### Relevant Terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Learning outcomes:</td>
<td>Statements of what someone knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. Learning outcomes are understood as providing a common language allowing for improved communication and cooperation within education and training and between education and the labour market.</td>
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<td>FORMAL recognition of learning outcomes¹</td>
<td>The process of granting official status to acquired learning outcomes for purposes of further studies or employment, through i) Award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles), ii) Validation of non-formal and informal learning, iii) Grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers.</td>
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<td>DE FACTO recognition</td>
<td>The acknowledgement of value of skills and qualifications by economic and social stakeholders (such as employers). It does not lead to formal recognition of achieved learning outcomes; it can lead however to access to a non-regulated profession or non-formal training.</td>
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<td>Regulated Profession</td>
<td>A professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which, the pursuit of which, or one of the modes of pursuit of which is subject, directly or indirectly, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to the possession of specific professional qualifications; in particular, the use of a professional title limited by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to holders of a given professional qualification shall constitute a mode of pursuit.</td>
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<td>Recognition of credits</td>
<td>The process through which a competent body certifies that learning outcomes achieved and assessed elsewhere, expressed in credits, satisfy some or all requirements of a given standard, or its components.</td>
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<td>Transfer of learning outcomes</td>
<td>The process through which learning outcomes achieved and validated in one context can be formally or de facto recognised in another context.</td>
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<td>Mutual recognition of qualifications</td>
<td>The recognition of qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) awarded in one or more countries or organisations by one or more other countries or organisations. It can be bilateral (between two countries or organisations) or multilateral (within the EU or elsewhere).</td>
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¹ Also referred to as recognition of prior learning
between companies belonging to the same sector).

| Transparency of qualifications | The degree of visibility and legibility of qualifications, of their content and value on the (sectorial, regional, national or international) labour market and in the education and training systems. It usually implies a description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. Enhanced transparency facilitates transferability/portability of learning outcomes. |
| Validation | A process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard. It usually includes four phases: identification, documentation, assessment and certification. |

**Examples of existing European transparency tools and initiatives**

**Learning outcomes approach:** Increasingly qualifications are described in terms of the learning outcomes they recognise and education and training programmes are described using the learning outcomes that learners are expected to develop through them. The focus on outcomes allows abstract from the learning input factors, such as time spent in education, subjects studied or learning inputs.

**The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**: The EQF describes eight common European reference levels in terms of learning outcomes. Participating countries reference their national qualifications levels to the eight levels of the EQF and assign a national level to each qualification. This process makes the levels of qualifications comparable throughout Europe. To date, 25 countries have referenced their national qualifications frameworks and the remaining countries plan to do so in the course of 2015 and 2016. This process has contributed to making participating countries trust the quality of each other’s qualifications. Learners, graduates, providers and employers can use these levels to understand and compare qualifications awarded in different countries and by different education and training systems.

**Qualifications databases:** Countries participating in the EQF develop qualifications databases in which they provide information on the national qualifications. These databases provide the content of the qualifications described in terms of learning outcomes. The information on the qualifications will also be presented at European level.

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2 [https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/how-does-eqf-work](https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/how-does-eqf-work)

3 Member states, Candidate countries, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland,

4 Referencing is the process that results in the establishment of a relationship between the levels of the EQF and national qualifications frameworks or systems. Through this process, national authorities responsible for qualifications systems, in cooperation with stakeholders responsible for developing and using qualifications, define the correspondence between the national qualifications system and the 8 levels of the EQF, which are also referred to as "referencing" levels.
Database of regulated professions: In every EU country, there are some professions that are regulated. To make it easier for EU citizens to find information about regulated professions, the European Commission set up a database on professional access requirements across the EU.

ESCO: The multilingual European Classification of Occupations, Skills, Competences and Qualifications, ESCO, currently being developed, has the ambition to create the same language for both labour market and education and training in 23 languages.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning: Member States are invited to put in place, no later than 2018, arrangements for validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired via non-formal and informal learning. These arrangements allow individuals to obtain qualifications on the basis of validated learning outcomes, regardless of the context in which they were achieved.

