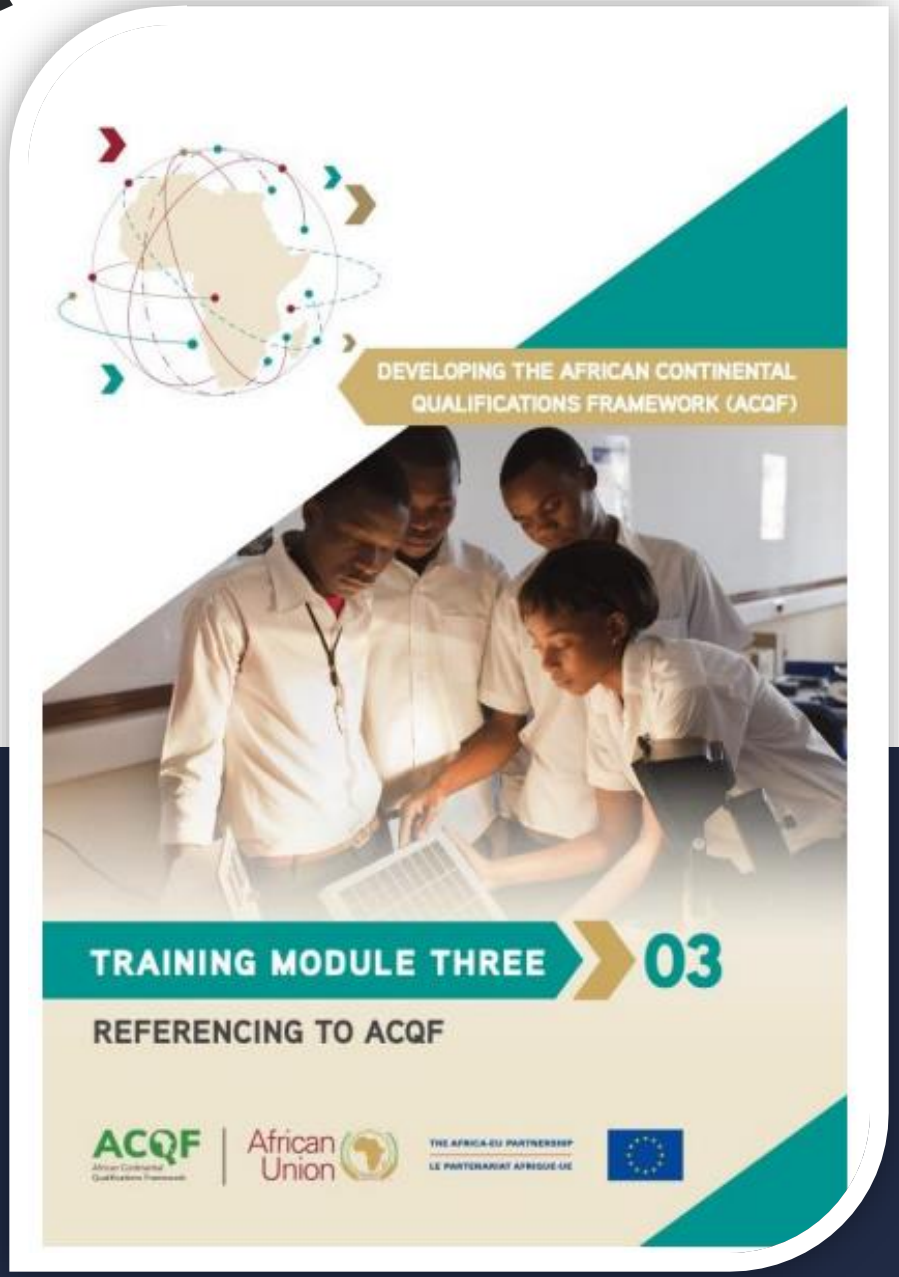
ACQF



ACQF
African Continental
Qualifications Framework

Day 4

Referencing NQF-ACQF

29/02/2024

Speaker: E. Castel-Branco

Consultation week:

"Co-construction of the ecosystem NQF-RPL-CATS"

Agenda day 4 (29 Feb 2024)

- 09.30-12.00: RPL Policy Document – co-designing the annotated outline
- 12.00-13.00: Referencing NQF to ACQF
- 13.00-13.50: Lunch break
- 13.50-14.50: Governance, stakeholders map
- 14.50-15.50: Monitoring and evaluation
- 15.50-16.50: Quality assurance of NQF-RPL-CATS
- Wrap-up.

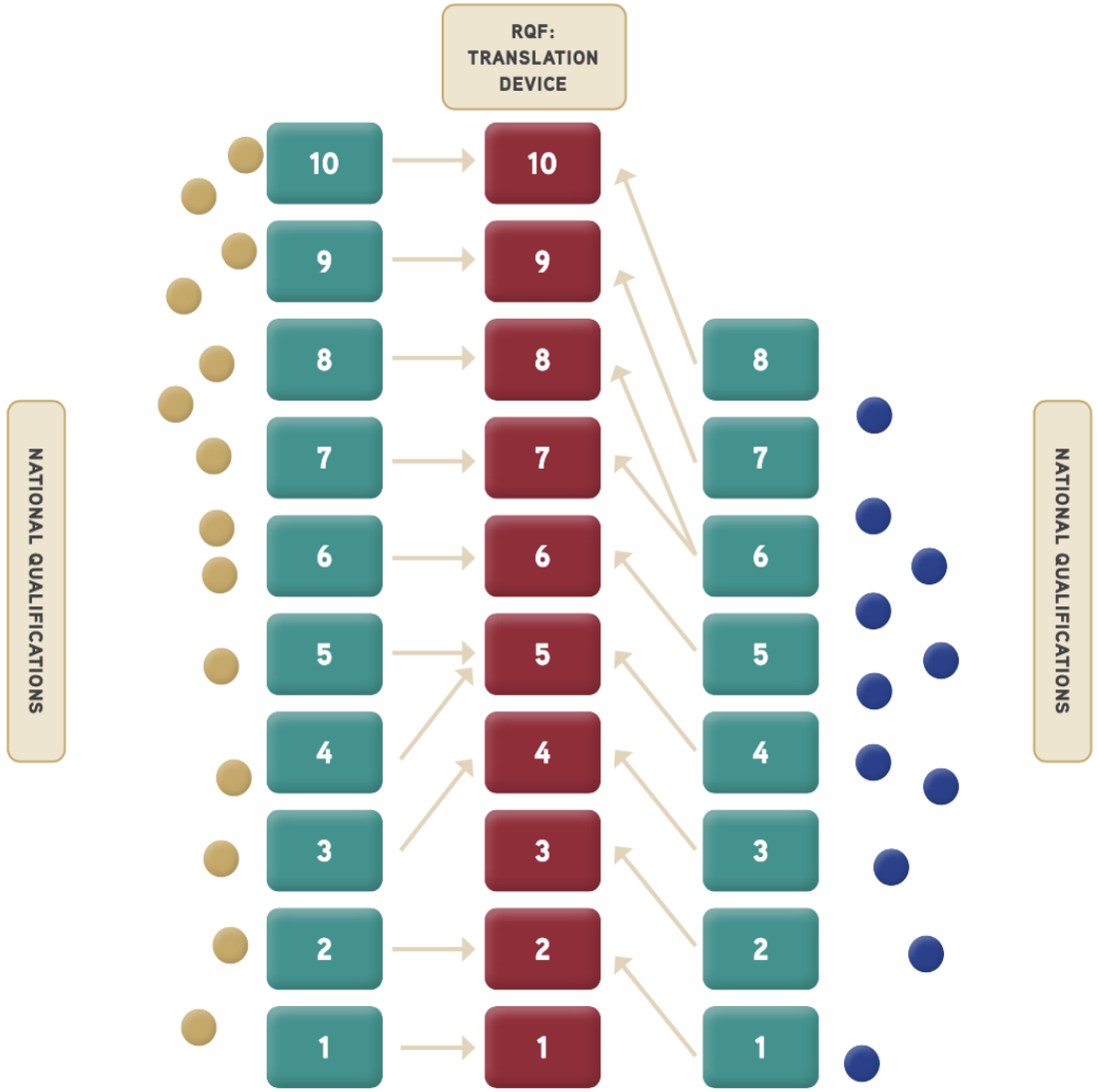
Introduction

This session elaborates on referencing of NQFs and systems to the ACQF as a core function of the ACQF as meta-QF for Africa.

