

CONNECTING REGIONAL QUALIFICATIONS INITIATIVES AROUND THE GLOBE

Towards a global agenda for increased dialogue

Why is cooperation important now?

These conclusions summarise our discussions on 19 May on different forms of cooperation between Regional Framework Initiatives around the globe. We are aware that the number of RQF initiatives around the globe is growing, especially among middle income and low-income countries. They are often linked with the developmental agendas of different regional economic communities and quality assurance networks, seeking to support labour and learner mobility, enhance access and quality of education and lifelong learning through relevant qualifications, and improve employability and opportunities for all.

RQFs have a role to play in finding international and global solutions to respond to the disruption caused by the COVID crisis and the transition to greener and more digital economies and societies. While RQFs need to be based on strong interaction between stakeholders and institutions in member countries, global cooperation is important to face common challenges and develop common solutions. This cooperation has to start immediately to enhance the capacities of all RQF initiatives to advance and face new challenges jointly. The crisis is both a threat and an opportunity for RQFs. Such challenges are best addressed collectively. There is a strong interest in cooperation from the regional bodies and national actors which are involved in implementing RQFs and from international organisations. We can work together online and seek new funding opportunities to support cooperation.

Background for our cooperation

The [AQRF practical guide](#) describes a regional qualifications framework as a broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently,

for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country. Although this sums up well the links between RQFs, NQFs and qualifications, it does not say much about the workings and objectives of regional qualifications frameworks, why they are important and why cooperation between them is in the interest of all existing RQF initiatives?

In a world where people learn and work in different contexts, qualifications signal people's competences. Qualifications can be passports to enable international mobility. RQFs are instruments aiming to ensure that qualifications become passports. In our interconnected world, mobility for work and learning and technical and economic cooperation is increasingly global, often going beyond regional economic communities.

The [European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning](#) is an advanced regional framework, which has stimulated the development of NQFs in the 38 participating countries. The EU institutions and the countries have focussed on establishing links between NQFs and the EQF. There is a tremendous variety of qualifications across the continent. European countries have quite different sets of qualifications from each other. NQFs are used to clarify the links between qualifications domestically, while the EQF's role is to provide transparency between countries. The EQF has been a reference for NQFs and RQFs in other regions and is now initiating a process of comparison with NQFs and RQFs outside the 38 countries. This process, which is new, will be a mutual dialogue, in which the EQF is not promoted as a standard, but rather one in which other national or regional frameworks are treated as equal partners. This dialogue, comparison process and the resulting understanding of the correspondence of levels achieved, should improve international transparency and a better understanding of the value of qualifications and support international mobility and cooperation.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) is an EU agency that works with countries outside the EU on supporting their human capital development reforms. ETF carried out a [background study on RQF initiatives](#) to explore comparison. We found far more RQFs than anticipated, identifying 17 initiatives, a number which is still growing. These RQFs cover countries with a total population of 5.3 billion inhabitants, or two-thirds of the world's population. Making them work together can therefore have an enormous impact. Although our study was only meant originally to meet the needs of the expert group working on comparison, we decided to disseminate it further and discuss its findings. This happened on 19 May, in two webinars, adapted to time differences around the globe. We managed to attract participants from 77 countries, covering participants coming from as far as the Kingdom of Tonga (+11 H), the city of Vancouver (-9 hours), from Auckland in the South (36°S) to Helsinki in the North (60°N). These conclusions build on the discussions during the webinar.

We found that each regional framework is unique in its objectives, context and arrangements. Most initiatives are being developed in middle and low income countries in the Southern Hemisphere. They play an important role in supporting the development agendas of their regions and in strengthening mutual trust in qualifications. Many of these frameworks are not yet operational, which would make it difficult to compare them to the EQF. During the interviews conducted for the study we realised it is important to exchange more experiences and also that we face many global challenges together that require concerted action. The most urgent of these challenges now is how to address COVID's disruption of education and training systems and labour markets.