ECTS (the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System in higher education) is a tool that helps to design, describe, and deliver study programmes and award higher education qualifications. The use of ECTS, in conjunction with outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, makes study programmes and qualifications more transparent and facilitates the recognition of qualifications. Course descriptions contain ‘learning outcomes and workload’ (i.e. the time students typically need to achieve these outcomes).

ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) is a technical framework to assess and document, cumulate and transfer learning outcomes. It also serves as a means to facilitate labour mobility by enhancing transparency and recognition of such learning outcomes. ECVET is based on the following principles: i) Qualifications are made up of learning outcome units. Each unit can be assessed and validated, and ii) Assessed units of learning outcomes represent the learners’ credit, which can be transferred to another country or setting and cumulated towards a full qualification.

Common European quality assurance arrangements: they aim at generating mutual trust in education and qualifications systems, thus facilitating recognition across borders:

ESG - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education;

EQAR - European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education;

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6 https://ec.europa.eu/esco/home
8 http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm,
11 http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/
12 https://www.eqar.eu/
EQAVET\textsuperscript{12}.- European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

**Tools for the documentation of qualifications, skills and learning experiences** allow the presentation of acquired knowledge, skills, competences and qualifications in a transparent and structured way. Among the most important tools:

The **Europass** framework\textsuperscript{13}, including the Europass CV, the Diploma Supplement for higher education\textsuperscript{14}, the Certificate Supplement for Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the European Skills Passport. They support the international comparability of learning outcomes acquired in various contexts and contribute to better understanding skills and qualifications in recognition processes;

Several sectoral skills and qualification passports such as the European Skills passport in Agriculture\textsuperscript{15} and the European Qualifications and Skills Passport for the Hospitality sector\textsuperscript{16}. These are mostly developed through the European sectorial social dialogue. However, they are not, to date, coordinated with each other and with other transparency instruments.

Several EU (and OECD) countries have recently put great efforts into improving their recognition procedures, by simplifying the structures and enhancing transparency. Recent policy changes in EU countries are discussed notably in the following reports:

"Recognition of qualifications and competences", IOM-LINET, 2013;

"Tackling Brain Waste: Strategies to Improve the Recognition of Immigrants’ Foreign Qualifications", MPI, 2013;


Beyond efforts put into early recognition, pre-departure assessments, transparency tools and bridging courses, specific arrangements are assimilated to EEA citizens by way of other EU Directives.

Arrangements for the recognition of professional qualifications can also be subject of international trade agreements between the EU and third countries. An example is the Comprehensive Trade and Economic Agreement (CETA) which establishes a framework for the mutual recognition throughout the territories of the EU and of Canada of professional qualifications and determines the general conditions and guidelines for the negotiation of profession-specific agreements. There are also ongoing negotiations regarding this issue with the USA in the context of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

\textsuperscript{12} http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2009.155.01.0001.01.ENG
\textsuperscript{13} http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home.
\textsuperscript{14} Adopted in the same format by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO in the context of the EHEA.
\textsuperscript{15} http://www.espagri.net/
Furthermore, Member States have the possibility to conclude bi-lateral agreements for recognising professional qualifications acquired outside the EU by third-country nationals (examples include agreements between the UK and Commonwealth countries or France and Québec).

**Related networks/services:** In order to support coherent implementation of EU and European tools across Europe, several coordination activities and networks of national representatives/contact points help implement and monitor the implementation of EU tools and legislation at national level. Examples are: EQF Advisory Group, EQF National Coordination Points, Network of national QF correspondents of the EHEA, ECVET Group/Network/Community of Practice, National Europass Centres, Reference Points for Quality Assurance in VET, the Committee on the recognition of professional qualifications and a group of coordinators for the implementation of the recognition of professional qualifications.