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European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



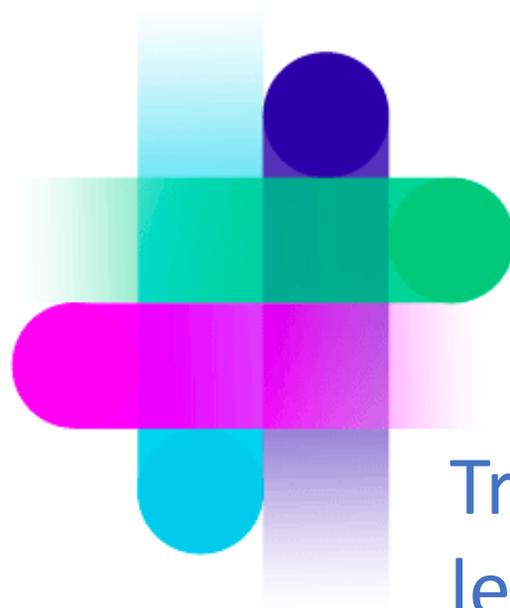
## Making learning progression a reality

Learners in the spotlight

**21 February 2024**

Virtual event

#learningoutcomes



## Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey

Session 1: European policy initiatives on  
transparency and transferability of learning  
outcomes: synergies, success, and future pathways

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# Main tools and initiatives analysed

## Quality assurance

- European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) – 2000
- Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) – 2005 and 2015
- European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) 2009 and 2020

## Credit accumulation and transfer

- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) – 1985
- European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) – 2009-2020

## Comparability of skills and qualifications

- European Qualifications Framework (EQF) -2008 and 2017
- Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) – 2005
- Europass (Diploma supplement, Certificate supplement, and Europass portal) – 2004 and 2018
- The multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, and Occupations (ESCO) -2017
- Recommendation on key competence framework – 2006-2018
- Recommendation on Microcredentials – 2020

## Validation

- Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) – 2012

## Recognition

- Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) on recognition of academic qualifications –1997
- Directive on Professional Qualifications (PQD) – 2005 and 2013
- Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad – 2018

# Relationships between tools: overarching messages

- There is **considerable overlap** between initiatives in terms of their **aims and objectives**. They also build on **similar concepts**.
- In particular: shared focus on increasing transparency and transferability **underpinned by learning outcomes**.
- At the same time, **there are differences in how they have been implemented and/or coordinated**.
- **The EQF stands out for the number of connections/links with other tools and initiatives** within the same and across different thematic areas (and sectors). Together with Validation: examples of cross-sectorial initiatives.

# Examples in more detail: quality assurance in HE and VET

## Relationships between tools: ENQA/ESG; EQAVET

- Developed with **same core objectives** and they share **similar principles and concepts**.

However:

- **Significant differences in governance and implementation** (due to HE/VET 'divide').
- **Generally mirrored at national level:** mixed results in relation to enhancing dialogue between HE and VET.

## Relationships with other tools

### HE (ENQA/ESG):

- **Strong links with the 'Bologna instruments':** QF-EHEA; ECTS; Diploma Supplement (Europass). Also links with EQF/NQFs.

### VET (EQAVET):

- **Aligned objectives** with EQF and ECVET
- **However, perception of 'operating in silos'** over time; limited ECVET implementation nationally

### Validation: aligned aims (ESG; EQAVET). However:

- **HE:** no common position; not a priority nationally
- **VET:** focus on formal learning; alignment with EQAVET nationally is not strong

### Recognition

- **HE:** links with mutual recognition of academic qualifications
- **VET:** Recommendation on automatic recognition refers to EQAVET.

# Credit accumulation and transfer: ECTS and ECVET

## Relationships between tools: ECTS / ECVET

- Conceived with coherence in mind: **alignment of objectives**. However, the focus is on different sectors (VET vs HE)
- **Use of concepts is also different** (e.g. system of credit points) and there were significant **differences in governance and implementation**
- Overall, evidence on achievement of the **desired compatibility is relatively limited** (transferring credits between systems)
- The 2020 VET recommendation ends ECVET but: *“For vocational qualifications at post-secondary and tertiary level, the ECTS already in use may be applied”*.

## Relationships with other tools

### HE (ECTS):

- **Strong links with quality assurance (HE), qualifications frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA); Diploma Supplement;** initiatives on **academic recognition of qualifications** (LRC and 2018 Council Recommendation on mutual recognition). **Minor links with Directive on professional qualifications**
- **Links with validation are weaker** due to limited use of validation for recognising non-formal and informal learning

### VET (ECVET)

- **Designed to work coherently with quality assurance** in VET and EQF and encourage the use of **validation**. **However, limited implementation** of ECVET nationally hindered practical synergies
- ECVET tools are referred to in the **Recommendation on automatic recognition** (Learning , Memorandum of Understanding)

# Comparability initiatives and EQF links

- The tools in this thematic area (EQF, QF-EHEA, Europass, ESCO..) are well aligned in principle.
- The EQF stands out for the number of connections/links (in terms of objectives, aims, principles) with other tools and initiatives.
- Designed as a cross-sectoral tool and deliberate attempt from early on to align governance and cooperation to facilitate input and buy-in.

# Validation of non-formal and informal learning

- High synergy particularly with the **EQF (and NQFs)**.
- Synergies with other tools in HE/VET in general hampered by
  - **Lack of consistency** in definition / understanding of validation and **uneven development and take-up of validation services** across different sub-sectors of education and training.
- **Initiatives on recognition**, no explicit links with Recommendation on validation, **but learning taking place outside formal systems** is often considered (e.g. LRC: “non-traditional qualifications”; Directive: “professional experience”).

# Recognition of qualifications (LRC, PQD, mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes)

- Share similar goals, but have different purposes, operate differently, have different legal status, and degrees of synergy is different.
- The system governing the recognition of vocational qualifications is particularly complex.
- Supported though by various transparency tools and initiatives (EQF, Europass certificate supplement, Europass portal, quality assurance initiatives, etc)

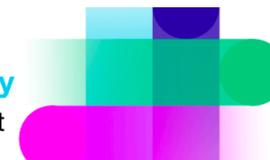
# Sustaining relationships from design to implementation: main challenges and lessons

- **Moving from internal focus to broadening / enhancing links** with other initiatives (to reduce the risk of 'silos').
- **The 'autonomy' of different sectors is often a barrier:** some of these tools have been designed within specific sectors (HE and VET).
- **The subsidiarity principle and the OMC: requires mobilisation** of national policy makers, stakeholders and providers across all countries and relevant sub-sectors.
- **Cooperation among different stakeholder groups is essential** for effective synergies. Some show strong collaboration, in others cooperation can be strengthened?
- **Importance of support for experimentation:** e.g. pilot projects and EU funds (ESF) supporting the development of initiatives, exchange of experience, and trust.



# Core impact areas

- **Emphasis on the use of a learning outcomes** approach in different sectors of education and training (and in non-formal learning).
  - Facilitated by shared focus on increasing transparency and transferability underpinned by learning outcomes.
- **Commitment to promote the comparability, recognition, and transparency of qualifications** across sectors and levels of education and training.
  - 2000-2020: Clear trajectory of change towards greater transparency and comparability of qualifications.
  - Central role of EQF, supported by quality assurance (crucial for increasing trust), and the provision of additional information about the level, content, and context of a qualification.
- **Awareness of the need for increased flexibility** of education and training systems and learning pathways.
  - 2000-2020: Increased emphasis on modular approaches
  - For example: ECVET promoted modularisation; also enabled by comparability, credit transfer, quality assurance and validation tools (though take-up is uneven)



# Thank you



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