

Workshop 5

External dimensions of the European Qualifications Framework and potential of policy co-operation with other regions

- a) *The evolution of regional qualifications frameworks*
- b) *How can regional qualifications frameworks support mobility between different regions of the world?*

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1. Introduction

- How can EQF help mobility between regions?
- How can it link to other ((regional) qualifications frameworks?
- Three presentations:
 - The Southeast Asian Nations' Qualifications Frameworks (ASEAN RQF). The goal is a common labour market and recognition of qualifications across ASEAN countries by 2015.
 - NZ-Ireland: collaboration between NZQA and NQAI to improve the basis on which Ireland and New Zealand recognise each other's qualifications
 - EU-Australia study on the role of qualifications in supporting mobility

1. Dilemmas and challenges

- Why the increase in regional qualifications frameworks? It is linked to: common labour markets; international labour markets; labour mobility; brain-drain and brain-gain.
- Why transnational comparisons? There are globalising pressures; as more NQFs develop, more possibilities for transnational comparisons arise (formal referencing/alignment to informal bilateral activity);
- Worker and learner mobility is increasing and diversifying: bilateral understandings no longer adequate.
- NQFs do not mean much to one, unless others too have them. Knowledge-building, sharing issues, getting outsider views of what we are doing ourselves is central to credibility and comparability of recognition and mobility .
- Socio-economic developments , and contexts for international mobility and recognition are hugely different from one region to the other

2. Common issues raised

- Significant commitment to RQFs, but progress is often hampered by different factors, weak foundations, disparate geographic spread, political restraints limiting free movement across borders, limit understandings of learning outcomes for lifelong learning. Institutional provisions will have to be strengthened
- Compatibility of qualifications requires national and international credibility, comparability and common understandings; these entail: many years of work; sharing and discussing; continuous review of qualifications; the understanding that levels alone do not mean that they correspond to one another.
- Recognition is complex issue: it entails both centralised decisions and responses (common understandings, common referencing/alignment and the side of qualifications authorities, as well as decentralised decisions and informal understandings at the level of labour market regulation (currency in the labour market is equally important).

3. Necessary conditions and policy recommendations

- Strengthen existing qualifications systems possibly hampering establishment of regional frameworks for mobility and recognition. Strengthening institutional capacity and provision will be important .
- Focus RQFs for supporting NQF development (set of quality parameters; and general kinds of understandings on qualifications; and common principles of quality assurance of learning outcomes).
- Move beyond establishing RQFs for ideological and political reasons; move away from advocacy to implementation.
- Existing NQFs could be used as a basis for establishing bilateral qualifications recognition; but even here RQFs have been important for broad shared understandings.

4. European cooperation

- Global positioning of EQF : Strengthen interactions between EQF and other RQFs; more interregional discussions and educational cooperation; concrete joint actions (use Qualifications Platform), and joint impact studies.
- Asia and Pacific could learn from challenges of referencing in context of EQF. These challenges and even mistakes need to be made visible. National referencing needs to be an on-going process in order to keep it sustainable (2° round of EQF referencing?)
- Facilitate bilateral recognitions through EQF.
- It will be important to promote EQF as a tool that enables mobility rather than one that acts negatively to prevent access (Fortress Europe)
- Use recognition of qualifications enabling people to do more with their qualifications rather than as mechanisms gate keeping mechanism