



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

50  
YEARS  
SHAPING LEARNING AND  
SKILLS FOR EUROPE

# Cedefop turns 50: shaping learning and skills for Europe

Iraklis Pliakis, Cedefop expert on qualifications and credentials



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## Who we are, what we do

- ✓ We are one of the first 'decentralised' EU agencies
- ✓ specialising in VET, skills and qualifications policy
- ✓ acting as a knowledge broker between the European and national levels
- ✓ set up in 1975 in Berlin, moved to Thessaloniki in 1995



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# Cedefop's strands of work



# VET at EU policy level

## 2025: A Competitiveness Compass for the EU

- ✓ Promoting skills and quality jobs while ensuring social fairness: a horizontal enabler of competitiveness

## 2025: The Union of Skills

- ✓ Build skills for quality jobs and lives through a strong educational foundation, with an inclusive lifelong learning approach.
- ✓ Upskill and reskill
- ✓ Circulate skills
- ✓ Attract, develop and retain talent.

## 2026: European Strategy for VET

2027: Recommendation on human capital, focusing on education, skills, competitiveness and the rapidly evolving labour market.

*Council recommendation on a European approach to microcredentials, European Education Area, European Skills Agenda, Council recommendation on VET, Osnabrück Declaration*

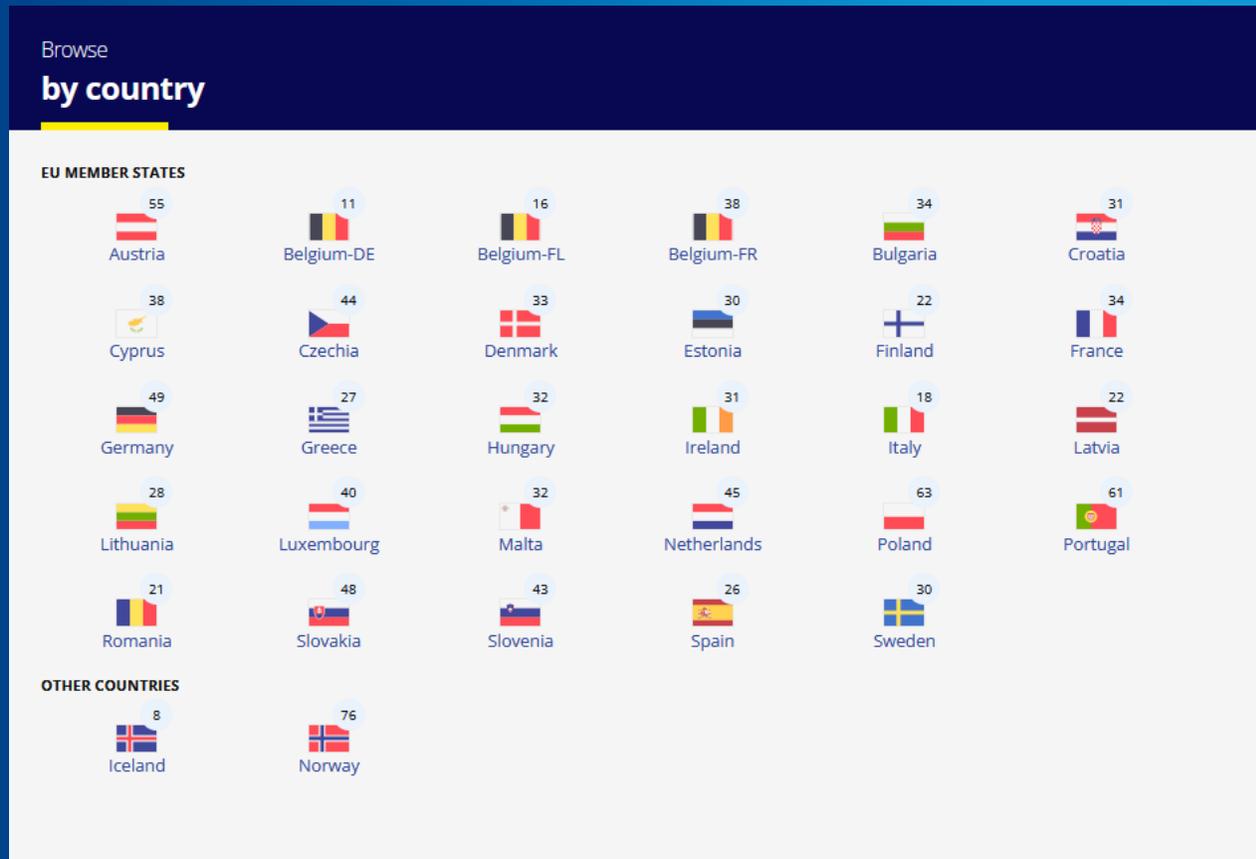


# Timeline of VET policies in Europe



The Timeline is a rich collection of strategies, legal acts and practical measures in VET and lifelong learning.

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# Timeline of VET policies in Europe



Browse

## by target group

**LEARNERS (811)**

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices	481	Young people (15-29 years old)	360
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)	147	Learners with migrant background, including refugees	115
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers	135	Learners with disabilities	111
Adult learners	374	Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)	105
Unemployed and jobseekers	172	Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment	159
Low-skilled/qualified persons	146	Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)	117

**EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS (484)**

Teachers	329	Trainers	258
School leaders	206	Adult educators	131
Guidance practitioners			138

**ENTITIES PROVIDING VET (588)**

Companies	285	Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	165
VET providers (all kinds)			498

**OTHER STAKEHOLDERS (179)**

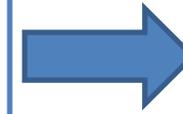
Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)	169	National, regional and local authorities	35
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Feedback

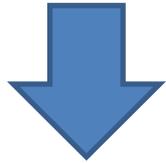
The Timeline is a rich collection of strategies, legal acts and practical measures in VET and lifelong learning.