Developmental role of Regional Economic Communities, and strengthening mutual trust through QA bodies

Opening new opportunities for businesses and individuals building on innovation and the skills of people is seen as a key driver for economic development and cooperation in many parts of the world. Many Regional Economic Communities in the Pacific, Asia, on the Arab Peninsula, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean see that RQFs can contribute to sustainable development through facilitating human development. Getting the right skills and qualifications to support development is critical. RQFs provide synergy through a common agenda and instruments to structure the cooperation between countries on skills and qualifications. This is not only recognised by governments working together in regional economic communities, but also by regional quality assurance bodies, promoting recognition and learner mobility and using qualifications frameworks as a quality enhancement mechanism.

COVID disruption

The COVID crisis has been disruptive in many ways. Millions of people, in particular migrants and women, have lost their jobs. Lockdowns interrupted education and training processes, exams and work-based learning for billions. It has stimulated more digital and online learning including cross-border provision. Many of us have started to work online and rethink our jobs. Due to reduced income, governments have made cuts that affected the services managing skills and qualifications. The South African Qualifications Authority, SAQA was facing closure, and was obliged to dismiss half its staff. In 2020, the National Qualifications Authority in the UAE was integrated into the Ministry of Education. The COVID crisis accelerated processes that had already started. We are dealing with multiple disruptions at the same time. Increased digitalisation and automation is transforming or destroying jobs. The climate crisis is making living conditions unsustainable in some parts of our planet and is pushing us away from fossil fuels and polluting heavy industries and mining sectors. Many jobs will need to become greener and new jobs are being created. Half of us will need to reskill over the coming years.

To support this transition, public authorities have a duty to support upskilling and reskilling and ensure that those who are most at risk of unemployment get access to lifelong learning. These principles are central to new skills policies everywhere, such as the [European Skills Agenda \(2020\)](#) which pledges access to lifelong learning for everybody, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all). The European Skills Agenda sets very ambitious goals: 60% of adults should participate in learning every year and 80% of adults should have basic digital skills. Upskilling and reskilling are key, taking into account all possible pathways for skills acquisition including non-formal, informal and formal learning, introducing individual learning accounts to support individuals financially, using micro-credentials to recognise short learning experiences, and paying specific importance to the skills of migrants from outside the EU.

Other world regions have their own strategies to deal with the post covid situation and to support sustainable development. Regional Economic Communities play a particularly important role.

Will RQFs be part of the solutions?

For policy makers and the general public, Regional Qualifications Frameworks are not the most obvious priority in this crisis situation. We need to work on making this better understood. As said earlier, RQFs often have a shared agenda and use common instruments which can structure cooperation, for the benefit of people. After the COVID crisis we will not return to business as usual. We have to build back better. The COVID crisis and the green

and digital transition, require new skills everywhere. The situation is not limited to a specific country or region, we are facing a global crisis of skills, which therefore needs global solutions. Acting together, we can be more effective, learning from each other what works and sharing and developing common solutions. RQFs are soft tools focusing on transparency, helping countries to move in a common direction with their neighbours, supporting mutual understanding and creating new international opportunities and facilitate the mobility of individuals. Each regional qualifications framework addresses countries with millions, sometimes billions, of people. This means that there is potentially a strong multiplier effect if RQFs can improve the opportunities for people.

Living up to expectations

RQFs have unique features to support international and global transparency. RQFs are important in supporting the development and implementation of NQFs and the introduction of new qualifications, based on learning outcomes that can facilitate alternative personalised pathways and new ways of learning. RQFs need to keep up with changing needs. We must ensure that qualifications frameworks are responsive and flexible enough to recognise and facilitate new learning.

Qualifications matter. They are an integral part of the skills ecosystems in all countries. They signal the knowledge and skills that people possess, which allows them to obtain a job or pursue a career, access education or training programmes, and move between countries for work or study. No other tool or representation of a person's capacities can fulfil this function so effectively. Keeping them up to date is essential for the implementation of skills policies and lifelong learning solutions. . Their necessity is not always well understood by policy makers, researchers and donor organisations, who prefer to focus on what is new and fashionable.

