Peer learning activity in the context of the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

‘How can qualifications frameworks support recognition of qualifications?’

17-18 March 2016, Luxembourg

SUMMARY REPORT
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1. Introduction

On 17-18 March 2016, a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) was held in Luxembourg. The activity focused on **how qualifications frameworks (QFs) can support recognition of qualifications**. The Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth hosted the PLA in cooperation with the European Commission and Cedefop. Forty-two participants attended the event.

1.1. PLA objectives

The purpose of the PLA was to examine and exchange information on how qualifications frameworks can support the recognition of qualifications. In particular, the PLA looked at Directive 2005/36/EC, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and national recognition legislation and practices and how these interact with National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs). A key question was how synergies can be created between recognition arrangements and QFs. In particular, the PLA sought to explore the following:

- What do we mean by recognition?
- What needs to be recognised?
- What tools are used for recognition?
- What are the characteristics of QFs that can support recognition decisions?
- What are the challenges?

Through the presentations and the resulting discussions, the PLA aimed to provide answers to the following overall questions:

- What is the use of QFs in the context of the Directive 2005/36/EC?
- What is the process of assigning an EQF level to the Common Training Framework (CTF)?
- How, and to what extent, do NQFs facilitate and support recognition decisions, and what needs to change to facilitate these decisions further?
- How can we facilitate recognition of qualifications not covered by the Directive and the Lisbon Recognition Convention?

1.2. Purpose of this report

This report summarises the discussions that took place during this PLA. It is intended to support the work of the Commission and PLA participants, by making available the results of the PLA activities to the participants, stakeholders and other social partners.

The report is structured according to the main topics of the PLA and draws on a range of presentations and roundtable discussions. The PLA agenda is included in Annex A.
2. Welcome from the Host Country

2.1. Welcome address

Day 1 began with a warm welcome from the host of the PLA Jos Noesen followed by a welcoming address by Léon Diederich (Premier Counsellier from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Luxemburg).

As a highly bordered country, Luxemburg relies substantially on migrant labour and benefits from using a robust QF, informed by the EQF. This maximises the linking of the skills of cross-border workers to the right jobs. 75% of Luxembourg’s residents study abroad and 50% of the labour force come from outside Luxembourgs’s borders.

In this respect, it is important to keep the common vision of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in mind including student mobility with full recognition of qualifications and periods of study and access to the European labour market.

The Yerevan Communiqué set the aim to complete EHEA by 2020 with automatic recognition of HE qualifications. Member States (MS) are advised to develop stronger policies to use QFs to recognise learning experience in the widest sense. Frameworks will aim to enable automatic recognition of qualifications unless substantive differences remain. That also allows for partial recognition.

In terms of education, it is important that learning outcomes be clearly detailed for all education cycles. Mr Diederich emphasised the Pathfinder Group on the Automatic Recognition of Comparable Higher Education Degrees established at the Bucharest ministerial conference in 2012. The objective of the work of the group is to explore ways to approach the long-term goal of automatic recognition of generic levels of qualifications by moving away from individual to system-level recognition, placing students on an equal footing irrespective of the country of origin of their HE degree. Those MS that do this best will also be the most attractive to the best-qualified people and they will apply for jobs knowing that recognition is effective.

A number of international, European and national arrangements for recognition have been put in place over the last years. Some of these, such as Directives 2005/36/EC and 2013/55/EU, are regulatory tools stipulating the legal rights of qualifications holders to practise their profession in another EU country.

In the context of implementing Directive 2013/55, the government of Luxemburg has made a clear distinction between academic and professional recognition, and has integrated the NQF as a supporting tool in the academic recognition procedure.

Two different registers have been established, i.e. the register of educational qualifications and the register of professional qualifications. A key innovation is that the educational titles and degrees will be linked to the national EQF and classified at one of the eight levels. Only through practical experience it is possible to gain knowledge about to what extent the NQF can facilitate and support recognition decisions. The practical experience deepens and broadens the ability to compare and understand qualifications in a European context.
3. Session 1 - Setting the Scene

The objective of Session 1 was to set the scene for the PLA. Three initial presentations were followed by roundtable discussions and plenary feedback from the discussions.