To learn more:

- ✓ **ACQF Training Module 3**

At: https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english



CJ

Key words on “referencing” NQF-ACQF

Compare

Agreed criteria

Agreed procedures

Roadmap

National referencing team

NQF in place

Qualifications

Learning outcomes

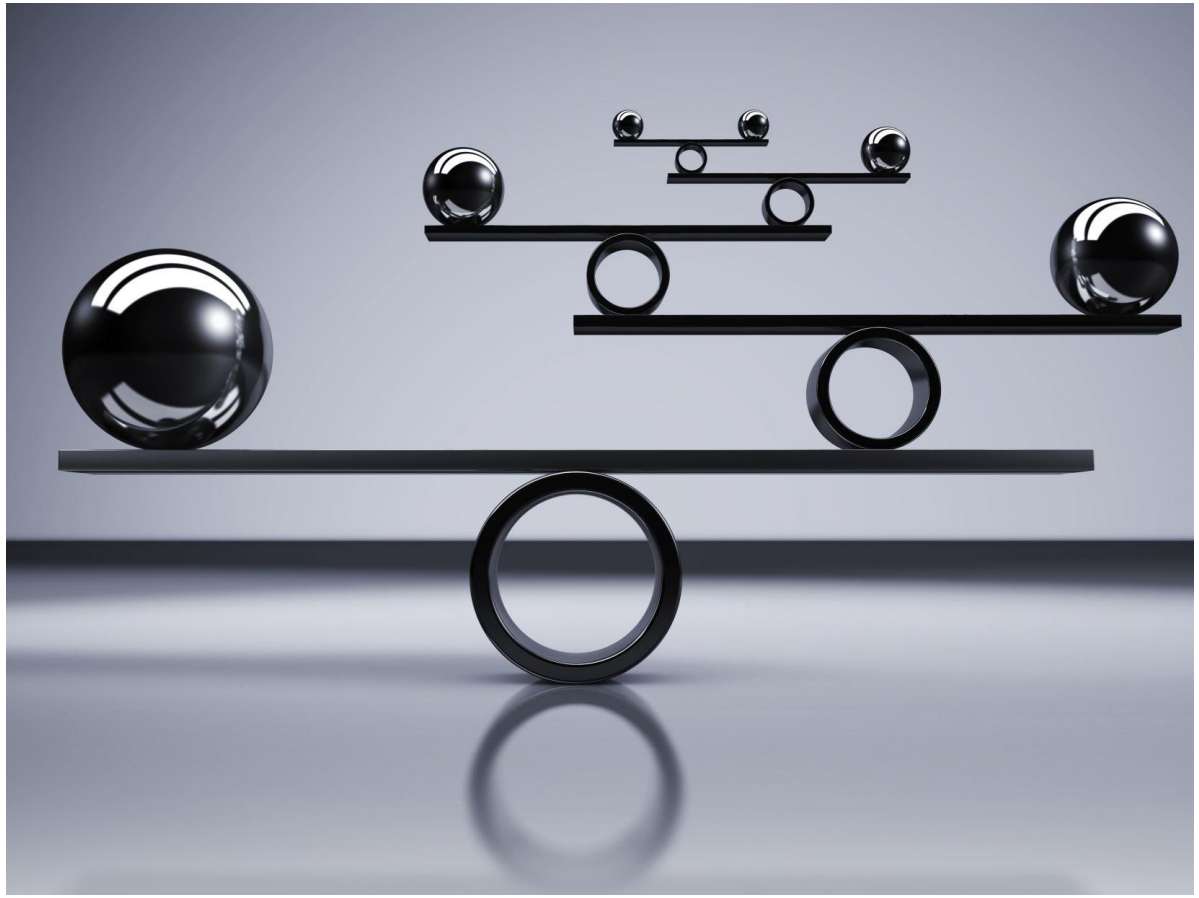
Level descriptors

Quality assurance

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Compare qualifications and qualifications frameworks

- **Key** for the expected easier recognition and portability (intra-Africa & Africa-Rest of the world).
- **Key** for enhanced information-sharing on qualifications
- **Key** for learners' mobility
- **Key** for implementation of Addis and Global Recognition Conventions
- Benchmarking, self-assessment, policy learning – NQF is always in evolution



Connect and create mutual trust

NQFs are above all about **people**'s skills, knowledge, qualifications – in the national and international contexts.

Connect, link - to better understand each other, support development and generate mutual trust – the essence of a policy instrument **such as ACQF in the context of the African continent** and in relations with other parts of the world.

The process of referencing NQFs to ACQF is one of the main functions and tools to support this goal! It is **about mutual understanding, transparency, comparability.**

The referencing approach elaborated by the ACQF project is based on international practice and instruments – but is streamlined, simplified.

ACQF

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 / emerging sectors and skills
- Capacity development
- Networking and cooperation
- Analysis, monitoring and evaluation

ACQF

Referencing criteria

EQF	ASEAN QRF	SADCQF	ACQF
10 criteria	11 criteria	10 criteria	**4 main criteria** + 1 block steps

Similar, comparable

ACQF focuses:

- Level descriptors
- Learning outcomes
- Transparency - inclusion qualifications in NQF and **register**
- Quality assurance

Guideline and TM 3: main topics – to help your referencing process

Conceptual and technical basis of referencing	Referencing model for ACQF referencing	Annexes
• Definitions, objectives, benefits • Referencing facilitates portability, recognition • Post-referencing: ACQF levels on new qualifications documents, registers	• Criteria • Report • Workflow	• Draft ToRs for national referencing team • Self-assessment tool: 4 criteria and guidance

ACQF

Self-assessment tool

- Firstly conceived in 2016 by ETF in the context of new countries joining EQF process. We elaborated this tool to help newcomer countries understand the essence of the referencing criteria.
- This tool can be contextualised, adjusted, simplified…and we did it in the context of ACQF-I.
- Self-assessment is now part of the referencing process proposed by ACQF – as the 1st step, managed by the country teams and supported by ACQF experts.

01

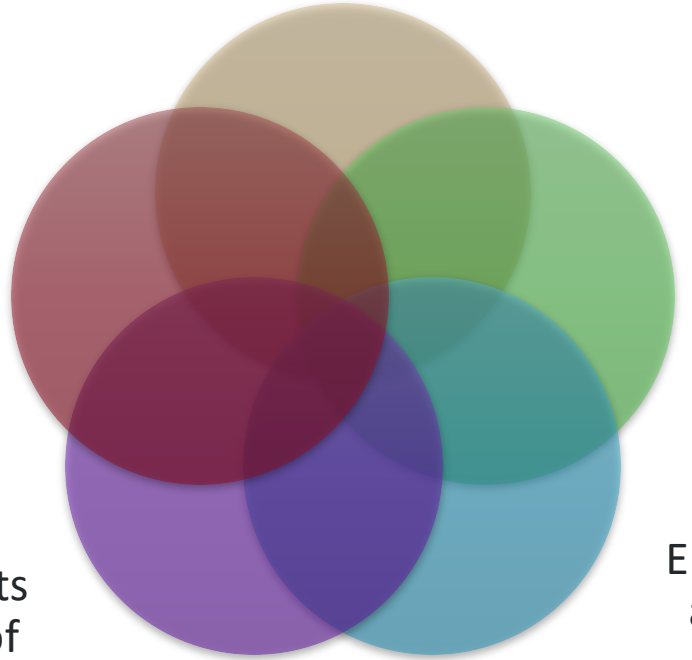
Referencing NQFs to RQF / ACQF: overview

Key elements of referencing

ACQF referencing model

Takes account and is compatible with experience of other relevant RQFs: EQF, ASEAN QRF, SADCQF and goes beyond

Proposes support and capacity development to national referencing teams



Streamlined process and focus on major criteria

Proposes elements of digitalisation of the process

Enhances the self-assessment and peer learning aspects

Referencing NQFs to RQF (ACQF)

- Referencing is a process aimed at comparing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the ACQF, thereby **building on national ownership**, **collaboration between relevant institutions and stakeholders**, provision of **evidence for transparency** of the analysis and reporting on all referencing criteria and procedures.
- At **national levels**, referencing contributes to self-assessment of the status of the national qualifications framework and system to identify areas for reform and improvement and to draw attention to the NQF among national policy institutions and stakeholders.
- 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**.

Referencing to the ACQF

- A process to compare national qualifications frameworks/ qualifications levels with those of the overarching qualifications framework (ACQF).
- Through a structured referencing process, based on agreed and common criteria and procedures, a national inter-institutional team (experts, stakeholders) defines and establishes the relationship/ link the NQF/ NQS levels and quality assurance with those of the ACQF.
- The purpose of referencing to the ACQF is to contribute to clarity and mutual trust between national (regional) qualifications frameworks and systems, to comparability of qualifications of different countries, to transparency through information-sharing on qualifications frameworks and systems.

Referencing: what it is and what it is not

It is…

- Comparison and linking national qualifications frameworks to the ACQF
- Feasible for countries with operational NQFs / whose NQFs are approved and in implementation / or at an advanced stage of development
- It is conceived, structured, and conducted as a gradual process that can take longer in certain countries than in others. Where countries are unable to meet all the referencing criteria immediately, they can engage in a phased referencing
- **It is of benefit for the countries, regions and the continent: its about supporting, encouraging, self-improvement**

It is not…

Referencing:

- Is not a competitive process or intended as ranking between countries
- Is not an exam to pass or fail. It is a process of mutual learning, comparison and transparency

ACQF

Referencing criteria

Referencing criteria: why and what for?