NQFs and RQF have been associated with incremental changes that take time. *NQF stands for no quick fix, you're in it for the long haul is a lesson shared from the oldest frameworks. There is a strong pressure to change this. Questions from webinar participants showed this. How can we build consensus between member states on a common way forward? We need to mobilise member countries and stakeholders (Dr. Kebede Kassa, IGAD), How do we ensure learners are seeing the benefits and are kept up to date with the developments of RQFs and NQFs (Margaret Cameron).* In our webinar we spoke about digital and green changes, but the real emphasis was on social changes. We need to avoid a divide between high income, middle income and low-income countries and create more opportunities for all. This is particularly important as the majority of RQFs address middle and low income countries with limited resources and capacities.

Individuals move physically or virtually in search of a better future and opportunities to study or work abroad. There was a call for fair mobility among participants. Achieve more equity between RQFs and NQFs and create equal opportunities. We must make sure that qualifications can be recognised when people move. For a sustainable future our economies and societies cannot be built on exploitation of the skills of those who come from outside, but we have to make the best of all people's talents and allow everyone to contribute and develop further.

We need to find and share innovative solutions. RQFs are operating in different environments, have different objectives and developed different tools. This gives us a common capital of knowledge that we can share and use to make RQFs more effective, based on what works. Working together has become easier; during the crisis we have learned to work more online, reducing the physical distances between us.

There are many common challenges that need to be addressed. We need new types of qualifications and credentials to recognise when people have undertaken upskilling and reskilling activities. There is still important work ahead in improving mutual understanding and working towards common languages and definitions to support global transparency. Recognition is increasingly interlinked with qualifications frameworks, but there is a need to work more on professional recognition. Qualification systems are moving from a basically paper trail to digital, connected and interoperable systems. These new technologies can benefit all RQFs, and we need to explore how we can share them to better support the digitalisation of qualification systems.

How can we take cooperation forward?

This section summarises the contributions from the participants, coming from the 17 identified RQF initiatives, national organisations from 77 countries and international experts participating in RQFs and from different international organisations supporting their development. It sums up the possible actions that could be developed together in an international dialogue. The key issues are sharing experience, raising awareness, reaching final beneficiaries and decisionmakers, capacity-building, organising online workshops on a range of issues, working together on a common language and international consensus, developing common concepts and common tools, focussing on global transparency, the alignment and referencing of NQFs to RQFs, and comparison between RQFs, linking with ongoing international initiatives,

A strong interest in sharing experiences and mobilising actors

Many participants indicated that much can be done to share more experience and tools between RQFs, in order to learn from frameworks in other contexts and create synergies together. Many colleagues indicated that they want to be part of a global dialogue and contribute experience and perspective. It would not just have to be a discussion on tools and technicalities. RQFs could share policies, processes and strategies with anyone who may need them.

Just to give some examples of the reactions: As a member of the AQRF Committee I can contribute to this discussion indicated one participant. The Organisation of American States can support a political dialogue, while the ILO Decent work office in South Asia offered to facilitate exchange of experiences with the South Asian region. Members of the EQF Advisory Group expressed their interest in supporting the exchange of experiences. "We can bring in the experience of the Netherlands in implementing the EQF and our NQF" (Tjits Pijls). "We can share experiences and practices from QQI in Ireland" (Barbara Kelly). The ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) is an organisation dealing with cooperation between European and Asia Countries. The ASEM secretariat pledged to create an expert group in the framework of ASEM Education and organise a peer learning activity.

