



Supplementary conference material

In the context of the Cedefop project [Ensuring transparency and transferability of learning outcomes](#)¹ we propose several policy scenarios of lifelong learning towards 2040 drawing on an analysis of developments over the past 20 years

The scenarios are outlined in the background note of the conference. Each explores a range of potential implications for key stakeholders, including learners, education and training providers, and policymakers.

This document is an excerpt from the draft final report, presenting policy implications for policymakers at both system/policy and provider/institutional levels.

Implications for policy makers

In **Scenario 1 - Flex Max** (High Flexibility, High Permeability), EU and national policy makers play a **key role in making qualifications and systems across the EU more transparent, allowing for easy comparison and transfer of learning outcomes**. To this end, **they fully open up the NQFs** so that they describe all types and levels of qualifications – awarded both in all education and training sub-systems and outside formal education – **and ensure links with validation**. They also ensure that they build and maintain comprehensive **national qualifications databases/ registers** – which are key to making NQFs both visible and accessible to end users – that **cover all qualifications** (i.e., those offered in formal education and training, those developed in the private education and training sub-system, international qualifications, partial qualifications and micro-credentials), NQF levels and education and training sub-systems, making (all) qualifications more visible, transparent and comparable both nationally and internationally. By increasing both the coverage and data quality of national qualifications databases so that these shift from just being a trusted reference source with official information about qualifications towards becoming a ‘comprehensive’ point of reference on qualifications for different purposes, such as qualifications and curricula development, validation of non-formal and informal learning, or for recognition purposes, policy makers actively seek to maximise both the flexibility and permeability of their respective learning ecosystem.

Looking further afield, policy makers in all 27 Member States also **ensure that national qualifications databases/registers are fully interoperable** in line with the European

¹ The first publication is available on the project website “[Cedefop. \(2024\). Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey. Analysis of developments at European and national level](#)”.

Interoperability Framework (EIF). They also **structure their data on qualifications and their learning outcomes using common formats such as the European Learning Model (ELM), and work to develop or strengthen common terminology** to record information on qualifications and their learning outcomes. These efforts collectively support interoperability between the systems and facilitate information exchange across the EU.

In promoting maximum flexibility of learning and permeability of education and training sub-systems, policy makers develop compatible approaches to **credit transfer and accumulation** by ensuring that credits and learning outcomes are described in consistent ways and recognised across borders and education sub-systems. Such credit systems enable learners to have their learning outcomes - both acknowledged and used towards a qualification, irrespective of where these are achieved – across different institutions, learning contexts (e.g., education, work, leisure), sub-systems and countries as well as points in one's life. Policy makers (and key policy actors) at both system and institutional provider level support the consistent implementation of the credit systems in higher education and in VET. They also ensure that credits can be awarded through validation of learning taking place in non-formal context such as on the working place.

Policy makers pursue with greater vigour a number of **policies towards flexible learning pathways** such as modularised learning opportunities and a broader approach to curriculum design across sub-systems. As a result of this **broadening and 'hybridisation' of curricula** in general education and VET, general and vocational (and occupation-specific) content now also encompasses, to a much greater extent, transversal skills and more general subjects (as opposed to being narrowly-defined content). In a similar vein, they encourage **differentiated instruction** in line with the learners' needs and interests together with the development of personalised learning. As mentioned above, policy makers support the introduction of **modular / credit-based curricula** which, in turn, underpin 'modularised' learning pathways and allow learner movement / progression between the different education and training sub-systems, most notably between general and vocational education as well as between the latter and higher education.

On a related note, policy makers support more **flexible approaches to assessment, allowing learners to accumulate smaller parts of qualifications, including micro-credentials** which are assessed separately and can also be stacked up towards a full qualification. Indeed, they have developed clear principles for the accreditation, provision, assessment, and awarding of micro-credentials at national level which is, in turn, in line with the European approach to micro-credentials. Policy makers support the **use a wide range of forms of assessment**, including contextual, real-life situational assessments and digitised forms of assessment (e-assessment) such as computer-adaptive assessments, e-portfolios and virtual reality and/or augmented reality assessments to evaluate one's skills and competences via digital tools.

They also **encourage publicly funded education and training providers to offer part-time or evening learning opportunities for greater flexibility of learning provision** and provide **financial incentives** for providers to develop online, hybrid or blended learning opportunities for on-demand skills.

