



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)

Brief overview of progress

Report to 5th meeting of the ACQF Advisory Group
Of 26 May 2022

Date of the report: 17 May 2022

Drafted: Eduarda Castel-Branco

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



Table of contents

ACRONYMS.....	2
1 CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	3
2 QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS IN AFRICA	6
3 VISION OF THE ACQF	9
4 ACQF PROJECT: OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS 2020-2021	11
5 ACQF PROJECT: OVERVIEW OF MAIN OUTPUTS AND MILESTONES 2022	15
6 ACQF PROJECT: PROGRESS REPORT IN SYNTHESIS (2020 TO MAY 2022)	16
7 ACQF PEER LEARNING WEBINARS: BRIEF OVERVIEW.....	19
8 1 ST ACQF TRAINING PROGRAMME: BRIEF OVERVIEW.....	22
9 SOURCES.....	26

Acronyms

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfECN	Africa Early Childhood Network
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CEDEFOP	European Centre for Development of VET
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
EAQFHE	East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education
EAC	East Africa Community
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAQAF	Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework
REC	Regional Economic Community
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCQF	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework
VET	Vocational education and training
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority

1 Context and rationale of the African Continental Qualifications Framework

Paving the way to the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)

Education, skills and work will determine the improvement to livelihoods of the more than 1.3 billion people on the African continent, and drive growth and development for the generations to come.

The call for the establishment of a continental qualifications framework for Africa was formulated in key policy documents and strategic initiatives geared towards integration and prosperity on the continent. The ACQF responds to objectives set by the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan (2023). The main AU policies and political initiatives underpinning development of the ACQF are as follows:

- Agenda 2063¹ and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan (2023)²
- Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25)³
- African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)⁴
- Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment⁵
- Another initiative mentioning the ACQF is the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF).

With a median age of 19.7 in 2020, Africa's population is the youngest in the world. In 2020, Africa's population under 35 represents almost a billion people (22.7 per cent of the world's total youth population). Africa's young demographic could provide a powerful opportunity for development, innovation, decent jobs and beyond. But despite the economic growth of the last decade, African countries struggle to create jobs and to equip young people with the skills and qualifications required to service their economies and societies. This lack of economic opportunity is often combined with disenfranchisement, thus creating a potential cause of instability.⁶

The accomplishment of the potentialities of the African demographic dividend in post-Covid-19-pandemic economic recovery will depend on the development of the right mix of skills within the population and the quality and comparability of qualifications of all levels and sectors of education and training systems across countries. Learning must be lifelong and life-wide, to enable transitions to new jobs, especially in high productivity and innovation sectors, and adaptation to new skills requirements in the green and digital economies. Moreover, access to learning and qualifications should support inclusion in decent work and in the formal economy of small artisans, rural producers and the self-employed, and of the population with limited formal schooling but with practical professional and life experience, especially women and young people.

¹ African Union, Agenda 2063, at: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>

² Agenda 2063, First Ten Year Implementation Plan 2023, at: <https://www.nepad.org/agenda-2063/publication/agenda-2063-first-ten-year-implementation-plan-2014-2023-0>

³ CESA 2016–2025, at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf; CESA Journal, at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33863-doc-cesa_journal_vol2_final.pdf

⁴ AfCFTA, at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf; Factsheet on the AfCFTA, at: <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/faqs/2377-african-continental-free-trade-area-faqs-june-2018-update/file.html>

⁵ Text of the Protocol, at: <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/1965-protocol-to-the-abuja-treaty-free-movement-of-persons-right-of-residence-and-establishment-adopted-29-january-2018/file.html>

⁶ Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Africa's Youth (2021): Action needed how to support the continent's greatest asset, at: <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-08/international-youth-day-research-brief.pdf>

At a continental level, the mobility of learners and workers is essential to achieve the benefits of economic integration, on the one hand, and improved matching of the supply of skills and qualifications with existing demand (job vacancies) across different countries, on the other hand. Easier movement of persons on the continent would make African labour markets more efficient, enabling companies to bridge skills shortages and gaps, and allowing the society to gain from brain circulation. Information-sharing between countries on qualifications levels and standards, and on the supply of skills is fundamental to support fair and effective labour mobility between countries.

Among its policy recommendations, the 'African Economic Outlook 2020'⁷ emphasises the need to address obstacles to labour mobility to enhance growth's inclusiveness and cross-sector labour reallocations to reduce poverty in Africa. Merely by allowing labour to move freely across sectors, African countries could increase incomes and reduce poverty and inequality. Policies should contribute to increasing the transferability of skills and qualifications across sectors or the acquisition of sets of new skills and qualifications to meet the requirements of receiving sectors.

Challenges of the socio-economic context

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, despite persisting and multiple challenges, economic growth in Africa was high for over a decade. In 2019 economic growth was 3.4%. Compared with the rest of the world, Africa's GDP growth was above the world average of 3% for 2019 and well above the average for advanced economies at 1.7%. There were six African countries among the ten fastest-growing economies in the world.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit all countries across the continent hard, albeit at different scale by regions and countries. The African Economic Outlook 2021⁸ reports that Africa is projected to recover in 2021 from its worst economic recession in half a century. Real gross domestic product (GDP) in Africa is projected to grow by 3.4% in 2021, after contracting by 2.1% in 2020. This projected recovery will be underpinned by a resumption of tourism, a rebound in commodity prices, and the rollback of pandemic-induced restrictions. The outlook is, however, subject to great uncertainty from both external and domestic risks.

Africa's growth trajectory over the last two decades had raised hopes that its economies would join the ranks of middle- and high-income countries and lift its people from poverty. But growth has not been inclusive, and job creation in high-productivity sectors lagged behind demographic growth. Large shares of the population remain employed in low-productivity jobs in traditional agriculture and informal sector.

African countries have much to gain from improving education to achieve inclusive growth. But many education indicators have stagnated and even deteriorated, and without a rapid acceleration of progress, the continent will be unable to achieve key education commitments by 2030. Dropout and out-of-school rates are higher in Africa than in other world regions. And, if current trends continue, Africa will fail to bring all children to school by 2030. Among African children of primary school age (typically 6–11 years), on average 14.7% were out of school during 2015–18, as were 31.9% of adolescents of lower secondary school age (12–14 years) and 50.2% of youth of upper secondary school age (15–17 years).

The contribution of education to increasing labour productivity growth is limited because of the weak complementarity between human and physical capital. Existing skills and qualifications are not adequately utilised in the labour market. Large shares of employed youth consider their skills mismatched with their

⁷ African Development Bank (AFDB). 2020. African Economic Outlook 2020 – developing Africa's Workforce for the Future. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2020>

⁸ AFDB. 2021a. African Economic Outlook 2021: From Debt Resolution to Growth: the road ahead for Africa. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2021>

jobs, and their education inadequate for work readiness. Employers identify inadequately skilled workforces as a major constraint to their businesses, and to recruitment of the right profiles.

Development of the ACQF

The African continent is marked by a wide diversity of education and qualifications systems, with different structures and typology of qualifications and limited updated information on qualifications in the public domain. International qualifications related to dynamic professional sectors, technologies and global companies gain ground, but often are not linked with qualifications frameworks and systems. A range of new transversal, digital and green skills are required for people to adapt and be employable in the context of the transformation of work and learning, digitalisation of public and private organisations and demands for a greener and sustainable economy. Migrants and refugees carry potentialities, skills, hope for safer life and work – but often no qualifications documents. Furthermore, continental free trade has started operations in a range of sectors, a process likely to trigger demand for new skills and qualifications and more efficient recognition. The informal sector of the economy shows no signs of abating and there is a vast need for good quality programmes of recognition of prior learning and access to modular skills development opportunities with certification.

The ACQF and the Qualifications Platform (database) will provide a contribution of continental scope to address these issues, complementing and enhancing national policies and systems and regional cooperation on these matters.

The development of the ACQF was launched at an official event held in September 2019 at the headquarters of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This process is steered by the African Union Commission's (AUC) Education Science and Technology (AUC ESTI) directorate, Division for Education, and is technically supported by the European Union's (EU's) 'Skills for Youth Employability Programme', a contribution to the wider AU's Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA).⁹

The activities of the ACQF component run from 2019 to 2022, and aim to:

1. Develop the ACQF policy document, accompanied by an action plan and technical guidelines and supported by a feasibility study;
2. Set an evidence base on qualifications frameworks and systems on the continent, based on research and continuous updates;
3. Support networking of qualifications frameworks institutions and stakeholders; and
4. Development of capacities at national, regional and continental levels, supported by high-quality thematic materials, and instruments including a website and e-learning platform.

