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PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY ON THE ADDED VALUE OF NQFS AS TOOLS TO SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING

20-21 October 2008, London, UK

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INTRODUCTION

The third Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on the theme of national qualifications frameworks (NQF) organised by the Cluster on Recognition of Learning Outcomes took place on the 20-21 October 2008 in London. The PLA was hosted jointly by the qualifications authorities of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It brought together 27 representatives from 19 countries. Several experts from national administrations came accompanied by representatives from the economic sector or by other stakeholders. In addition to national delegates, experts from different UK qualifications authorities, representatives of the European Commission, Cedefop, the European Training Foundation and external experts to the Commission attended.

The London PLA was building on the outcomes of the two previous PLAs (Budapest and Krakow) on the topic of NQFs. During the PLA in Niepolmice it appeared strongly that the policy drivers for NQFs vary from country to country and that the technical features of NQFs depend on the policy objectives pursued. As highlighted in Poland, NQFs can have a different added value depending on the way national qualifications systems are structured and function. The PLA in London elaborated on how NQFs can support the different policy objectives.

PLA Objectives

The main objective of the PLA was to support peer learning among participants by providing examples of national practices and stimulating discussions.

As noted above, the main theme of the PLA was the added value NQFs can bring to policy objectives in order to support lifelong learning. More specifically, the following categories of policy objectives that NQFs can pursue were discussed:

- Supporting a common understanding, transparency, coherence/consistency of qualifications;
- Promoting access, progression, the transferability of credits and lifelong learning;
- NQFs as tools for integrated reforms and stronger partnerships;
- Creating independent references for variable standards of qualifications.

Purpose of this report

This report summarises the discussions that took place during the PLA. It is written so as to enable wider audience of those who did not participate in the PLA to benefit from the information exchanged and to create inputs into national and European debates on NQFs.

It is intended that this report be used to support the work of the Commission in

disseminating the results of the activities of the RLO Cluster and PLA to Member States and other stakeholders.

The report is structured according to the four sub-themes of the PLA.

PLA STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The PLA took place over two days. Prior to the PLA, participants received a background paper that described the theme of the seminar and highlighted the key issues under each of the sub-themes.

An important part of day one was dedicated to discussions in four workshops, each of which were stimulated by inputs from two presenters. The discussion in workshops were also stimulated by issues and questions highlighted in the background paper.

Day 1

Day one was opened by a welcome from the UK hosts and the European Commission. The messages from the previous PLAs were highlighted and participants were provided with a brief update on Commission activities regarding the implementation of the EQF. The introduction was followed by three presentations concerning: 1) the UK qualifications frameworks 2) the NQF developments in Germany and 3) the Austrian NQF design process. Four parallel workshops, each concerning one of the themes highlighted in section 1.1, were run twice. Therefore PLA participants had a choice to go to two different workshops. A panel discussion concerning the direct value of NQFs for individuals was also organised during day one.

Day 2

The second day begun by presentations from three UK partner organisations, showing how the different frameworks address issues of qualifications transparency and coherence, access and progression for individuals as well as the links between the different frameworks. This was followed by feedback from workshops presented by rapporteurs, observations by the Austrian and German participants and a discussion. Finally conclusions from the PLA were drawn and suggestions for future activities were formulated.

SUPPORTING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING, TRANSPARENCY, COHERENCE, CONSISTENCY OF QUALIFICATIONS

NQFs have several features which make it possible for them to be tools towards more transparency, coherence and consistency of qualifications thus improving their understanding. For example:

- A structure of levels which makes it possible for everyone to easily understand the relationships between different qualifications. By being based on learning outcomes, these levels can more accurately represent the content of a qualification than when they are based on the learning pathway (e.g. ISCED). In the latter case,

the levels represent the learning process the qualification holder has undergone rather than what s/he has learned;

- A set of rules regarding how qualifications are constructed and how they are described thus ensuring consistency across the different awarding bodies. For example qualifications frameworks may require that all qualifications be related to an occupational standard, contain an assessment standard and refer to an educational standard (e.g. FR);
- Requirements concerning the quality assurance related to acquisition of qualifications in the framework which enhance the credibility of qualifications. For example for qualifications to be referred to the framework, requirements regarding how assessment, validation and recognition are designed and run can be part of the framework structure (e.g. IE).

Note that not all NQFs have all the features discussed above.