Apply = to all countries / regions

Essence of referencing

Guide national referencing teams

Comparability and transparency of process and outcomes of referencing

Global comparability of referencing

Quality assurance of referencing

Trust

4 main criteria – focused on essential elements of any NQF

Level descriptors

Learning outcomes approach

Qualifications in the NQF

Quality assurance

Criterion 1

Criterion 2

Criterion 3

Criterion 4

Key ACQF referencing criteria

Referencing is about demonstrating…

ACQF Referencing Criterion 1:

There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the NQF or NQS and the level descriptors of the ACQF.

ACQF Referencing Criterion 2:

The NQF or NQS are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for RPL (incl non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems.

ACQF Referencing Criterion 3:

There are transparent processes and procedures for **including qualifications** in the NQF or for describing the place of qualifications in the NQS and **information on qualifications** is accessible, trustworthy and verifiable in a national register(s) of qualifications.

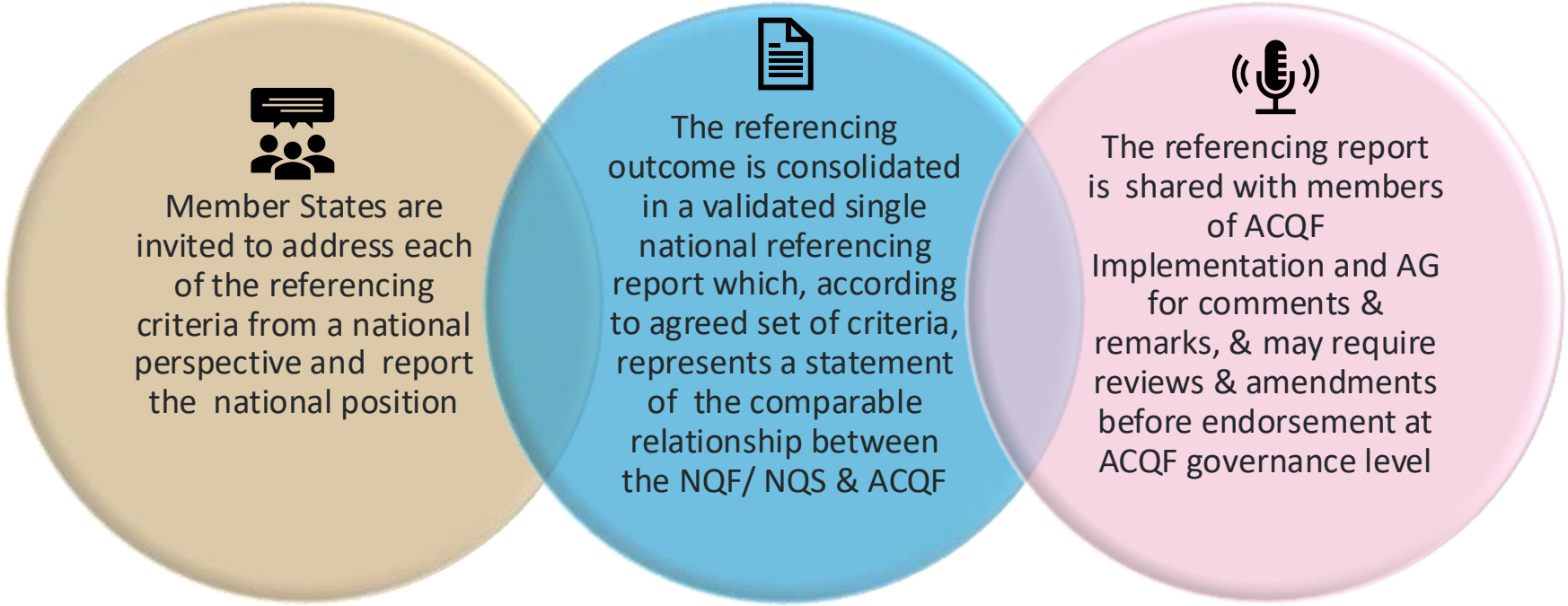
ACQF Referencing Criterion 4:

The national quality assurance **(QA) system** for education and training refers to the NQF or NQS and is consistent with the principles of QA of the ACQF.

ACQF Referencing - follow up (six items)

1. **Responsibilities and/or legal competence of relevant national bodies** involved in the ACQF referencing process are clearly defined and published by the relevant competent authorities.
2. The relevant national **quality assurance bodies state their agreement** with the referencing outcome and referencing report.
3. People from other countries who are experienced in the field of qualifications are involved in certain aspects and steps of the referencing process. Their role is advisory and supports transparency, improvement and credibility. The national referencing committee informs the ACQF implementation setting and AG on the involved **international experts.**
4. Competent national bodies certify the referencing to the ACQF and publish **one comprehensive, evidence-based referencing report,** which addresses all referencing criteria.
5. The **referencing outcome is published** by the participating country and the ACQF network upon its final validation by the ACQF implementation setting and AG, on the dedicated ACQF website.
6. Following the completion of referencing, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g.: certificates, diplomas, supplements) and qualifications registers issued by the competent national authorities will contain a clear reference to the **appropriate ACQF level**, based on national legislation and procedures.

Member states are invited…



Follow-up upon successful referencing:

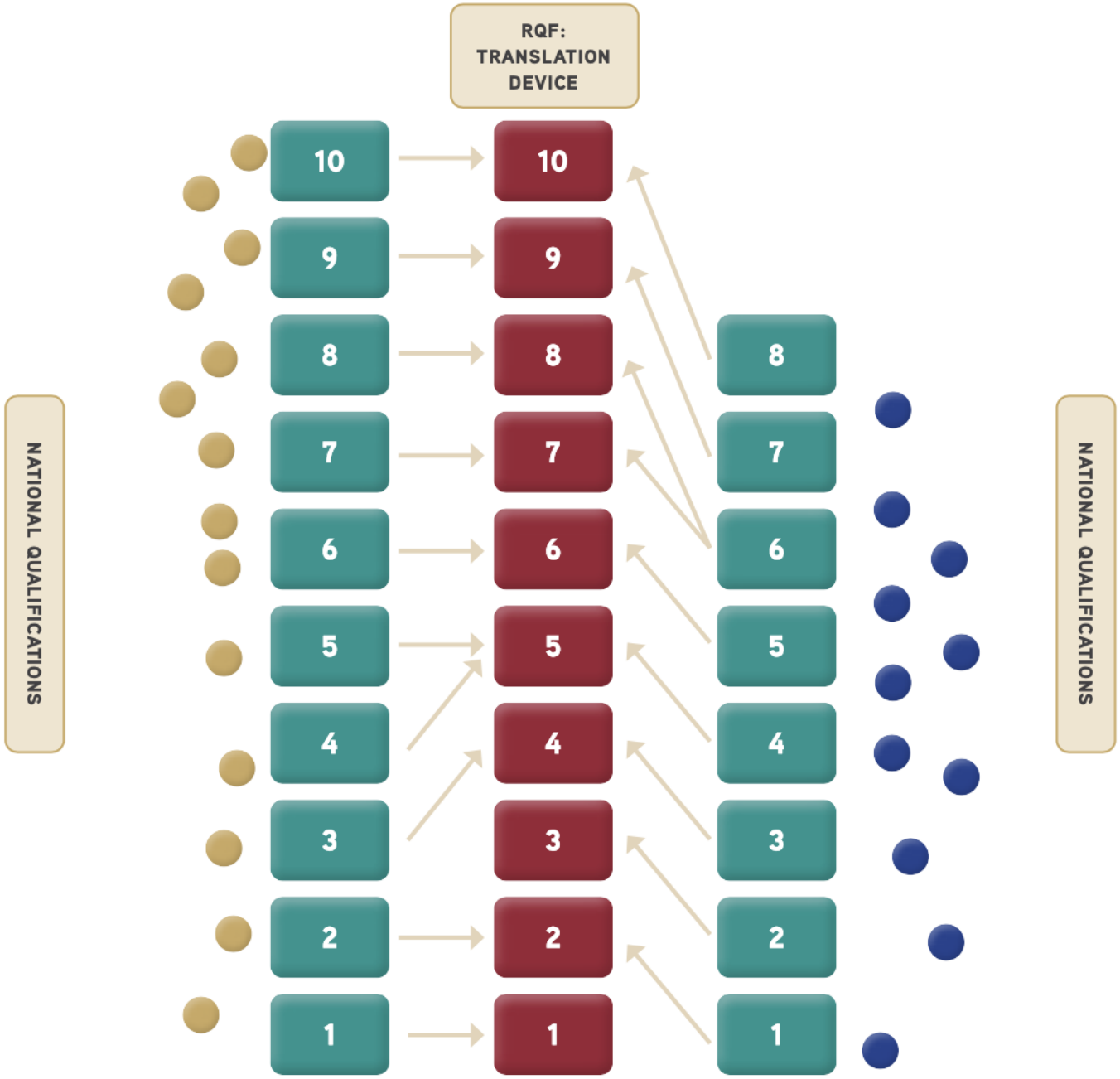
- **Publication of the validated and final referencing report on ACQF website**
- **Use of ACQF levels on qualifications documents and qualifications databases of the NQF referenced to ACQF.**