The EU has committed to supporting the development of the ACQF, as defined in Action 4 of the Communication – '[Africa-Europe Alliance on Sustainable Investment and Jobs](#)', adopted on 12 September 2018 by the European Commission. This communication was endorsed by all heads of state of the EU, at the [European Council meeting](#) on 18 October 2018.

The ACQF will be the largest of the regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs), as it cooperates with 55 countries and 8 regional economic communities (RECs). It is in fact the only RQF in the world interacting simultaneously with two different levels – national and regional!

Enablers and opportunities of the ACQF relate to the demographic dividend of the continent, projected advances in human development, the significant flagship policies and strategies for continental integration

⁹ SIFA is an initiative of the AU and is implemented through a partnership comprising the EU and Germany (BMZ, the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development), as co-funding partners. In the programme component responsible for development of the ACQF, GIZ partners with the EU Agency European Training Foundation (ETF). The ETF assures thematic and technical steering and coordination of the ACQF component.

related to the African Union’s Agenda 2063, but also those strategies promoting green recovery and digital transformation. Most importantly, there is a growing number of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in development and consultation and NQFs approved and advancing in implementation. But the continent is facing important challenges, and the education crisis is one of the most pressing priorities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated and brought to light existing distortions and inequalities in all dimensions of human and economic development. As countries and regions are taking measures to begin post-pandemic recovery, wider access to retraining and reskilling will be indispensable to support people’s transitions to different jobs and adaptation to new skills requirements. The post-pandemic recovery and “build back better” must bring the world (and Africa) to a better place, in terms of equitable, safe and democratic societies, greener economies, in which participation in the benefits of technology, new learning and work is a commitment of leaders and citizens across the continent and around the world. This is the main agenda wherein the future ACQF should contribute.

2 Qualifications and qualifications frameworks in Africa

NQFs in Africa are at different stages of development and implementation. Dynamics in the last three years show a surge in the number of countries starting development of NQFs, while others are adopting the policy and legal basis, putting in place governance structures and technical tools to operationalise the NQF.

The first comprehensive mapping study on qualifications frameworks and systems in Africa was carried out by the ACQF project in 2020-2021. This mapping study is a collection of 13 national reports, 3 regional reports and a comprehensive comparative analysis, available on [ACQF website](#). Four country reports were updated in 2021 (Cape Verde, Egypt, Morocco and Mozambique). The overview provided in this chapter is entirely based on ACQF research, accessible on the [ACQF website](#). Complementary analyses and updates carried out by the ACQF project in 2021 show a dynamic process of development of new qualifications frameworks in different regions of the continent (table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1: Qualifications frameworks in Africa by stage of development and implementation - overview (April 2022). Highlighted: countries with qualifications framework of sectoral scope (mostly focused on qualifications of TVET systems)

Stage of NQF development and implementation	Number of NQFs Africa	Countries
NQF development to be started (2)	2	Chad, Republic of Congo
NQF in early thinking (8)	8	Burkina Faso, Union of Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, São Tomé e Príncipe, Togo
NQF in development and consultation (9)	9	Angola, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique (comprehensive), Sierra Leone, Somalia
NQF legal act approved, implementation started (15)	15	Burundi, Eswatini, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe
NQF in advanced implementation and reviewed (7)	7	Cape Verde, Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia

Source: Dataset of ACQF Mapping Study. ACQF. 2021a)

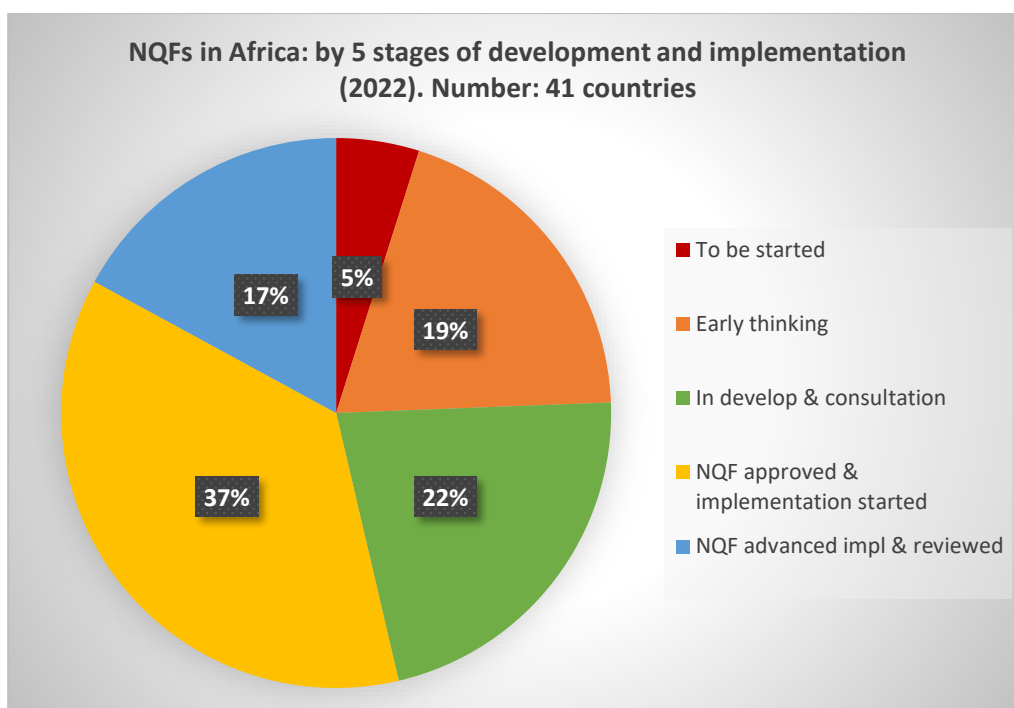


Figure 1: NQFs in Africa – distribution by stages of development. Number of countries included: 41.

Source: Database of ACQF project. [ACQF website - resources](#).

Up to now the Southern African Development Community has been the region with highest number of countries with developed and operational NQFs (ACQF, 2021a). But currently other regions are seeing a growing number of countries adopting NQFs and operationalising them. Rwanda and Egypt are amongst the most recent adopters of legal acts establishing the NQF: in October 2021 Rwanda approved a new comprehensive 10-level NQF, and Egypt approved the legal amendments establishing their 8-level NQF. Other countries are on the road to approve comprehensive NQFs in 2022. Moreover, several countries have started their processes of reflection, analysis, and inter-stakeholder consultation towards a future NQF – the cases of Guinea-Bissau and Cameroon are worth mentioning.

These developments are taking place in all regions of the continent. Some examples of recent dynamics of NQF development and implementation in all regions are summarised in table 2.

Table 2: High-level summary of NQF development in different regions of Africa.

Region in Africa	Some examples of NQF development processes and milestones
North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2021-2022 Egypt approved legislative amendments on the NQF, establishes governance structures and NQF register of qualifications. - In 2021 Morocco works on legal basis and governance of the NQF; and on development of a comprehensive register of qualifications. - In 2021-2022 Tunisia develops the concept and tools of the register of qualifications; implements reforms of TVET qualifications.
West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2020-2022 Cape Verde approved amended legislation on the NQF and on the National Catalogue of Qualifications; reinforces the NQF governance set-up; improves the website and tools of the NQF; started operationalization of the RPL system: methodology framework, training of assessors and facilitators, piloting RPL processes in key sectors and award of qualifications.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2020-2022 Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone are developing comprehensive NQFs. - Ghana takes steps to develop a comprehensive NQF, based on the experience of the TVET Qualifications Framework. - In 2021 The Gambia adopted the 10-levels NQF and started implementation, led by the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA). - In 2021-2022 Guinea-Bissau started reflection and analysis on the NQF, formed a dedicated multi-stakeholder working group and started capacity development actions.
East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kenya made progress with the development of policies, standards and guidelines, e.g.: for developing national occupational standards and national curriculum development; on quality assurance of qualifications. Developed and tested RPL policy and Guidelines; adopted the regulatory-methodological framework for Credit Accumulation and Transfer System. A new digital register of qualifications is in construction. - Rwanda approved in October 2021 the comprehensive NQF integrating all sub-sectors of education and training. - Burundi approved the NQF. - IGAD is developing a regional qualifications framework (RQF) - EAC approved the East African Qualifications Framework for TVET, validated harmonised occupational standards and adopted Regional students' and staff exchange implementation strategy (May 2022)
Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cameroon resumed work on development of the policy and legal basis of NQF. - São Tomé and Príncipe started the first steps towards development of the NQF, with a baseline analysis, and capacity development actions.

