



The Learning Outcomes Approach in the EU

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Taller OIT 'Avanzando
hacia un marco regional
de cualificaciones'
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Structure

1. The 'problem' and its context
2. The shift to 'learning outcomes'
3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning
4. European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
5. Connecting validation and EQF



'The problem'

Lack of transparency, comparability and portability

Main objectives:

Make citizens' mobility rights a reality

Facilitate the effective use of human resources

Promote LLL

1

EU Single market



- ▶ Free mobility of capital, goods and services & people/ workers >
- ▶ Requires mutual recognition of qualifications
- ▶ European Directives for the automatic recognition of professional qualifications (i.e. 2005/36/EC) -specific qualifications to work in a regulated profession- based on harmonisation of education and training (doctor, midwives, nurse, dentist, pharmacist, veterinary surgeons, architect).
- ▶ Automatic recognition based on professional experience or a combination of experience and training (in trades, commerce, industry)



Mobility of workers and efficiency

- ▶ General system for the mutual recognition of regulated professions (individual case) need to register with the competent professional body which grants right to practice in the host country (may take some months to get a decision, may need a period of adaptation of up to 3 years, a test or take some additional training, etc.)



THE EU SINGLE MARKET

Regulated professions database

[European Commission](#) > [Internal Market](#) > [Free movement of professionals](#) > [Regulated professions database](#)

The database contains information on regulated professions, statistics on migrating professionals, contact points and competent authorities, as provided by EU Member States, EEA countries, the UK and Switzerland.



IS MY PROFESSION REGULATED IN ANOTHER COUNTRY?

Country where you got your qualification:

Country where you wish to practice:

Profession you wish to practice:

Fill here a generic name of a profession in the site language, or if not possible, the name of the regulated profession in the language of the home or host country.

SUBMIT

CLEAR



SEARCH SPECIFIC PROFESSIONS/COUNTRIES

- [Generic names of professions](#)
- [Regulated professions by country, with competent authorities](#)



STATISTICS

Professionals moving abroad (establishment)

- [Overall statistics](#)
- [Geography of mobility](#)
- [Ranking - the most mobile professions](#)

Temporary mobility

- [Overall statistics](#)
- [Geography of mobility](#)
- [Ranking - the most mobile professions](#)

Interactive map



USEFUL LINKS

- [Assistance centres](#)
- [National websites on regulated professions](#)

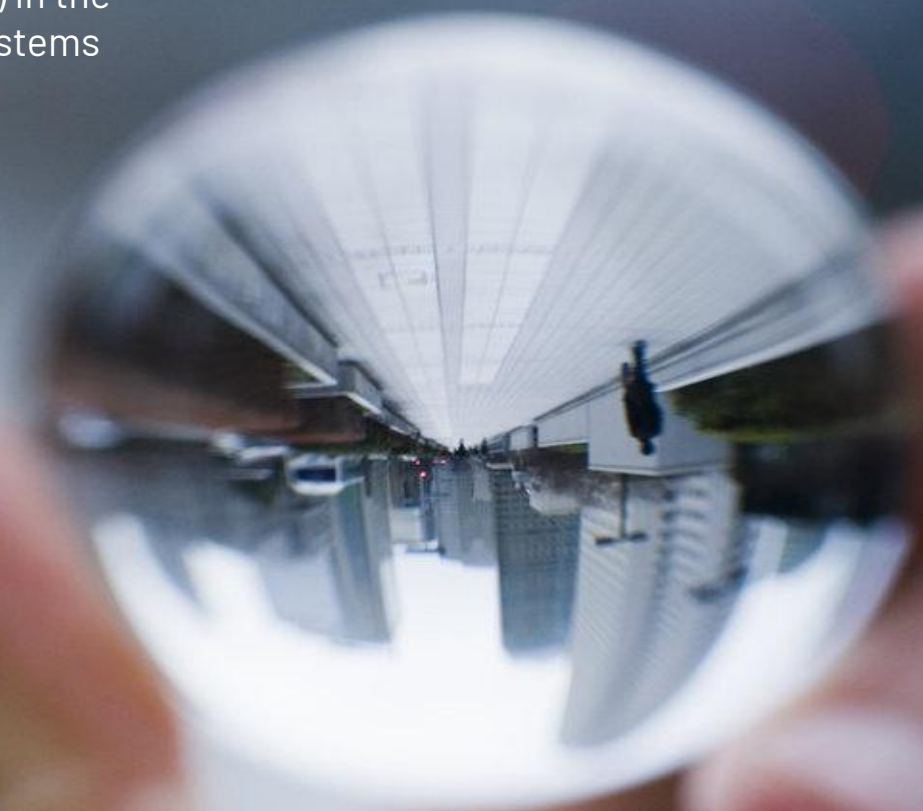
Many occupations and qualifications are not regulated professions