Linking NQFs through the overarching framework (RQF – ACQF)

- By means of NQFs

Or…

- NQS (if its features allow)



Referencing report

ECB

Referencing report structure defined by country's referencing team. However, few (4 suggested) minimum elements:

1

Description of whole education and training system:

- Including adult learning, literacy and basic skills, continuing training; pathways for learners; QA; main institutions & stakeholders & their roles in the system; main legislative acts, regulatory texts

2

The NQF:

- Goals, principles, legal & regulatory acts, levels & descriptors, governance, registers / databases of qualifications, Status of implementation, Main challenges & plans for further development

3

Country response to ACQF referencing criteria- sections elaborated by criterion:

- Each criterion addressed in a dedicated section. Examples and evidence by criterion – in the Annexes.
- Brief overview of referencing process, stakeholders' involvement, endorsement by national competence bodies, follow-up measures; builds (refers to) on chapters describing education & training & NQF; use of examples & references to sources contributes to robustness & credibility of argumentation in this chapter, & is recommended

4

Sources and annexes with relevant evidence

- Relevant legislative-regulatory framework, guidelines, standards, important databases / registers, descriptions of qualifications types and examples

To ensure report is easy to read & understand, it should be structured in comprehensive & integrated way, make use of cross-referencing between chapters, use examples, & user-friendly layout

Referencing process: ACQF proposal

- **Virtual meetings**
- **Digital referencing tool (ACQF prototype)**

Step 1: Self-assessment and decision

Step 2: Short training and roadmap

Step 3: Referencing report: state of play presentation

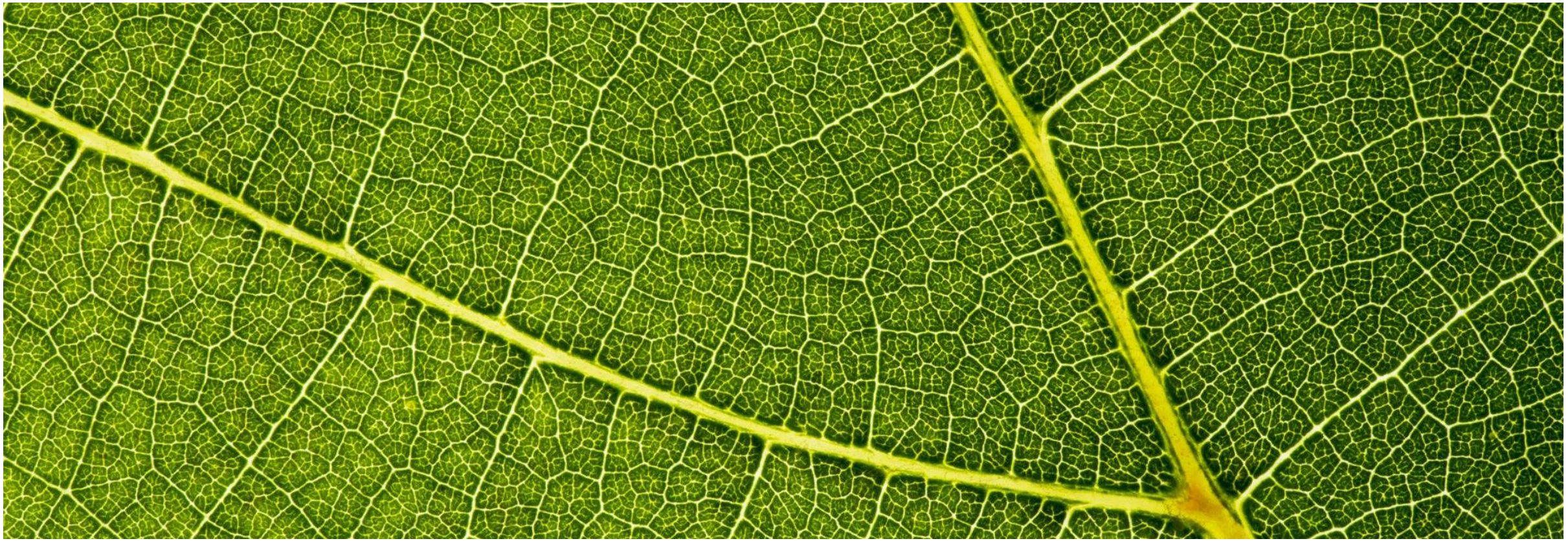
Step 4: Referencing report, advanced draft

Step 5: Referencing report, final draft. Sharing and Presentation.

Comments and finalisation.

ACQF

Referencing capacity and arrangements



Support to countries

Principles

ACQF referencing will be coordinated, managed and quality assured by the ACQF implementation setting and AG, according to **principles:**

- The ACQF is a public policy and instrument
- The ACQF is holistic, integral and unified
- Referencing between NQFs and the ACQF is based on:
  - trust and integrity of the process,
  - coordination, support and continuous improvement of the process and outcomes
  - establishing and maintaining the zone of trust by providing transparency to the process

The needed robustness of referencing should not be the result of overly complex and time-consuming activities, but of dialogue, peer review, analysis, self-assessment, and an evidence-based report.

Support will be offered to countries to plan and carry out efficient and streamlined referencing processes

The country is the major beneficiary.

Referencing will be encouraged and advanced through:

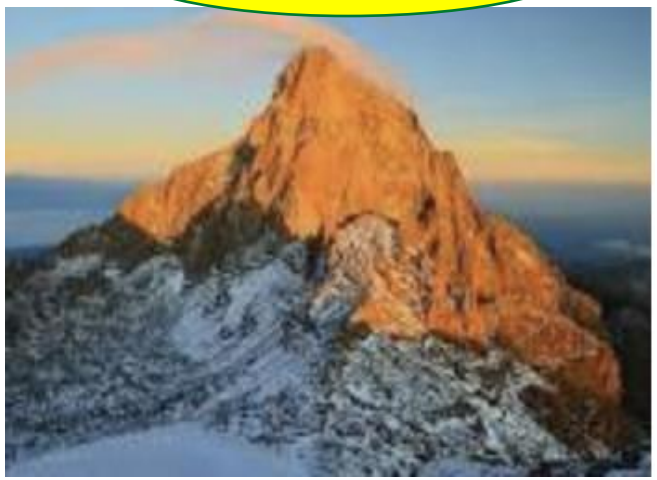
- Regular referencing briefs from the ACQF implementation team
- Full use of various platforms and communication methods
- ACQF Website https://acqf.africa/
- Digital tool to support the referencing process
- Good documentation to ease the coordination and monitoring process
- Dissemination of ACQF Guidelines and training modules
- Established principles, templates and digital tools
- Training sessions (mostly virtual) in relevant languages
- Peer-sharing and Coaching
- Online communication and e-meetings

02

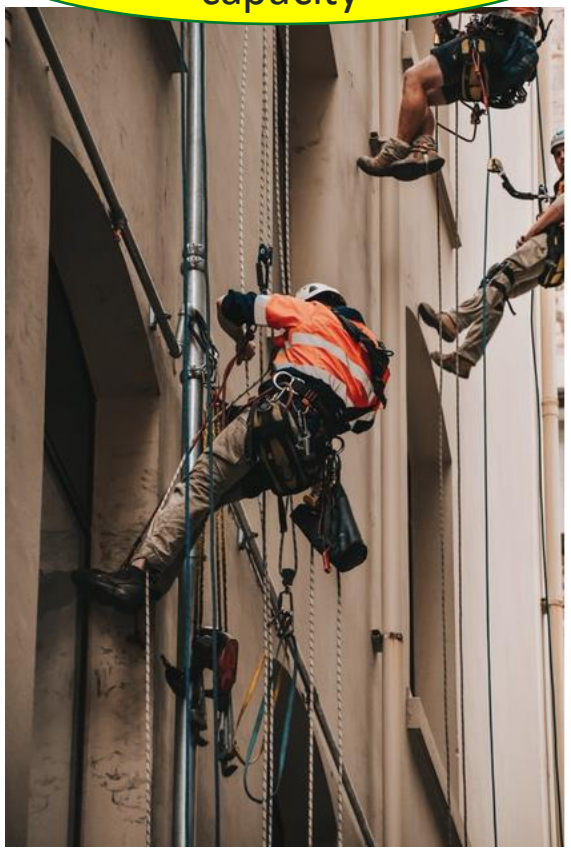
Getting practical

Preparing to referencing: What is essential...