Moving from initial concepts and plans on the NQF to adoption of policies and instruments can be more challenging and lengthier in some countries than in others. While in some contexts the national institutions benefit from enabling conditions, such as socio-economic demand for better qualifications, active social partners, and technical and financial resources, in other contexts the implementation of education and training reforms and NQF projects is adversely affected by persisting political instability and insecurity. In many countries NQF development is related to wider reforms of education and training systems, reinforcement of employment policies, and often supported by international projects and expertise. In many cases the national authorities work with projects supported by the EU.

“Considering a total of 41 countries included in the data collected by the [ACQF Mapping Study](#), the continent has a higher number of qualifications frameworks (approved, implementation started or implementation advanced) than other larger regions had when they enacted their overarching RQFs. Although thirteen years separate the advent of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the development of the ACQF, it is very useful to note that when the legal base of the EQF was approved (2008), only three countries had NQFs in place and operational (France, Ireland and the United Kingdom).” (ACQF. 2021d: 6).

The continent is creating a critical mass of NQFs, and this is good news for the much-needed transparency of qualifications, for the establishment of learning outcomes-based assessment and certification allowing people in Africa to obtain qualifications (or part thereof) via high-quality processes of recognition of prior learning (or ‘validation des acquis de l’expérience’), as well as for the comparability of qualifications across countries, supporting more efficient processes of recognition and portability of qualifications for learners and workers.

3 Vision of the ACQF

The ACQF is strongly anchored on key strategies and policies of the African Union (AU), spanning from education to free trade and free movement of people. Stakeholders, NQFs and the African Union Commission (AUC) have high expectations about the expected contribution of the ACQF towards transparency, trust and portability of skills and qualifications. As the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) becomes operational, stakeholders agree that free trade and free movement will be hampered if the continent does not enact a common framework for comparability of qualifications, facilitating recognition and validation of learning.

Vision of the ACQF

According to the initial vision for the ACQF presented at the inaugural workshop in September 2019, the ACQF is envisioned as an meta qualifications framework for the continent, based on the principles of:

- *inclusiveness*: across all levels and types of qualifications, all forms and stages of learning and modalities of certification;
- *innovation*: support new developments related to emerging skills, roles and occupations, new technologies and societal demands; and
- *openness*: to participation of all stakeholders and AU member countries, to experience and good practice from Africa and other regions and continents.

To achieve the wider objectives:

- to support comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications and lifelong learning;
- to facilitate recognition of learning from different contexts, diplomas and certificates and support mobility (of learners, workers, services);
- to work in cooperation and complementarity with national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and systems and regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs), support NQF development and the creation of a common African education and qualifications space; and
- to promote cooperation and mutual understanding, by means of referencing with qualifications frameworks (or systems) in Africa and worldwide.

As a policy instrument, the ACQF is anticipated as an enabler, fulfilling a range of functions, such as:

- a) A platform providing benefits to countries and RECs, such as easily accessible and updated information on NQFs on the continent; databases and inventories; various capacity development, peer-learning and networking facilities and e-resources; public (users') outreach activities;
- b) A hub and catalyst for development and support to operationalise qualifications frameworks at national level; and
- c) A reference for cooperation with African and other international frameworks.

The ACQF will cooperate and interact with NQFs, with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the respective RQFs.

ACQF in the context of change and transformation

The ACQF will emerge, develop and evolve in an environment marked by the post-Covid-19 recovery efforts, intertwined with the multiple transitions of our time. The emerging ACQF will face the challenges of economic slowdown and recession triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the significant learning losses as a result of widespread school closures.

The future of work arrived ahead of schedule. At least four mega drivers of change are boosting the dynamics of this transformation and adaptation: digitalisation, automation and artificial intelligence; Covid-19; greening of the economy and society; and societal movements. In this context of transformation of work, reskilling and upskilling become urgent, as more workers transition to jobs that are based on a changing mix of tasks and skills. New types of qualifications and of modalities of recognition of learning emerge and the concepts of micro-credentials and digital certificates are becoming part of policies and practices of qualifications systems.

The role of qualifications frameworks in the context of transformation accelerated by the Covid-19 might usefully be unpacked under these three headings:

- recognition (individual learning achievements and newer forms of certification);
- accessibility (NQFs could do more to insist on access as a principle for qualifications to be included); and
- quality assurance of NQFs and constituent qualifications, so that Covid-19 does not present a threat to the quality, reputation or recognition status.

Principles underpinning NQFs may come to be just as important as technical features – fairness, transparency, quality, equality and relevance. Most important is that NQFs, or rather their design, implementation and use by stakeholders, don't make things worse for citizens. NQFs as policy instruments are only one of many that policymakers will need to employ in a coherent response to these wide issues.

Scenarios and feasibility of the ACQF

From the point of view of the ACQF, as an overarching referencing qualifications framework for the whole continent, the landscape found by the Mapping Study of national qualifications frameworks in different stages of development and implementation is favourable for activities geared to cooperation, comparison and eventually referencing between countries' qualifications frameworks and the ACQF. Over twenty countries can be considered for preparatory actions leading to future referencing with the ACQF, and another group of less than ten countries can be candidates, once their NQFs reach the point of starting implementation.

The ACQF, as connector of NQFs and a promoter of trust and of new horizons for African integration and international transparency of skills and qualifications, benefits from a conjunction of opportunities on which to build. The expectations of African countries and citizens are high. The ACQF must respond through its ability to embrace the twin transition (green and digital), to foster inclusion by valuing all forms of learning, to be a catalyst for better qualifications systems and frameworks across the continent and to contribute to transparency and credibility of African education and qualifications in the world.

The scenarios of ACQF were presented to ACQF Advisory Group at two meetings (8 April and 28 July 2021). The proposed titles of each scenario underline its distinctive value:

1. **Scenario 1: 'ACQF connects'** (horizon: 2023)– underscores support to effective networking, experience and knowledge sharing, capacity development and communication. The ACQF website is fundamental to this scenario, and the ACQF is a platform for all countries and RECs on the continent.
2. **Scenario 2: 'ACQF creates mutual trust'** (horizon: 2026)– beyond the sharing of experiences and communication, this scenario focuses on the referencing of NQFs/RQFs to the ACQF, and eventually use of ACQF levels and label on qualifications of the linked NQF/RQFs.
3. **Scenario 3: 'ACQF opens new horizons'** (horizon 2030) – besides being a meta-framework for referencing, the ACQF promotes new qualifications (standards, profiles) of a continental nature,

contributes with automatic mutual recognition of qualifications (based on quality assurance and other considerations) and supports digital certificates.

The construction and implementation of the ACQF occurs in a context marked by opportunities and challenges. The design of the ACQF and its supporting Action Plan should carefully consider and enable the virtuous interplay of strengths and weaknesses to leverage opportunities while mitigating challenges.

The proposed broad plan of ten outputs (2022–26) covers the critical aspects and components of the ACQF, from governance to technical foundations, capacity development and cooperation and partnerships with other frameworks globally. This output plan is wider than development, comparison and referencing of qualifications frameworks, as it is oriented to a perspective of impact on transparency, validation and recognition of learning, and its contribution to mobility – the essence of qualifications frameworks working in their eco-system.