In this scenario, policy makers **expand the use of instruments** such as individual learning accounts (ILAs) which support flexible learning systems by providing individuals with increased funding and access to learning programmes. On a related note, in order to help learners record and manage their learning achievements / qualifications, knowledge and skill-

sets and as well as plan their further learning and career trajectory, they ensure either national digital tools that are compatible across education and training sub-systems and countries are in place, or support the use of the EU digital tools such as the **Europass**. In doing so, they ensure that not only information systems are interoperable and/or develop secure interactive online platforms where one can obtain details of individual qualifications but also how they relate to each other within and across countries. These can also provide information about learning opportunities, e.g., across sub-systems, within and across countries, thus further supporting learner progression.

However, in order to protect learners' personal data and privacy and ensure fair access to education, it is essential that policy makers take all the necessary steps to **effectively regulate digital learning tools and artificial intelligence/AI-based education systems**, especially in view of their widespread use and potential for misuse. To foster a compatible approach across sub-systems and countries, policy makers draw on a number of European regulations, strategies, policies and guidelines such as the Ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data in teaching and learning for educators and EU Artificial Intelligence Act. For example, the latter requires careful monitoring of AI systems deemed 'high risk' such as those which determine a learner's access to education (admission decisions) and to evaluate learning outcomes (grading decisions).

By designing and implementing **inclusive policies for lifelong learning** – in line with the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) – policy makers help address the diverse needs of a changing population and respond to rapid technological shifts. In this regard, ILAs allow individuals – both those in employment and the unemployed – to accumulate and use training entitlements over their lifetime, while instruments such as micro-credentials support learners improve their skills sets flexibly through shorter learning experiences, also in a quick response to emerging skills gaps. Moreover, policy makers ensure that 'no one is left behind' in terms of their knowledge and skills especially in the face of the ongoing green and digital transformation that require regular, if not constant upskilling/reskilling. This, in turn, means that they make a concerted effort to reach out and (re) engage in lifelong learning all segments of the population, including vulnerable groups such as early school leavers / young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), the low-skilled, the unemployed/inactive, older adults/workers and those with a migrant background. For example, targeted outreach activities combined with individualised and intensive support and guidance together with bridging courses and/or second chance education programmes, can all help such groups (re)engage in education and training.

In a similar vein, **effective systems/procedures for the recognition of prior learning (validation)** and flexible admissions policies to formal learning provision can also support inclusive lifelong learning policies. To this end, policy makers ensure that validation procedures allow learners to access all types of learning provision, including formal education and training programmes, while most (if not all) qualifications can be awarded (in full) through validation. At the same time, they promote that the approach(es) to validation is/are compatible across all education and training sub-systems and countries. In doing so, they ensure that validation supports lifelong (and life-wide) learning by allowing individuals to transfer and accumulate learning over time and across institutions, sub-systems, and countries.

Policy makers – at both system/policy and provider/institutional level – **promote flexible admission rules and procedures across education and training sub-systems**. They also introduce measures such as bridging programmes and mechanisms aimed at easing

transitions between the different learning sub-systems (e.g., between vocational and general education) which, in turn, allow learners to change educational tracks, across institutions, sub-systems and countries.

In an effort to promote learner progression / transition across sub-systems and borders, policy makers (and key policy actors) – at both system/ policy and provider/ institutional level – **ensure that procedures are in place whereby recognition of all types and levels of qualifications across countries is possible.** To this end, both the Professional Qualifications Directive and the Lisbon Recognition Convention across sub-systems and countries is implemented and policy makers promote reflections on strengths and weakness of the different approach to develop a common methodology that support recognition for different types of qualifications. Moreover, where relevant, automatic recognition systems are in place and are widely used, allowing learners from one country to be considered for entry to a programme of further study at the next level in another - also in line with the 2018 Recommendation on automatic recognition.

The above also highlight the vital importance of mutual trust and confidence both within and across institutions, sub-systems, and countries, not least through transparent, robust and compatible approaches to quality assurance. To this end, policy makers commit to stimulating and creating the conditions for developing collaborative and compatible quality assurance frameworks across both education and training sub-systems and countries, including by fostering strong cooperation at both system and provider/institutional levels. This, in turn, will result in greater trust and transparency across sub-systems and countries, thus allowing for flexible learning progression either within a country or across countries. Governance arrangements, such as single co-ordination bodies, cross-sectoral steering committees, joint meetings and conferences involving policy makers / representatives from general education HE, VET, and adult education help break down barriers between education and training sub-systems, promote close co-operation and support the flexible transition/ progression of learners across sub-systems.