3.1. Recognition of qualifications; conceptual challenges

On behalf of the European Commission, DG EMPL Policy Officer Susanne Lonscher-Räcke set the European policy context. Developments in the EQF aim to increase transparency and comparability of qualifications and to facilitate mobility of workers across Europe in the context of the strategic objectives of jobs, growth, mobility and competitiveness.

While there has been an extensive programme of PLAs related to the EQF, this PLA was the first to examine the ways in which Qualifications Frameworks can support recognition of qualifications. Employers should be able to match jobs to people to maximise the use of the employees’ skills and increase overall productivity.

The key elements of academic and professional recognition leading to regulated professions were noted, but some recognition tends to be de facto. De facto recognition means ‘the acknowledgement of value of knowledge, skills and competences by economic and social stakeholders (such as employers)’. It does not lead to formal recognition of achieved learning outcomes. However, it can lead to access to a non-regulated profession or to non-formal training.

The presentation ended by asking key questions of what decides a type of recognition:

- What is being recognised?
- For what purpose is recognition being sought?
- Which stakeholders conduct the recognition?
- Which level or point someone’s journey into the labour market/employment takes place?

Overall the presentation highlighted two key challenges. First, recognition is needed in an increasingly dynamic labour market with new occupations and roles that challenge recognition systems, but where employers need to recruit employees effectively, whose qualifications match the jobs. Second, recognition frameworks must cope with complexity, Trust is important in the recognition of frameworks by all stakeholders from employees to employers.

3.2. NQF’s; their existing and potential role in supporting recognition

Next Jens Bjornavold from Cedefop reviewed the need for authoritative, accurate and comprehensive information and knowledge of the EQF in the context of recognition.

Thirty-five countries are now looking at comprehensive NQFs. The process is now levelling up, where the NQFs are being modernised.

It is important to underline that the QFs have limitations. A QF is not qualified to provide automatic recognition. Instead, the QF should be considered as a map providing valuable information on the overall position of a qualification in a particular qualification system.

The full potential of the QFs is yet to be achieved. Information on levels adds value, but is not sufficient to support decisions on recognition. There is a need to combine the function of a map and gateway to qualifications. Most NQFs are a gateway to detailed information. However, the interaction between NQFs and national qualifications is often weak. A simple statement of a level is not sufficient to understand a qualification.
In the future, a common format for the presentation of learning outcomes will be necessary. This should not replace the national presentation, but a common language is necessary to realise the potential of going from the map to a deeper understanding of qualifications.

3.3. First results of the ongoing Study on 'Obstacles to Recognition of Skills and Qualifications'

The third presentation was provided by Vicky Donlevy, Director, Ecorys UK Ltd. The aim of the study is to:

- Collect empirical evidence on the practical obstacles to fair, efficient and effective recognition of skills and qualifications and their underlying causes.
- Explore how existing transparency and recognition tools can be used to overcome the obstacles and identify other tools and measures that would be needed at both EU and national level.

Preliminary results were presented, based on:

- EU level statistical data analysis;
- EU level literature review;
- Country level desk research in 13 MS; and
- Exploration of de facto recognition.

The statistical evidence was available only at country level, which can mask heterogeneity across sectors and spaces within countries. Data largely report the situations in preceding years, not the present year. However, the data clearly show wide differences in migration levels and patterns across countries.

The academic literature has not focused much on the recognition issues, and the recording of skills and qualifications is uneven. Until now, transparency tools have focused heavily on the education sector. However, LLL is becoming increasingly important. Nevertheless, 13 different obstacles to recognition of skills and qualifications have been identified and have been applied to both different stakeholders (individuals, employers, education & training providers and intermediate organisations) and different types of mobility (between types and levels of education and training; between education/training and employment; between economic sectors and across geographic borders).

Regarding the exploration of de facto recognition, the study has so far demonstrated that recognition is a complex term to 'unpack', because de facto recognition is defined to some degree in relation to formal recognition. However, even the word 'recognition' means different things in different countries. A broad distinction is that formal recognition involves some form of national/regional legal regulation, where de facto recognition encompasses other forms of recognition.