Since 2013 Cedefop, ETF, Unesco and the Unesco Institute for Lifelong learning have been publishing a biennial [Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks](#). The ACQF process was referred to several times by different participants. The [ACQF mapping study](#) has been a good exercise to map qualification framework developments in Africa that helps to document different experiences at national and regional level. Regular [capacity building events](#) are organised to share experiences from different national and

regional qualifications frameworks around the globe. ILO Cinterfor has [mapped developments in Latin America](#) recently, including an interactive [dashboard](#) allowing comparison of developments. ILO Cinterfor in cooperation with the Organisation of American States and Unesco, Santiago de Chile, are organising a course on the development of an RQF from 12 July to 23 August, to strengthen interest from different groups of stakeholders.

Capacity building

Capacity building is an obvious starting point as many RQFs are still in an early phase of development and all RQFs face several new challenges together. The focus has to be on the people in the first line for developing the frameworks, but one should not forget practitioners who have to implement the qualifications frameworks (according to Anna Kahlson, Sweden). Building capacities for national teams is important to support the RQF process as well as the NQF development. Learning is easier and faster for those of us who are starting from our National Frameworks. We need to strengthen local technical support (according to James Keevy, South Africa). Priority technical areas are legislation, developing and using learning outcomes, and the design of qualifications and frameworks (according to Teresa Duarte, Portugal). Building qualifications and certification systems are seen by many as critical.

Organise specialised workshops

There is a need to organise a series of webinars between the various RQFs. We need to advance as well in more agile conversations, including face to face, and share experience in workshop-type formats. Collaborative events could be used for information sharing. They will help to widen every ones horizon, with an open mind towards other systems and their specificities. Many participants demonstrated a readiness to facilitate webinars or cooperate in webinars organised by others.

One participant wrote that it would be interesting to be able to contribute experience in the EQF for the creation of the Latin American framework. Some of these workshops could have a more regional character, others could be global from the start. New Zealand will work with the Pacific Qualifications Framework and national frameworks in the Pacific to strengthen cooperation, train the regional and national staffs involved in implementing the qualifications frameworks with advice on the development and use of levels and links to the World Reference Levels developed by Unesco.

The Commonwealth of Learning is very experienced in conducting online global workshops. The Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth predates the COVID crisis, managing online collaboration over the last ten years. It could extent common training and capacity building activities that are already planned to other partners (Mairette Newman, COL Secretariat).

ETF is also ready to provide links to participants from other regions and countries to activities that are already planned. Some participants stressed their expertise in adult education that they would make available to facilitate interactive events. Some stressed that they were ready to use these events rather as participants to build their capacity. Tonga stressed that it wants to work further with the Pacific Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to build capacity through cross-national webinars. ETF will propose a calendar in which different organisations and participants can include new and already existing workshops that could be opened up to other participants, in order to move to a concrete level of planning.

Communication for awareness with wider public and reaching decision-makers

Communicating more effectively about RQFs is a topic that many participants underlined. Wider support for RQFs depends to a large degree on our ability to explain the added value to decision makers and find more ways of reaching stakeholders and final beneficiaries. It is important to exchange experiences and views on how to inform policy makers and the wider public. Participants stressed that it is important to place the RQFs within the national context to show the added value. We need to develop the sense of usefulness of the NQF and the RQF with decision makers. The link between RQFs facilitating international transparency and lifelong learning strategies, needs to be better articulated. This can help us to put the framework at the top of the public agenda. Participants were interested in how political commitment for RQFs can be secured, particularly at the regional level. RQFs make use of different communication tools to reach end users and stakeholders. In the context of the EQF for example, EQF levels are added onto national certificates, and in databases of qualifications. Different examples of these communication tools can be shared to explore how effective these are.

Common language and consensus

Many participants indicated that it is important to build a common understanding between RQFs, about concepts and levels that we all use. According to James Keey from South Africa, strengthening conceptual understandings should be a priority. Recognition of prior learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning, prior learning assessment and recognition, validation of acquired experience, accreditation of prior and experiential learning, recognition, validation and accreditation all these terms are used in parallel to describe a similar process. And this is only just in English. Translating the term “micro-credentials” into Russian, French or Spanish is not straightforward. At different stages, alternative terms have been used to describe learning outcomes and to define learning outcomes.