The PLA discussion on this topic was stimulated by three presentations: the future Austrian NQF; the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCF); and the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF). For purpose of this report certain similarities and differences between the three frameworks can be drawn (see Table 1). These show that the NQFs pursue different goals and are situated in different contexts, which have impacts on the technical features of the framework.

Table 1

QCF	Austria – future NQF	SCQF
<p><i>Issues addressed by the QCF example:</i></p> <p>Large number of awarding bodies</p> <p>Variety of qualifications' types</p> <p>Necessity to improve flexibility of training pathways and portability of learning outcomes</p>	<p><i>Issues addressed by the AT NQF example:</i></p> <p>Insufficient understanding of Austrian qualifications abroad (internationally)</p> <p>Little experience with the use of learning outcomes in the qualifications framework</p> <p>Move towards greater autonomy of VET providers in defining school curricula.</p>	<p><i>Issues addressed by SCQF example:</i></p> <p>Enable progression across the different sub-sectors of the education and training system.</p> <p>Variety of types and sizes of qualifications – create transparency.</p>
<p><i>Regulatory Framework</i></p> <p>Requires that all qualifications:</p> <p>Are based on units that have the same format</p> <p>Have inherent quality assurance processes</p> <p>Enable progressive accumulation and transfer</p>	<p><i>Non regulatory framework</i></p> <p>Qualifications are regulated outside the framework (e.g. the ministry of education regulates most qualifications in IVET and general education)</p>	<p><i>Non regulatory framework</i></p> <p>The sub-sectors that are within the framework are regulated but the overarching framework is not. It is based on voluntary agreement of institutions concerned.</p>
<p><i>Learning outcomes based</i></p> <p>There is a long tradition of using learning outcomes for design of qualifications as well as assessment.</p> <p>No reference to the training programme. Credits express the notional learning required to achieve learning outcomes.</p>	<p><i>Learning outcomes based but maybe not solely</i></p> <p>Little tradition of learning outcomes. Qualifications are based on curricula.</p> <p>The reference to the training pathway is an important reference for all actors in the qualifications system.</p>	<p><i>Learning outcomes based</i></p> <p>Like in the QCF there is a long tradition of using learning outcomes and credits express the notional learning required to achieve learning outcomes.</p>

Source: Presentations made during the PLA

Key messages

The discussion during the two workshops and the plenary discussions concerned with the theme of transparency, coherence and consistency highlighted that:

- To achieve consistency and coherence of qualifications certain degree of regulation is required (regarding for example standards or quality assurance). This regulation may be integrated in an NQF but may also be part of other features of the qualifications system (e.g. in Austria the fact that the ministry of education is the main awarding body for initial qualifications creates already important consistency and coherence across a large number of qualifications);
- Transparency is an important added value of its own. The fact that an NQF may be presented in a simple diagram is important to the learner, the guidance services as well as employers. Furthermore, transnational understanding as created by the NQF (using EQF) is a strong added value for mobile citizens and the labour market;
- NQFs are of strong added value for parties within qualifications system(s): regulatory and qualifications bodies as well as providers. For qualifications authorities they are able to set specific standards (through the use of descriptors) that all qualifications at a certain level in the framework have to satisfy. For providers they provide a means of discussing progression. By ensuring that qualifications follow a certain standard description or structure and that the learning outcomes are transparent they improve the possibilities of access, transfer and accumulation for learners;
- Though learning outcomes contribute undoubtedly to transparency, in certain qualifications systems they are not yet an element of the common language: teachers and those involved in qualifications design, but also other stakeholders, “talk” in terms of inputs and teaching subjects. On the other hand employers are in favour of learning outcomes based approaches. In order to maintain trust in the system, the shift to learning outcomes will have to be progressive;
- Learning outcomes, as formulated on bases of qualifications descriptors in the NQF, referring to a certain level of knowledge, skills and competence, can contribute to improve assessment and hence the quality of the certification process. Furthermore, assessment may be the critical point that will stimulate the shift to learning outcomes in systems where there is little use of these for the moment. Indeed the existing assessment processes are often implicitly based on learning outcomes. Making these explicit will improve the assessment process.