Overall, the presentation identified further the complexity of recognition, showing how employers need more clarity and understanding of the value of qualifications frameworks. There are also challenges regarding input data in the ways that skills and qualifications are documented, and the majority of development of recognition tools has been in the academic sector, but the tools do not directly transfer to the employment context, such as for SMEs and for low-qualified people.

3.4. Roundtable discussions

Following the welcome address and the three presentations setting the scene, the participants where then asked to discuss the following two questions in groups:
Q1: Taking into account your own experiences regarding recognition, have the essential conceptual, practical and political issues been identified by the session?

Q2: Do you agree with the role of NQFs in recognition as outlined in the presentation?

Table 1 summarises some of the main points from the participants:

**Table 1: Summary of Roundtable Discussions – Session 1**

| Q1 | • The political dimension is a key issue when it comes to recognition of qualifications. It has to be clear for all players which institution can award which qualification.  
• The term ‘De facto recognition’ is new, the term recognition in general refers to something formal. It may lead to incorrect expectations. Valuing or rewarding could be used instead of recognition.  
• It is important to keep the dynamics of the labour market and the political challenges in mind. NQFs must be seen as systems for levelling and describing qualifications, and not to focus on an individual level.  
• Definitions and terminology are important. Recognition can be understood in different ways and the levels are perceived in different ways. It is therefore important that NQFs are in line with EQF. |
| Q2 | • NQFs can be helpful in connection with recognition. More knowledge about the method on how national qualifications are allocated to NQFs is needed. Attention should be paid to the different situation of Higher Education (HE), moving faster due to the Bologna Process.  
• QFs are meant to build trust between countries.  
• Participants expressed caution also about summarising learning outcomes on new registers with small amounts of text to summarise them, since that risks enforcing generalisation.  
• Different actors are in different stages of development. Practicalities can be time-consuming, so it is necessary to trust the levelling of the countries. Hence, a QF is a ‘gateway’ not a solution.  
• De facto-recognition is up to the employer. Further regulation of de facto recognition was not welcomed with the argument that this would interfere with member states’ and employers responsibilities. |

4. **Session 2 – The approach of the Common Training Frameworks**

Session 2 considered the Common Training Frameworks (in the Amended Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications).

4.1. **A Common Training Framework**

Sophie Weisswange, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG GROW, explained the rules, constraints, possibilities and opportunities of a Common Training Framework (CTF), after having looked at Directive 2005/36/EC, which rests on the legal right of free movement of workers. There are two main regimes, i.e. permanent establishment and the temporary provision of services. Focusing on the permanent establishment, it is possible to distinguish between the following three regimes:

- automatic recognition based on harmonised minimum training requirements (seven sectoral professions: doctors, nurses, dentists, vets, pharmacists, midwives, architects); and
• a general system of mutual recognition (primary or subsidiary application).

The final goal of the third regime is recognition, and MS must look for recognition. Compensatory measures could be required such as an adaption period, aptitude tests, etc. Clear justified decisions should be provided about the outcomes.

The 2013 revision (2013/55/EU) added components such as the Common Training Framework, the European Professional Card, and Assistance Centres.\(^1\)

A Common Training Framework (CTF) is a common set of minimum knowledge, skills and competences necessary for the pursuit of a specific profession, and some of the conditions for a CTF are:

- A profession or training regulated in at least one third of the MS.
- A CTF should enable more professionals to move across the MS.
- A profession in question is not a sectorial profession.
- A CTF should be described in terms of combined knowledge, skills and competences of at least one third of the MS.
- It should be based on the levels of the European Qualifications framework.

The effects of such a CTF would be:

- Automatic recognition of qualifications acquired following a CTF.
- CTFs will be voluntary for professionals.
- CTFs do not replace national training programmes.
- The possibility of exemptions for MS under certain conditions.

The presentation concluded by emphasising that a CTF is not a European curriculum or a European diploma. However, a CTF would have a significant impact on increasing the mobility of the European workforce.