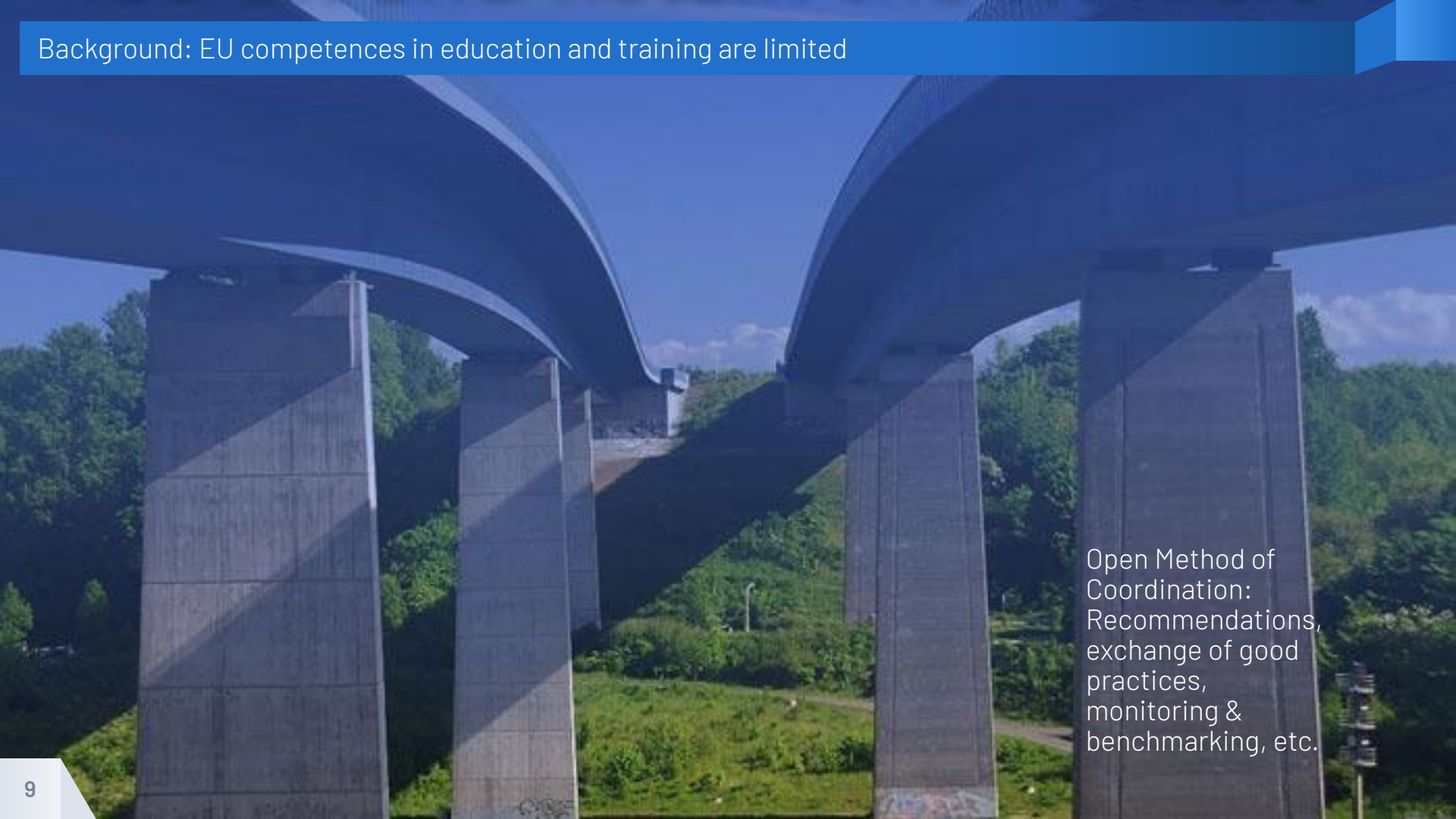


Transparency important for these
(although the EQF is also useful for
regulated occupations).

Transparency: The degree of visibility and legibility of qualifications, their content and their value (...) in the labour market and in education and training systems (Cedefop 2004)

Ecosystem: Initiatives I will talk about today, but also others such as Lisbon Recognition Convention, Europass framework (CV; interoperability national and EU qualification databases), ECTS/ ECVET, modularisation & micro-credentials, European Classification of Skills Competences and Occupations, etc.





Open Method of
Coordination:
Recommendations,
exchange of good
practices,
monitoring &
benchmarking, etc.

