



European initiatives and developments relevant for recognition of qualifications

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CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Shaping VET and qualifications

Cedefop

- actively supports the development and use of European tools and principles for transparency
- monitors VET policy developments across the EU
- Looks into the future of VET



Project on transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

Duration: 3 years
(2022-2025)

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/transparency-and-transferability-learning-outcomes>

Overall aim

The project looks at European and national policy **initiatives** promoting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes **over the last 20 years (2000-2020)** to examine their relationships and the extent to which they have supported individual citizens' **lifelong learning**

Future policy scenarios towards 2040 will be developed.

MOBILITY

**LIFELONG
LEARNING**

**Transparency and
Transferability of LOs**

The study identified five thematic policy areas supporting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

Quality assurance

Comparability of skills and qualifications

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Credit accumulation and transfer

Mutual recognition of skills and qualifications

EU FUNDING POLICY EXPERIMENTATION OMC RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTIVES

The set of policy 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

Credits

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

Comparability

- European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (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 Microcredentials (MC) - 2020

Validation

Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning - 2012

Recognition

- Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) on recognition of academic qualifications 1997
- Directive on Professional Qualifications 2005/36/EC and 2013/55/EC (PQD)
- Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad - 2018



Initiatives which main purpose is recognition

A complex landscape

Different:

- Purposes (professional /academic/further learning purpose)
- Legal status (legally and non-legally binding)
- Approaches (balance between input and output factors)
- Degrees of synergy among them and with other tools and initiatives

Recognition of VET qualifications?

Lisbon Recognition Convention

- It covers those qualifications that give access to HE (potentially also VET qualifications)
- It covers programmes that have a professional orientation (e.g. Universities of applied science)
- In some countries LRC principles are used for supporting recognition of VET EQF levels 3-5 (e.g. SE)

Directive on Professional Qualifications

- Closely linked to “VET qualifications” but only if these give access to regulated professions.

Recommendation on automatic recognition

- It covers “Upper secondary education and training qualifications” including VET qualifications

In addition to initiatives specifically focused on recognition there is a broad range of other initiatives that support recognition of skills and qualifications by promoting the use of **learning outcomes**, their **transparency**, **comparability** and fostering **trust**.





Supporting the comparison (and recognition) of qualifications

Internal CEDEFOP project

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Comparison and recognition of qualifications

- At its core, comparison of qualifications is about understanding how programmes and qualifications align or differ, and to what extent similarities can be observed and agreed on.
- Formal recognition
 - Cedefop (2011): The process of granting official status to skills and competences either through award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles) or grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers, validation of gained skills and/or competences.
 - EQF Recommendation (2017): '*formal recognition of learning outcomes*' means the process of granting official status by a competent authority to acquired learning outcomes for purposes of further studies or employment, through (i) the award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles); (ii) the validation of non-formal and informal learning; (iii) the grant of equivalence, credit or waivers;

Why is it important to compare and recognise qualifications (and learning outcomes)?

- It is important that societies and labour markets make best possible use of already existing skills and qualifications. N.B. future skills challenges
- Individuals need to build on and combine outcomes of education and training over time and across institutional and national borders for study and employment purposes.
- Lifelong learning and employment opportunities for individuals are strengthened.
-?

Much has been done!

Many EU or other international initiatives supporting the comparison of qualifications:

- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF)
- Professional Qualifications Directive
- Lisbon Recognition Convention
- ESCO: Classification of European Skills, Competence and Occupations
- Council Recommendation on promoting automatic recognition
- EUROPASS: a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications
- Better documentation (Certificate Supplements, short descriptions of qualifications)
- Information exchange networks
- Digitalisation

BUT: Some of these are rather complicated and not directly related to each other.

Work carried out by Cedefop 2017-2022

Some conclusions

- Further development of reference systems supporting analysis and comparison within and between countries on different levels: analysis and comparison require terminologically and conceptually sound reference points.
- Agree and implement a common format using learning outcomes in qualification descriptions.
- Exploration of automatic gathering of data (for the time being data formats are incompatible and coverage is not complete).
- The use of learning outcomes opens opportunities for applying methodologies for analysing and comparing qualifications and support transferability.
- A methodology for analysing and comparing qualifications based on learning outcomes can be supported by using a reference point that includes a set of skills appropriate for the respective purpose of comparison.
- Generic challenges associated with applying the methodologies for comparing VET qualifications relate mainly to the quality of the reference point, to the learning outcomes, to issue of expressing the level of proficiency of learning outcomes and to including context features in comparison.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/comparing-vet-qualifications>

Approach of the current comparison/recognition project

- 1) Identify multifaceted challenges: technical, mutual-trust, political
- 2) Analyse the institutional and political context facilitating or preventing comparisons of qualifications.
- 3) Analyse the objectives (what to compare for which purpose) and conceptual basis of existing approaches.
- 4) Analyse the practical feasibility of existing methods and tools, their strengths and weaknesses.
- 5) Analyse progress made recently in AI and language models and how these can be utilised.
- 6) Clarify the scope, type and contents of a practically oriented comparison methodology or a tool
- 7) Clarify how such a practically oriented approach could be institutionally embedded at national and European level.

Refernet Partners' contribution

- 1) 1.3.2024 Refernet Plenary: Learning café on the comparability and recognition of qualifications
- 2) April 2024 Cedefop sends the survey on comparison and recognition of qualifications to Refernet Partners. Before this, a webinar will be organised to discuss the draft survey questions with Partners.
- 3) May - June 2024 Refernet Partners will send their answers to Cedefop.
- 4) June – August 2024 Cedefop will review the information and if necessary, will ask further information.
- 5) September – October 2024 Cedefop will compile the information and will prepare an analysis to be used for the next steps of the project “Comparison and recognition of qualifications”.
- 6) Optional: October – November 2024 a webinar with Refernet Partners will be organised to discuss further steps for the project on comparability and recognition of VET qualifications.

Learning café

- Division into small groups (appr 7 persons/group)
- Group will select moderator and rapporteur (can be same or different person)
- Discussion: 45 minutes
- Wrap up in the Plenary 30 minutes (oral discussion, no written report is needed)

Questions to be discussed:

- 1) Why and for which purposes is comparison/recognition of skills and qualifications necessary and important?
- 2) Which factors facilitate comparison/recognition?
- 3) Which factors undermine or prevent comparison/recognition?
- 4) How do you see the role of technology (AI and language models) in facilitating comparison/recognition? How do you use the digital technology?
- 5) How do you see the role of existing European (or national) digital tools (e.g. Europass, ESCO or Cedefop EQF Comparison Tool)?

Thank you



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