PROMOTING ACCESS, PROGRESSION, THE TRANSFERABILITY OF CREDITS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Issues of access, progression and transfer are at the core of lifelong learning. NQFs can improve these processes through:

- Clarification of relationships between qualifications. By making explicit the relationships between qualifications, through the use of levels and descriptors, NQFs improve the legibility of progression routes for individuals (mainly through the intermediary of guidance services) but also for training providers;
- Focus on learning outcomes. Qualifications structures focused on education and training pathways hinder possibilities of progression and transfer and restrict access by privileging formal learning. The use of learning outcomes for formulation of qualifications standards creates possibilities for individuals to achieve these outcomes in different manners. Furthermore, the use of learning outcomes facilitates communication between education and training institutions (within the same sector but also across the sectors – e.g. VET and HE);
- Use of units and credits. Some qualifications frameworks have as a distinctive feature the use of units and/ or credits to break down qualifications into smaller components and to describe these. As transferable parts of qualifications, units and credits enable progressive achievement of qualifications and facilitate access;
- Trust or regulation. While some qualifications frameworks ensure progression and transferability through regulation, others rely on trust which is supported by the features of the framework such as quality assurance and levels of learning outcomes.

Note that not all NQFs have all the features discussed above.

The discussion during the workshops addressing these issues was facilitated by three presentations: the QCF, the SCQF example in social care sector, development of the German NQF. The table below shows how the examples explained support progression, permeability and transfer in the existing and planned frameworks.

Table 2

QCF	Germany – future NQF	SCQF – social sector qualifications
<p>Issues addressed by the example:</p> <p>Previous NQF – very large number of qualifications were outside the framework – this constrained progression</p> <p>This was due to very bureaucratic character of the previous framework</p>	<p>Issues addressed by the example:</p> <p>Creating greater compatibility between how VET and HE qualifications are designed and hence improving possibilities of progression</p> <p>So far no use of units and no mechanism for credit transfer in VET.</p>	<p>Issues addressed by the example:</p> <p>This sector has an important amount of workers with low wages and low formal education and training achievements.</p> <p>The level of learning outcomes of staff is much higher than their formal qualifications.</p> <p>The sector requires higher level of formal qualifications.</p>
<p>Features addressing permeability, progression and transfer:</p> <p>Each learner has an electronic record of credits gained at any time of the learning pathway.</p> <p>Same learning outcomes may lead to two units at two different levels because of two sets of assessment criteria – if the learner does not have the higher level s/he at least has the lower one.</p> <p>Regulation of transfer by the QCF regulator – units are accompanied by a list of qualifications towards which they can be accumulated.</p>	<p>Features addressing permeability, progression and transfer:</p> <p>The descriptors to be developed have to be “sector-neutral” (e.g. the Dublin descriptors do not fit the VET sectors)</p> <p>Referencing criteria and procedures will have to be transparent</p> <p>Relate the NQF development to other processes in the system (development of competence-based standards)</p> <p>Need to develop joint ownership of the NQF across the system</p>	<p>Features addressing permeability, progression and transfer:</p> <p>The framework is open to credit learning that is delivered by other institutions than the awarding bodies regulating the different sub-sectors.</p> <p>The social sector was able to formulate the non-formal and informal learning achieved by the staff into learning outcomes and these were allocated level and credit. Hence making it possible for universities to recognise this learning.</p>

Key messages

Like in the first workshop the debate in the second workshop confirmed the necessity to see NQFs, their objectives and their technical aspects in the national contexts. In addition the workshops and discussions on themes of progression and transfer lead to formulation of these key messages:

- Designing a framework which has technical features that support progression and transfer (e.g. not referring to the training pathway, being neutral regarding where and how the learning takes place) is one thing. It is another thing to ensure that the framework really supports progression and transfer. This will not automatically flow from the technical aspects of the NQF;
- Guidance and information is crucial to make NQFs realise this added value of creating permeability. Learners have to be informed about the possibilities for building up their training pathways and this information has to be accessible and understandable to them. Learners do not necessarily need to know the framework itself: it is the guidance staff who will use it;
- Trust and attitude of parties involved is essential for enabling transfer and progression using the NQF. If the providers/ qualifications authorities look for equivalence or perfect-fit when it comes to recognising learning from other sectors transfer will be impossible. While maintaining the quality of qualifications, the providers or awarding bodies need to accept certain flexibility regarding for example access and transfer requirements;
- Regulation versus voluntary participation. QCF is a regulated framework where the regulatory body has the competence to enforce transfer by obliging the awarding body to recognise units awarded by other bodies. SCQF on contrary is a voluntary framework where transfer is based on dialogue and trust between the learner and the awarding body. It is voluntarily accepted that the learner has the right to claim credit for learning achieved elsewhere – if refused this is to be explained;
- Because of the importance of trust (be it in a regulated or not regulated system) the development of an NQF that leads to transfer and facilitates access requires time and efforts;
- To facilitate transfer and support progression, smaller elements of qualifications may be required: units and credits. These bring additional flexibility and support more individualised pathways.

