

SESSION:
Work Assignment 2
Increasing transparency and improving
transferability of learning outcomes at national level

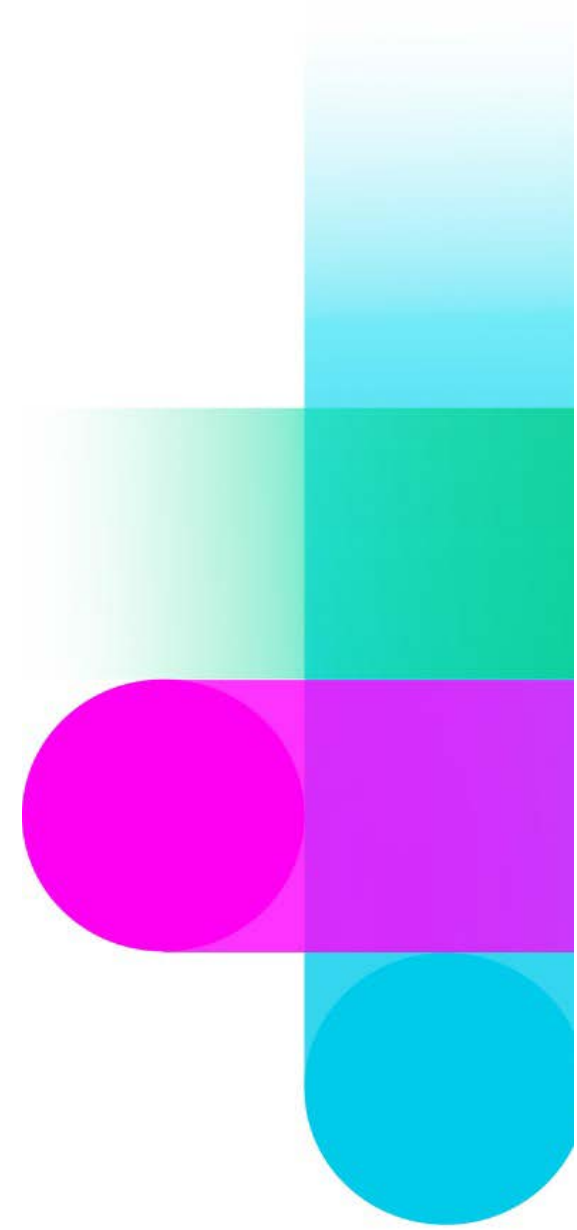
29 September, 2022

*Making learning progression a reality –
Building on lessons from European transparency tools*



Agenda

1. Objective of This Session
2. Scope of Work Assignment 2
3. Conceptual Framework
4. Focus on Research Questions and First Insights
5. Q&A





1. Objective of This Session

WA2 is in its beginning phase. Objective of this session is to share with you the **methodological approach** that we have developed to address Work Assignment 2 and **collect your feedback, insights, comments** on this approach and the first insights gathered, together with **any additional suggestion** to strengthen the work.

2. Scope of WA2

- WA2 investigates initiatives at national level in **EU27+ countries** (IE, NO, UK) that aim at supporting transparency and transferability considering a **time-span of two decades**, starting in year 2000.
- **Goal of this WA** is not to replicate existing knowledge and literature on national measures supporting T&T and the learning outcomes approach per se (knowledge which already exists and where Cedefop has already fundamentally contributed), but to provide an original and insightful perspective into two decades of learning-supporting policies at national level.
- The WA addresses **four Research Questions** as shown earlier. Each of the four RQs is addressed with **a mix of three research tools**, depending on the type of insights needed and the already available information and data:
 - Literature Review, delivering a comparative analysis of initiatives at national level in the geographical and time scope earlier discussed
 - Survey, with the aim to expanding the type and number of stakeholders involved, cover countries in scope, and corroborate or fine-tune findings from the review of the available literature
 - Eight Case Studies, in selected countries: DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, NL, RO, PL, with the aim to investigating in-depth dynamics related to sustainability, impact and synergies, gather additional hypothesis and support the development of the analysis