The broad output plan includes 2022-2026:

1. ACQF governance setting established and operational
2. ACQF policy and technical document and Action Plan implemented and monitored
3. ACQF Database of qualifications designed / launched, and operations started with pilot countries
4. Skills and qualifications: analysis, intelligence, development
5. NQFs referenced to ACQF, in accordance with ACQF Guidelines
6. Increased number of NQFs at stage 4-5 (approved, implementation started and advanced) in African countries
7. Improved learning validation practices through application of high quality Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit accumulation and transfer systems, and cooperation with Recognition agencies (bodies)
8. ACQF contributes to better mobility and quality of qualifications in the context of the AfCFTA
9. ACQF Capacity development and awareness raising activities expanded to all countries
10. Dialogue, comparison and cooperation with other regional and national qualifications frameworks in the world

The ACQF policy and technical document considers seven main areas of activity of the ACQF:

1. Referencing of qualifications frameworks to ACQF
2. Support RPL
3. ACQF Qualifications Platform
4. Qualifications: common profiles for new and emerging occupations / jobs and continental free trade and integration
5. Capacity development
6. Networking and cooperation with African stakeholders, employers, national and regional institutions and international networks and frameworks.
7. Analysis, monitoring and evaluation

4 ACQF Project: overview of progress 2020-2021

The ACQF development process is underway (2019–2022) and is based on evidence and analysis, stakeholders' participation, political lead of the AUC, awareness-raising, networking and capacity development.

This process is organised into two phases:

Phase 1 (September 2019 to November 2020) (completed)

- Baseline evidence and analysis: mapping of the state of play, dynamics, main characteristics and perspectives of qualifications frameworks on the continent; and
- Engagement with stakeholders, start of capacity development and peer learning on key themes related to qualifications frameworks and systems.

Phase 2 (2020–2022): Development of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document and Action (close to conclusion)

- The process moved from evidence creation to the reflection on options and scenarios for the ACQF as a sustainable policy instrument;
- The draft ACQF policy and technical document reflects the orientations from the discussion with AUC and the ACQF Advisory Group on the scenarios and options for the ACQF, and builds on findings and recommendations of the [ACQF Feasibility Study](#) (2021d).
- The set of 10 ACQF Guidelines accompany the ACQF policy and technical document. ACQF Guidelines will support further implementation of the ACQF and assist countries and REC stakeholders (institutions and practitioners) interacting with ACQF.
- The ACQF capacity development programme builds on a mix of delivery and networking modalities to share knowledge and experience on key themes of the domain of qualifications frameworks and systems, coach national / regional teams, support a network of national trained experts.

In this phase the ACQF project undertakes other research and analytical activities, continues the programme of peer learning webinars, implements actions to support countries and regions, and enhances networking and communication with stakeholders at country and regional level and with relevant international organisations.

Main outputs and progress until December 2021

1. ACQF Advisory Group (ACQF AG)

Following the Terms of Reference adopted at the launch workshop of ACQF project (2-4709/2019) held in Addis at AU headquarters, the project working together with AUC ESTI Division for Education organised 4 meetings for (2019-Jan 2022) for discussion and consultation on all activities, plans and draft outputs. An Intranet resource was established in January 2022 to centralise all drafts documents submitted to ACQF AG and collect feedback and suggestions – reminders to join the Intranet will be resend to all members.

2. Baseline analysis and evidence: ACQF Mapping Study. Completed and pre-publication: November 2020. Final publication: March 2021. Four country reports¹⁰ updated (October 2021).

The full collection of ACQF Mapping reports is composed of 13 national, 3 regional and a comprehensive mapping report – on the state-of-play and perspectives of qualifications frameworks in Africa. The full collection, including 4 national reports updated in 2021 are accessible in the [ACQF website](#).

3. ACQF Feasibility report – accessible in 3 languages at the Policy and Guidelines page of the [ACQF website](#). Completed: end June 2021.

This report was presented and discussed at ACQF Advisory Group meeting of 28 July 2021. On the basis of the three scenarios of the ACQF, the feasibility study deepens the analysis of critical

¹⁰ These updated country reports are: Cape Verde, Egypt, Morocco and Mozambique.

dimensions of feasibility, presents a plan of outputs (horizon 2026) and outlines initial reflections on the options for ACQF governance.

4. ACQF policy document: first draft completed and submitted to ACQF Advisory Group meeting (13/01/2022).

The first draft was completed in December 2021 and shared with ACQF Advisory Group for discussion, comments, and validation during the upcoming 4th meeting (13 January 2022).

The initial concept and approach to develop the ACQF Policy document was discussed with ACQF Advisory Group at the 3rd meeting of 28 July 2021.

5. ACQF Guidelines: first draft completed and submitted to ACQF Advisory Group meeting (13/01/2022). Two Guidelines are in early draft status. A team of specialist experts developed the Guidelines.

The concept paper on ACQF Guidelines and the themes they address was presented at the ACQF Advisory Group meeting of 28 July 2021.

The set of 10 ACQF Guidelines are the technical foundations accompanying the ACQF policy document. The Guidelines address the ten themes, considered in the context of ACQF:

1. Guideline 1: Learning outcomes
2. Guideline 2: Level descriptors
3. Guideline 3: Referencing of NQF or system to ACQF
4. Guideline 4: Validation and recognition of learning
5. Guideline 5: Quality assurance in the context of ACQF
6. Guideline 6: Registration and databases of qualifications
7. Guideline 7: Monitoring and evaluation in the context of NQFs and ACQF
8. Guideline 8: Communication and outreach
9. Guideline 9: Innovation and technology in the context of qualifications, qualifications frameworks and ACQF
10. Guideline 10: qualifications and qualifications frameworks – a systemic view.

Each Guideline is a trio of documents: (1) a synthesis guideline, (2) a technical guideline (this document) and (3) a training module:

- Technical in-depth guideline: This document forms the core of the trio of documents. It will present as a short handbook: for clarification and technical support. This will be used by implementers, practitioners, and other groups
- Synthesis version: This version is a shortened version for policy purposes. It will be used primarily by policy institutions, and other groups, and has a key purpose to provide policy orientation
- Training module: This version will form part of the knowledge base and used for the ACQF Training programme and ACQF e-learning platform.

As instruments of the ACQF, each Guideline:

- Clarifies and deepens key concepts, principles and practices related to the 10 themes;
- Provides a technical orientation for national implementing bodies and stakeholders, especially the lead institutions managing the NQF or system and interacting with the (future) ACQF governing structure and implementation unit;

- Is oriented to be a reference at both country (NQF or system) and continental (ACQF) levels, and addresses the perspectives and needs of both levels
 - Works in synergy with, and complements, other ACQF guidelines and will be used as a digital tool;
 - Refers to the relevant existing (or planned) African Union policies, instruments, guidelines and other conventions applicable in the domain of qualifications frameworks or systems;
 - Contributes to an AU area of education and qualifications, based on converging elements and recommendations that eventually contribute to continental integration and mutual understanding while respecting the diversity of the national and regional context; and
 - Will evolve and be updated and enriched to reflect new developments, experiences and needs related with the transformation of learning and other drivers.
6. **ACQF governance options – feasibility report.** Started in October, completed and discussed the inception report and discussed the roadmap with AUC Division for Education. Presentation on the roadmap – on the agenda of the ACQF Advisory Group, 4th meeting (13/01/2022). Report in 3 languages accessible at [ACQF website](#).
7. **Capacity development programme** – composed of a combination of modalities of learning, notably peer learning webinars, support to countries and regions, training programmes, conferences.
- **Peer Learning Webinars (PLWs):** 12 PLWs conducted in 2020-2021. Shared 24 country cases and experiences (NQFs, quality assurance, recognition), and three regional cases - from Africa, Asia, Europe and Middle East. All learning materials, presentations, video learning materials are well organised in the dedicated [webpage](#) of ACQF website. A special library of [video learning materials](#) covering all real NQF cases presented at the PLWs has been created to ease access to this useful resource.
 - **Thematic briefs:** to support self-learning of key issues and topics on the domain of qualifications frameworks. Six thematic briefs are available at [ACQF website](#).
 - **Support to countries and RECs:** upon demand and building on the ACQF networking, which was established through peer learning webinars and research (ACQF Mapping Study), the ACQF project provides some technical / expert support, differentiated to meet the specific needs and in accordance with the level of development and implementation of the qualifications framework. This line of work has grown in 2021 and these are the main examples of cooperation:
 - **Angola: support to EU project RETFOP (2021):** ACQF developed, upon demand, a reference report on two themes: i) **TVET quality assurance**; ii) **Monitoring and evaluation of NQF / NQS / TVET**. This substantive reference report (in English and Portuguese) takes stock of global experiences and instruments and provides recommendations oriented to country application. The report was presented for a wide audience, at a webinar organised by RETFOP on 8 October 2021, and was uploaded in Capacity4Dev platform of the European Commission at: [Presentation](#) and [Report](#).
 - **Guiné-Bissau:** following the initial dialogue with the EU project RESEN, webinars were held with the working group facilitated by RESEN coordination to define needs, the approach and milestones. In October 2021 ACQF delivered the Baseline Mapping Report (unpublished) supporting the initial reflections and outlining a roadmap towards the NQF. This report was presented by RESEN at the regular donors’ coordination meeting on 11 November 2021.

