



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

# Do national qualifications framework matter?

European experiences

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# European NQFs – Cedefop's evidence

Qualifications at  
EQF level 5

Learning outcomes

Validation of non  
formal and  
informal learning

Reforms in VET  
curricula

NQF monitoring  
and analysis

International  
qualifications

Review and  
renewal of VET  
qualifications

Quality of  
certification in VET

Global inventory of  
RQFs and NQFs  
(Unesco, ETF ,  
Cedefop)



## NQFs in Europe today

- 39 countries – **43 NQFs** - different stages
- Towards **comprehensive frameworks**
- Learning-outcomes-based levels
- **'Loose'** frameworks
- Wide range of functions/roles:  
**communication / transparency vs regulatory role**
- International **comparability of qualifications**



## Contribution of NQFs - what does evidence show?



**Improved transparency  
and understanding of  
national education and  
qualifications systems**

- **Comprehensive map of qualifications – common language**
- NQFs are being ‘filled’ with qualifications – qualifications register – clear progress
- **Levels** are becoming (more) **visible in certificates and qualifications databases**
- **Identifying gaps in provision** of qualifications



## Contribution of NQFs - what does evidence show?

**Cross-sectoral stakeholder involvement and coordination increasingly formalised**

- Permanent national qualifications councils or other bodies with stakeholders from different parts of education and labour market
- Differences across countries in involving social partners

Making broader range of qualifications visible:  
**opening towards 'non-formal' qualifications**

- Increasing attention: Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, Norway, Austria
- Commitment of stakeholders outside formal system crucial



## Contribution of NQFs - what does evidence show?



**Reinforced and more consistent use of learning outcomes**

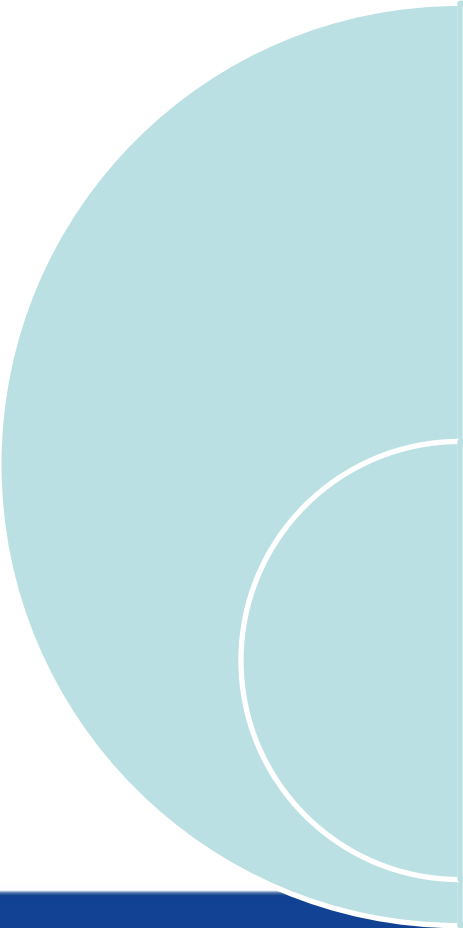
- comprehensive NQFs - most important tool
- Dialogue between education and labour market
- Renewal of standards, curricula and assessment

**Updated and extended qualifications standards**

- **Review and renewal:** may increase input from employers; risk of proliferation of (unused) qualifications
- **New qualifications,** filling gaps in provision – EQF level 5