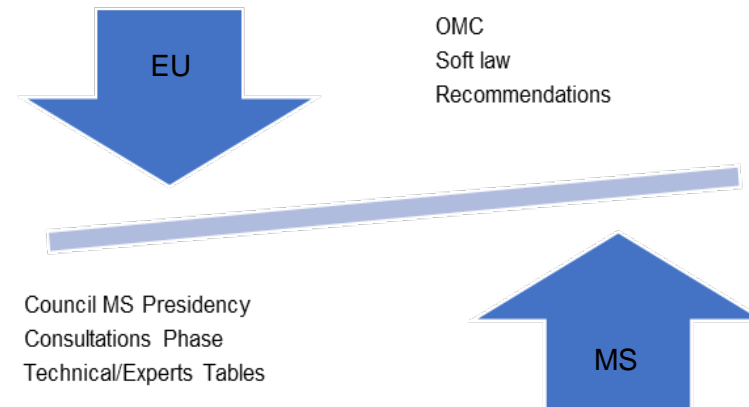
3.1 Conceptual Framework for the literature review

- We adopt an **evolutive, process-oriented approach** that allows us to identify relevant national initiatives in their connection with the overarching policy efforts and instruments at EU level – building on the approach and policy areas explored in WA1– and trace the evolutions, synergies and **interplay** between the EU level and the country level.
- We underline the **implications of EU policy making for institutional sustained change at national level** as one of the key elements to be investigated.
- For the comparative overview of national initiatives, we start from the academic literature stream named “**Europeanization**” (among others Radaelli 2008) which deals with the conceptualisation of the processes and **interdependencies between the EU and the national level** in policy making.
- Over time scholars have used it to shed specific light on the interactions between the EU and national policy making (and the implications for institutional changes at national level) in the **policy domains of skills formation, VET, higher education initiatives and structures**, thus providing an interesting literature to address our RQs (e.g. Powell and Trampusch 2011).

3.2 Conceptual Framework

- **Starting Definition of Europeanization:** *processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies (Radaelli 2003)*
- **Consideration of both levels and two directions of interplay** – both how EU discourses and actions influence the national level, and how the developments at the national level might be taken up in the EU level (tentative framework: download/upload of policies, e.g. Proitz 2015)

1. At EU level, the literature agrees on the fact that the EU and its agencies have leveraged a “soft” power and have successfully achieved to become a “norm” setter, a recognized source of inspiration and information for different countries (e.g. Kleibrink 2022).
2. At national level, we consider pivotal to acknowledge pre-existing systems and structures, pre-existing debates related to skills and learning and pre-existing conditions and overall orientation of reforms and initiatives, path-dependencies and actors involved.



4.1 Addressing Research Question 1

1. RQ 2.1 - **Which national level initiatives and reforms**, since 2000 and across levels and sectors, have contributed to more flexible education, training and learning systems making it possible for individuals to enter and re-enter and/or combine learning throughout their entire life addressing:

- ✓ transparency of learning outcomes (addressing formal qualifications as well as outcomes of non-formal and informal learning);
- ✓ transferability of learning outcomes (addressing formal qualifications as well as outcomes of non-formal and informal learning).

Methodology/Method Mix

- Primarily literature review available in scientific production and reports (comparative and vertical, in English)
- Survey useful to include countries less represented in literature
- Case studies to address specific information gaps

First Insights – To be Explored and Integrated. **Example:** Focus on NQFs in 2000-2009

✓ **TYPE of INSIGHT 1 – HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION (TWO DECADES).** Some EU countries had already started a path toward transparency and transferability **well before year 2000**, and, at the same time, the **pre-existing skills systems have influenced the national direction and speed** in moving the systems in a certain direction.

✓ **TYPE of INSIGHT 2 – COUNTRY CLUSTERS.** Focusing on one specific policy area (establishment of competence and qualification frameworks), some **groups of countries** seem to emerge based on first literature review: early movers (UK), countries with a developed dual and apprentice system and low resistances (AT, NL, DK) or higher frictions (DE); Eastern European countries (EE, LT), which in the first period were mainly compliance-oriented; late comers (e.g. IT), which developed the NQF later.

✓ TYPE of INSIGHT 3 – CLUSTERS OF INITIATIVES leading to T&T

- Reforms and legislative acts in the years prior to 2000 at different levels (national, sectoral, regional...);
- Initiatives in the consultation (prior to developing and accepting a NQF) and implementation phase
- Initiatives which leverage benchmarking to proactively stimulate debates and progression of the implementation
- Initiatives for capacity building and (mutual) learning
- ...