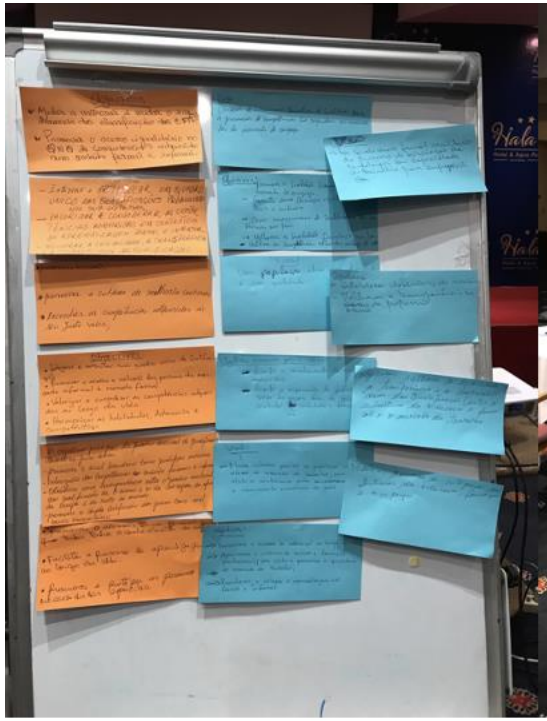
1. Goal, plan

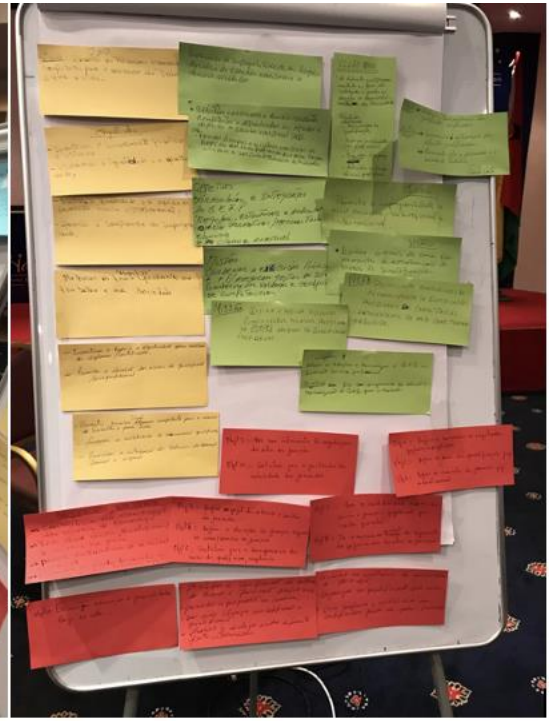


2. Determination, capacity



3. Analysis, dialogue, drafting, support





Essential information on the working table of the referencing team

- Overview of education and training system for LLL. Diagrammes.
- NQF legal and regulatory basis, different acts and texts
- NQF level descriptors
- Register, catalogue of qualifications
- Qualifications description
- Qualifications development, approval, levelling tools (technical-methodological)
- Learning outcomes, standards: competence, occupational
- Main components of Quality Assurance

Shaping the referencing report

- After self-assessment and short referencing training…agree main report outline (pertinent with goals of referencing and the country's stage of NQF implementation)
- Take stock of all essential sources, especially legislation, regulations, policies, classifications, methods.
- Allocate responsibilities in referencing team: in terms of information collection, clarifications, review
- Agree a roadmap and milestones for analysis and drafting (1-2 key drafters)
- Referencing chapter – 4 criteria: consult relevant institutions and experts; agree methodology / steps for each criterion, especially criterion 1
- Assemble the 1st draft report – discuss it
- Identify information gaps to be completed, systemic / NQF issues to be noted and acknowledged
- Draft 2 – more complete and nuanced. Stakeholders' workshop for wider discussion, and contributions
- Interact with ACQF team and with peers from other countries
- Finalise report - with issues, conclusions, annexes with evidence and examples
- Submit to ACQF implementation setting for discussion

03

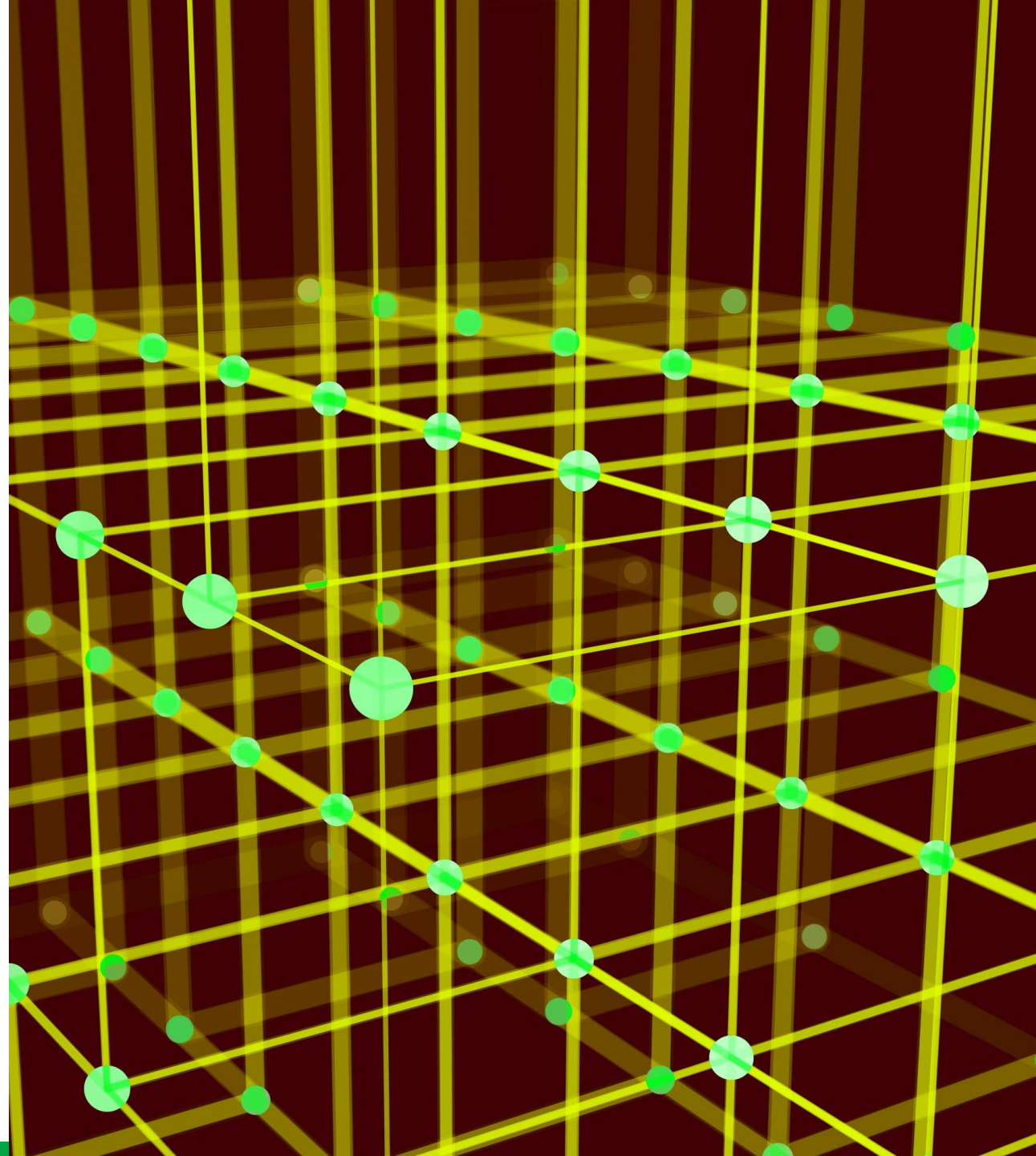
Example comparison EQF-Slovenia NQF

Practical example

SQF-EQF referencing

https://europa.eu/europass/en/document-library/eqf-referencing-report-slovenia

- Slovenian NQF - EQF
- Conceptual comparison NQF-RQF
- More detailed comparison of level descriptors NQF-RQF



ACQF

Criterion 1

- To show the clear and demonstrable link between the Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), was carried out a three-stage methodological analysis:
  - Structural comparison of the two frameworks,
  - Conceptual comparison of the two frameworks,
  - Comparison of SQF descriptors and EQF descriptors.

Conceptual comparison of the 2 frameworks

- The SQF is based on a combination of Slovenia's existing Classification System of Education and Training (KLASIUS) and EQF guidelines. Each SQF level is described on the basis of the same three concepts – knowledge, skills and competences – as the levels in the EQF (in 2013). The above concepts are defined in a similar manner, although it may be observed that while the EQF describes them in generic terms, the SQF takes into account the characteristics of the national education system and labour market, for which reason the descriptors at all levels are for the most part more detailed.
- When comparing **similarities and differences between knowledge, skills and competences in the SQF and EQF**, noted:
  - ***Knowledge.*** The starting definitions of the concept of 'knowledge' are similar in both frameworks. In both cases knowledge is defined as the result of a learning process in different settings, with the definition in the SQF also specifically mentioning learning processes in the context of work and private & social life.
  - ***Skills.*** The definition of the concept of 'skills' in the SQF incorporates the distinction between cognitive skills and practical skills from the EQF definition but differs from the EQF in that it also emphasises the use of knowledge to carry out tasks and solve problems.
  - ***Competences.*** Both definitions of competences, in the SQF and the EQF, are coherent in the part that describes competences as the ability to use knowledge and skills in various situations, where the EQF places slightly more emphasis on the professional and personal development of the individual, while the SQF emphasises responsible conduct on the part of individual. Both frameworks include the notions of autonomy and responsibility.

