

Session Briefing Notes: **For Participants**

Unlocking Skills Mobility: The Role of European Transparency Tools to Drive the Skills Portability Initiative and Talent Mobility

13 October 2026

Dublin, Ireland

Session Title	Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries: Role of cooperation to support transparency and recognition of qualifications
Session Day and Time	Day 2 13 October 10.30-11.20
Session Format	Panel Discussion
Duration	50 mins
Session Schedule	Opening and Introduction (3') Approx 5-7' per speaker Wrap up and close (3')
Session Moderator	Dr Jim Murray, QQI
Panellists	- Donnie Wood, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership - Prof. Ts. Dr. M. Iqbal Bin Saripan, Malaysia Qualifications Authority - Dr Andy Smith, Quality Assurance Agency (UK) - Aurelija Valeikiene, Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, Slovakia - Alison Dittmer-Croad, New Zealand Qualifications Authority - Selai Waqainabete, Pacific Qualifications Recognition Project
Background	Ireland maintains a bilateral relationship to the UK and its qualifications frameworks via the UK and Ireland Qualifications Frameworks Group which meets annually and maintains the Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries Guide, which enables broad comparison of qualifications across the UK and Ireland. Scotland is exploring a bilateral comparison of National Frameworks with Malaysia.

	Funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Pacific Qualifications Recognition Project aims to strengthen the Pacific Qualifications Framework and national qualifications frameworks and systems so that Pacific qualifications are more widely recognised, facilitating the movement of learners and skilled workers. Strengthening the Pacific Qualifications Framework will also enhance the quality of education across the Pacific region and increase opportunities for Pacific people. The five-year project is being jointly implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) in partnership with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The <i>Treaty on the Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications</i> is a multilateral agreement between the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Signed in Brussels in September 2021 and entering into force on 1 May 2024, it provides for the automatic recognition of the <i>level</i> of higher education qualifications (Short Cycle, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees) awarded in the participating countries. Ireland and Poland are in the process of joining the Multilateral Treaty on the Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. Poland applied in 2025 and is completing national ratification procedures, while Ireland formally applied in May 2026. Their accession reflects growing European support for automatic recognition as a means of enhancing learner mobility and simplifying access to further study across borders The Treaty builds on the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and supports the Bologna Process objective of achieving automatic recognition across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). By removing the need for lengthy recognition procedures, it facilitates learner and graduate mobility, making it easier for individuals to pursue further study or employment in another participating country. The Treaty is widely regarded as a pioneering model for deeper cooperation and trust in qualifications recognition across Europe
Session Objectives	- To understand the benefits of bilateral co-operation through informal and formal processes - To understand the rationale and process for undertaking comparison activities - To understand the benefits of facilitating automatic recognition

Session Title	Beyond Comparison: Exploring the benefits and future opportunities of qualifications framework cooperation and other tools to support transparency and mobility
Session Day and Time	Day 2 13 October 11.40-12.30
Session Format	Panel Discussion
Duration	50 mins
Session Schedule	Opening and Introduction (3') Short intro and statement from each speaker 5' each (30') Follow up questions (10') Wrap up and conclusion (5')
Session Moderator	Órla Barry, QQI
Panellists	- Jeff Prothero, Coleagu Cymru (Wales) - Bulbul Yadav, NCVET India - Vasyl Fediuk, Ukraine National Qualifications Authority - Fiona Ernest, Seychelles Qualifications Authority - Prof. Ts. Dr. M. Iqbal Bin Saripan, Malaysian Qualifications Authority
Background	Updated Guidelines on Comparisons of the EQF and Third Country Qualifications Frameworks were recently published, following three pilot comparisons with the Cabo Verde NQF, Ukrainian NQF and with the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) Qualifications Framework. There is an expectation that further comparisons will be undertaken because of the Skills Portability Initiative. There are already two EU funded projects underway to conduct preliminary studies that will lead to further EQF comparisons namely with the Indian National Skills Qualifications Framework and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework. Additional comparison studies will be carried out in line with EU policy priorities in the context of Talent Partnerships which are ongoing with Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Bangladesh and Pakistan. While these guidelines are new, the activity of studying third country qualifications frameworks is not. The EQF was originally compared to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the

	New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) and Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) about a decade ago. Since its departure from the EU, the status of the United Kingdom in the context of the EU is less clear. The frameworks associated with the four jurisdictions were referenced to the EQF in 2019 prior to the departure, but this referencing is not as visible and transparent as other countries with direct referencing to the EQF. Ireland maintains a relationship to the UK and its qualifications frameworks via the UK and Ireland Qualifications Frameworks Group which meets annually and maintains the Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries Guide, which enables broad comparison of qualifications across the UK and Ireland but relies on the EQF as a coordinating reference point.
Session Objectives	- To understand the longer-term perspective of New Zealand on the benefits and challenges of comparing national frameworks with EQF - Learn about the Pacific Qualifications Recognition Project and cooperation between the Pacific Qualifications Framework and New Zealand - To understand the perspective of recently compared frameworks, Ukraine and Southern African Development Community about the arising benefits from comparison - To understand the unique challenges of the UK and its relationship with EQF without referencing or comparison as viable options. - To understand the aspirations of India and the ASEAN region for comparison or other forms of cooperation with the EU