Learning Outcomes

Connecting education
and training systems & the labour market

2

// L0: statements of what a learner is expected to know, be able to do and understand following the completion of a learning sequence

(Cedefop 2014)



The 'shift' to learning outcomes

European Commission Memorandum on LLL (2000) signalled the start of a transition to more flexible education and training systems that facilitate lifelong and lifewide learning

Inputs

Syllabi, course duration, location

It is difficult to compare and recognise as equivalent. Makes accumulation and recognition across institutions and countries more difficult. Focuses on origin of the learning.

Outcomes

Knowledge, skills, competences/ responsibility & autonomy

Facilitates mutual recognition by means of equivalences -no only between educational institutions but also between education and the labour market. Focuses on the content of the learning.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Making all learning visible and trusted

3



a) formal learning means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education;

b) non-formal learning means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (...); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; (...) in-company training, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations

c) informal learning means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective

(Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2012)



Definition & stages in making learning visible



Identification

Of LOs acquired through non-formal and informal learning (self-assessment &/ or advisers)

Documentation

Which often includes collection of evidence (portfolio of previous work/ evidence of professional experience, reflection on LOs acquired, etc.)

Assessment

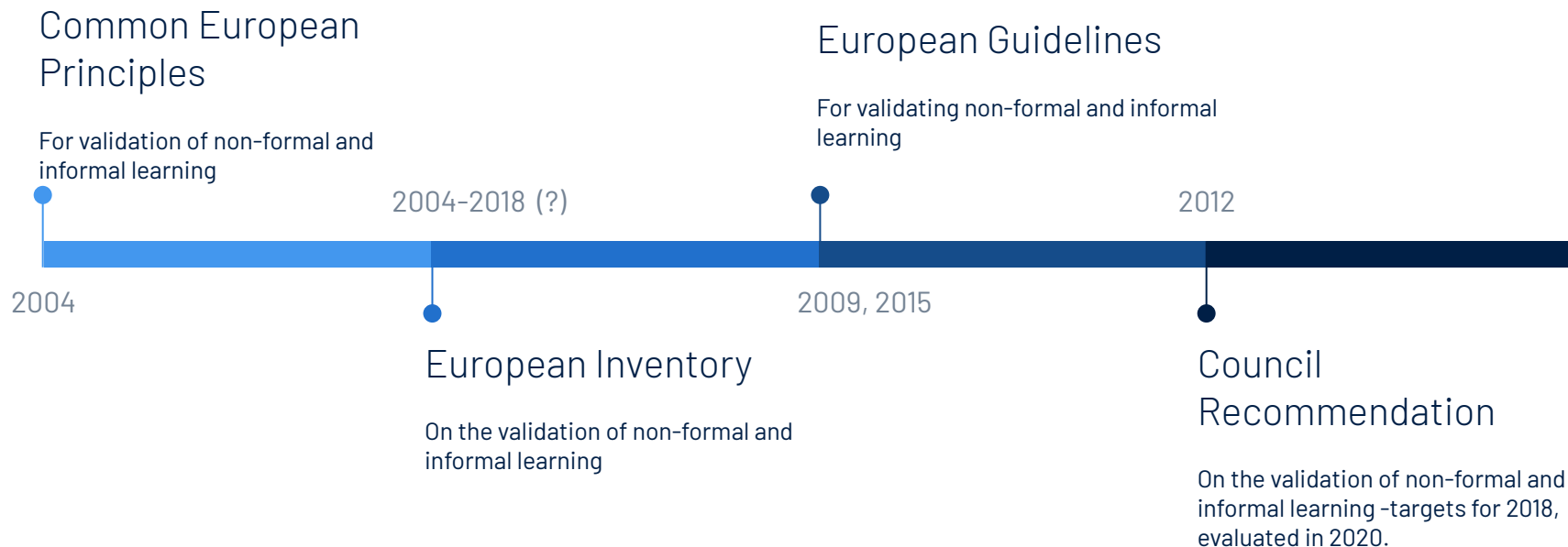
Against certain reference points/ standards (tests, evidence from previous work, examination of portfolios, demonstrations, etc.).

Certification

By means of a qualification, credits or other appropriate means awarded by a competent authority

Not necessarily all stages

Political initiatives



25,000



Qualifications at all levels delivered yearly through VAE system

Qualifications (approx. 7,000 quals. in 2021) awarding institutions are required to offer VAE/ have processes in place.

Employers required to make employees aware of VAE in annual performance appraisal interviews & employee leave right

Progressive reduction in the number of years of experience required to access the system and expansion of what is considered experience



Challenges

The provision of training in the formal system is not modular enough, and this rigidity prevents access to learning for only the competences that are missing.