Policy makers at both the national and EU levels are also **faced with decisions on funding models** as regards to funding/resource allocation for instance for guidance services, digital infrastructure, and quality assurance systems, including robust quality assurance processes as regards the on-going opening up of national qualification frameworks to non-formal and informal qualifications. In addition, **aligning educational offers with labour market needs helps maintain economic competitiveness, but these partnerships will need to balance individual, public, national and industry interests.** Flexible learning pathways need to be supported by appropriate information and guidance services which can advise learners on the learning pathways that best meet their learning requirements and aspirations. This, in turn, requires much greater policy emphasis on lifelong guidance.

In **Scenario 2 - Rigid Islands** (Low Flexibility, Low Permeability), **the development of qualifications and NQFs is informed by the specific national policy context and education and training system** (as well as the labour market, albeit to a lesser extent), with little or no interest in strengthening the compatibility with qualification frameworks from other countries. In some cases, there are separate qualifications frameworks (or sub-frameworks) and credit transfer systems, when they exist, are linked to specific sub-systems (e.g., general, vocational, higher education). **Policy makers** do not promote comparability of all types of qualifications/credentials and place **focus only on formal qualifications.** To this end, NQFs include only formal qualifications and do not display any links and/or bridges between them.

At the same time, in order to support NQF implementation and use, by also making them more visible and accessible to end users such as learners, education and training providers and employers, **policy makers maintain many qualifications databases/ registers**, typically linked to specific education and training sub-systems which again do not show any links or bridges.

There are **limited links between NQFs and validation arrangements**, with the latter being highly variable within and across countries and sub-systems of education and training. There is lack of co-ordination by policy makers as regards validation arrangements, resulting in both **different / fragmented approaches to and very limited use of validation**. Moreover, validation tends to be targeted by policy makers only to specific groups of learners such as the low-skilled, migrants, and early school leavers as opposed to being universal.

Rigid boundaries between formal and non-formal education hinder smooth validation of non-formal and informal learning as does the **limited use of credits and modular approaches to education and training**. When they do, policy makers support **separate credit transfer systems** for academic and vocational education and training which are neither compatible (e.g., in terms of credit points being based on learning outcomes as opposed to study duration) nor linked to each other, thus hindering learner progression. Even within the same sub-system, variable and incompatible approaches to credit transfer between institutions further limit the scope for progression, especially as these do not make credit transfer an integral part of the admission and enrolment process.

This is not helped by the fact that **policy makers do not encourage strong co-operation / co-ordination** between the different education sub-education and training sub-systems either in their own country or across borders; instead, these tend to operate in parallel with weak links between them. There are few or no mechanisms to co-ordinate learning policies across sub-systems of education and training throughout the policy cycle (meaning policy design, implementation, and evaluation). For example, while there may be an overarching quality assurance framework in place, coordination between policy actors within and across sub-systems is very limited, with variations in its implementation across institutions and providers even within the same sub-system, resulting in neither trust nor transparency across them.

National policy makers tend to exercise full control over the quality and content of the education and training system, with often little or no co-ordination and collaboration with other countries, either at system/policy or education and training provider sub-system level. Where they opt for such co-operation, this tends to take place in specific education and training sub-systems or specific qualifications, e.g., higher education or VET. Policy makers' oversight of the education and training system ensures strict adherence to quality assurance processes and standards and fosters confidence in all relevant parties, e.g., learners, providers and employers. For example, national policy makers ensure such quality assurance measures are in place for the development of programmes and qualifications, teaching and assessment leading to the award of qualifications, accreditation and audit of education and training.

Due to limited cross-border co-operation across education and training sub-systems, **recognition procedures across countries only apply to particular education and training sub-systems, or qualifications**. As such, recognition across countries is very limited and only for specific sub-systems, usually higher education. At the same time, national practices focus on the recognition of formal qualifications for access or admission purposes to the next level of learning.

Speaking of learner progression, **restrictive admission and access requirements** between both different sub-systems of education and training and institutions also make

movement to the next level of education across sectors challenging. These are also linked to the fact that **policy makers opt for a strict and clear separation of the different sub-systems** as well as a **focus on formal education and training** which, *inter alia*, broadly overlooks non-formal provision which tends to be used on an ad hoc basis in order to address specific skills gaps.