Can we develop meta and middle structures between RQFs and NQFs, to support the development, analysis and comparison between qualifications frameworks? The jargon used in qualification systems is often set in different cultural backgrounds, where terms may seem similar but have very different meanings, or where very different terms are used to describe very similar aspects. The starting point is to share conceptual inputs, but in the end, we need a common language for comparison of qualifications. It is important to work together towards a consistent approach to the relationship with credentials and international qualifications. In this respect the recent initiative of Unesco to agree a universal definition for micro-credentials is laudable.

Can we develop a database with common concepts and common tools? We could undertake collaborative work on models for RPL, Credit Accumulation and Transfer mechanisms, articulation, and flexible learning pathways (according to Heidi Bolton of SAQA). We can exchange existing tool kits and guidelines. Another area of joint work could focus on assessment design strategies and structures (tools development).

Dialogue, stakeholder involvement and institutions

There is a need for more regular interaction between RQFs. Cooperation between RQFs should be at meta level, wrote one participant, otherwise becomes too complicated. Some regional bodies representing RQFs are meeting now in the World Reference Levels Group, but this dialogue does not aim at strengthening mutual cooperation between them. Moreover, in the meantime there are many new RQF initiatives that are not part of this dialogue.

The successful implementation of RQFs depends to a great deal on how the NQFs that are linked with the RQF progress. Sometimes one or more NQFs in a region can be a regional

champion to promote the RQF, but in the end RQFs need to progress across all the countries that are involved. Therefore, many participants emphasised the need to support NQFs in specific countries in order to develop the RQFs. For example, now that a number of ASEAN member states have advanced in implementing their NQFs and referenced their NQFs to the RQF, the priority now is to develop the NQFs of the remaining members of the ASEAN so that they too can begin referencing to the AQRF. Sharing of experiences that will help develop RQFs and NQFs. RQFs can provide a very relevant background for developing a NQF, as Bosnia and Herzegovina shows, where it is necessary to get agreement amongst 13 jurisdictions in the absence of any national Ministry of Education.

The dialogue, stakeholder involvement and institutional structures are key components of implementing RQFs. A participant indicated that it is important to learn about the structures that need to be in place to ensure RQFs can successfully support globalisation of the workforce. Establishment of effective and sustainable governance systems are seen as critical factors to advance an RQF. Who are best qualified to be on the Committee of an emerging RQF? How do we ensure it reflects clarity of purpose and scope of the RQF? New RQF initiatives are looking for the right formula, while existing RQFs may want to review their cooperation structures. We need to strengthen the PQF so it can become a tool for supporting labour mobility within and outside the region. We will need in-depth promotion and formalised systems of collaboration among member agencies. Could we establish partnerships between national qualifications authorities or quality assurance agencies within and across regions?

Learning to work together with different groups of stakeholders could also be an important topic for capacity building. NQFs and RQFs have created new partnerships and we can share experience in these dialogues. Ensuring inclusion and participation of stakeholders and building institutional capacities are key. We have to learn to overcome traditional silos, e.g., by merging TVET with academic qualifications levels. International organisations can play a role in bringing different stakeholders and countries around the table (according to Gabriel Bordado from ILO in India).

Joint research, creating an evidence base on what works

Several participants suggested jointly exploring how to monitor and evaluate RQF effectiveness. Many NQFs are reviewed from time to time. The number of studies on RQFs is much more limited. Looking at current RQFs, can we have clarity about what it means to review an RQF. How do we evaluate RQFs and NQFs? How can we build capacity to analyse, synthesise, research, manage research partnerships, and support policy development and implementation? How important are different contexts for implementing RQFs? What can we learn from sharing and discussing existing research? A number of colleagues expressed interest in getting involved in any study or project to assist developing RQFs and also how to enhance their own RQF.