Composition of participants socially skewed (females; those who already hold formal education qualifications)

Reliance on some sectors such as health -a small number of of quals make up for over half of the applications (Wequin 2021; see also European Inventory u18)

Need to enhance IAG to applicants (including on funding); further professionalise staff.

European Qualifications Framework

4



4a. EQF

Qualifications recognition advice

The advice presented does not represent access to employment, a regulated profession or education and training. The information provided may assist an employer, professional recognition body or education and training provider determine if an applicant holds the qualifications deemed necessary for employment/programme entry. However, final recognition decisions for the purposes of accessing further education and/or employment are made by education institutions, professional recognition bodies and employers.

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) for Ireland is used to place foreign qualifications in the context of the Irish education and training system. The major awards in the NFQ have been referenced to the EQF and aligned to the QF-EHEA.



EQF: Aims and objectives

1

Aims

Transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications

2

Wider objectives

Contribute to modernising E&T systems and increase employability, mobility and social integration.
Better linking formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Target 1: Develop NQF and reference to EQF (by 2010)(4 did)
Target 2: Certificates clear reference EQF level (by 2012)(1-2 did, no common approach had been developed)

EQF National Coordination Points (information, update, maintenance)
EQF Advisory Group (2008/9-): Member States, Social Partners, other Stakeholders (has met over 50 times)
Common Principles for Quality Assurance of Qualifications -see 2017 EQF Recommendation

EQF: 8 levels

	Level	
Qualification Country A	8	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	7	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	6	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	5	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	4	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	3	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	2	Qualification Country B
Qualification Country A	1	Qualification Country B

EQF Advisory Group developed detailed criteria to guide the referencing process -summary in 2017 EQF Recommendation

30+ countries NQF/ EQF level mentioned explicitly in the qualification

More emphasis on development of criteria to compare third country NQFs and regional frameworks with EQF

08	Most advanced specialised skills/ extend & redefine knowledge/ critical problems
07	Specialised problem solving skills/research/ innovation new knowledge integrate different fields
06	Advanced skills generate creative solutions to complex/ unpredictable problems
05	Comprehensive range skills generate creative solutions to abstract problems
04	Range skills generate solutions to specific problems
03	Range of skills to solve problems selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information
02	Basic skills to use relevant information solve routine problems using simple rules/ tools
01	Basic skills to carry out simple tasks

[There are also descriptors for knowledge + responsibility/ autonomy]

— Level 1 - learning outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context

— Level 2 - learning outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy

 Portugal	 EQF Levels	 Italy
NQF 8 Doctoral degree (Doutoramento) ▲ Biotecnologia Molecular e Celular Aplicada às Ciências da Saúde/ Molecular and Cellular Biotechnology Applied to Health Sciences Ciências do Mar/ Science of the Sea Informática/ Computing	EQF Level 8	NQF 8 Research doctorate - Dottorato di ricerca ▼ Academic diploma for research training - Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca ▼ Specialisation diploma - Diploma di specializzazione ▼ Second level university master . Master universitario di secondo livello ▲ Master in chirurgia estetica, Master in digital humanities Academic specialisation diploma - Diploma accademico di specializzazione ▼ Higher specialisation diploma or master - Diploma di perfezionamento o Master ▼
NQF 7 Master degree (Mestrado) ▲ Arquitetura/ Architecture Medicina/ Medicine Ensino de Dança/ Dance Teacher Training	EQF Level 7	NQF 7 Master degree - Laurea magistrale ▼ Second level academic diploma - Diploma accademico di secondo livello ▼ First level university master - Master universitario di primo livello ▼ Academic specialisation diploma - Diploma accademico di specializzazione ▼ Higher specialisation diploma or master - Diploma di perfezionamento o Master ▼



Some key points

NQFs

Many countries developed their NQFs first, to then reference those to the EQF and this is updated. Keep in mind that this is not a straightforward task and some qualifications may be in between levels. L5 particularly tricky (intersection general, vocational and higher education).

International quals

And third country quals., MOOCs, etc. Risk to assign these to different levels in the NQF -need procedures to exchange information and assign levels

Benefits of its own

Lithuania, Estonia: identification of gaps in L5 provision. Portugal redesigned VET qualification profiles as gaps appeared when describing them in terms of LOs.