NQFS TOOLS FOR INTEGRATED REFORMS AND STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

Many European countries are undergoing important reforms of their entire education and training systems. These are some examples of reforms that concern a number of countries: strengthening importance of key competences in general education; creating stronger links between education and training and the labour market requirements (in VET but also HE); preventing dropping out and motivating people at all ages to return to learning; strengthening quality assurance; etc. Because these reforms have broadly the same goal: raise the skills levels of populations, improve employability and strengthen integration; there is a need for coordination. Some aspects of NQFs can support such coordination and strengthen partnerships:

- For many NQFs the objective is to create a structure of levels that brings together all the sectors of education and training. NQFs therefore create an opportunity for the different stakeholders to create a common instrument that will support different objectives in the qualifications system(s);
- NQFs are based on level descriptors that in turn influence qualifications' standards and qualifications' design. The design of descriptors should therefore be closely related to the practice in designing qualifications. This process is an occasion for dialogue not only across the education and training sectors but also with the economic stakeholders;
- In order to create the added values described in other sections of this report an NQF requires trust and ownership. It is therefore important to associate different stakeholders (from within the qualifications system(s) and from outside – e.g. labour market) to the design process.

Note that not all NQFs have all the features discussed above.

The workshop that addressed this topic was based on presentations from two different countries: Wales and Austria. The table 3 below summarises the issues raised by the two presentations.

Table 3

Welsh NQF	Austria – developing NQF
<p><i>Issues addressed by the example:</i></p> <p>Necessity to motivate people to engage in learning.</p> <p>The framework was based on willingness to recognise all learning (also outside the formal systems).</p> <p>For permeability – it was crucial to create mutual trust across all parties concerned and hence to involve all these parties in the process.</p>	<p><i>Issues addressed by the example:</i></p> <p>There is a political willingness, supported by employers, to reinforce the use of learning outcomes in standards design and assessment.</p> <p>LLL perspective – enable stronger links with the adult learning sector and the formal system – this is related to other initiatives – e.g QA in adult learning.</p>
<p><i>How is partnership and integration of reforms supported:</i></p> <p>Dialogue between the bodies concerned. Face-to-face meetings for the stakeholders to exchange.</p> <p>The partners get to know each others' systems and trust is created progressively.</p>	<p><i>How is partnership and integration of reforms supported:</i></p> <p>Wide consultation (one year) with all parties concerned: GE, VET, HE, adult learning, employers, social partners, etc.</p> <p>National steering group for the NQF (different parties are involved)</p> <p>Research demonstrating opportunities and difficulties – evidence to support the process</p>

Source: Presentations made during the PLA

Key messages

Stakeholders' involvement was a topic that was in fact addressed through all the discussions during the PLA, as was the theme of wider lifelong learning policies (beyond the NQF development). In relation to the theme of NQFs as structures creating synergies among policies and stakeholders the PLA participants arrived at the following key messages:

- Make sure that the process is not limited to stakeholders from within the qualifications systems. Representatives of the economic world are crucial for the quality and success of the framework. If they are not involved in the process the

NQF will be purely a tool for education and training ministries and providers, jeopardising the potential added values the NQF could bring;

- The process should be open and stakeholders should be able to join at any stage. Not all parties will be interested from the start though it is important that the crucial stakeholders are involved. It is important to maintain the possibility of bringing in stakeholders at a later stage;
- The coordinators should remain sensitive to the different interests of parties involved. NQFs raise different expectations from different parties. While a compromise has to be sought it is also important that the interests of all parties are taken on board in one way or another. It is only if the NQF fits the different needs of parties concerned that ownership will be developed;
- Stakeholders must be convinced that there is a need for the system to change and that the NQF will provide benefits. The development of an NQF should not be perceived as a top-down process (because the Ministry or because the European Union requires it). The difficulties in the qualifications system should be revealed and a demonstration of how an NQF can address these should be available (e.g. research in the AT case). These benefits have to be formulated from the point of view of the different stakeholders;
- Stakeholders' participation has to be voluntary and motivated by their perception of the added value that an NQF can provide;
- Neutrality of the organisation (or persons) coordinating the process can be very helpful;
- Planning and progressive development are required;
- In certain countries, development of non regulatory NQFs is a catalysts for more general long term reform such as the definition and wide use of learning outcomes in education and training more generally.