4.2 Addressing Research Question 2

2. *RQ 2.2 - **What is the orientation of these initiatives** and reforms and which objectives have been set?*

Methodology/Method Mix

- *Secondary data and information in academic production and reports (comparative and vertical, in English)*
- *Survey useful to gather additional mechanisms and elements*
- *Case studies to address information gaps and overall orientation of national initiatives/countries*

First Insights – To be Explored and Integrated.

Two, complementary, perspectives could be used to address this RQ:

1. **Process-orientation:** how were initiatives and reforms developed and their objectives set?
2. **Learning design-orientation:** which key mediating mechanisms and priorities were identified and pursued in the initiatives in scope to achieve T&T ? Literature shows that initiatives have been oriented toward different objectives and achievements, such as:
 - ❖ Modularization («dividing up into components of what is considered comprehensive vocational capability»)
 - ❖ Standardization of qualifications and paths toward comparability across MS
 - ❖ Permeability of paths and degrees between VET and HE
 - ❖ ...

4.3 Addressing Research Question 3

2. *RQ 2.3 - How are initiatives and reforms **connected to each other and do they support or contradict** each other?*

Methodology/Method Mix

- *Secondary data and information in academic production and reports (comparative and vertical, in English)*
- *Survey useful to include countries less represented in literature*
- *Case studies for in-depth analysis of internal and external coherence*

First Insights – To be Explored and Integrated.

Addressing this question will leverage the **historical and process reconstruction** carried out in the literature, and the insights to the first previous two questions.

Specific sub-questions addressed include:

- In which **sequence** over time have national initiatives been promoted, and why?
- Did **frictions** emerged among initiatives (or between initiatives and status quo)?, and what was their origin?
- Which **antecedents** were considered key to develop specific initiatives? (e.g. modularization often considered an antecedent for competence frameworks)

4.4 Addressing Research Question 4

2. RQ 2.4 - How can overall national initiatives and reforms in this area be judged according to the criteria of **sustainability**, synergies **and impact**? To what extent are learning-outcomes-based approaches and associated national lifelong and life-wide policies mutually reinforcing as regards the transparency and transferability of learning outcomes?

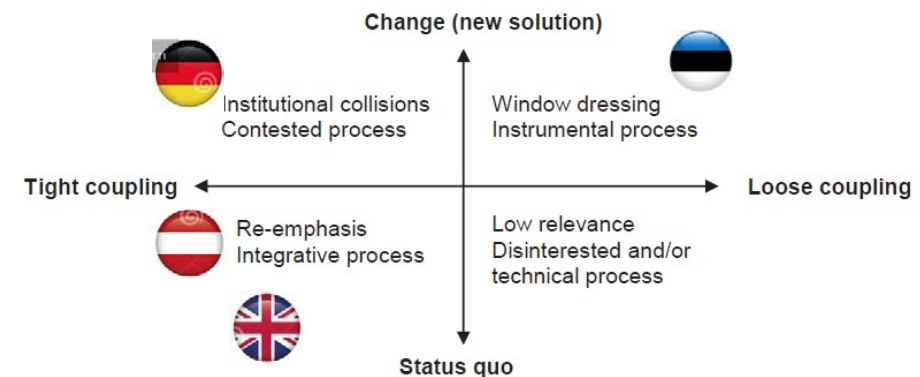
Methodology/Method Mix

- Secondary data and information in academic production and reports (comparative and vertical, in English)
- Case studies for in-depth analysis and testing hypothesis on sustainability, synergies and impact

First Insights – To be Explored and Integrated.

We plan to start addressing this question by identifying a specific interpretation/proxies for sustainability and impact. In particular, we aim at positioning countries starting from two possible dimensions which could be related to potential impact and sustainability (example below for NQF, based on literature):

- Were initiatives oriented **toward a preservation of the (national) status quo**, or involved **actual change** in the form of new solutions? (useful to gauge the level of *impact*)
- Were initiatives **tightly coupled**, or **loosely coupled**, with existing national systems and issues and were therefore oriented and contextualized in the different structures? (useful to gauge, among others, *synergies* and *sustainability* of reforms and initiatives)



Q&A

- Feedback on the approach/interpretation of specific RQ
- Additional elements, frameworks, interpretations to be considered
- Sources suggestions
- Points of attention
- ...