Trust + visibility

Underlines the importance of QA

Also continuous care and updating as quals. systems change

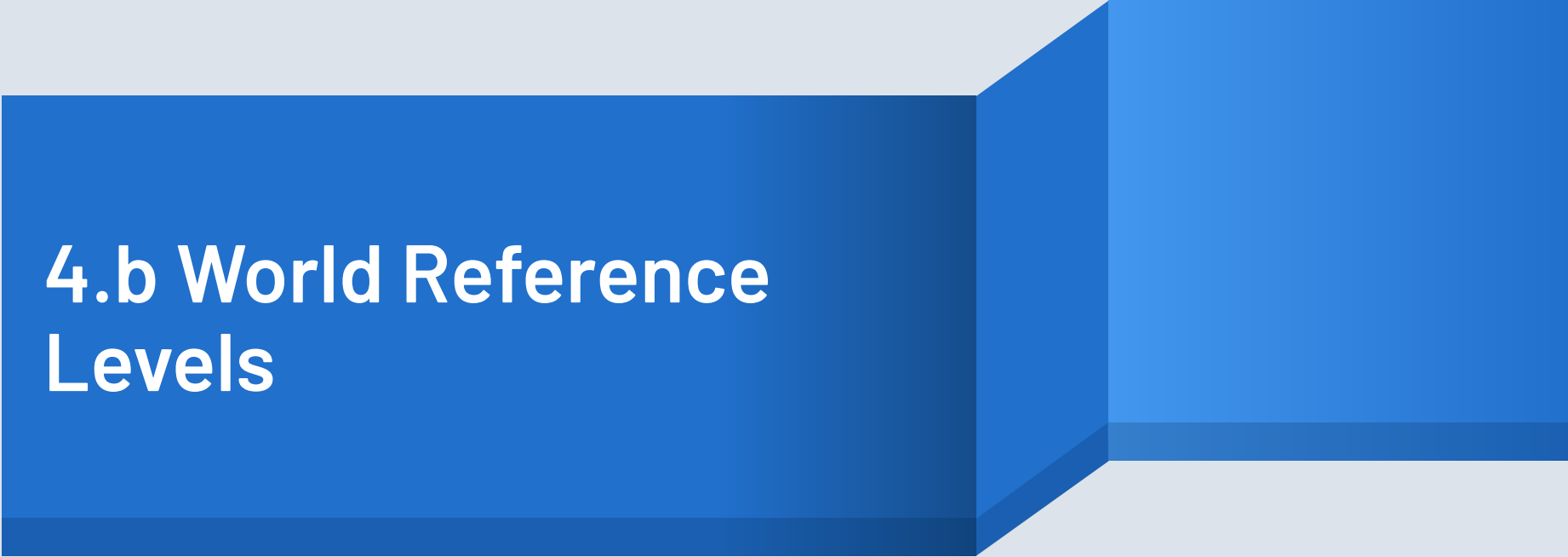
Visibility is needed for EQF to achieve its aims and objectives

E&T sector