ACQF

More detailed comparison of the level descriptors

- In addition to the conceptual comparison of the two frameworks…
- …a more detailed comparison of the contents of SQF descriptors and EQF descriptors, where are compared the similarities and differences of the Slovenian and European qualifications frameworks - domains knowledge, skills and competences.
- **Correspondences** between EQF descriptors and SQF descriptors are shown in red (*knowledge*), purple (*skills*) and green (*competence(s)*).
- Differences between knowledge, skills and competences in the two sets of descriptors are shown in **blue**.

Comparison of level descriptors: level 3

Comparison of SQF level 3 with EQF level 3

Knowledge: At level 3 the EQF describes knowledge very generically without an increase in requirements, while the SQF places knowledge at this level in the national context of education and work and therefore emphasises the practical and vocational nature of knowledge, the limitation of its theoretical basis and the situational orientation of learning tied to a specific discipline.

Skills: The EQF emphasises the practical nature of the accomplishment of tasks, which are based on the application of basic methods, tools, materials and information. The SQF adds the element of basic literacy and places skills in the context of the predictability of problems and standardisation of tasks.

Competences: The EQF descriptor for level 3 refers to the ability to take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study, while the SQF descriptor at this level is based on limited autonomy of operation and simple verbal and written instructions. The SQF also mentions the element of guidance, which relates to autonomy of operation.

SQF level 3 highlights the practical aspect of knowledge and skills and in this way builds on SQF level 2. SQF level 3 and EQF level 3 correspond in terms of degree of difficulty.

Conceptual of level descriptors (SQF 7-EQF 6)

Comparison of SQF level 7 with EQF level 6

Knowledge: At EQF level 6, knowledge is defined as 'advanced knowledge of a field of work or study' involving a 'critical understanding' of theories and principles, which corresponds to the definition of knowledge at SQF level 7, which talks about advanced technical, theoretical and practical knowledge 'in a specific field' as a basis for critical reflection (in the skills category).

Skills: At the level of skills, correspondences between the frameworks are apparent in the description of skills that demonstrate the mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems (EQF) and are the basis for original thinking/work and the mastery of complex work processes in new work situations (SQF).

Competences: We also find correspondence between the descriptors in the competences category. Similarity is apparent in the elements of taking responsibility for decision-making, operating in unpredictable contexts, taking the initiative and taking responsibility for professional development. The SQF descriptor also highlights the ability to devise and sustain arguments and transfer knowledge within a group.

We find that the descriptors of EQF level 6 correspond to those of SQF level 7.

Comparison of descriptors of level 3 (EQF-SQF)

Comparison of EQF level 3 with SQF level 3

EQF Levels	SQF Levels	EQF descriptors			SQF descriptors		
		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCES
3 level	3 level	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study Adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems	Predominantly practical, life- and vocationally relevant knowledge with some theoretical basis, acquired primarily through the study of examples, imitation and practice in the context of a specific discipline.	Basic literacy and practical skills on a limited scale including the use of appropriate tools, methods and materials. Application of known solutions to resolve predictable problems on a limited scale. Ability to carry out transparent and standardised tasks.	Ability to acquire new knowledge and skills in a structured context with appropriate guidance. Ability to operate with limited autonomy in a predictable and structured context on the basis of simple verbal or written instructions. Taking a limited degree of responsibility.

- ***Knowledge:*** At this level the EQF describes knowledge very generically without an increase in requirements, while the SQF places knowledge at this level in its own context of education and work, emphasising the practical and vocational nature of knowledge, the limitation of its theoretical basis and the situational orientation of learning tied to a specific discipline.
- ***Skills:*** At this level the EQF emphasises the practical nature of the accomplishment of tasks, which are based on the application of 'basic methods, tools, materials and information'. The SQF again adds the element of basic literacy and places skills in the context of the 'predictability' of problems and 'standardisation' of tasks.
- ***Competences:*** The EQF descriptor for this level refers to the ability to take responsibility 'for completion of tasks in work or study', while the SQF descriptor at this level is based on 'limited autonomy of operation' and 'simple verbal and written instructions'.
- ***SQF level 3 highlights the practical aspect of knowledge and skills and in this way builds on SQF level 2. SQF level 3 and EQF level 3 correspond in terms of degree of difficulty.***

Comparison of descriptors level EQF 6 / SQF 7

Comparison of EQF level 6 with SQF level 7

EQF Levels	SQF Levels	EQF descriptors			SQF descriptors		
		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCES
6 level	7 level	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts. Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups	Advanced technical/ theoretical and practical knowledge in a given field, supported by a broad theoretical and methodological basis.	Ability to carry out complex operational/ technical tasks, including the use of methodological tools. Mastery of demanding and complex work processes through autonomous application of knowledge in new work situations. Ability to diagnose and resolve problems in various specific work settings linked to the education and training domain. A basis for original thinking/work and critical reflection.	Ability to operate in different settings and functions and articulate new knowledge. Taking responsibility for defining and achieving own work results and/or work results of a heterogeneous group in defined fields of work. Ability to devise and sustain arguments within specific work settings related to the field of education and training. Identification of own learning needs, ability to take the initiative for own learning, ability to transfer knowledge within a group.

- *Knowledge:* At EQF level 6, knowledge is defined as 'advanced knowledge of a field of work or study' involving a 'critical understanding' of theories and principles, which corresponds to the definition of knowledge at SQF level 7, which talks about advanced technical, theoretical and practical knowledge 'in a specific field' as a basis for 'critical reflection' (in the skills category).
- *Skills:* At the level of skills, correspondences between the frameworks are apparent in the description of skills that demonstrate the 'mastery and innovation' required to solve 'complex and unpredictable problems' (EQF) and are the basis for 'original thinking/work' and the mastery of complex work processes in new work situations (SQF).
- *Competences*: Correspondence between the frameworks at the level of competences is evident from 'taking responsibility for decision-making' and managing 'complex' activities or projects in the EQF and 'taking responsibility for determining and achieving (own) work results' and carrying out 'complex' tasks (in the skills category) in the SQF.
- The description of competences at SQF level 7 and EQF level 6 does, however, reveal differences too. These can be seen in the fact that the EQF emphasises 'taking responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups', while the SQF emphasises 'ability to participate in reasoned discussion in specific work settings' and 'identifying own learning needs', 'taking the initiative for own learning' and 'ability to transfer knowledge in a group'. From this point of view these competences in the SQF are, in contrast to the EQF descriptors, primarily oriented towards the professional development of the individual.

Comparison of descriptors of levels EQF 8 / SQF 10

Comparison of EQF level 8 with SQF level 10

EQF Levels	SQF Levels	EQF descriptors			SQF descriptors		
		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCES
8 level	10 level	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research	Advanced knowledge serving as the basis for autonomous, original research/artistic work or the development of the discipline at the highest level, which is connected with scholarly, professional or artistic recognition both nationally and internationally.	Planning, managing and carrying out works of the highest complexity, including participation in research projects/artistic projects, and resolution of the most complex theoretical and practical problems. Capacity for critical reflection, advanced abstract thinking and synthesising new and complex ideas.	Capacity for highly autonomous work/creative work of the highest standard, interpretation and the ability to find answers to abstract questions and questions of the greatest complexity in a professional, academic or artistic field. Ability to transfer knowledge via critical dialogue between a professional discipline and an academic discipline, and a capacity for responsible evaluation of the consequences of the application of new knowledge in different contexts.

Let us focus on Competences – similarities and differences:

- *Competences*: Correspondence between competences at EQF level 8 and SQF level 10 is apparent in the demonstration of 'substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, academic and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes' including research in the EQF and a capacity for 'highly autonomous work/creative work of the highest standard, interpretation and the ability to find answers to abstract questions and questions of the greatest complexity' including 'research projects/ artistic projects' (in the skills category) in the SQF, with the difference that the SQF also places particular emphasis on the 'ability to make a responsible assessment of the consequences of the application of new knowledge in various contexts' and the 'transfer of knowledge between a professional discipline and an academic discipline'. The latter confirms the difference in the description of competences already identified in a comparison of SQF level 9 and EQF level 8.

Differences EQF 8 / SQF 9

Competences:

- Correspondence between EQF level 8 and SQF level 9 is apparent in the demonstration of ‘substantial autonomy’ and the development of ‘new ideas or processes’ in contexts including research in the EQF, and in the ability to carry out tasks autonomously and the ability to formulate ‘original thinking/ work’ (in the skills section) in connection with ‘basic and/or applied research/artistic work’ in the SQF,
- … with the difference that the SQF also places special emphasis on the ‘ability to independently, professionally and ethically orient own learning and learning of others in various contexts’. The SQF emphasises the role of the individual in the broader social context with an emphasis on professional and ethical conduct that is not to be found in the EQF.

Some concluding questions of the referencing team...

