



The European Qualifications Framework: supporting learning, work and cross border mobility

15-16 March 2018, Brussels

Workshop 1

How has the EQF and its focus on learning outcomes supported the modernisation of education and training systems?

Recent studies ⁽¹⁾ show that most European countries now define and describe their qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, focussing on what learners are expected to know, be able to do and understand. The adoption of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in 2008, and the subsequent implementation of learning outcomes-based National Qualifications Frameworks, has played a key role in promoting this approach. Not only do the qualification framework descriptors indicate (on the vertical axis) how the complexity, depth and breadth of learning outcomes increase from lowest to highest levels, they also (on the horizontal axis) point to the important relationship between domains of learning outcomes, notably between knowledge, skills and autonomy/responsibility.

Countries working on the EQF agree that the shift to learning outcomes increases overall transparency and makes it easier to understand and value the content and profile of qualifications. The focus on learning outcomes allows for a better description of existing education and training provisions, making it easier for learners and employers to manoeuvre within increasingly complex systems.

Increasingly, however, countries see the shift to learning outcomes as enabling reform and modernisation of education and training systems. The focus on outcomes introduces a common language, potentially improving the dialogue between education and training institutions and their 'customers' in the labour market and society in general. This is critical to improve the matching of skills needs and provisions, and may strengthen the overall relevance and quality of qualifications. Furthermore, the focus on outcomes makes it possible to signal more clearly to teachers, trainers and learners what is expected from them, demonstrating how learning outcomes can be used to support the quality of learning itself.

For learning outcomes to support development and reform, the level descriptors of qualification frameworks cannot operate in isolation. The outcomes described by the frameworks must be linked to and aligned with the application of learning outcomes at other levels, notably qualification and occupation standards, curricula and assessment specifications. In other words, for the learning outcomes approach to make a difference it must reach and inspire teachers, trainers and learners.

⁽¹⁾ 2017 Handbook on learning outcomes: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4156>
2016 Study: Application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3074>



The following questions will be addressed by the speakers and discussed by the participants in the working group sessions:

- 1) To what extent is the learning outcome approach implemented and accepted in your country/institution; which factors have prevented and/or supported implementation?
- 2) To what extent and how can the learning outcomes approach support the quality of teaching and learning?
- 3) To what extent and how can the learning outcomes approach support the matching of skills and competence provisions and the needs of the labour market and society?
- 4) How can learning outcomes-based qualifications frameworks support the modernisation of education and training systems in the next decade?