# Timeline of VET policies in Europe: monitoring VET policy implementations in EU-27+

Rich collection of strategies, action plans, legal acts, regulations and practical measures by thematic category, target group, country, EU priority



Monitor how initiatives develop from design to implementation



## Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeships

POLICY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN LITHUANIA



### Browse by European priorities in VET

VET RECOMMENDATION	OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION
VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges	Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET
165	125
Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET	Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation
83	148
VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand	Sustainability - a green link in VET
73	52
VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills	European Education and Training Area and international VET
132	38
VET promoting equality of opportunities	
84	
VET underpinned by a culture of quality assurance	
33	

- Background
- Objectives
- Description
- Bodies responsible
- Target groups
- Thematic categories
- Subsystem
- Further reading
- Related policy developments
- Country
- Type of development



# The EQF process: building the European map of qualifications



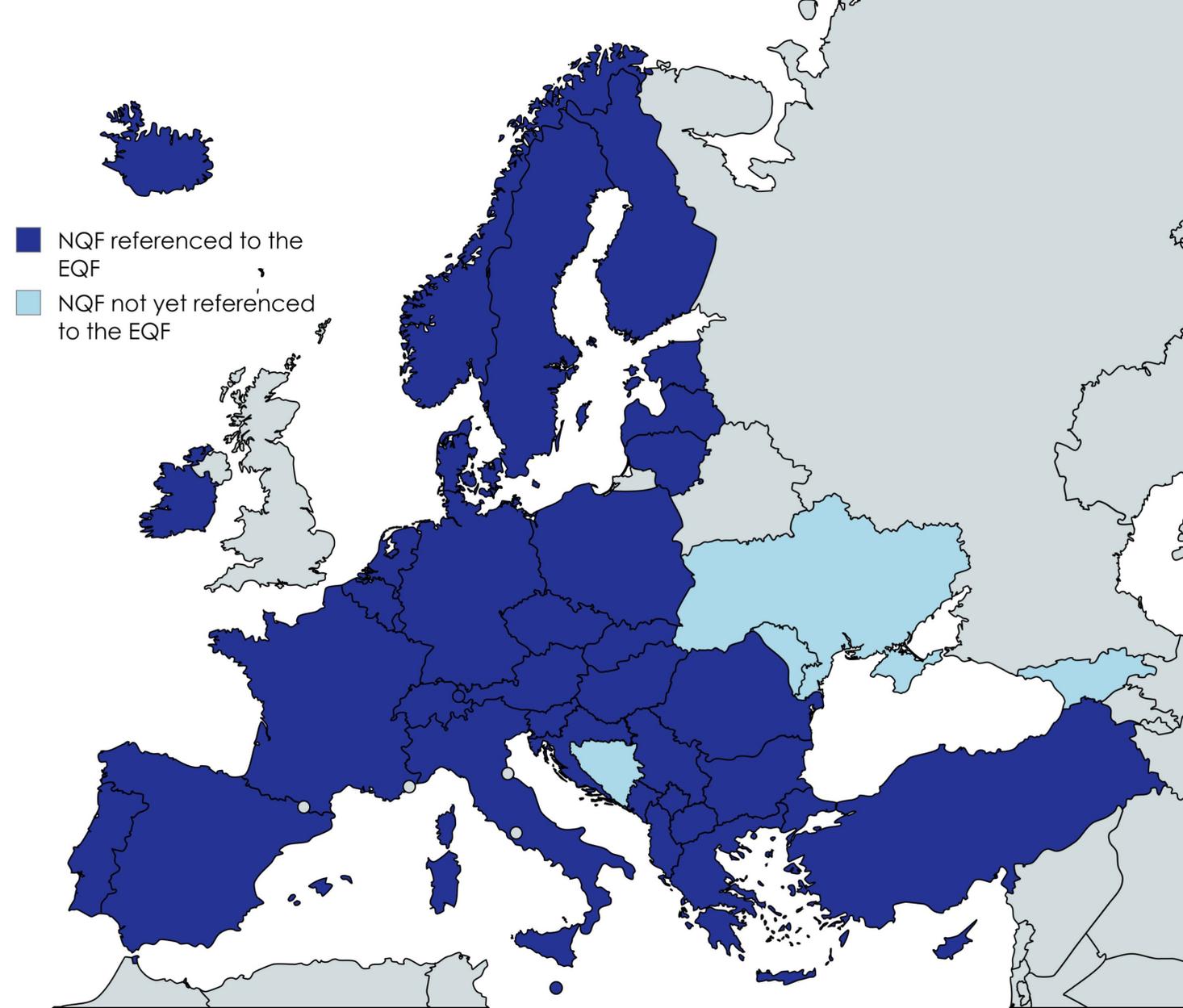
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# Countries in the EQF process

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41 EQF countries

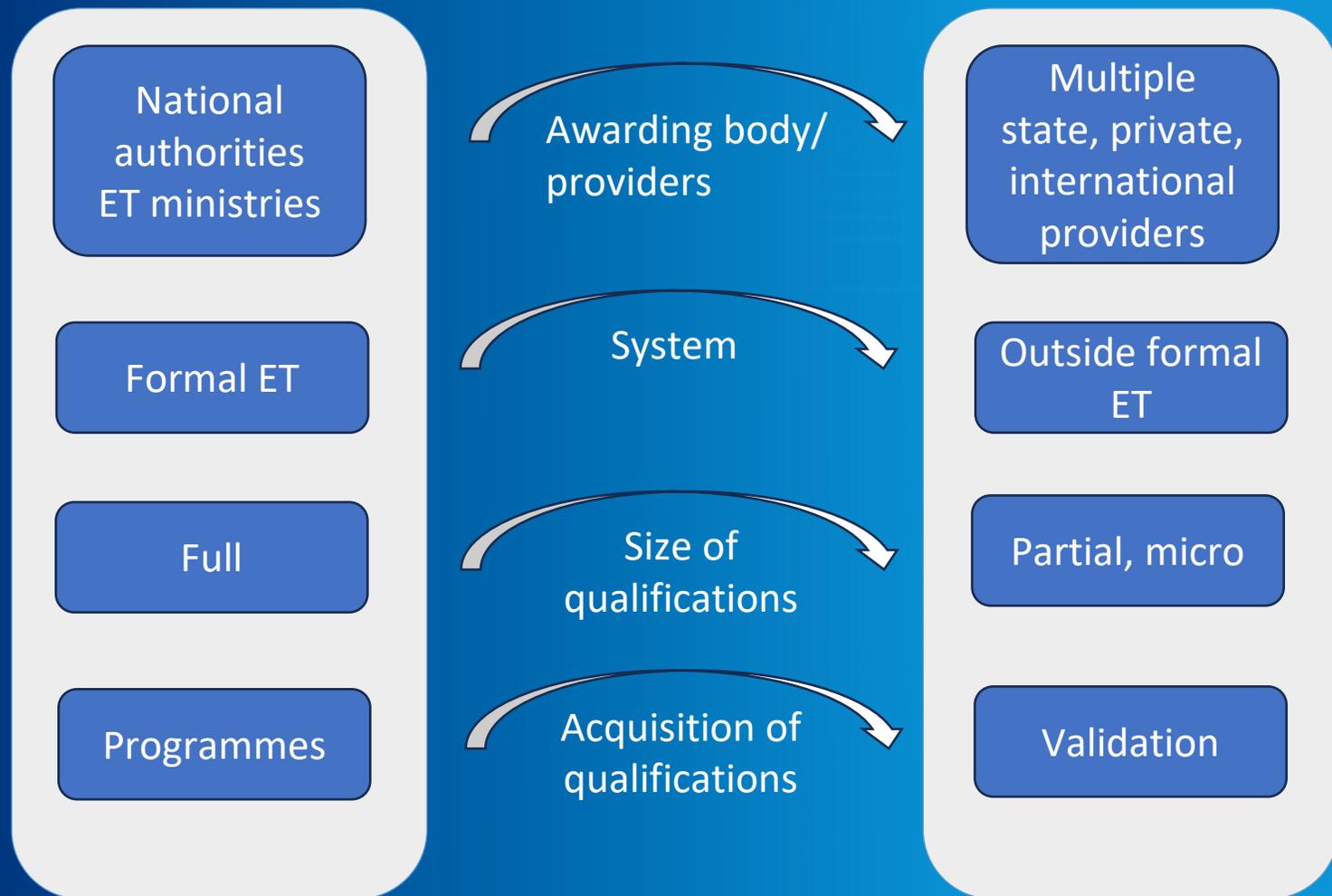
37 countries have linked their NQFs to EQF (all EU MSs)