- **Cameroun:** based on the dialogue and analysis of the ACQF Mapping report, started reflection with two ministries (Secondary Education and Higher Education) and the World Bank project on possibilities of cooperation with ACQF.
- **SADC Qualifications Framework:** high level of interest to cooperate with ACQF on capacity development for all SADC countries and a review of the state-of-play of implementation of SADCQF and recommendations for improvements going forward. In 2020 ACQF delivered the “Mapping Study report” (3 languages) and in 2021 the Report of “Review of implementation and Way Forward”. The latter was discussed at the meeting of SADCQF Technical Committee for Certification and Accreditation (TCCA), on 25/11/2021. Follow-up steps are planned for 2022.

8. Networking

- **With African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN):** partnership for AQVN programme of knowledge-sharing webinars (five events conducted between July and November 2021. Presented and discussed 16 experiences and cases – from Africa and Europe. All presentations and video recording are accessible at [ACQF website](#).
 - **With African Curriculum Association (ACA) and CESA Curriculum Cluster:** partnership in the development and conduction of the African School Curriculum Mapping Study. Report completed on 14/12/2021. Synthesis-infographic and dissemination webinar with stakeholders – indicatively in February 2022.
9. [ACQF Website](#) – launched **early** October and officially presented at the “Africa Creates Jobs Conference” (AUC-AUDA) on 3 November 2021.

5 ACQF Project: overview of main outputs and milestones 2022

In 2022 the ACQF project will complete the planned activities and deliver the main outputs, listed below:

1. **ACQF policy document.** Milestone: completion in June 2022
2. **ACQF Guidelines: full set (synthesis, technical and training modules).** Milestone: completion in June 2022.
Testing of some Guidelines with pilot countries – this applies especially to Guidelines 2 and 3. Period of testing: June-September 2022.
3. **Feasibility Study on ACQF governance options.** Milestone: completion in June 2022
4. **SADC Qualifications Framework:** completion of study and follow-up cooperation. Milestone: final activities after completion of report - until September 2022.
5. **Study on complementarities ACQF-AfCFTA.** Milestone: completion in November 2022
6. **Handbook on competence-based training.** Milestone: completion in November 2022.
7. **Capacity development programme:**
 - a) ACQF Peer Learning Webinars: thematic focus on Recognition of Prior Learning (three webinars). Period: February-March.
 - b) ACQF in-depth training programme: two 5-days programmes. April and September
 - c) ACQF Conference: October 2022

- d) Learning Management System (e-learning): established as prototype in April and further developed until July 2022
- e) Development of thematic briefs on new themes (e.g.: RPL, common profiles of qualifications, involvement of stakeholders from the world of work in NQFs and ACQF)
- f) Support to countries:
- Continuation of capacity development activities with Guinea Bissau: support to NQF working group, finalization of baseline analysis report, finetuning the NQF development roadmap, 3-days workshop (June 2022) for joint reflection, training and planning. Capacity development sessions online.
 - Cooperation with São Tomé e Príncipe: dialogue with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour; drafting of baseline analysis report and initial draft of NQF development roadmap; capacity development sessions online.
 - Cooperation with Mozambique: contribution to capacity development webinars of CNAQ 2022 – 6 presentations on themes of the NQF domain (May-October 2022).
 - Cooperation with Cape Verde: dialogue and technical support for comparison with EQF
 - Peer sharing and mutual learning sessions on NQF and RPL: Portuguese-speaking countries (April-July 2022).
- g) Cooperation with regions:
- Further work with SADC Secretariat and Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA): update and finalisation of report ‘Review of SADCQF implementation and way forward’. Presentation of final draft to TCCA meeting in April 2022 and Education Ministers meeting (June 2022).
 - Other regions contacted ACQF project for contributions to their regional dialogue, analysis and capacity development activities related to regional qualifications frameworks and policies: East Africa Community (IUCEA, on RPL) and IGAD (on RQF).
8. **ACQF AG meetings:** in 2022 two meetings are planned: 5th meeting on 26/May and 6th – in October. The ACQF AG will be invited to an extraordinary meeting specifically aimed at validation of the ACQF Policy and Technical Document. The date of this meeting will be confirmed by AUC ESTI Education division.

6 ACQF project: progress report in synthesis (2020 to May 2022)

Table 3: Outputs of ACQF project: planned (as per project planning document of November 2019) and achieved (as of 18/05/2022)

Planned		Status of actual implementation
<p>1. ACQF Policy and technical document.</p> <p>This is key planned output of the Output 5 of TA component of Skills for Youth Employability project.</p>	09/2022	<p>Draft 1 submitted to ACQF AG-4 for discussion and comments (13/10/2022)</p> <p>Consultation process: 1 month Jan-Feb 2022</p> <p>Draft 2 completed with annexes: delivered to AUC on 10/5/2022 for comments and sharing with ACQF AG members for meeting (26/5/2022).</p> <p>Translated – 3 languages (English, French, Portuguese). Note: Arabic version: July.</p> <p>Next steps:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation and discussion at AG-5 meeting (26/05/2022) - Validation workshop with AU member states (June 2022) - AUC to submit to STC-EST for discussion and validation
<p>2. Feasibility study</p> <p>This is an important planned output, underpinning the ACQF Policy and technical document</p>	07/2021	<p>Final draft submitted in June to ACQF AG-3 (28/07/2021). Published on ACQF Website (EN-FR-PT)</p>
<p>2. Technical guidelines</p> <p>Technical foundations supporting ACQF Policy and technical document. This output is additional to the original plan - to support sustainability and implementation of the ACQF.</p>	04/2022	<p>10 Technical Guidelines: draft 1 submitted and discussed at ACQF AG-4 meeting (13/01/2022) Consultation process: 1 month Jan-Feb 2022 Draft 2: finalised (04/2022). Translation underway. 10 Synthesis guidelines: completed. Incorporated in ACQF Policy and technical document (chapter 4). 10 Training Modules: completed. Published on Website, used at 1st ACQF training programme 18-22/04/2022</p>
<p>3. ACQF Mapping Study</p> <p>This is a planned output, laying the baseline evidence for the ACQF project work. Composed of country and REC reports (up to 10), comprehensive report, synthesis and infographic</p>	12/2020	<p>Completed: 13 country and 3 REC reports; comprehensive report, synthesis and infographic in 3 languages. Updates: 4 country reports updated in 2021 Finalised, published. Paper publication available</p>
<p>4. Capacity development programme: part 1</p> <p>Planned: 6-7 workshops in 2020-2022 – with some training sessions by workshop</p>	Up to 09/2022	<p>a) Concept paper of ACQF Capacity development programme. Presented and discussed at ACQF AG-2 (04/2021). b) 10 ACQF training modules: published on ACQF website and used for 1st training programme. c) 15 ACQF Peer Learning Webinars on key themes: NQF, RPL, QA, recognition, micro-credentials, qualifications registers. Average: between 70 to 100 participants per webinar. All learning materials published on ACQF website (Presentations, video recordings, results of polls) d) 1st ACQF Training Programme: 5 days programme (18-22/04/2022) completed. 100 participants. All learning materials (presentations, modules) published on ACQF website. All video recordings and results of polls uploaded on ACQF website. e) ACQF Thematic briefs: 9 briefs published. f) Learning Management System (LMS) established in April 2022: ACQF-LMS. First 2 courses integrated and in testing. Additional courses – in preparation in the Platform. LMS was tested for 1st ACQF Training Programme – to issue participants’ digital certificates.</p>