Tended to dominate the first part of the process (as noted in the EQF evaluation) -with consequences for the inclusion of private qualifications and micro-credentials

Connection to other programmes

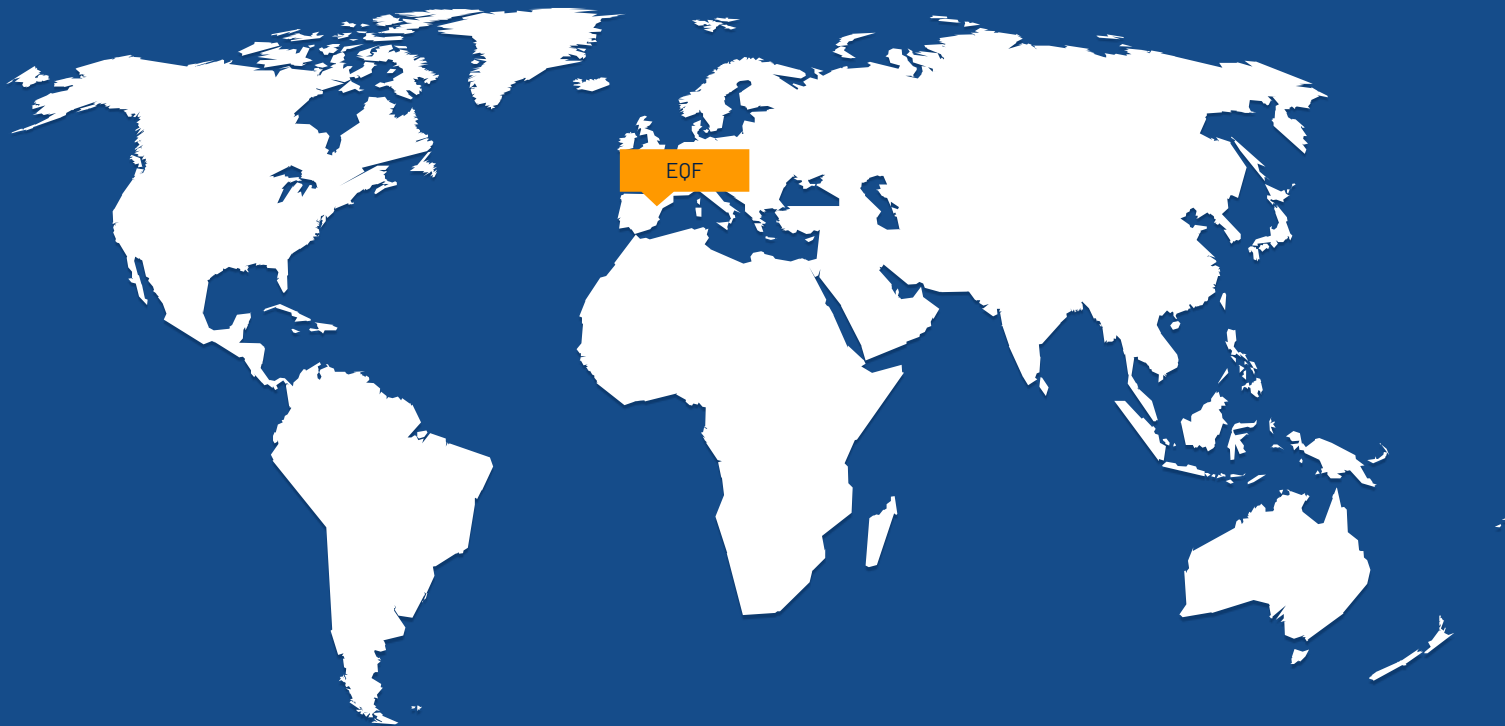
Pilot project, Peer Learning Activities, LLL funded NCPs, etc.