- Is the NQF clear, integrated, coherent?
- Are the level descriptors contextualised?
- Do level descriptors express vertical and horizontal logic?
- Is the learning outcomes approach understood, applied and how? What challenges? What achievements?
- How are qualifications described, developed and included in NQF / register?
- What linkages between QA and development and leveling of qualifications?
- How does Quality Assurance work in this context of qualifications?
- What institutions and stakeholders participate and endorse the referencing report?

04

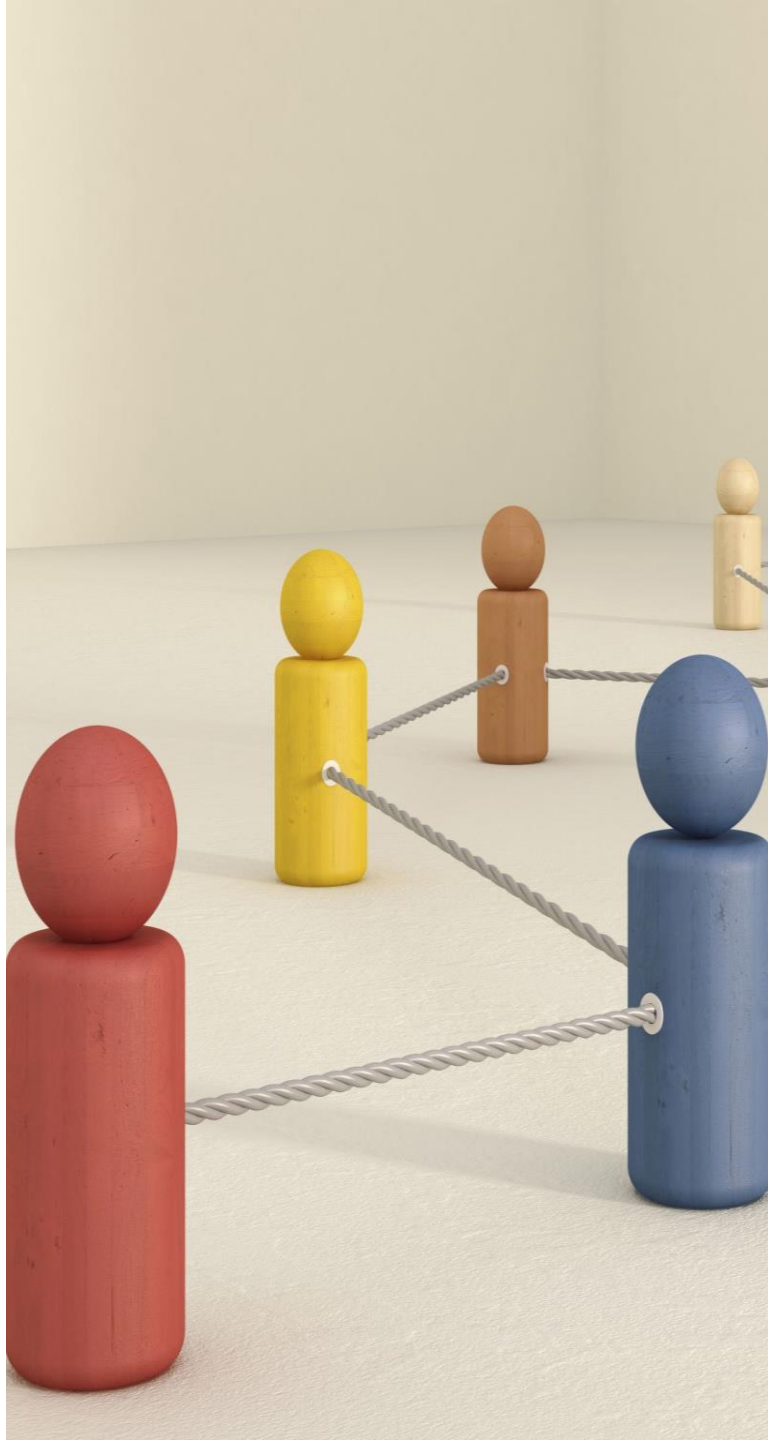
Example Comparison EQF-Cabo Verde NQF

1.1 Comparison EQF-NQF

It is based on the EQF Recommendation (2017), which invites the Commission, Member States and stakeholders to *"explore possible avenues for the development and application of criteria and procedures allowing the comparison of third country national and regional qualifications frameworks with the EQF in accordance with international agreements;".*

The comparison is:

- Process that facilitates **confidence in the quality and level** of qualifications, to support the recognition and international mobility of learners and workers.
- It aims to **increase the transparency and comparability of qualifications**.
- It is based on **equal dialogue of a set of mutually agreed topics; Joint report.**
- It can **connect qualifications frameworks around the world** and contribute to international transparency of qualifications.



1.2 Comparison: justification

Framework of Cape Verde-EU cooperation: close relations since independence in 1975

- Special Partnership since 2007.
- Common values; political dialogue; GSP+ trade (only African country)
- Areas of cooperation: investment, jobs and growth; ocean governance and the blue economy; Administration reform.

Interest for both parts:

- At Launch meeting of the EQF and NQF Comparison: both parties confirmed the shared interest and benefits of the process and its results.
- Migration flows (students and workers)
- Transparency, comparability of Cape Verdean qualifications = mutual trust
- Increase the visibility and implementation of the NQF among all sectors in Cape Verde

1.3 Comparison approach, topics and working group

8 online meetings: from 21/November 2022 to 30/May 2023
Report presented to EQF AG on 20/Jun 2023
Participatory process, dialogue, sharing of experiences, documented at every step

TOPICS

1. Objectives of both qualifications frameworks
2. Scope of the frameworks
3. Levels and level descriptors
4. Learning outcomes approach
5. RVCC / VNFIL
6. Quality assurance
7. Communication, visibility, transparency, access to information
8. Recognition processes
9. Governance structures
10. Referencing processes
11. Transparency and quality assurance of the comparison process

Comparison Working Group

Cabo Verde:

- Ministry of Education: DNE, DGES
- Ministry of Finance and Entreprise Development: DGE
- UC-SNQ
- ARES

EQF:

- European Commission (Skills Agenda Unit); 3 EU Member States (Luxembourg, Portugal, Poland); ETF. EU Delegation: invited to meetings, shared reports

4.1 Summary of the comparison

Topic	Key findings on comparison between EQF and NQF of Cabo Verde
1. Objectives	High comparability.
2. Scope	High comparability
3. Levels and descriptors	High comparability. Identical descriptors levels 6, 7 and 8; very close at the other levels (NQF descriptors: more detailed formulation, attention to context)
4. Learning outcomes	High comparability. Cape Verde: application well rooted in vocational training but less pronounced in higher education.
5. RVCC / VNFIL	High comparability. Cape Verde: challenge - demand higher than supply of RVCC (funding)
6. Quality assurance	High comparability. Cape Verde: digitalization of processes and results, online platforms
7. Communication	Comparability. Dissemination by Web/media, events, trainings. NQF: need to expand and customise information to various audiences, involve all sectors of education, and use NQF levels in HE diplomas
8. Recognition	Comparability. Role of the NQF Cape Verde is more substantial than that of the EQF in recognition
9. Governanace	Comparability. UC-SNQ as coordinator; ARES: higher education qualifications; social partners, employers and other ministries involved in development prof. qualif, approval, renewal.
10. Referencing	Cape Verde may reference to the ACQF, according to criteria comparable to the EQF
11. Transparency of comparison	Clarity on the themes, methodology and process of meetings, dialogue and mutual learning; Good participation. Gradual drafting of the report throughout the process.

4.2 Topic 1: Objectives

Conclusions on Topic 1:

- The analysis and dialogue have identified important **similarities in the nature and objectives of the Cape Verde NQF** and the EQF and it is legitimate to consider that **both frameworks are comparable**. The fact that the Cape Verde NQF explicitly targets cooperation and links with the EQF reinforces this conclusion.