		<p><u>Planned until end of project:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) 2nd ACQF training programme: 5-9/09/2022, hybrid format, in South Africa. h) Integrate remaining 8 training modules in ACQF-LMS i) Open use of ACQF-LMS for self-paced training j) 2 webinars on micro-credentials (09/2022) k) 1 webinar on competence-based training (CBT) to present the handbook (11/2022)
<p>5.Capacity development programme: part 2 - cooperation with countries</p> <p>Planned: networking with countries through peer learning and exchanges</p>	Up to 11/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cooperation with Angola - project RETFOP (EU supported): delivered report on quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation in the context of TVET sector and policy. b) Cooperation with Guiné Bissau – project RESEN (EU supported): baseline analysis report; roadmap NQF development; support to formation of NQF working group. Planned: 3 days workshop in Bissau (June 2022); final report on vision and plans for NQF (October 2022) c) Cooperation with São Tomé e Príncipe: started dialogue and exchanges with Ministry of Education; 1st draft of baseline analysis report. Planned: discussion of baseline report; capacity building sessions.
<p>6.Capacity development programme: part 3 - cooperation with RECs</p> <p>Planned: networking with RECs and regional organisations through webinars</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) SADC: upon constructive exchanges with SADC Secretariat and participation in regular meetings of TCCA in 2020-2021, cooperation materialised in the review of SADCQF implementation and way forward. Delivered: comprehensive review report accompanied by an updated inventory of NQFs and related policies and tools in all countries of the region. Presentation and discussion at 2 TCCA meetings. Report will be published upon official validation by the meeting of Education Ministers. b) EAC: contribution to Experts’ meeting on RPL – development of a regional policy and approach, upon IUCEA’s invitation. Delivered extensive presentation on RPL, links to higher education, regional approaches to RPL. 11-12 April 2022. c) IGAD: dialogue on development of new RQF and links to ACQF capacity development programme, modules and analysis. Presentation to IGAD meeting (23/05/2022) on the EQF experience. d) ECOWAS: exchanges on NQF and RQF through ACQF Peer Learning Webinars; contribution to UNESCO workshop on NQFs (March 2022)

		e) Indian Ocean Commission (COI): contribution through presentation and dialogue – meeting on regional TVET development (February 2022).
<p>7.Capacity development programme: part 4 - research and thematic development</p> <p>Activities and initiatives beyond the main strand of research and thematic development (Mapping study, Feasibility Study, Guidelines) and cooperation with countries and RECs</p>		<p>a) Thematic webpages: on RPL (done), on micro-credentials (in development) on ACQF website.</p> <p>b) Report on RPL: a brief overview of concepts, achievements, lessons and 10 African cases. Published and disseminated at EAC Experts’ meeting, and 1st ACQF Training Programme.</p> <p>c) Inventory and overview on registers / databases of qualifications</p> <p>d) Comprehensive inventory and overview of NQFs in SADC</p> <p>e) Study: Mapping school curriculum in Africa. Jointly conducted with African Curriculum Association, and CESA Cluster. Completed study and report.</p> <p>f) Study and Handbook: competence-based training. Started.</p> <p>g) Study: exploring linkages and complementarities between ACQF and AfCFTA. Started.</p>

7 ACQF Peer learning webinars: brief overview

The ACQF project developed and tested the concept and approach of ‘Peer Learning Webinars’ in 2020, as a response to the confinement and constraints imposed by the regulations issued to protect people and societies in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This solution received widespread acceptance by the ACQF stakeholders in all involved African countries, regions and organisations. The AUC expressed appreciation for this approach and its benefits in terms of networking, knowledge-sharing and awareness raising on existing good practice across the continent.

The history of the 12 peer learning webinars of 2020-2021 is summarized in figure 3.

In 2020 the seven ACQF peer learning webinars shared and discussed the NQF / RQF experiences of 22 countries and regions (14 from Africa, and 8 from Europe, Middle East and Asia). In 2021, 5 webinars explored a wider range of themes, and included quality assurance, recognition of learning / qualifications, NQF – qualifications registers and databases, learning outcomes, levels and descriptors, school curriculum survey and micro-credentials. In 2022 the three ACQF peer learning webinars (Feb-March) were focused on RPL. A total of 11 cases were shared and discussed.

All learning materials, presentations, reports, results of polls, and video recordings are published on ACQF website: [Webinars](#). For users and learners interested in specific individual country and thematic cases, it is easy to search and access any of the 41 cases systematised at this resource: [Videos-real cases](#).

All learning materials, video recordings and resources on ACQF website are free, open, and public. African stakeholders, public and private organisations, social partners, experts, end users are encouraged to use these resources in the context of their relevant and appropriate initiatives, e.g. in training, policy dialogue, analysis, comparison and to share feedback with ACQF project via the ACQF website.

History: PLW 2020-2021

2020	National Qualifications Frameworks	Regional Qualifications Frameworks
Africa (14 cases)	Angola, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe – 12 cases	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF), East Africa Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE) – 2 cases
Other regions, continents (8 cases)	Bahrein, France, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenija – 5 cases	Arab Qualifications Framework (AQF), European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework – 3 cases

2021

National Qualifications Frameworks	Quality Assurance frameworks	Recognition of learning / Qualifications	NQF MIS /Databases Qualifications	Thematic focus
Seychelles	CAMES (Regional)	RPL (Kenya)	South Africa	✓ Learning outcomes
Namibia	ANAQ-Sup (Senegal)	AQVN	Kenya	✓ Levels and descriptors RQFs
NQF-TVET reform		Angola - INAARES		✓ School curriculum
Mozambique		Cabo Verde - ARES		✓ Micro-credentials (Cedefop)

Figure 3: Brief summary of countries and themes of the 12 ACQF peer learning webinars in 2020-2021.

Table 4: Summary overview of ACQF Peer Learning Webinars: 2020-2022

Item	Report – brief overview
Participants	<p>On average: between 65 and 110 in each webinar</p> <p>Approx. 60% of participants regularly attended several webinars</p> <p>Organisations represented: ministries, quality assurance authorities, NQF authorities, recognition bodies, education and training institutions, researchers and experts, social partners, RECs, international organisations.</p>
Languages	English, French, Portuguese
Cases: countries and regions presenting their systems, policies and experiences (alphabetic order)	<p><u>African countries:</u></p> <p>Angola, Cameroon, Cape Verde (three times), Egypt, Kenya (3 times), Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique (twice), Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa (twice), Zambia, Zimbabwe (twice).</p> <p>African regional / thematic organisations: AQVN, CAMES, AfECN</p> <p><u>Other regions and countries:</u></p> <p>Bahrein, France, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia</p> <p>EQF, ASEAN QRF, Arab Qualifications Framework</p> <p>Specialised organisations: CEDEFOP</p>

Peer learning webinars 2022: focus on RPL

People learn anytime, everywhere. Outcomes of prior learning in all contexts of life can be validated, recognised, certified to give people wings to new perspectives and opportunities in education and training, employment, entrepreneurship, better jobs, social inclusion. Across the world, countries and regional communities increasingly recognise the value of non-formal and informal learning and many are establishing systems to acknowledge competencies gained through non-formal and informal modalities.

The new overview of the ACQF project on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) / Validation of Competences gives an overview on RPL, viewed as component of national qualifications systems. Ten examples from African countries presented in this overview show some diversity in terms of scope, and design of RPL / Validation systems, but also several common traits: Angola, Cape Verde, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, and Zambia.

The ACQF project continued the programme of peer learning webinars in 2022. This new series focused on developments and practices in the domain of **Recognition of Prior Learning / Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience / Reconhecimento validação e certificação de competências (Reconhecimento de competências adquiridas)**. This series of three Peer Learning Webinars gathered policy makers, RPL professionals, employers, and experts to share experiences and debate on different policies and guidelines for RPL / VAE / RVCC-RCA, innovation in validation / assessment practices and tools, approaches to support inclusion of informal sector workers, migrants, and refugees. Cases from Africa and Europe were shared and discussed: ACQF Guideline on Validation of Learning, EU policy framework on validation of non-formal and informal learning, and nine country cases: Cape Verde, Zambia, Cameroon, France, South Africa, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Portugal.

The new page on [RPL at ACQF website](#) has been created in preparation of this series.

Webinar 1: 18/02/2022 (10.00-12.30 GMT)

Cases in discussion: 1) ACQF Guideline on Validation of Learning – presentation of draft; 2) European Union – 10 years of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning: lessons and way forward; 3) African country experiences: Cape Verde – new developments and practical application of RPL; 4) Discussion, poll and recommendations.

The full set of learning materials, presentations, video recording can be [accessed on the website](#).

Webinar 2: 03/03/2022 (10.00-12.30 GMT)

Cases in discussion: 1) Country cases and experiences: Zambia, Cameroon, France; 2) Discussion, poll and recommendations.