## Contribution of NQFs - what does evidence show?



**Comprehensive NQFs  
make higher VET visible  
(EQF levels 5-8)**

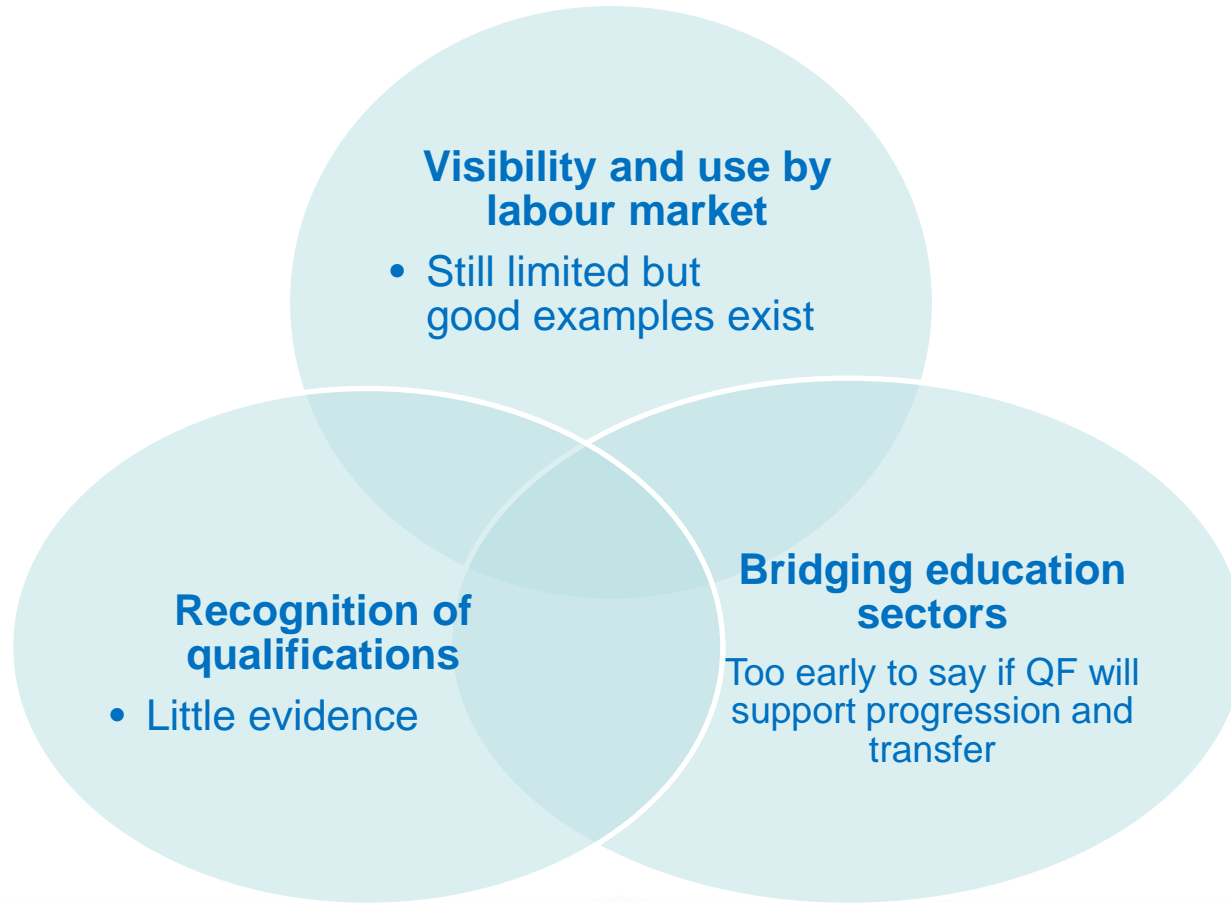
- VET & general/academic qualifications at the same level formally – acceptance and parity of esteem?

More systematic  
implementation of  
**validation of non-formal  
learning**

- Enabling tool for validation
- From fragmented to more coordinated national validation approaches
- More common in IVET, CVET and HE than general education



# NQFs have not reached end-users yet







## Challenges in evaluating NQFs

- Many NQFs are still at early stage of implementation
- Evidence of positive outcomes of the development and implementation process
- Few NQFs in Europe – subject to systematic evaluation
- Most research on NQFs seem to relate to early frameworks in English speaking countries





## Challenges in evaluating NQFs

- Contextualisation: social, political and institutional context matter
- NQFs are multilevel and dynamic tools, a range of purposes, multiple stakeholders and objectives
- Change: NQFs evolve and change their functions over time
- Limited causality: complexity of social and political phenomena
- Methodological complexity

By which yard stick to measure dreams?

*Source: Pilcher et al.*



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