CREATING INDEPENDENT REFERENCE FOR VARIABLE STANDARDS OF QUALIFICATIONS

NQFs can overcome the complexity of qualifications systems structures as well as the variability of learning environments within a country. This is possible thanks to the below features and mechanisms of NQFs:

- Neutral level descriptors that are able to accommodate differences across regional and sectoral approaches to qualifications but that are also formulated with clarity so as to enable the distinction between one level or another;
- While the education and training pathways, conditions and requirements may be extremely variable across a country (even regarding very similar qualifications), the learning outcomes and standards based on these can become the common language for different stakeholders. Learning outcomes approaches are open to the fact that there are various ways to learn and that individuals have different learning styles;
- Existence of quality assurance requirements regarding how qualifications are designed and how they are awarded (assessment, validation and recognition) supports the credibility of qualifications in the framework. This does not mean that an NQF should prescribe specific QA processes (this may be regulated elsewhere in the system) but that all qualifications in an NQF should be quality assured;
- The development of trust among the different stakeholders makes it possible for NQFs to be open to other forms of learning while maintaining credibility and ownership.

The discussion on this theme was stimulated by inputs concerning how does the Welsh qualifications and credit framework support referencing of qualifications from outside the formal system and the development of the German framework. The key issues from the two presentations are summaries in the table 4 below.

Table 4

Welsh NQF – national health service qualifications	Germany – developing NQF
<p><i>Issues addressed by the example:</i></p> <p>People within NHS often change hospital or town and the learning they did in the previous workplace is not recognised – duplication</p> <p>The sector often requires formal qualifications and traditionally high value is placed on HE qualifications</p> <p>Need to create a match between the E&T funding available and the needs of staff development</p>	<p><i>Issues addressed by the example:</i></p> <p>Regional differences in qualifications and training pathways (landers).</p> <p>Differences in approaches to qualifications between GE, HE and VET, mainly regarding how competence is formulated and the existence of units and credits.</p>
<p><i>How does the NQF overcome differences in qualifications:</i></p> <p>The Welsh NQF is open to learning from outside the formal sectors if certain conditions are satisfied e.g.:</p> <p>The assessment has to be quality assured</p> <p>The NHS example combined the following processes enabling it to be referenced in the framework:</p> <p>Job profiles are defined in KSL, they are the basis for employee review and design of a development plan. Learning pathways are offered and learning outcomes are assessed – award of credit</p> <p>The benefits to the employer are numerous: better investment in training, improved appraisal process, rigorous assessment.</p>	<p><i>How does the NQF overcome differences in qualifications:</i></p> <p>Development of neutral descriptors that can accommodate the variety.</p> <p>The framework acts as a common point of reference where broad descriptors are perceived to be relevant to each type of qualification</p> <p>The neutrality of the NQF is not seen in a restrictive or dominant bureaucracy for the qualification managers</p> <p>The NQF is seen to broaden the understanding of the qualifications outside their 'home' territory.</p>

Source: Presentations made during the PLA

Key messages

The discussion related to how can NQFs accommodate for variety within qualifications systems and countries lead to the following messages:

- By defining the standard (in terms of the level of learning outcomes) and the quality assurance required but not the content of the qualification (in terms of the exact LO required), NQFs can be open to a large variety of learning (also learning in a voluntary sector or on the job) while maintaining the quality and trust. If learning from another context is to be referenced to the NQF, this requires that the LO of such learning are made explicit and that the QA processes that ensure that these LO have been achieved are specified. The LO are then referred to the NQF level descriptors to specify the level of learning – this process is also quality assured;
- The existence of “content neutral” levels and descriptors facilitates validation of non-formal and informal learning. In systems where this is not the case (i.e. where only the LO from formal learning can be referenced to the framework) non-formal and informal learning can only be validated against qualifications standards already existing within the formal system. However this is not always suitable for the needs of the labour market. Work-based learning may be different than the existing qualifications (e.g. it may be more specific). Referring non-formal and informal learning directly to the framework is much more flexible for the labour market but it requires existence of quality assurance processes;
- It is first important to develop learning outcome-based levels, standards and assessment processes. Credits are only really useful for lifelong learning purposes if they are based on learning outcomes and related to a set of qualifications levels;
- By making qualifications (LO) levels explicit the NQF provides an objective picture of qualifications and their levels. The perceptions of implicit levels within systems are often based on traditional subjective views that some qualifications are on higher level than others. It therefore gives on one hand a more objective picture of the qualifications landscape and on the other it is a quality tool which sets certain levels that those in charge of qualifications have to respect.