The learning documentation – presentations and videos – is at your disposal to consult and learn. Visit the [webinar page](#).

Webinar 3: 24/03/2022 (10.00-13.00 GMT)

Cases in discussion: 1) Country cases: South Africa, Senegal, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Portugal. 2) Discussion, poll and recommendations.

All learning materials, presentations and videos are accessible at the [webinar page](#).

Other peer learning webinars

Networking with African Qualifications Verification Framework: series of 5 peer learning webinars on recognition of qualifications

ACQF cooperated with AQVN in 2021, as networks working together for a common goal: transparency, comparability and mutual trust in qualifications and qualifications systems. Between July and November

2021 AQVN activated its networking via a programme of five knowledge-sharing, involving different countries and organisations from Africa and Europe. Recognition and verification policies and practices shared at this programme showed a diversity of approaches, but also a common ground, in which recognition, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks can play together for transparency of qualifications and fair mobility. The cases shared: Botswana, Cape Verde, Eswatini, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia, Sweden, France, ENIC-NARIC Networks and European Commission's policies in the domain of recognition. All presentations and video-recordings are accessible on the [dedicated resource](#) of ACQF website.

8 1st ACQF Training programme: brief overview

The 1st ACQF training programme was successfully conducted, fully online (Zoom).

Summary overview of the features of the programme, implementation, and participants' final evaluation

Training Programme: 'Skills and qualifications - towards better frameworks and systems for people's lifelong learning'.

Individuals, societies, economic systems, countries, and regions need more and better skills and qualifications for the green and digital transition, for equal opportunities, better jobs, resilience and democracy. This training programme aimed to refresh and upgrade knowledge on qualifications frameworks and systems; learn on new and digital tools supporting modernisation of qualifications and the response of qualifications frameworks and systems to the transformation of learning and work. It offered a good opportunity to be part of an inspiring learning journey with many other African and international participants.

Table 4: Main features and components of the 1st ACQF training programme

Item	Report – brief overview
Date and duration	18-22/April, 4,5h x 5 days
Participants (learners)	Average present at most sessions: 100 Countries represented: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Union of Comoros, Egypt, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe Representative of ECOWAS; staff of ETF.
Trainers and guest experts	ACQF Trainers: A. Bateman, C. Jaftha, E. Castel-Branco, K. Allgoo; JET Education services (E. Hazell, K. Shiohira); ZAQA (M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo, J. Mwewa) Guest experts: M. Chiyaba (ZAQA, Zambia); M. Dlamini, G. Hlatshwayo (ESHE, Eswatini), M. Khobotlo (CHE, Lesotho); S. Maindi (KNQA, Kenya); S. Cheney and P. Barker (Credential Engine, USA); M. Brown (Micro-Credentials Observatory, Ireland).
Languages	English, French, Portuguese
Certificates	Delivered through ACQF.LMS – upon completion of all training activities and submission of filled questionnaire.
Sessions and themes	Total: 25 sessions, including recapitulative summaries and assessment 1. ACQF: meta-framework. Policy, tools, guidelines 2. NQF: systemic view. Governance. Cases.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Occupations, skills, and qualifications. Classifications and taxonomies. Some results of the Global Inventory of NQFs 2021. 4. Development of qualifications. 5. Learning outcomes approach. Applications in different contexts. 6. Validation of learning – RPL 7. Validation of learning – CAT 8. Registers (databases) of qualifications. 9. Quality assurance in the context of NQF 10. International cases – registers (databases of qualifications): Credential Engine. 11. Innovation and technology in the context of NQFs, ACQF. 12. Micro-credentials: the global debate and research on the theme; role in LLL, place in NQFs 13. Monitoring and Evaluation – concepts, data, tools, examples. 14. ACQF – level descriptors 15. ACQF – referencing 16. ACQF – communication and outreach 17. Presentations of learners’ assessment exercises: 4 cases. 18. Final Poll – on all key themes of the programme <p>Note: the presentation on ‘Green and Digital Transitions – implications for learning, qualifications and ACQF’ was proposed for homework study (given the time constraints on the last training day). This PPT is accessible on ACQF website.</p>
<p>Learning and assessment</p>	<p>The training programme was based on a combination of presentations by the trainers; case studies to illustrate certain thematic aspects and issues (guest experts); and continuous assessment through polls addressing the topics of each presentation and questions and answers using chat box of Zoom.</p> <p>Used forms of consolidation and assessment of learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of learning and themes of the previous day: at starting session daily. Done by the learners. - Polls at all sessions addressing the themes and issues of top importance. - Homework – assessment tasks: interested participants prepared detailed responses to homework tasks related with Module 10 (NQF-systemic view) and Module 7 (Monitoring and Evaluation). These responses were presented at session 23 (learners from Botswana, Cameroon, Seychelles, and Tunisia). These 4 Presentations are uploaded on ACQF website. - A final poll covering all themes was conducted at session 25. - The questionnaire for delivery of the certificates was a complementary assessment exercise. <p>All PPTs and the 10 training modules were shared with all participants a week before the start (published on ACQF website). Every morning participants received an email reminding the agenda of the day, the URLs to each presentation and related training module.</p> <p>All results of Polls are accessible for further analysis.</p>

Participants’ evaluation of the training programme: results of the final survey

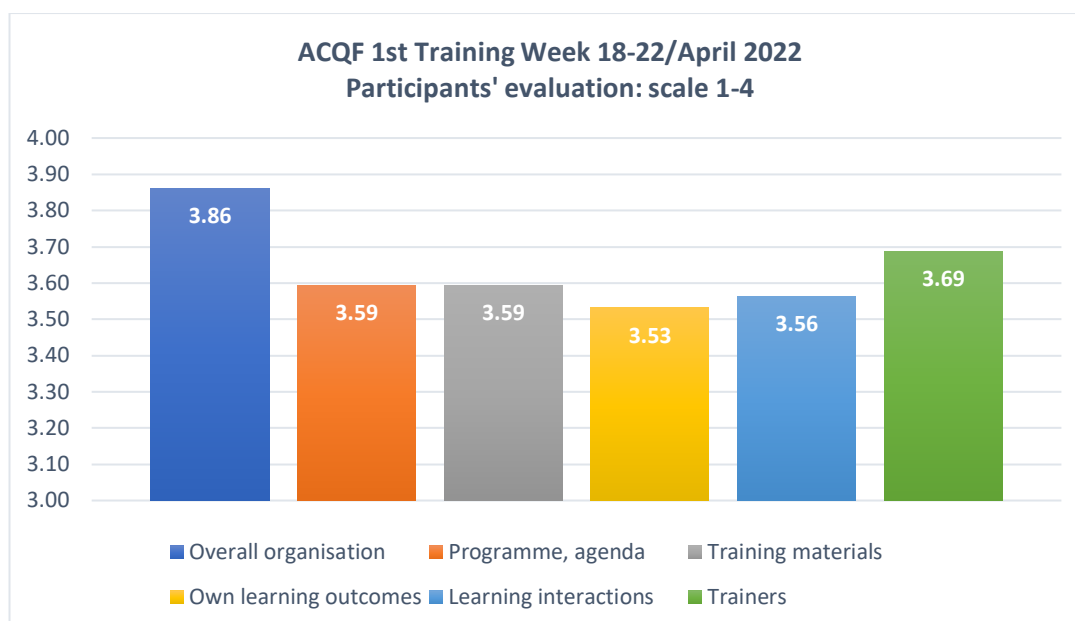


Figure 2: 1st ACQF training programme. Participants' evaluation of the programme, based on the final survey.

On a scale 1-4 participants who filled the final evaluation survey gave an average mark above 3.63 (maximum: 4) to the six dimensions of the survey. Figure 2 provides the overview of average marks by dimension. The highest marks were given to the two dimensions: overall organisation of the programme and trainers.

In addition, the final participants' evaluation survey gathered information on the themes / topics of highest interest in this programme and those preferred for the next ACQF training programme; and qualitative information on the participants' opinions concerning aspects that can be improved in upcoming training programmes.

Table 5: extract from participants' evaluation survey – question: 'What themes would you like to learn in the next training programme?'