# Comparing NQFs

 Austria (2022)	 EQF	 Ireland (2022)
<b>NQF 8</b> Doctorate ( <i>Doktorgrade</i> ) Level-8 professional qualifications in the health sector awarded by the Federal Ministry of Health <a href="#">Show details</a>	<b>EQF 8</b> ⓘ	<b>NQF 10</b> Doctoral degree Higher doctorate
<b>NQF 7</b> Master's degree ( <i>Master- bzw. Diplomgrade</i> )	<b>EQF 7</b> ⓘ	<b>NQF 9</b> Master's degree Postgraduate diploma Level 9 professional award <a href="#">Show details</a>
<b>NQF 6</b> Bachelor's degree ( <i>Bachelorgrade</i> ) Master craftsperson ( <i>Meister</i> ) Master of agriculture ( <i>landwirtschaftliche/r Meister/in</i> ) Engineer ( <i>Ingenieur</i> ) Health qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Health – nurse responsible for general care (RL 2005/36/EG) ( <i>Gehobener Dienst für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege (Diplomierete Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegerin, Diplomierter Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger)</i> ) Level-6 professional qualification <a href="#">Show details</a>	<b>EQF 6</b> ⓘ	<b>NQF 8</b> Honours bachelor's degree Higher diploma Level 8 professional award <a href="#">Show details</a>  <b>NQF 7</b> Ordinary bachelor's degree Level 7 professional award <a href="#">Show details</a>
<b>NQF 5</b> VET college/school leaving certificate – 5-year programmes (BHS) ( <i>Reife- und Diplomprüfung der berufsbildenden höheren Schulen</i> ) Level-5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Defence – staff non-commissioned officer ( <i>Stabsunteroffizier oder Stabsunteroffizierin (StbUO, Erstverwendung)</i> ) Level-5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Justice – senior prison officer ( <i>Exekutivdienst in der Verwendungsgruppe E2a im Justizressort (Dienstführenden Grundausbildung – mittleres Management)</i> ) Level-5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy ( <i>Duale Akademie</i> ) <a href="#">Show details</a>	<b>EQF 5</b> ⓘ	<b>NQF 6</b> <div data-bbox="1200 996 1556 1246" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge</li> <li>• A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</li> <li>• Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change</li> <li>• Review and develop performance of self and others</li> </ul> </div>

# In which ways NQFs have evolved?



# Developing comprehensive NQFs



- ✓ In 13 countries at least one type of a levelled qualification can be considered as a microcredential.
- ✓ 6 countries have already included international qualifications and 5 are planning to do so.
- ✓ In some cases, countries incorporate professional qualifications as a sub-framework.

[Building a European qualifications map: Development of NQFs across Europe](#)

# Progress made... still a long way to go

- ✓ Two main target groups:
  - NQF developers and implementers
  - system beneficiaries and end users
- ✓ Awareness of NQFs/EQF among employers and jobseekers has gradually increased, but often remains low
- ✓ Individuals most often use NQF/EQF levels to ease their international mobility and orientation within the ET system
- ✓ 24 NQFs are used by labour market stakeholders; 15 countries have reported that NQF/EQF levels are used in job ads and/or recruitment procedures (usually not extensively)

Learners, workers,  
jobseekers, employers,  
labour market  
stakeholders



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# NQF online tool

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## Welcome

The NQF online tool is a rich source of information on the [qualifications frameworks](#) and systems of the 41 countries participating in the [European qualifications framework \(EQF\)](#) process. Policy-makers, researchers, and the wider public can learn about the structure and scope of the NQFs, and get information on their implementation, impact and future priorities.

The NQF online tool presents, through an interactive map/grid, information on the state of play of the NQF of each [country](#) in 2018, 2020 and 2022. Information is organised in thematic categories, and can be compared for two countries ([Country comparison](#)). In addition, through the EQF users can compare qualification types between two countries ([NQF comparison](#)), and have an '[Overview](#)' of the main features of all NQFs across Europe.

The information displayed in the tool is collected biennially by Cedefop together with the European Commission and ETF, in cooperation with countries and the EQF national coordination points.

We hope the wealth of information presented will inspire and support all those interested in developing transparent and accessible education and training systems, and those navigating through the various European qualification types.

Detailed information on developments in Georgia and Moldova will be available in the next update of the tool in 2025.

Browse

## by country

[Albania](#)[Austria](#)[Belgium-DE](#)[Belgium-FL](#)[Belgium-FR](#)[Bosnia &  
Herzegovina](#)[Bulgaria](#)[Croatia](#)[Cyprus](#)[Czechia](#)[Denmark](#)[Estonia](#)[Finland](#)[France](#)[Germany](#)[Greece](#)[Hungary](#)[Iceland](#)[Ireland](#)[Italy](#)[Kosovo](#)[Latvia](#)[Liechtenstein](#)[Lithuania](#)[Luxembourg](#)[Malta](#)[Montenegro](#)[Netherlands](#)[North Macedonia](#)[Norway](#)[Poland](#)[Portugal](#)[Romania](#)[Serbia](#)[Slovakia](#)[Slovenia](#)[Spain](#)[Sweden](#)[Switzerland](#)[Türkiye](#)[Ukraine](#)