Referencing, alignment of NQFs to RQFs and comparison between RQFs

The relationship and interplay between qualifications, NQFs and RQFs is very important for the implementation of RQFs. Only a few RQFs have extensive experience with referencing or alignment of NQFs to the RQF. In 2020, the AQRF revised its [referencing guidelines](#) based on its first experiences. Many RQFs are starting to develop referencing/ alignment methodologies and criteria. There is strong interest from RQFs to learn about different approaches to referencing and alignment of NQFs to a RQF and to learn more about comparison of RQFs. There are questions about how the recognition of qualifications can be enhanced by linking with other RQFs. If we consider qualifications from an international

perspective, how will qualifications be validated between 8 level RQFs and 10 level RQFs? Which aspects are essential for alignment, if the aim is to integrate NQFs? There is also a question about how the CQF could request comparison with the EQF. The answer to this is still not fully clear, as we have just started to test comparison. Next year ETF is expected to organise a Peer Learning Activity on Comparison. Could comparison between the AQRF and the EQF support transparency on qualifications in Europe and Asia and student mobility between Asian and European countries. Could it be an activity within the ASEM Education Process?

World Reference Levels

UNESCO has been working for a number of years to develop a system of World Reference Levels (WRLs) which can be used to translate learning outcomes into an internationally recognised form. This is in response to global trends such as increasing migration, the globalisation of the labour market, the internationalisation of education and training, and the steadily increasing variety and availability of credentials. The Shanghai Consensus (2012) for transforming technical and vocational education and training recommended the development of international guidelines on quality assurance for the recognition of qualifications based on learning outcomes. An international group of experts meets twice a year to discuss the development and implementation of the WRLs. The Group includes international organisations, as well as representatives from a number of RQFs. The World Reference Levels can be accessed at <https://worldreferencelevels.org>. The WRLs are not a meta-framework of RQFs.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

The comparison of level descriptors is at the basis of referencing, alignment and comparison processes and important for credential evaluation and associating a qualification from abroad to national levels. Level descriptors vary in terms of the number of levels and domains. Reynaldo Vea from the Philippines wanted to know whether level descriptors had been compared. If so, did the study come to any conclusion? James Keevy shared the Unesco study [Level-setting and recognition of learning outcomes: the use of level descriptors in the twenty-first century - UNESCO Digital Library](#) (2014). Cedefop has also published an [Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in Europe \(2018\)](#). The ACQF has just completed a [Thematic brief on level descriptors](#) in Africa (2021).

Level descriptors are often linked with qualification type descriptors, and learning outcome statements of individual qualifications and units or modules. There are very many guides and handbooks on writing and applying learning outcomes. This is definitely an area where there is a lot of interest to exchange experiences. The [European handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes](#), published by Cedefop in 2017 is a good introduction.

New qualification needs

An area of cooperation where there is considerable interest from all participants is collaboration on the changing demands for qualifications. Qualification frameworks, need to be frameworks of qualifications to be effective. Populating NQFs and RQFs with new qualifications meeting 21st century requirements is a need for all qualifications frameworks. Identification of new professional profiles, developing skills for the labour market, understanding different labour markets and possibly jointly developing qualifications were suggested by different participants. Moreover, many colleagues are interesting in comparing qualifications and concrete analysis of qualifications. Can we agree clear criteria on qualifications across regions? What criteria are being used for the inclusion of qualifications in NQFs? Anna Kahlson from Sweden proposed to share experiences on the support for the

design of non-formal qualifications (i.e. those that are outside the scope of existing formal systems). How do you deal with verification of qualifications across member states as the Arab Qualifications Framework is proposing?