On a related note, **policy makers focus on providing** learners with ‘traditional’, **highly structured/standardised** and often one-size-fits-all **learning pathways**. These typically lead to specific / strictly predefined qualifications, with no or very limited scope for flexibility in progression. In a similar vein, **educational policy favours a ‘traditional’ approach to assessment** with evaluation of learning taking place **at regular and set times**. In doing so, assessment does not form part of the learning process, but is set aside from it, with learners being usually subject to a **summative assessment** at the end of the academic year. Assessment which is primarily carried out by the teacher/educator tends to be ‘quantitative’ and emphasise rote learning. It is also often used not only to assess but also classify learners. The latter usually advance at the educator’s pace regardless of their ability to master the taught content.

Speaking of learning content, in this case, the **instructional curriculum** defined by policy makers and delivered by teachers **is set and standardised with very little differentiation**. This, in turn, means little there is little or no adaptation of the teaching/learning approach applied by educators so as to meet the diverse needs, interests, or abilities of learners. By favouring the application of an undifferentiated and standardised state-defined curriculum, policy makers seek to ensure that all learners receive the same learning content, at the same pace and through the same teaching methods in a universal and consistent manner. As for the place, pace and method of teaching, these also tend to privilege **‘traditional’ forms or modalities of delivery** such as the classroom, predetermined/set pace and teacher-centric direct instruction.

The **promotion of (national) digital tools** by policy makers **and their use by learners** to describe and document their skills, qualifications and experience **is limited** and restricted to formal qualifications. Moreover, national digital tools have either no or limited links to the relevant European digital tools such as Europass and there is limited work on promoting common terminology that can support interoperability of information on skills and qualifications. This can also be affected by a country’s degree of digital transformation and maturity, including alignment with the European Digital Credential Infrastructure (EDCI) which, in this case, is low.

Scenario 3 - Fragmented Flexibility (High Flexibility and Low Permeability) presents a **context of well-developed flexibility but limited permeability between sub-systems of education and/or borders**. In promoting learning flexibility, **policy makers ensure** that the **NQF include all types of qualifications**, learners have access to lifelong guidance within education and training sub-systems, and that there are sufficient financial incentives for flexible learning pathways, e.g., financial support for learners, especially those from disadvantaged groups, including through ILAs. In supporting greater flexibility in learning, **policy makers encourage**, including through appropriate strategies and funding, the **broadening of learning provision** so that learners have access to a wide range of providers which goes well beyond the formal educational institutions and encompass employers, sectoral bodies, community organisations and other types of non-formal providers.

However, such broadening of provision is associated with specific sub-systems as opposed to across sub-systems. To this end, **learners can tailor and customise their**

learning journey in line with personal and professional needs **within a particular sub-system** of education, e.g., VET or HE, where they can work towards all types of qualifications, including micro-credentials, and partial qualifications, and access a wide range of online courses. However, **policy makers / actors** – at system/ and institutional/provider levels – **pursue restrictive admission policies** and **do not support bridging programmes** or joint courses between sub-systems such as vocational and higher education.

As a result, a learner can progress relatively flexibly within a particular education and training sub-system. Indeed, **policy makers support the use of modules and credit accumulation and transfer systems in particular education and training sub-systems**, with limited or no use across sub-systems. That said, in the pursuit of **greater flexibility of learning content**, in the way they design the curriculum, policy makers do not make a sharp division between general and vocational education, resulting in **blurred boundaries** in their respective **curricula**. In relation to the latter, **policy makers** also opt for a **more flexible forms of assessment** and a **greater focus on formative assessment** as part of the learning process within a specific education and training sub-system.

Speaking of assessment, policy makers have encouraged the development of **digital tools** that allow learners to track learning outcomes from across formal, non-formal, and informal settings. However, policy makers are not particularly interested in developing digital tools that can be used across sub-systems or in supporting learner mobility across countries through such tools. Therefore, each education and training sub-system has created its own application without promoting interoperability of systems or a systematic approach to describe skills, knowledge and competence in a comparable way. As a result, these tools are used to promote mobility within a particular education and training sub-system; but not across sub-systems and countries, thus limiting the scope for transparency and transferability of learners' achievements.

Along similar lines, **validation arrangements** set up by policy makers **are education sub-system specific** resulting in inconsistent/variable approaches across the learning ecosystem. Moreover, validation arrangements may not exist in all sub-systems (adult learning, CVET, higher education, IVET or general education) or may not cover all qualifications available in these sub-systems, but only some. Even within the same sub-system, there are differences across institutions and providers as regards approaches to validation.