A blue 3D rectangular block is positioned on a light gray background. The block has a front face, a top face, and a right side face. The front face is a dark blue rectangle containing the text '4.b World Reference Levels' in white. The top and right side faces are a lighter shade of blue. The block is oriented horizontally, with its front face facing left.

4.b World Reference Levels

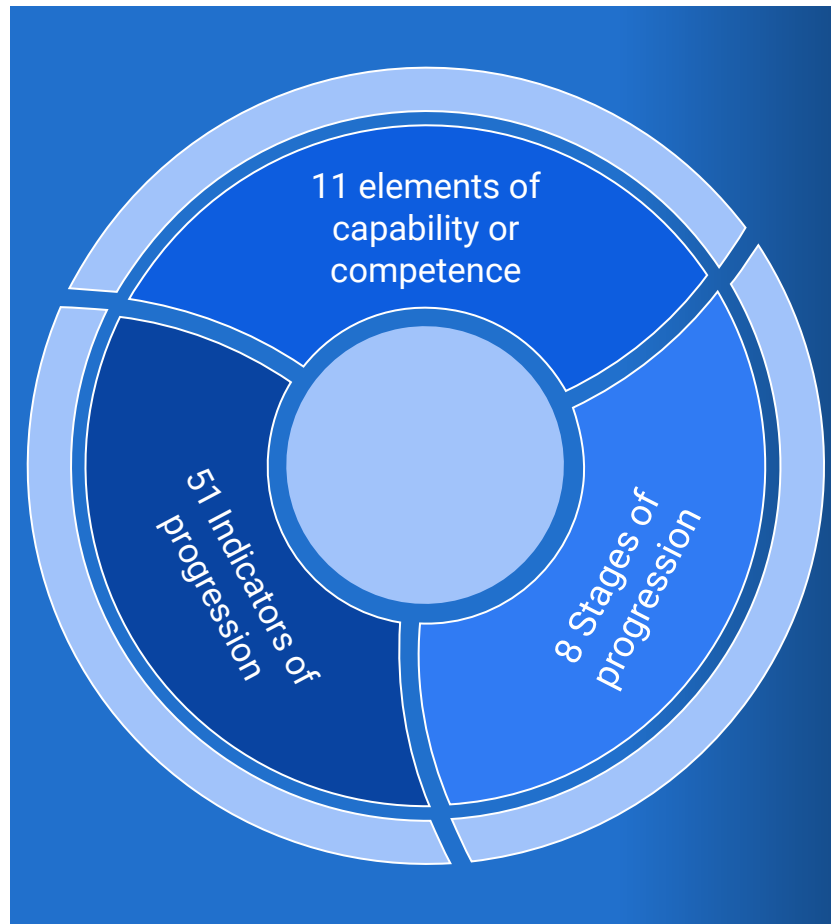


Inspired NQFs outside the EU & regional frameworks



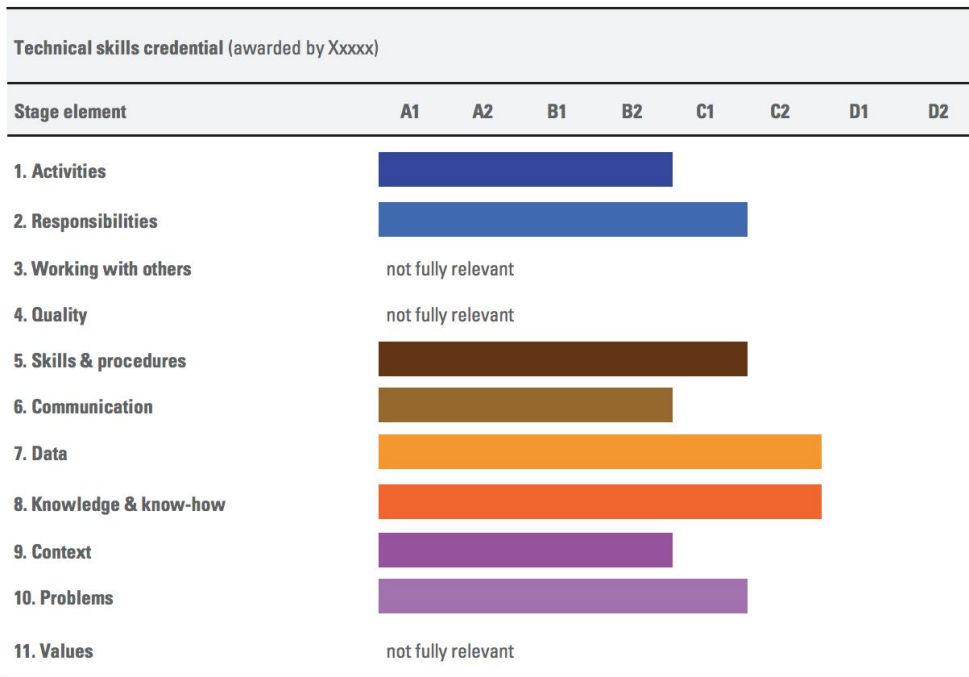
World Reference Levels

Tool developed by UNESCO to facilitate international transparency/ comparison of learning outcomes, creating profiles of LOs



World Reference Levels

Figure 1-4. WRL profile



8 competence levels

11 elements

Source: Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualification frameworks 2019 vol.1

World Reference Levels

“Accessing and using Data” (example of question and indicators of progression with associated levels)

Which of the following is/are most appropriate to describe the procedures related to data referred to or implied in the specification being profiled?

- ☐ Use simple numerical procedures or programs as instructed [A1]
- ☐ Use familiar numerical procedures or programs [A2]
- ☐ Use routine arithmetical procedures or programs [B1]
- ☐ Select routine mathematical procedures or programs [B2]
- ☐ Use mathematical/statistical procedures or programs which require some specialised knowledge or know-how or expertise [C1]
- ☐ Select mathematical/statistical procedures or programs which require specialised knowledge or expertise [C2]
- ☐ Collaborate or advise on the design of specialised mathematical/statistical processes or programs [D1]
- ☐ Collaborate or advise on the design of highly specialised mathematical/statistical processes or programs [D2]
- ☐ None of the above

Connecting validation and the EQF

5

// Qualifications are the formal outcome of an assessment and validation process by a competent authority and typically take the form of documents such as certificates or diplomas. They determine that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. Those learning outcomes may be achieved through a variety of paths in formal, non-formal or informal settings.

(EQF Recommendation 2017)