COUNTRY	REPORTING YEAR	SCOPE OF THE FRAMEWORK	NUMBER OF LEVELS	LEVEL DESCRIPTORS	LEGAL BASIS/STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	NQF LINKED TO EQF	NQF/EQF WEBSITE	QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER/DATABASE
 Albania	2022	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and lifelong learning qualifications for adults and people undertaking specialised courses for professional development.	Eight	knowledge, skills, competences	NQF law (adopted in 2010, revised in 2018) (in Albanian) <a href="#">Activation stage</a>	2021	<a href="#">Website</a>	<a href="#">The National Catalogue of VET qualifications</a>
 Austria	2022	The NQF is open to all types of qualifications from the formal and non-formal sectors. General education qualifications are not yet included in the framework.	Eight	knowledge, skills, competence	Federal Law 14/2016 on the NQF (in German) <a href="#">Operational stage</a>	2012	<a href="#">Website</a>	<a href="#">Qualifications register</a>
 Belgium-DE	2022	Comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.	Eight	occupational competence (knowledge and skills), personal competence (social competence and autonomy)	Decree on establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community (2013) (in German) <a href="#">Activation stage</a>			
 Belgium-FL	2022	The NQF includes all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training (educational qualifications) and professional qualifications that can be awarded awarded both inside and outside formal education.	Eight	knowledge / skills, context / autonomy / responsibility	Decree on the qualification structure (2009) (in Dutch) <a href="#">Operational stage</a>	2011, 2014 update, 2023 update	<a href="#">Website</a>	<a href="#">Qualifications database</a>
 Belgium-FR	2022	The framework includes educational and professional qualifications awarded by the public sector and skills certificates awarded through the validation of non-formal and informal learning.	Eight	knowledge / skills, context / autonomy / responsibility	Decree on cooperation agreement between the three francophone governments on the creation and management of CFC (2015) (in French) <a href="#">Activation stage</a>	2013	<a href="#">Website</a>	<a href="#">Qualifications register</a>
 Bosnia & Herzegovina	2022	Designed as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training. Open to those awarded outside formal education and training.	Eight	knowledge, skills, competence	Decision of the CoM on the adoption of the baseline qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) (in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian) (in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian)		<a href="#">Website</a>	



## NQF online tool: overview of NQFs



# National qualifications frameworks (NQF) online tool

 Introduction

 Overview

 Countries

 Country comparison

 Qualification comparison

 About

## Countries



Use the interactive map or the countries grid to display information on NQF developments across Europe. It is possible to compare countries based on reporting year, stage of development and whether the NQF has been linked to EQF.

Detailed information on 2022 developments in the accession and pre-accession countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine) will be available in the second quarter of 2024.

Reporting year

2022



Stage of development



NQF linked to EQF

- Any -



Apply

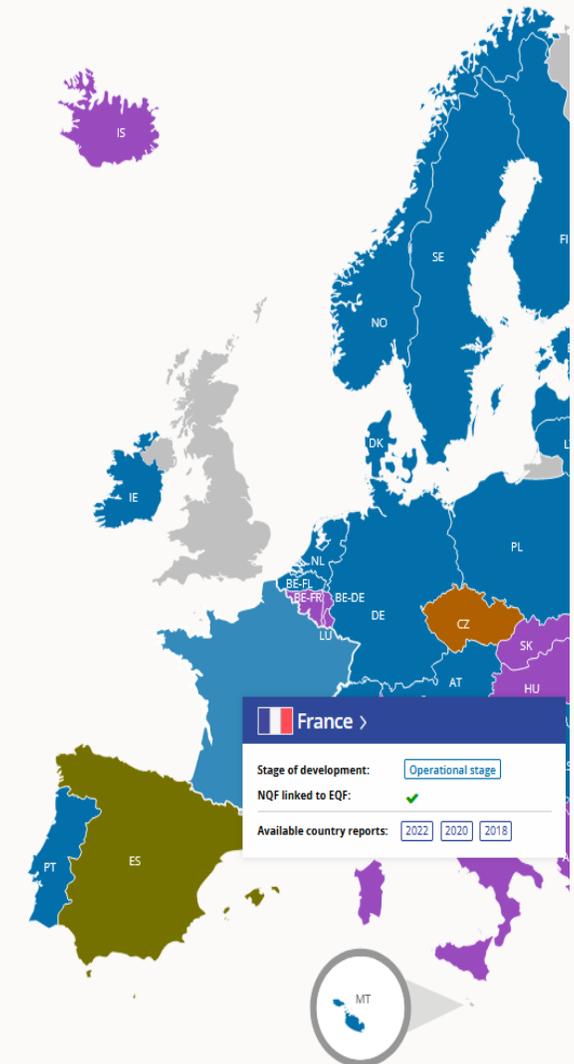
Reset

Map view

Grid view

[NQF online tool: detailed information per country](#)

- Explorative stage
- Design stage
- Adoption stage
- Activation stage
- Operational stage
- Review stage



**France**

Stage of development: Operational stage

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

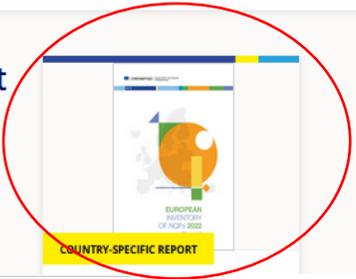
Available country reports: 2022 2020 2018

Expand all

### NQF country report

- 1. National context
- 2. NQF objectives and functions
- 3. Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications
- 4. Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement
- 5. Recognition and validation of prior learning
- 6. NQF implementation and impact
- 7. Referencing to the EQF
- 8. Reflections and plans
- NQF table
- Main sources of information
- Acronyms
- References

### Related content



### Overview

Stage of development:

Operational stage

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

#### Scope of the framework:

The NQF covers all levels and types of formal qualifications apart from initial education qualifications (nursery school, primary school and first cycle/lower secondary level). It is open to qualifications awarded outside the regulated qualification system, including private-sector and international qualifications, and industry or sectoral qualifications (CQPs)

#### Number of levels:

Eight

#### Legal basis/stage of development:

Law No 2002-73 on social modernisation (2002)  
(in French)

Law No 2018-771 for the freedom to choose one's professional future (2018)  
(in French)

Decree No 2019-14 on the NQF of vocational and professional qualifications (2019)  
(in French)

#### NQF/EQF website:

[Website](#)

#### Qualifications register/database:

[National register of vocational and professional qualifications \(RNCP\)](#)

**Compare with other country**

Country: -- Select country --

Reporting year: -- Select year --

Compare

tries?year=5340&nqf\_linked\_to\_eqf=All#france



## NQF comparison



Select two countries and compare their qualification types through the EQF. For a detailed overview and analysis of NQF level descriptors in Europe, please click [here](#). To discover more on NQF qualification databases, you can check the [Europass portal](#).