A) Shared and comparable objectives:

- Transparency and comparability of qualifications and qualifications frameworks and mutual trust between countries
- Portability of qualifications, mobility of learners and workers
- Qualifications based on learning outcomes accessible through different learning modalities and pathways
- Articulation of formal, non-formal and informal learning
- Validation of the learning outcomes developed in different contexts, contributing to employability, lifelong learning and the inclusion of workers and learners, especially those most susceptible to unemployment and precarious work.
- Links and cooperation with qualifications frameworks in other regions

B) Additional EQF objectives (differences): (a) referencing; (b) updating and disseminating on evolution and developments in NQFs; (c) facilitating recognition of qualifications

4.3 Topic 2: Scope

- **Both the Cape Verde NQF and the EQF are comprehensive and inclusive**: they cover qualifications from all education and training subsystems, of all levels and types. Both consider and support learning in different contexts: formal, non-formal and informal.
- Cape Verde's two registers of qualifications: a) CNQ for technical education and vocational training, levels 2 to 5) and b) the ARES register (higher education qualifications, levels 5 to 8) include national quality assured qualifications.
- Unlike the EQF, which, as a meta framework, does not directly contain qualifications, but provides EQF countries with the necessary infrastructure and support to publish information on national learning opportunities and qualifications through the Europass Platform.
- As a result of the similarities found in their scope, the Cape Verde NQF and the EQF are compatible and comparable
-

4.4. Topic 3: Level descriptors

Conclusions on Topic 3:

- The comparison dialogue concluded that the EQF levels are comparable to the NQF levels of Cape Verde. It should be noted that this comparison is not synonymous with referencing between the NQF and the EQF.
- The level descriptors of the Cape Verde NQF and the EQF are compatible and comparable at all levels. Both frameworks are structured in 8 levels, defined by descriptors that horizontally combine knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy (in the NQF of Cape Verde: "attitudes").
- Cape Verde's NQF descriptors share similarities with the EQF descriptors, but as they reflect national specificity, they are more detailed and comprehensive, particularly at levels 2 to 5, through greater attention to context, autonomy and responsibility. The descriptors of levels 6 to 8 of the Cape Verde NQF are identical to the descriptors of the EQF. The descriptors of degrees and diplomas of degrees and diplomas of higher education of Cape Verde are very similar to the Dublin descriptors of the European Higher Education Area.
- The hypothesis of opening levels 6, 7 and 8 of the Cape Verde NQF to professional qualifications was addressed, in resonance with trends and practices in NQFs in Europe.

4.4 Comparability of levels

Amílcar

EQF level	NQF level	Qualifications in the NQF of Cape Verde
1	1	Diploma of Compulsory Basic Education
2	2	Adult Basic Education Diploma with double certification corresponding to the Level 2 professional qualification Level 2 Professional Qualification Certificate
3	3	Secondary School Certificate (10th grade) Level 3 Professional Qualification Certificate
4	4	Secondary School Diploma (12th grade) Secondary school diploma (12th year of the technical pathway corresponding to the professional qualification of Level 4) with double certification Level 4 professional qualification certificate with double certification Level 4 Professional Qualification Certificate
5	5	Diploma of Higher Professional Studies (DESP) with training of professional qualifications of Level 5 (CESP – Courses of Higher Vocational Studies) Level 5 Professional Qualification Certificate
6	6	Bachelors degree (University)
7	7	Masters degree (University)
8	8	Doctorate (University)

Amílcar

4.5. Learning outcomes

Conclusions on Topic 4:

- The conceptual underpinnings of the learning outcomes approach, its expected benefits and its application are comparable and compatible in the context of the Cape Verde NQF and the EQF.
- The establishment and implementation of the learning outcomes approach is central to the objectives of the NQF and the CNQ of Cape Verde and plays an important role in the reform of education and training.
- The approach to learning outcomes is well rooted in technical education and vocational training in Cape Verde, through the definition and principles of professional qualifications, methodologies for the development of qualifications, application in training and evaluation, RVCC processes and quality assurance of the design of qualifications and assessment of students.
- Higher education legislation stipulates the transition from education focused on the transmission of knowledge to a model oriented towards the development of competences (results). However, the state of application of the learning outcomes approach is less prominent in higher education.
- The EQF supports reflection and analysis on the learning outcomes approach, as well as its implementation, through various cooperation modalities: referencing through its criterion 3; research projects on the state of application in the countries involved; joint activities to develop methodology and practical solutions for the concise and comparable formulation of learning outcomes for qualifications.

Eduarda

4.6. Validation – RVCC / VNFIL

Conclusions on Topic 5:

- Both the NQF of Cape Verde and the EQF recognise and promote the place of **non-formal and informal learning** as an **essential feature of the qualifications system/framework.**
- **The objectives and expected benefits of RVCC/VNFIL** are conceived similarly in both frameworks. They are related to the articulation of formal, non-formal and informal learning; parity of esteem of all learning modalities for the acquisition of qualifications; based on quality assurance processes; social inclusion and access to lifelong learning, to decent jobs for all population groups with limited formal education but possessing experience and skills.
- Both the RVCC process and the VNFIL process are structured **in phases**, defined similarly: four phases that allow candidates to grow in awareness, and readiness to successfully perform the assessment and certification.
- Both the RVCC process and the VNFIL are closely linked to the **principle of learning outcomes** and articulated with the qualifications framework (NQF and EQF). In both cases, the quality assurance of the process and of providers plays a leading role, ensuring the **credibility and parity of the qualifications and certificates awarded** as a result of the RVCC/VNFIL.
- In Cabo Verde, for now RVCC is limited to levels **2-5 of the NQF**; supply of RVCC services needs more resources / funding to cope with high demand.
- **As a conclusion: the dialogue and evidence indicate that the policies and methodological foundations of the validation, recognition and certification of non-formal and informal learning in the context of the Cape Verde NQF and in the context of the EQF are comparable.**

4.7 Quality assurance

Paula

Conclusion on Topic 6

- Quality assurance is an essential pillar of the transparency and credibility of NQF qualifications, as well as mutual trust between the different national qualifications systems and frameworks.
- The conceptual and methodological foundations of quality assurance in the context of the NQF/SNQ of Cape Verde address: a) the design of qualifications; b) the application of the learning outcomes approach as well as c) as the assessment of students/trainees and the certification process – in vocational education and training, in higher education and in RVCC processes. Quality assurance comprises a) internal processes (self-assessment) and b) external processes (accreditation, audits).
- The quality assurance of higher education in Cape Verde is managed by an independent specialized agency (ARES), which participates in international quality assurance projects and networks.
- Digitalisation in support of Quality Assurance: in Cape Verde quality assurance processes are supported by digitalisation, and online platforms for services to the public and institutions are practical and operational examples of this digitalisation and the benefits for different target groups and users, and for basic education, vocational training and higher education. The Training Entities Accreditation Platform (PAEF) provides online information on all accredited training entities (vocational training). The digitalization of quality assurance processes and information in higher education is done by the Digital Platform of ARES (PD-ARES), to which all higher education institutions and other interested parties have access.
- The dialogue of the comparison process concludes that quality assurance in the context of the Cape Verde NQF/NQF is compatible with the quality assurance principles of the EQF.

Paula

4.9. Recognition

Conclusions on the topic 8:

- The management and supervision of the processes of professional and academic recognition of qualifications in Cape Verde are directly linked to the institutions responsible for the coordination and implementation of the NQF, namely the UC-SNQ (professional recognition) and ARES (higher education/academic recognition). The CNEP, the Commission in charge of professional recognition, is part of the organizational structure of the UC-SNQ.
- The data point to greater dynamism of the processes of recognition of higher education qualifications treated by ARES.
- ARES cooperates closely with the ENIC-NARIC networks for references, data and verification of the authenticity of qualifications from the relevant countries.
- The main function of the EQF on recognition is to facilitate, share information and complement the role of ENIC-NARIC centres.
- The dialogue and analysis in the context of this comparison points to the comparability of the principles of recognition of qualifications in the NQF and EQF contexts.

5.1 Conclusions and lessons learned

- Comparison: for mutual and growing trust in Cape Verde's qualifications among EU countries
- Comparison facilitates the dissemination and better understanding of the NQF in Cape Verde, and the application of the learning outcomes approach
- Integrative and systemic view of the frameworks: they do not work in isolation
- Qualifications frameworks must evolve and adapt
- The importance of ownership of qualifications frameworks by all subsectors, institutions, partners, users. “Reach all villages”.
- Qualifications: cultural and social constructions – not only technical ones.
- The role and benefits of the EQF through voluntary cooperation, driving new initiatives and innovation

5.2 Recommendations

For both parties:

- Value the process and the result of the comparison; disseminate the report (all Cape Verde institutions; ENIC-NARIC network; EQF websites, Cedefop, ETF, ACQF, African quality assurance and recognition networks)

For the European Commission:

- Continue the meetings and dynamics of the comparison sub-group, eventually open possibility of some participation in certain activities / meetings of the EQF / Europass of the countries that have completed the comparison
- Advise ways and modalities to support technically and financially the implementation of these recommendations

For Cabo Verde:

- Continue to deepen and broaden the implementation of the NQF and its systemic components. Joint action plan all key institutions.
- strengthen the adapted application of the learning outcomes approach; Descriptors / References for areas of higher education
- Greater attention to employability in quality assurance criteria, design teaching programs
- Greater exchange and mutual learning between subsectors
- Invest more in training, dissemination, teacher training, training of trainers, capacities of institutions

5.2 Recommendations (FINAL)

Bolder and more innovative proposals for the future of Cape Verde's NQF were discussed, namely:

1. Consider opening up levels 6, 7 and 8 of the NQF to professional, market, technical qualifications and assess the internal coherence aspects of the NQF and the quality of those qualifications in the event of such a reform.
2. Consider options for establishing a **unified** digital register for qualifications at all levels of the NQF, comprehensive and with interactive functions for users.
3. Analyse options for **linking the information and data systems of the NQF (all levels of qualifications) with labour market information systems**, employment and analyses on the labour market integration of young people after graduation / certification (academic and / or professional qualifications).

Thank you!

- Coleen Jaftha
- Eduarda Castel-Branco