Advanced and practical quality assurance lessons
Mettre en accent sur compétences entre les pays.
Development of Standards from identification to final product
Coding of National Qualifications
I would like to learn more about Monitoring and Evaluation
Stratégie mise en oeuvre CNC et référencement
To deepen the themes related to: - NQFs Monitoring and Evaluation - the relationship between RPL and CAT - RPL on Higher Education - the relationship between National Registration and registers of qualifications and International Registration?
Sistema de Créditos, Validação e Certificação das Entidades Formadoras
Secção de partilha de experiencia dos diferentes países sobre a Legislação no sector de ensino tecnico e profissional.
Comme thèmes supplémentaires, j'aimerais qu'on aborde, la "Stratégie de développement du CNQ dans un contexte des pays fragiles" où il n'y a pas un système structuré du système éducatif.
Cas pratique: élaboration d'un CNC

La spécificité de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'éducation par rapport à la formation professionnelle en terme de mise en place d'un système national de certification

Aborder plus en détails le système d'évaluation et de certification (organisation des évaluations, sujets d'évaluation, évaluateurs, logistique, octroi des diplômes.....

La liaison entre les qualifications partielles et/ou les formations de courte durée et les CNC

Comparison of qualification systems based on language identity:
francophone/anglophone/lusophone/hispanophone

ACQF in relation to other continents.

More on NQF

Internal Quality Assurance

Concise draft agenda of the Training programme

Agenda Training Programme 18-22 April 2022 (draft 15/Feb 2022)

Time: GMT	Day 1: Introduction, NQF - systemic view	Day 2: NQF - deeper view	Day 3: RPL, Credit accumulation transfer; databases qualifications	Day 4: Innovation & technology, M&E	Day 5: NQF-RQF /ACQF
09.00-9.30	Session 1: Opening, objectives, acquaintance	S6: Recap Day 1. Questions - poll (DK, KA)	S10: Recap Day 2. Questions - poll (2 trainees)	S15: Recap day 3. Questions - poll (2 trainees)	S19: Recap day 4. Questions - poll (2 trainees)
09.30-10.00	S2: Training Agenda, themes, learning path, methods	S7: Development of qualifications. Cases. (TM10, AB)	S11: Validation of learning - RPL (TM4, ZAQA)	S16: innovation & technology - rationale, benefits, screening, requirements, embedding. Micro-credentials and digital credentials. Applications in NQFs. (TM9, JET)	S20: ACQF - level descriptors (TM2, CJ)
10.00-10.30	S3: ACQF - metaframework. Policy, tools, guidelines (ecb, ejm)	Consolidation: TM10	S11: RPL in practice. Cases. (Kenya, EU) - TM4	Guest expert: Micro-credentials (15 min)	S21: Referencing to ACQF (TM3, CJ)
10.30-11.00	S4: NQF - a systemic view (G10, AB)	S8: Learning outcomes approach. TM1. CJ	S11: Validation of learning - Credit accumulation & transfer (CAT) (TM4-ZAQA)	Consolidation	S22: ACQF - communication and outreach (TM8, CJ)
11.00-11.15	Short break	Short break	Short break	Short break	Short break
11.15-12.00	S4: NQF - systemic view. NQFs in practice. NQF governance. Cases. Consolidation	S8: Learning outcomes approach. Level descriptors. Applications. TM1-2. CJ	S12: Registration of qualifications in NQF. African cases (TM6, ZAQA)	S17: M&E tool ACQF (TM7, JET)	S23: Presentations and application by trainees (4-5 persons)
12.00-12.30	Total: 105 min	Consolidation TM1-2	S13: Quality assurance - NQFs (TM5)		S24 Green and digital transitions - implications for learning, qualifications, ACQF (ECB)
12.30-13.00	S5: Occupations, skills, qualifications. Overview Global Inventory NQFs 2021 (ecb)	S9: Discussion: linking the dots. Poll - main issues	<u>12.45-13.30</u> S14: International cases DB qualifications – Credential Engine (US)	S18: Discussion: linking the dots. Poll - main issues	S25: Final Q&A. Poll
13.00-13.30	Q&A	Q&A	<u>12.45-13.30 (Continued)</u> S14: International cases DB qualifications – Credential Engine (US)	Q&A	S28: Final outcomes of training. Feedback. Conclusion. Closure.

9 Sources

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021a. Towards the African Continental Qualifications Framework – Mapping report. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: J. Keevy, A. Bateman, E. Castel-Branco, L. Mavimbela, J. Adotevi, L. Sutherland, R. Matlala, U. Kyari and T. Sibiya. <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study/acqf-mapping-report-comprehensive>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021b. Towards the African Continental Qualifications Framework – Synthesis. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: J. Keevy, A. Bateman, E. Castel-Branco, L. Mavimbela, J. Adotevi, L. Sutherland, and R. Matlala. <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study/acqf-mapping-report-synthesis>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021c. Brief overview of progress – 2021. Author: Eduarda Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/webinars/2021-progress-report-acqf-development-project>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021d. Feasibility report. Rationale, scenarios and plan. Authors: E. Castel-Branco, E. Mukhwana, et al. <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/feasibility-study>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021e. Thematic Brief 1. Concepts and definitions on qualifications and qualifications frameworks. Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021g. Thematic Brief 3.1. Level descriptors in qualifications frameworks. Overview from 24 African qualifications frameworks. Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-3-1-level-descriptors>

ACQF. (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021f. Thematic Brief 4.1: Regional Qualifications Frameworks. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-4-1-regional-qualifications-frameworks-rqf>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021h. Thematic Brief 6.1. Quality assurance for technical vocational- education and training (TVET). Overview of approaches or regional/ international organisations. Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-6-1-tvet-quality-assurance>

ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework). 2021i. Thematic Brief 11. Governance of NQF / NQS. Author: E. J. Mukhwana. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-11-governance-of-nqfs-nqs>

ACQF. 2022a. Training module 1: Learning Outcomes in Qualifications Frameworks and Systems. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: C. Jaftha. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-1-learning-outcomes>

ACQF. 2022b. Training module 2: Levels and level descriptors. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: C. Jaftha. Contributors: A. Bateman, E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-2-levels-and-level-descriptors-in-the-context-of-acqf>

ACQF. 2022c. Training module 3: Referencing to ACQF. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: C. Jaftha, E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-3-referencing-to-acqf>

ACQF. 2022d. Training module 4: Validation and recognition of learning. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo and J. Mwewa. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-4-validation-and-recognition-of-learning>

- ACQF. 2022e. Training module 5: Quality Assurance in the context of ACQF. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: E. Castel-Branco, K. Allgoo. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-5-quality-assurance-in-the-context-of-the-acqf>
- ACQF. 2022f. Training module 6: Registration and databases of qualifications. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: M. Chiyaba, M. Hamalabbi, F. Cheelo and J. Mwewa. Contributor: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-6-registers-databases-of-qualifications>
- ACQF. 2022g. Training module 7: Monitoring and evaluation in the context of qualifications frameworks or systems. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: Eleanor Hazell, Zahraa McDonald et al. Contributor: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-7-monitoring-and-evaluation-the-context-of-nqfs-and-acqf>
- ACQF. 2022h. Training module 8: Communication and outreach in the context of NQF and ACQF. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: C. Jaftha. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-8-communication-and-outreach-in-the-context-of-nqf-acqf>
- ACQF. 2022i. Training module 9: Innovation and technology in the context of qualifications systems. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Authors: K. Shiohira, P. Molokwane. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-9-innovation-and-technology-in-the-context-of-qualifications-and-nqfs>
- ACQF. 2022j. Training module 10: Qualifications and qualifications frameworks: the systemic view. AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme – SIFA Technical Cooperation. Author: A. Bateman. Contributor: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules/training-modules-1-to-10-english/training-module-10-qualifications-and-qualifications-frameworks-a-systemic-view>
- ACQF. 2022k. Thematic Brief 8: Qualifications Frameworks in a changing world. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-8-qualifications-frameworks-in-a-changing-world>
- ACQF. 2022l. Thematic Brief 9. Competence-based training – a brief overview Author: E. Castel-Branco. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-9-competence-based-training-cbt-a-brief-overview>
- ACQF. 2022m. 12 NQFs in Africa: key features. <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study/12-nqfs-in-africa-key-features-2022>
- African Union. 2015. Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf
- African Union. 2019. Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth (2019–2028). <https://edu-au.org/resources/category/42-plan-of-action-for-the-african-decade-for-technical-professional-entrepreneurial-training-and-youth-employment>
- ASG-QA (African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). <https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/african-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-asg-qa/>