Session Title	Role of Talent Partnerships, sectoral cooperation, recognition of qualifications and skills assessment in supporting mobility
Session Day and Time	Day 2 13 October 12.30-13.40
Session Format	Short Presentations, discussion and Q&A
Duration	70 mins
Session Schedule	Opening and Introduction (5') 5-7Min presentation from each speaker (21') Discussion (20') Q&A (10')
Session Moderator	Michael Graham, ETF
Panellists	- Koen Nomden, European Commission - Lotte Kejser, ILO - Dr Alaa Ashmawy, NAAQE, Egypt
Background	Skills portability and qualifications recognition are central to how Europe responds to migration, labour market needs and talent mobility. This session will explore what works—and what does not—by considering migrants' experiences of seeking work in EU countries, patterns of non-EU migration, and the challenge of skills underutilisation. It will also look beyond Europe to alternative approaches to skills assessment and recognition in countries such as Australia, Canada and the Gulf states, while highlighting ETF initiatives that support EU policy in this area.
Session Objectives	- To understand practices in skills portability and qualifications recognition - To explore migrants experiences, patterns of non-EU migration and the challenge of skills under utilization.

Session Title	Micro-credentials: Unlocking Opportunities for Career Development and Inclusive Learning
Session Day and Time	Day 2 13 October 15.10-16.10
Session Format	Presentations followed by Q&A and discussion
Duration	60 mins
Session Schedule	Opening and Introduction (3') 15 Min presentation from each speaker (30') Q&A and conversation (25')
Session Moderator	Iraklis Pliakis, Cedefop
Panellists	- Iraklis Pliakis, Cedefop - Michela Bastianelli, INAPP, Italy
Background	Lifelong learning is increasingly recognised as a crucial tool for ensuring that no individual is left behind in education, training, and the labour market. For disadvantaged groups—such as migrants, refugees, low-qualified adults, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, and individuals with low digital or language proficiency—access to flexible and relevant learning opportunities is essential for social inclusion and labour-market participation. Microcredentials have emerged as a promising instrument within this landscape. Their modular, short-cycle, and skills-focused nature allows learners to acquire targeted skills and competences at their own pace and according to their needs. They can serve as stepping stones toward formal qualifications or as standalone learning experiences that support employability and personal development. However, despite their potential, microcredentials are not yet equally accessible to all. High-skilled and already-employed individuals tend to be more ready to benefit from lifelong learning opportunities, including microcredentials. Disadvantaged groups often face barriers such as limited awareness and access, low motivation, financial constraints and lack of guidance. Ambiguity around the definition of microcredentials, and uncertainty about the recognition and the value of microcredentials in the labour market further complicates their uptake. This breakout session will explore whether and how microcredentials can function as a tool for promoting social

	inclusion, drawing on country experiences and emerging practices across Europe and beyond.
Session Objectives	- Examine the extent to which microcredentials are currently used to support lifelong and life-wide learning among disadvantaged groups. - Identify which target groups are most commonly addressed and which remain outside of the policy focus. - Analyse the barriers that disadvantaged learners face in accessing and benefiting from microcredentials. - Discuss the features of microcredentials (e.g., delivery mode, duration, learning context, stackability) that can reinforce their role in promoting social inclusion. - Explore what a favourable ecosystem for inclusive microcredentials looks like, including guidance services, financing mechanisms, outreach strategies, and links to broader education and training systems. - Encourage peer learning by showcasing country cases and facilitating an open exchange among participants. -
Guiding Questions for Discussion	1. To what extent are microcredentials currently used to support lifelong and life-wide learning among disadvantaged individuals? <i>Which specific groups (e.g., migrants, refugees, low-qualified adults, NEETs, older workers, people with disabilities) are most commonly targeted?</i> 2. What barriers prevent disadvantaged individuals from accessing and benefiting from microcredentials? <i>Consider challenges related to awareness, guidance, digital access, financial constraints, motivation, recognition, and labour-market relevance.</i> 3. What are the essential components of an enabling ecosystem that fosters the use of microcredentials for social inclusion? <i>Which policies, support services, outreach strategies, platforms, and financing mechanisms are needed to ensure that microcredentials effectively reach and benefit disadvantaged learners?</i>

Session Title	Emerging Trends: Developments in micro-credential policy and implementation from across the globe
Session Day and Time	Day 2 13 October 16.20-17.20
Session Format	Showcase Presentations followed by a conversation
Duration	60 mins
Session Schedule	Opening and Introduction (3') 5 Min presentation from each speaker (25') Conversation (20') Wrap up close (10')
Session Moderator	Dr Lynn Ramsay, QQI
Panellists	- Satu Järvinen, European Training Foundation - Iraklis Pliakis, Cedefop - Alison Dittmer-Croad, NZQA - Noella Baker-Albert, Seychelles Qualifications Authority
Background	This session will explore emerging trends in micro-credentials across Europe and beyond, examining their role in supporting flexible learning, skills portability and lifelong learning. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on evolving policy developments, recognition challenges and the relationship between micro-credentials and qualifications frameworks, while considering how different approaches can best serve learners, employers and society
Session Objectives	- To explore different approaches to micro-credentials - To understand emerging trends with micro-credentials and discuss the pros and cons