### Select countries to compare NQFs

Country  Reporting year   Country  Reporting year

Select EQF level(s)

Compare

# Comparing NQFs

 Austria (2022)	 EQF	 Ireland (2022)
<b>NQF 8</b>  <b>Doctorate (Doktorgrade)</b>  <b>Level-8 professional qualifications in the health sector awarded by the Federal Ministry of Health</b> Show details ▾	<b>EQF 8</b> 	<b>NQF 10</b>  <b>Doctoral degree</b>  <b>Higher doctorate</b>
<b>NQF 7</b>  <b>Master's degree (Master- bzw. Diplomgrade)</b>	<b>EQF 7</b> 	<b>NQF 9</b>  <b>Master's degree</b>  <b>Postgraduate diploma</b>  <b>Level 9 professional award</b> Show details ▾
<b>NQF 6</b>  <b>Bachelor's degree (Bachelorgrade)</b>  <b>Master craftsperson (Meister)</b>  <b>Master of agriculture (landwirtschaftliche/r Meister/in)</b>  <b>Engineer (Ingenieur)</b>  <b>Health qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Health – nurse responsible for general care (RL 2005/36/EG) (Gehobener Dienst für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege (Diplomierete Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegerin, Diplomierter Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger))</b>  <b>Level-6 professional qualification</b> Show details ▾	<b>EQF 6</b> 	<b>NQF 8</b>  <b>Honours bachelor's degree</b>  <b>Higher diploma</b>  <b>Level 8 professional award</b> Show details ▾  <b>NQF 7</b>  <b>Ordinary bachelor's degree</b>  <b>Level 7 professional award</b> Show details ▾
<b>NQF 5</b>  <b>VET college/school leaving certificate – 5-year programmes (BHS) (Reife- und Diplomprüfung der berufsbildenden höheren Schulen))</b>  <b>Level-5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Defence – staff non-commissioned officer (Stabsunteroffizier oder Stabsunteroffizierin (StbUO, Erstverwendung))</b>  <b>Level-5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Justice – senior prison officer (Exekutivdienst in der Verwendungsgruppe E2a im Justizressort (Dienstführenden Grundausbildung – mittleres Management))</b>  <b>Level-5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (Duale Akademie)</b> Show details ▾	<b>EQF 5</b> 	<b>NQF 6</b> <div data-bbox="1200 996 1556 1246" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge</li> <li>• A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</li> <li>• Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change</li> <li>• Review and develop performance of self and others</li> </ul> </div>

[NQF online tool: NQF comparisons](#)

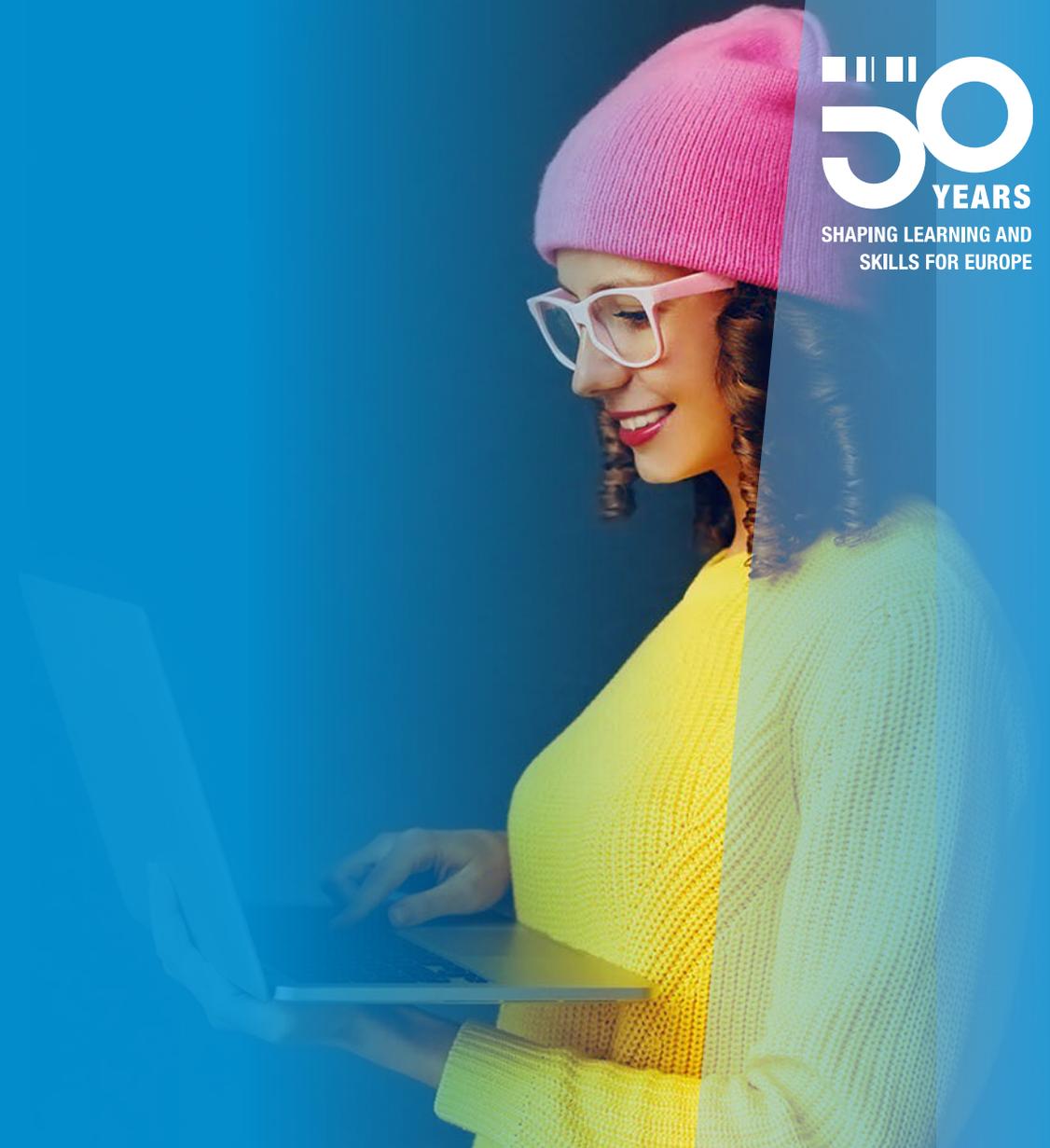


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# Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning



# Are microcredentials becoming a big deal?

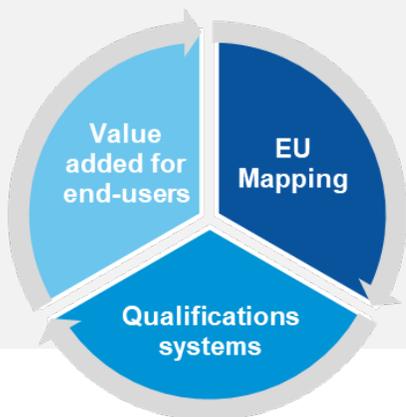
**2020-23**  
Cedefop study  
on MCs for VET  
and LM

**2021**  
Cedefop supports  
EC and the SWD  
with data from VET

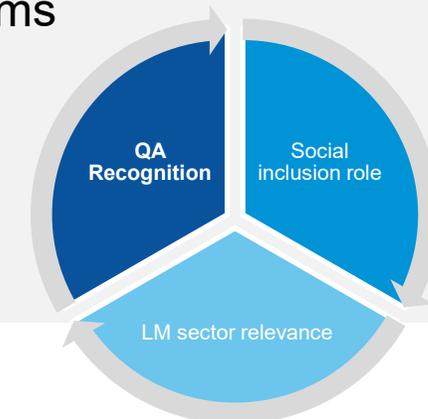
**2022**  
EC Council Recommendation  
MCs for LLL and employability

**2023-25**  
EU MS are increasingly  
embedding MCs in  
their ET systems

**2025-27**  
Cedefop  
new research:  
Deepening on MCs



*Monitoring implementation*



# Defining microcredentials (2020-25)

- **Uncertainty** linked to the **naming** and **function**
- **Diverse** landscape across EU
- Microcredentials: an **umbrella term**
- MCs indicate the **title**, the **date of issue**, the **identity** of the holder, the **provider** and achieved **LOs**.
- More **diverse learners** than full qualifications, e.g. new hires, customers of a company
- MCs mainly used by adults in employment and as supplements to full qualifications



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# Main characteristics of microcredentials in the manufacturing and retail sectors

Sector	Title of microcredential	Location	Workload	Link to ECTS or ECVET specified	Mode of delivery	YES	YES
Manufacturing	Safety procedures in medical processes	France	12 modules 17 days	NO	In person		
Manufacturing	Quality management system and welding coordination	Denmark	22.5 hours, 3 days	NO	In person		
Manufacturing	International Welding Engineer (IWE)	International (41 countries)	448 hours	ECVET	person/blended	YES	YES
Manufacturing	International Welding Practitioner (IWP)	International (41 countries)	150 hours	ECVET	In person/blended	YES	YES
Manufacturing		Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK, Portugal and Turkey.	60-70 hours	NO	Online/blended		
Manufacturing		Austria	1 month (fulltime)	NO	In person		
Manufacturing		Malta	125 hours	ECVET	In person	YES	YES
Industrial		Czechia	NS	NO	In person	NO	NS

Highly targeted/specialised types of training that are designed around specific

Focus on new and emerging topics and technologies

Microcredentials often describe learning outcomes. The remaining either do not mention their LOs or present them in the form of content description

Mode of delivery differs; it can be in-person training, online or blended.



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# Microcredentials as part of qualifications systems

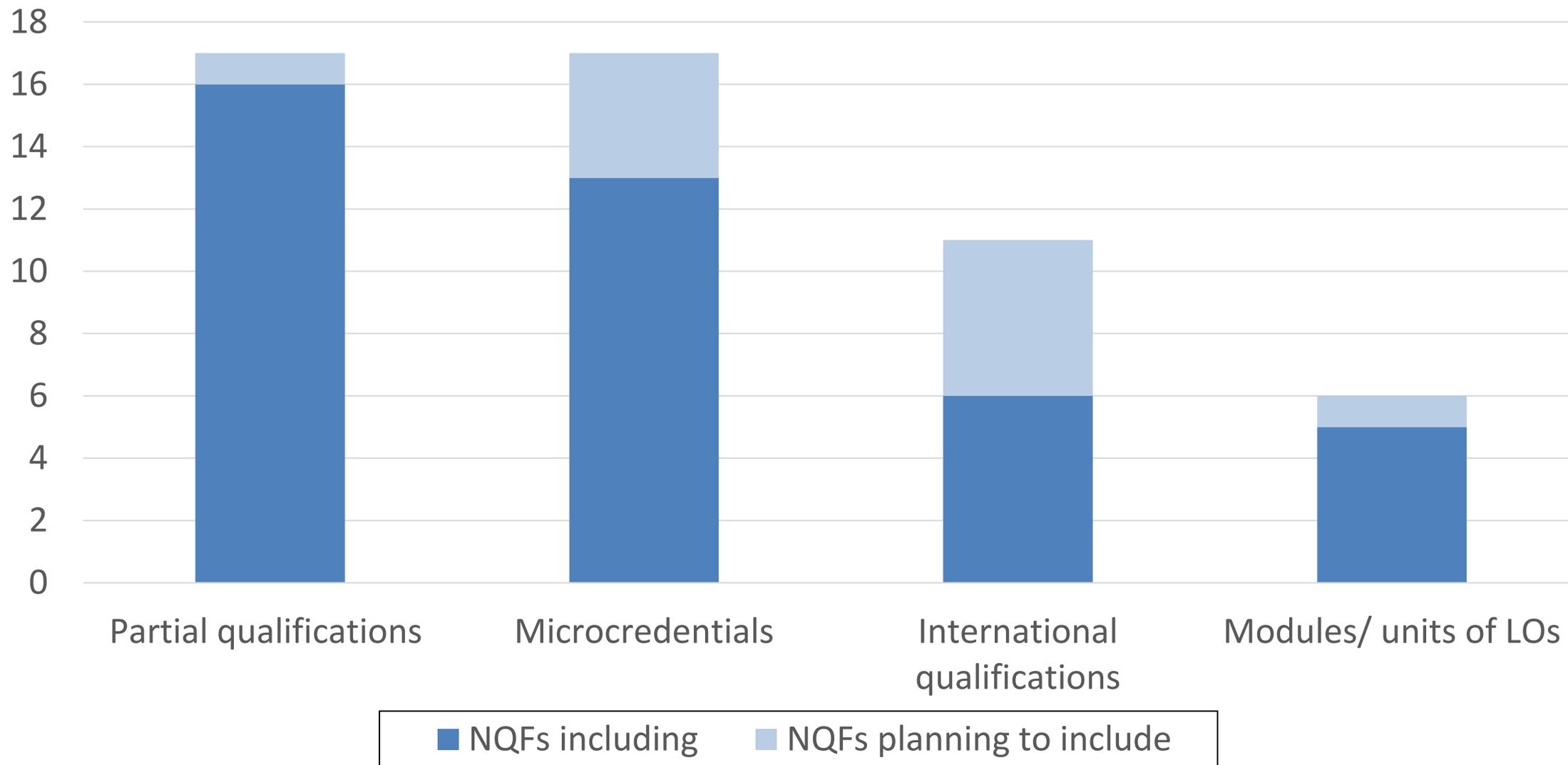
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# MCs and qualifications systems

- A wide variety of microcredentials can **fall outside of the formal qualifications system** and operate solely in the labour market.
- Indications that microcredentials **will not diminish the labour market value** of recognised qualifications in the near future
- MCs address the limitation of formal Qs to **timely respond to labour market needs**
- Microcredentials can push qualifications systems to become more **flexible, adaptable** and **responsive** to labour market needs
- Linking **modularisation** to microcredentials
- Can microcredentials lead to **fragmentation** of knowledge?