Although **policy makers support recognition across countries**, this tends to be **limited** for specific types of learning / qualifications **in specific sub-systems** (e.g., higher education) and, often, learner groups (e.g., graduates, highly skilled migrants, ICT professionals). This may also be linked to a country's industrial and skills policy as well as country-specific labour and skills shortages needing to be addressed.

Overall, although the focus is on flexibility of learning, this political priority is distributed differently/unevenly across sub-sectors of education, which operate independently. This means **policy actors are also "separated" with different priorities and approaches across education sub-sectors**, with the resulting **lack of bridges between learning sub-systems hindering system permeability and integration** and, ultimately, lifelong learning.

There is **limited integration and compatibility across education and training systems, both within and across countries**. While NQFs and qualification registers attempt to include both traditional and non-traditional qualifications, the **inconsistent descriptions of learning outcomes** reduce their effectiveness in promoting transparency and transferability across sub-sectors. Likewise, in some cases, there is a limited **number of qualifications databases/registers linked to specific sub-systems** as opposed to an overarching,

comprehensive and integrated register for all types and levels of qualifications across all sub-systems. This, again, supports learner progression within as opposed across sub-systems.

Overall, the **limited cooperation across education and training sub-systems**, e.g., **as regards areas such as quality assurance and validation results in low/no trust and no transparency across sub-systems and countries**, thus hindering learner progression across sub-systems and borders.

In **Scenario 4 - Rigid but Connected (Low Flexibility and Moderate Permeability)**, policy makers prioritise international cooperation for the same sub-system, differently to Scenario 5 - Gated Communities where the focus is on facilitating transitions within and between sub-systems within borders. The scope for the personalisation of learning is limited as the policy focus is on structured and standardised learning content and pathways. For example, policy makers prioritise standardised curricula which provide clarity, set common core standards and clear expectations for learners and offer a predictable framework which facilitates the transparency and comparability of learning across countries. However, such curricula do not offer much scope for learning flexibility and tailoring in line with the specific needs of learners. Moreover, the rigidity of the system creates additional challenges related to the need to address the gaps between (rapidly evolving) labour market needs and rather standardised/rigid education and training systems. This is because the standardisation of curricula often lags behind technological advancements and industry/economic changes, leaving learners unprepared for future jobs, e.g., in relation to the ongoing green and digital transitions.

Likewise, policy makers favour uniformity and standardisation in assessment practices, making it easier to evaluate learner performance and progress across different and countries. At the same time, standardised assessment practices make it easier for policy makers to compare the performance of educational institutions and regions/countries. Not surprisingly, in this scenario policy makers primarily support and fund formal learning providers, while non-formal education providers play a rather residual and complementary role in addressing specific gaps in provision.

On a related note, while NQFs and qualification databases/registers provide accessible information on formal qualifications, the exclusion of non-traditional qualifications from these frameworks limits the recognition of skills gained outside formal education (and associated permeability). In this case, policy makers do not focus on integrating non-traditional providers in quality assurance systems to expand access to lifelong learning.

Even so, standardised recognition procedures for formal qualifications supports the recognition of such qualifications across countries for some sub-systems. That said, restrictive access/admission policies between education and training sub-systems and/or educational institutions, either within a country or across borders, prevent totally seamless transitions and progression for learners. This is because they limit the permeability across sub-systems, such as VET and HE and constraining fluid pathways for those aiming to upskill, change careers, and/or pursue personal development goals. Policy makers have also invested in the development of digital tools to support portability of learning, but their use is rather limited and focused on formal qualifications.

On a different but related note, although policy makers have developed compatible systems to validate learning from formal, non-formal and informal settings within and across countries, these are not implemented in a uniform and widespread way; they are more widely used in some countries and within particular sub-systems of education. Despite the adoption of consistent approaches to validation, its use is rather limited and only targeted, e.g., involving specific groups of learners such as the low-skilled.

Given the emphasis on international mobility, policy makers also promote consistent approaches to credit transfer across countries within the same sub-system and largely for formal qualifications. At the same time, compatible credit systems that support transitions across sub-systems are less developed. For example, the relevant learner trajectories between institutions which form part of the same sub-system are quite set, thus limiting the scope for learning flexibility and system permeability. For example, the relevant learner trajectories between institutions which form part of the same sub-system are quite set, thus limiting the scope for learning flexibility and system permeability.