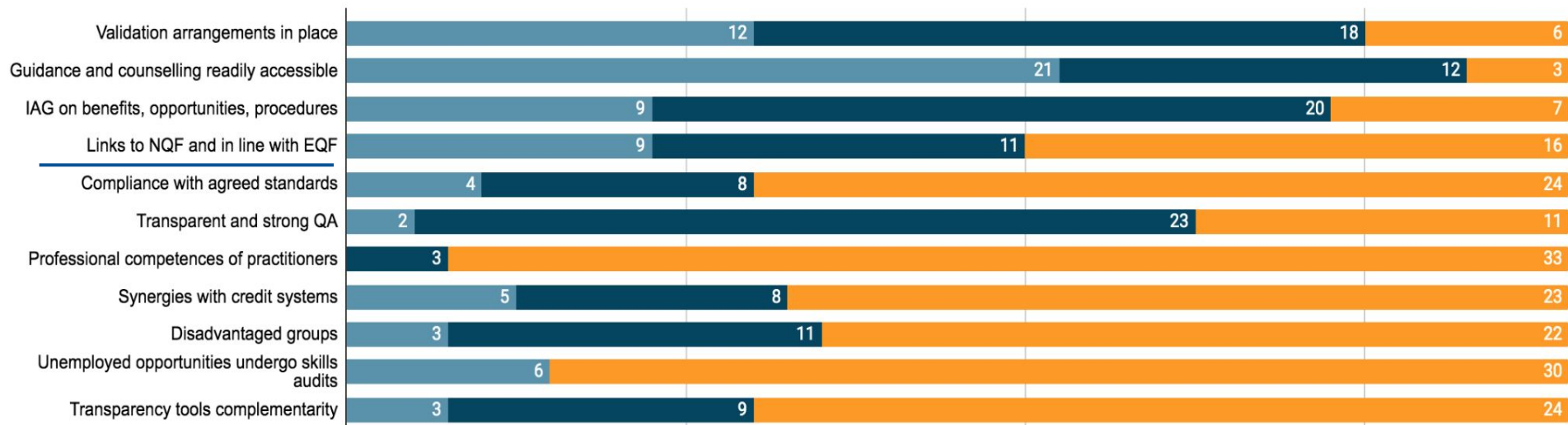


Connecting validation and the EQF



NQFs based on LO descriptors 'provide reference for validation of non-formal learning'; enable the inclusion of learning taking place outside formal education, at work and during leisure time.

■ High level of implementation ■ Medium ■ Low



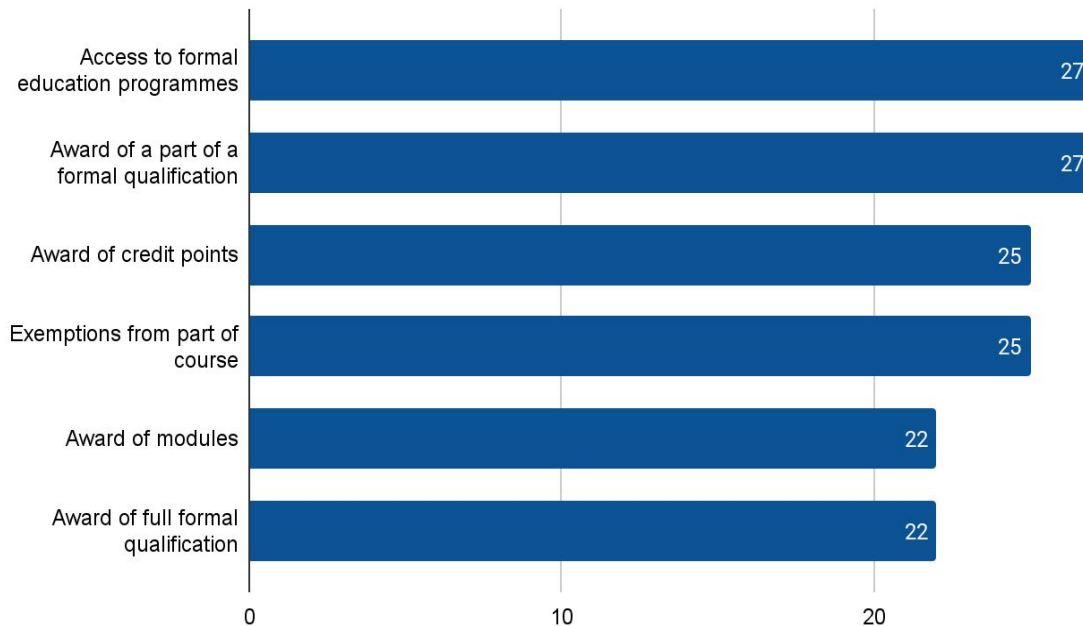
Source: European Inventory 2018

Connecting validation and the EQF



The most prevalent link is that validation gives access to formal education and leads to the acquisition of a part of a formal qualification.

There is still some way to go in the labour market and third sector areas, where various countries still do not have a link between validation and the NQF



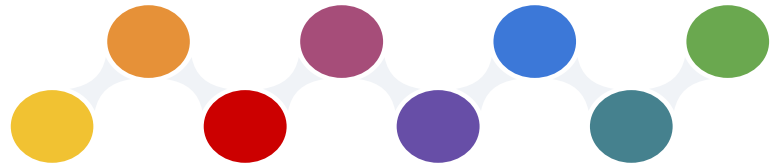


Connecting validation and the EQF

The development of NQF sand the EQF has represented a shift towards LOs and has been an important driver of validation initiatives in several countries (i.e. Greece, Croatia, Malta, Poland and Belgium).

Countries have been broadening the scope of their NQFs, aiming to become comprehensive frameworks & maps for lifelong and lifewide learning:

- ▶ Most now include all nationally recognised qualifications at all levels from VET, general, higher and adult education
- ▶ In recent years they have also increasingly captured qualifications awarded outside of formal education and training (e.g. private providers, companies, international bodies), and
- ▶ Help validate non-formal and informal learning.



Thank you!

Any questions?

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