# Alternative types of NQF qualifications



[Building a European qualifications map: Development of NQFs across Europe](#)

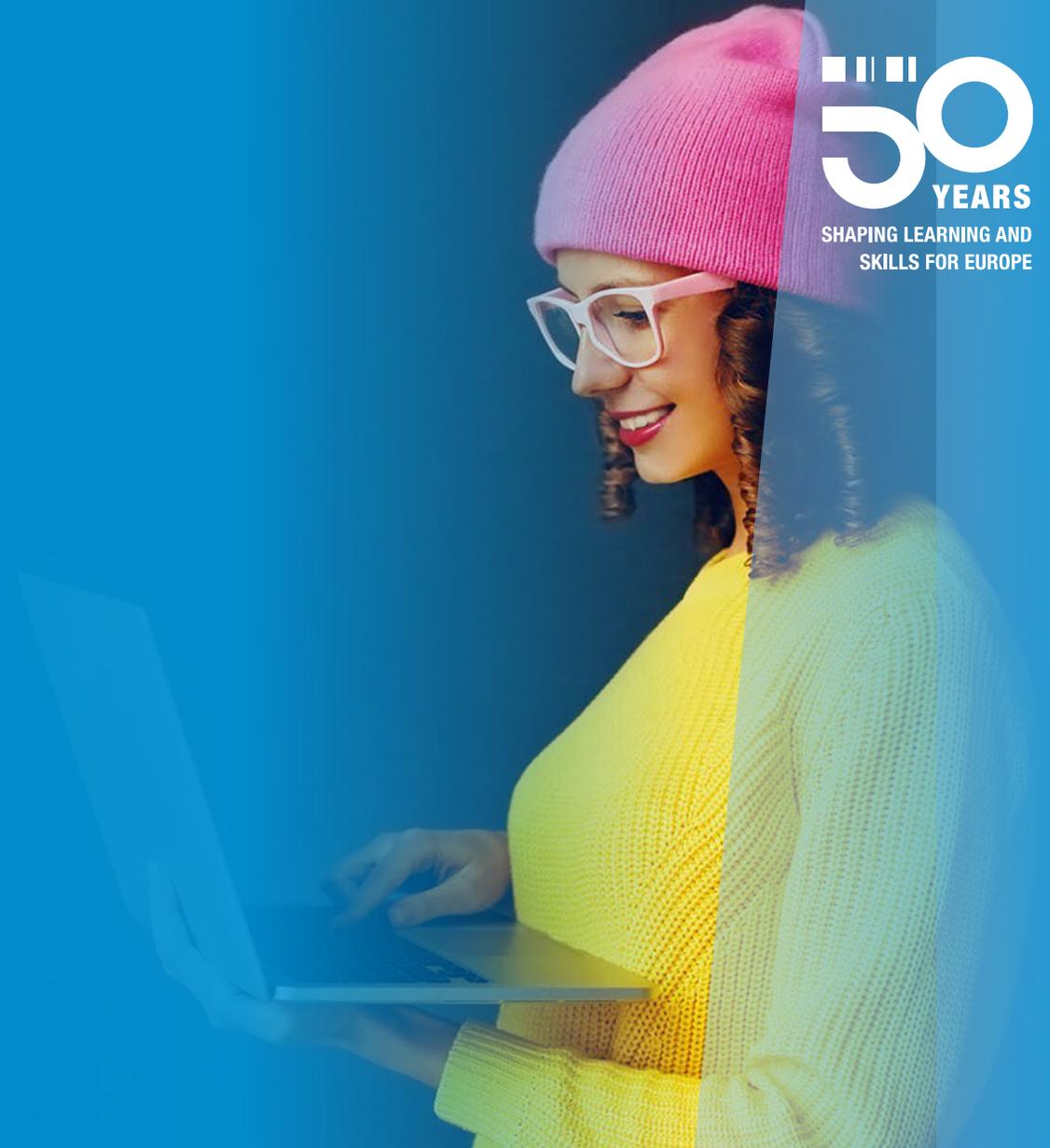


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# Microcredentials and end-users

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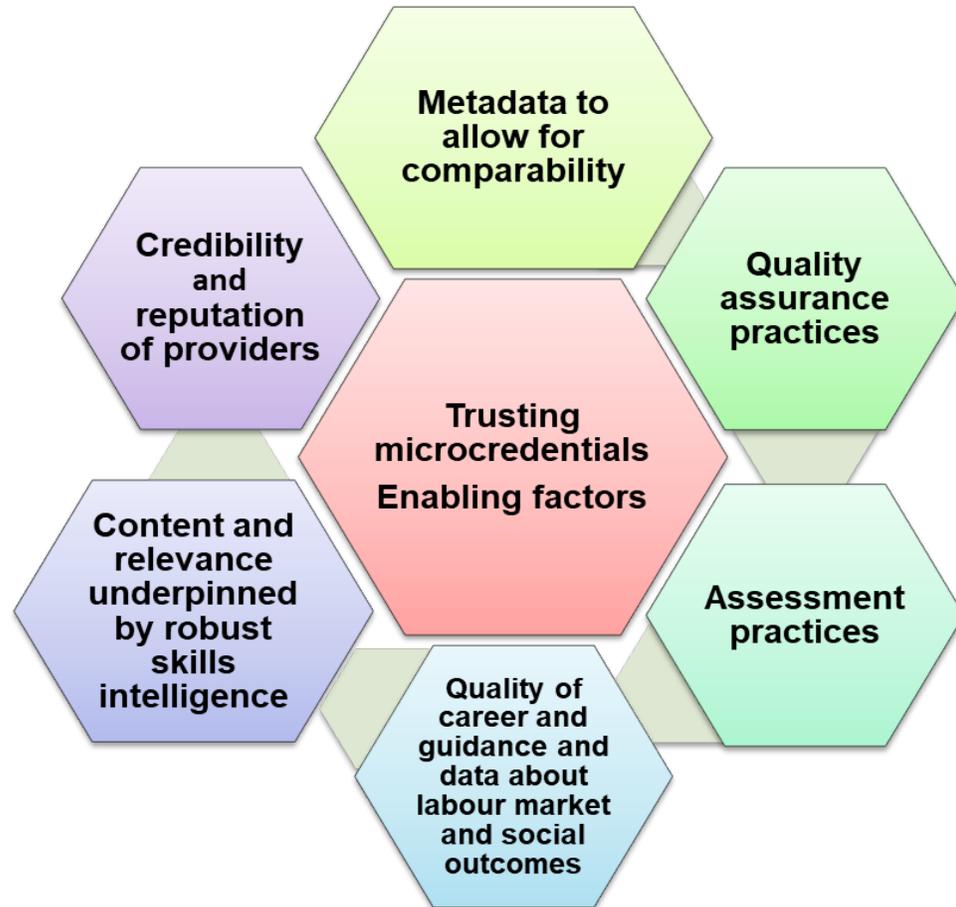
# Microcredentials and added value for