Regional and national databases of qualifications

Paulette Dunn-Pierre from Jamaica asked whether RQFs could be main depository of qualifications in a region or whether the management of database of qualifications is better placed at local or national accreditation agencies. The answer to this question depends very much on how these processes are organised. Placing qualifications in a register is a quality assurance process, but sharing a qualification widely is important to give it more currency. Caribbean Vocational Qualifications have been developed and are shared among different countries, raising their status above those of strictly institutional or national qualifications. The trend towards shared or international qualifications is growing with the internationalisation of jobs and provision, but databases of qualifications tend to be still mainly national in character. We are moving everywhere towards adding in qualifications for adult learning in addition to those provided for initial vocational education and higher education. In Europe, [Europass](#) the navigation tool for citizens for jobs, career and learning opportunities is being used to connect national databases of qualifications, supported by a common architecture and infrastructure based on the [qualification dataset register](#). Digitally signed certificates are starting to be issued, and data on qualifications can be linked with data on learning and career/job opportunities. [ESCO](#), the European classification for skills, competences and occupations is being used to analyse national qualifications, in order to understand better what is in them. This is certainly an area of interest for all RQFs as the future is in digitalisation.

Recognition of qualifications, VNFI or RPL, and quality assurance

Information about qualifications frameworks are important for credential evaluators. Comparing qualifications frameworks strengthens international transparency, but does not lead to automatic recognition. Recognition processes progressively use learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. [The Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#) of 2019 makes clear references to learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. Academic recognition is more developed than recognition of professional qualifications. Participants in the webinar emphasised the need to share information to support recognition, validation and quality assurance. This is important to improve mobility of individuals allowing them to utilise their qualifications acquired around the globe. There is interest in the links between Mutual Recognition Arrangements, and in exchanging information on regulated professions/occupations.

Countries are gradually widening implementation of systems of recognition of prior learning or recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. They are seen as very important for upskilling and reskilling of adults. The contexts in which these systems are implemented vary considerably around the globe. There is ample scope to exchange experiences on what works best where. ILO, Unesco and the EU have all published guidelines on validation and published good practices. Validation is part of the policy agenda of several RQFs. This has helped to foster the development of validation practices. A suggestion of one of the participants is to analyse agreements between member countries on recognition of prior learning.

Deepening mutual trust is at the core of cooperation between RQFs. Many RQFs have quality assurance principles and guidelines. The focus is on the design of qualifications, awarding processes and on provision. These approaches could be compared. One

participant suggested establishing common quality standards. The Commonwealth of Learning has developed an online quality assurance course for quality assurance professionals that could be shared. It has also developed guidelines for quality assurance and accreditation of MOOCs. The quality assurance of qualifications delivered online is an issue that is gaining in importance and given the international nature of provision may need common solutions.

Next steps

In this last part of the conclusions we propose three concrete steps to take our cooperation forward:

Create a common platform

We need a common platform for sharing our ideas and for sharing information.

ETF proposes to start from ETF Open Space, until we have found a more suitable platform. You can find the link to the RQF page on Open Space [here](#).

You can find here the Report on Global RQF Initiatives 2020, an infographic, the recordings and conclusions of our webinars on 19 May.

Create a common agenda for cooperation

During our webinar we have heard from many participants willing to organise capacity building activities, peer learning events or ready to support events organised by others. We would like to ask you to include these events in our joint calendar that you can find through [this link](#).

These events may have a regional or global focus. They may be existing events that can be widened to some additional participants or new events that you are willing to organise. ETF is pledging to organise two additional special events at least. One at the end of this year to support joint projects under Erasmus+. The second a presentation together with Unesco, UIL and Cedefop on the results of the Global Inventory on Regional and National Frameworks during March next year.

Joint projects

As discussed during the webinar the European Union is the biggest donor around the globe. The European Commission is starting a new planning round for its programmes around the globe. You may contact the European Union Delegation in your country to learn more and to explore whether your RQF initiative may benefit from these activities. Another important opportunity is Erasmus+ which is opening opportunities for cooperation on RQFs under the Capacity building in VET strand next year. ETF plans to organise information sessions about these funding opportunities and is exploring how it could support match-making online between interested institutions.