INDIVIDUALS' PERSPECTIVE

Though this topic was explicitly on the agenda only during one plenary session, it was one of the common threads of many discussions during the PLA. The benefits an NQF can bring to individual learners can be summarised as follows:

- NQF do not offer benefits to learners directly, it is the stakeholders: recruiters, trainers and counsellors; who materialise the benefits of NQFs for individuals;
- NQF can support better guidance and hence prevent dropping out;
- By being open to different forms of learning it can motivate individuals to go back to education and training. E.g. if their non-formal or informal learning is recognised

they feel valued and stimulated;

- Units and credit as elements of NQFs are tools that make it possible to recognise learning more frequently and in a way which is less costly in money and time. Thus, maintaining motivation but also flexibility;
- Units and credits as features of NQFs also make progression for individuals less abstract and hence again create motivation and flexibility;
- Though full qualifications are important, especially for young people in initial education and training, the possibility for NQFs to recognise smaller elements of learning outcomes (units) can be very beneficial to some individuals and also to employers;
- Individuals are the test of whether the framework is successful. Only when they use it for LLL the benefits have been realised.

CONCLUSIONS

In addition to the key messages regarding the four sub-themes of the PLA as summaries above, the following general conclusions have been highlighted by the PLA participants:

- It became clear through the discussions that NQFs require **strong political commitment**. Development of a NQF is a long term process, from the moment it is first discussed, through the consensus building, to the moment it provides benefits a certain time will pass by. It is a challenge for policy-makers and those involved in the design to maintain the momentum. It is of course also important to maintain the funding;
- Development of **consensus** across the variety of actors concerned is crucial for trust and openness of the framework. This can be achieved through “content-neutral” levels and descriptors;
- Development of NQFs should be progressive but on the other hand NQFs **evolve**. Therefore it may be necessary to have more modest expectations in the beginning and improve the framework over the years;
- NQFs have to **suit their national contexts**. The added value they can bring in is relative to the existing situation. Each system is facing different challenges (e.g. coherence may be a problem in some systems but not in others);
- The technical features of NQFs have to be based on the national context. Whilst it is entirely appropriate for NQFs to follow the **EQF** with using eight levels it is crucial that the number of levels (e.g. eight) actually reflects the true levels of qualification in a country or is set out as a longer term reform objective for the qualification levels for the country. In other words it is not because a country chooses eight levels that the referencing to EQF levels will be automatic;

- There is a need to be **realistic** about expectations form NQFs. While they can support many policy objectives, these will not appear automatically because of an NQF. Other related policies and practices have to be related to the NQF in order to create added value. Therefore challenges related to NQF are not so much related to the technical aspects but to all the peripheral requirements (e.g. involvement of stakeholders, quality assurance, etc.);
- Finally it is important to highlight that it is impossible to differentiate, in the context of NQFs as discussed during this PLA, the added value that occurs because of a NQF or because of the use of learning outcomes within the system. As demonstrated by many points in this report, the PLA showed that the two aspects have to be very closely interrelated.

Suggestions for future activities of the cluster

The PLA was closed by a round table on topics that participants would like to see addressed through future activities of the cluster. The suggestions are summaries here:

- Explore methodologies of referencing qualifications to levels;
- How to formulate methods that can be applicable to all the different regulatory bodies (e.g. Ministries)?
- How to ensure quality of the referencing process?
- Referencing to EQF and working methods of National Contact Points;
- How to motivate employer lead qualifications to be referenced to the framework?
- How do NQFs support validation of non-formal and informal learning?
- How to ensure sustainability of NQFs and of related activities;
- Quality assurance and NQFs;
- Relationship between qualification levels and education and training levels;
- Standards – relationship between professional and educational standards;
- The added value of credits in NQFs and the relationship with ECVET;
- What are the possible cross-sectoral (VET/HE/GE) approaches to formulating learning outcomes?
- Relationship NQFs and learning outcomes – which come first?