<b>Learners and employees</b>	<b>Employers</b>	<b>VET providers</b>
Standing out in a recruitment situation.	More responsive training offer	Expanding the outreach of VET providers.
Labour market mobility through vertical and horizontal skills pathways.	Faster and more efficient upskilling and reskilling of the workforce.	Consolidate strategies for VET excellence.
Improved labour market outcomes in the form of income and career development.	Improve employee retention through improved job and career pathways in the company.	Allowing for new services and engagements with new targets groups.
Career shifts.	Expanding the recruitment base (hidden workforce).	Involvement in local, regional and sectoral skills ecosystems building skills intelligence.
Access to continuing and further learning on a flexible basis.	Reducing induction costs of new employees by providing more individualised and affordable training opportunities.	Building institutional capacity to innovate by e.g., co-designing new forms of provision to reach underprivileged target groups.
Recognition of prior learning.	Renewed competitiveness and innovation performance through concurrent strategies for upskilling and reskilling.	Improving quality of provision by engaging actively with stakeholders in local labour markets.

Source: [Cedefop \(2023\)](#)

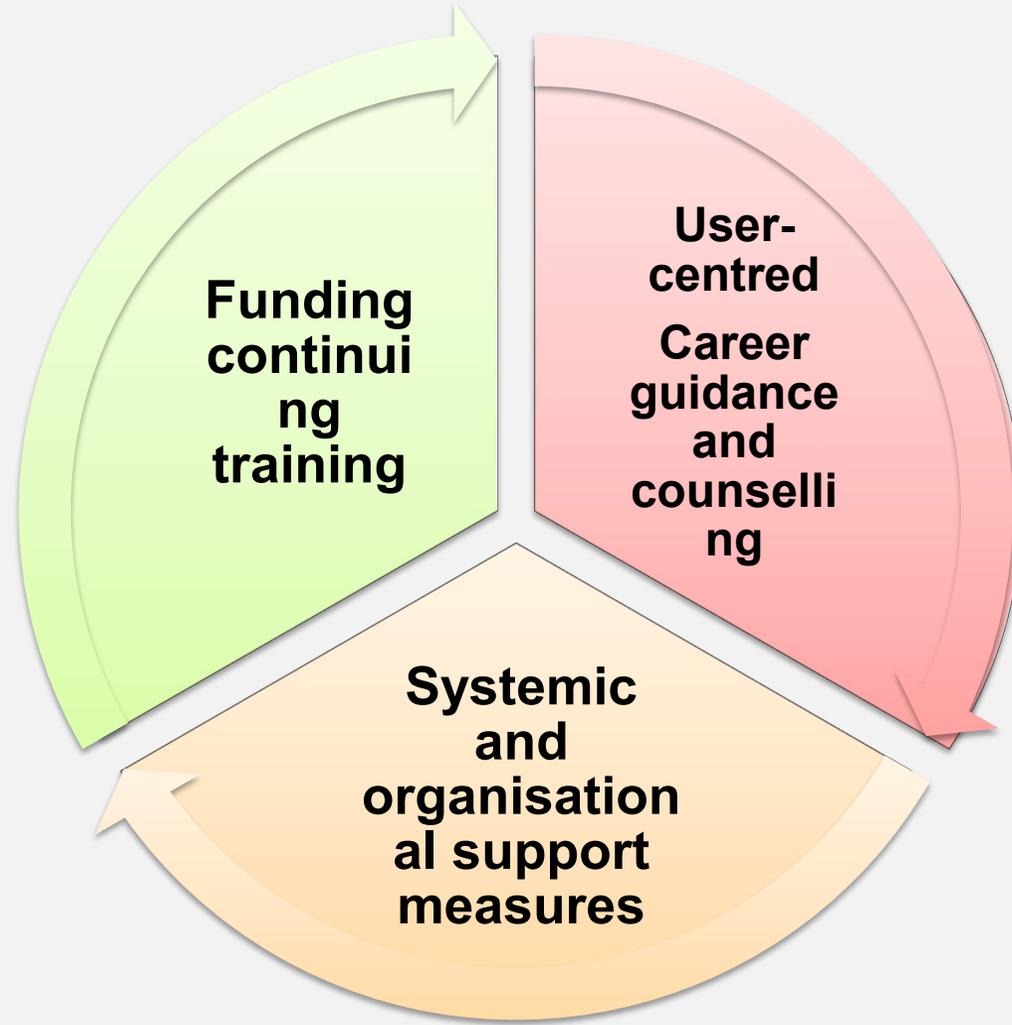
# Building trust in microcredentials



Source: [Cedefop \(2023\)](#)



# Ways to support engagement with microcredentials



Source: [Cedefop \(2023\)](#)

# MCs are promising but getting things right is a balancing act

## STRENGTHS

- Labour market responsiveness
- Up/reskilling & lifelong learning
- Skills validation potential
- Providers/employers cooperation
- Broadening access to learning
- Flexible learning pathways

## WEAKNESSES

- Uncertainty about benefits
- Proliferation of unregulated MCs
- Confusion among users
- Quality assurance - transparency
- Recognition challenges
- Reaching disadvantaged learners



# Thank you

For further information:

[Iraklis.PLIAKIS@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:Iraklis.PLIAKIS@cedefop.europa.eu)

Project pages

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf>

[www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training)

Publication

[Building a European qualifications map: Development of NQFs across Europe](#)

Online tools

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/malta-u2>

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