In supporting greater permeability within education and training sub-systems – both within and across countries policy makers promote cross-sectoral cooperation in relation to issues such as quality assurance or credit systems. However, this cooperation is predominantly sector-based. While these efforts establish important connections, they remain confined to specific sectors, limiting broader cross-sectoral integration across education and training sub-systems. In addition, , Additionally, the fact that such cooperation primarily involves only formal training providers (and formal qualifications) means that there is relatively low trust and confidence in the training offered by non-traditional providers, such as employers and community organisations as well non-traditional qualifications such as micro-credentials and/or those obtained outside formal education. This, in turn, limits the scope for flexible learning pathways and for learner progression between different types and levels of learning provision.

In **Scenario 5 - Gated Communities** (Moderate Flexibility and Permeability), the EU's **Member States have moved toward more – but not completely – flexible education systems**, allowing learners to achieve full or partial qualifications through modular approaches across various sectors. This increased flexibility goes hand in hand with moderate permeability, reflected in efforts to improve transitions both within and across sub-systems, particularly within national borders.

Although policy makers have opened up the NQFs to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, these still not include all types and levels of qualifications, thus limiting comparability and scope of recognition. As such, **NQFs provide an overview and serve as a reference point for comparing most – but not all – qualifications**. Policy makers also ensure that **there are links/interconnections between qualifications databases/registers**, although these are **not always visible across sub-systems**. At the same time, there are efforts to develop compatible descriptions of qualifications and their learning outcomes to support greater comparability also across sub-systems, albeit these are not implemented in a systematic way.

Despite policy makers wishing to enable learners to tailor their learning to their specific needs and interests as well as to transfer and build on all types of their learning – formal, non-formal or informal – **this is not widespread across all sub-systems**. For example, although there are **efforts by policy makers to open up learning provision to a wider range of providers**, including employers, sectoral bodies, social partners and community organisations, **this is not applicable across all sub-systems**. This, in turn, limits the availability of flexible learning options.

Likewise, although **policy makers broadly support the modularisation, opening up and flexibility of curricula**, including a stronger combination of general, vocational and transversal skills, leading to less clearly separated curricula between sub-systems, **this blurring of curricula is neither uniformly not consistently applied across sub-systems**. On a related note, **although policy makers encourage** the use of 'non-traditional', **flexible**

and continuous assessment methods, **such methods are not always applied consistently across sub-systems.**

Speaking of assessment and its results, a **national compatible digital tool** – developed by policy makers – **allows learners to keep a record of formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes** whenever and wherever these were achieved. However, the acceptance and use of this digital tool tends to be variable between sub-systems and, especially, borders and has limited links to other relevant digital tools available at EU level such as Europass.

In an effort to promote more flexible and permeable learning systems, **policy makers have introduced some measures which facilitate access between education and training sub-systems** such as bridging programmes and flexible admission requirements. However, **these are either targeted at specific group of learners** (e.g., IVET learners so that they can access higher education) **and/or specific sub-systems** (e.g., between VET and higher education).

On a related note, **policy makers have set up a national validation system** for learning from formal, non-formal and informal settings which can be used to achieve partial or full qualifications. In doing so, they also **encourage similar approaches towards validation and some compatibility both across education and training sub-systems** and countries.

In addition, **although policy makers support the use of credit accumulation and transfer systems across sub-systems**, their **acceptance and use are highly variable** across sub-systems, with higher education first and VET second being those with the greatest take-up. In a similar vein, **policy makers support a move toward more flexible education systems**, allowing learners to achieve full or partial qualifications **through modular approaches across various education and training sub-systems.**

On a different note, although **policy makers support cross-border recognition of qualifications**, this tends to be **more widely used in specific education and training sub-systems**, usually higher education. Despite some progress, **recognition systems across countries remain different and complex**, challenging learner mobility and career progression across countries. Overall, **efforts to strengthen the transparency and comparability of qualifications** and qualification frameworks and the **development of compatible credit systems across countries** to ensure cross-border recognition **remains limited**. This is due to the emphasis placed on supporting and strengthening cooperation and mechanisms to improve transitions within and across education sub-systems nationally, with cross-border recognition being overall less prioritised.

Policy makers encourage co-operation between education sub-systems related to **as areas such as quality assurance**, with growing efforts to align these practices within and across sub-systems nationally. However **this is rather patchy and irregular which**, in turn, **reduces the scope for trust and transparency** in the learning ecosystem. For instance, although policy makers foster strong coordination among formal or traditional providers within and across education sub-systems within a country in relation to the development of compatible quality assurance approaches, procedures, standards and tools, they tend to be less robust in demanding such coordination from non-traditional providers, including those engaged in the provision