4.2. A Member State’s perspective

Following the presentation from the Commission, Wilfried Boomgaert, Deputy Director of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, set out the ‘reality of experience’ at MS level.

There are emerging contradictions between 2013/55/EU and other developments. The 2013 revision included aspects such as ECTS, key competences, accreditation of prior learning, and alternative learning pathways. There are ‘red lines’ that the EQF should not cross: for instance, into areas such as salaries where they are set in a country according to qualification levels.

As new elements are introduced, there is a risk of adding complexity when the objective of the developments is to simplify and harmonise. For example, there are eight levels of EQF and five levels noted in Article 11 of the Directive.

In terms of recognition, there is a ‘no go zone’ for the EQF, as it is not a tool for recognition in the field of employment where access to the occupations is regulated. A ‘grey zone’ is where the eight levels of the EQF are used next to the five levels in Article 11 of the Directive.

As currently, the CTF does not exist, some first reflections would be that:

\(^1\) [http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publications/docs/professional-qualifications-regime_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publications/docs/professional-qualifications-regime_en.pdf)
• It will be based on national programmes/qualification standards.
• It will define minimum requirements, i.e. national systems may always have higher requirements and qualification levels.
• It will normally not have a direct impact on national education systems.
• ‘Opting out’ is possible, although it is not an easy procedure.

4.3. A country’s craft sector case

In the next presentation, Charles Bassing, Deputy Managing Director of the Chamber of Crafts, Luxembourg, presented the Luxembourg craft sector point of view on recognition of professional qualifications.

As mentioned previously by Léon Diederich, Luxembourg has a highly mobile trans-border labour market. Craft activities are regulated under Directive 2005/36/CE, which only considers access to working as a self-employed or technical director. Access as an employee is not regulated (with a few exceptions).

In practice, the two systems that are foreseen in the Directive only apply to 33 of the 97 existing craft activities (for most of the existing activities national rules are less strict than those of the Directive).

In Luxembourg, only 40% of business leaders are nationals. There has been a strong convergence to EU rules, especially in the construction sector. Currently, 60% of businesses comply with the Directive. However, the failure rate for businesses run by other nationals is five times that of others, and research is needed to understand the reasons. For example, there may be a lack of cultural and contextual understanding by other nationals.

In recognition cases, 90% of all cases are decided in 1-2 weeks, and only 10% require more time, for example to take an aptitude test.

The Luxembourg craft sector is currently not enthusiastic about the CTF developments and worry about a potential loss of specificity, diversity and reactivity. The fear is that the result could be a system that focuses on the lowest common denominator. Consequently, it is important to inform all potential stakeholders to help build confidence and trust in recognition frameworks.

4.4. Roundtable Discussions – Round 2

Following the presentations of Session 2, the participants were asked to discuss two sets of questions in groups:

Use of QF in the context of the Directive:
Q1: In your country, do you make use of the EQF as an additional source of information in the context of the general system of recognition?
Q2: If not, can you explain why?

The process of assigning an EQF level to a CTF:
Q1: Who would need to be involved?
Q2: To what extent would the NQF level(s) of related national qualifications play a role and how?
Q3: What quality criteria and quality assurance mechanisms would be needed?
Q4: What are the challenges and problems you expect in this process?

Table 2 summarises some of the main points from the participants:
Table 2: Summary of table discussion – round 2

| The use of QF in the context of Directive | • In terms of professional qualifications of the Directive the EQF is nearly not used due to lack of knowledge about QFs among employers and end users.  
• The EQF is not used in the recognition process as not all NQFs are fully operational. Another reason is that the EQF has a different goal in that it mainly functions as a transparency tool. |
| The process of assigning an EQF level to a CTF | • In order to prepare a CTF, the establishment of a sector skill alliance preparing curriculum could be a solution. The alliance should consist of at least 10 MS (1/3). In order to achieve support in MS, it is important that this process is not initiated by the Commission  
• There is a profound need for more clarity about the CTF. Some of the key questions raised are:  
  o What is it?  
  o What is the scale?  
  o What is the added value?  
  o Who is going to be responsible for the preparation, monitoring and maintenance?  
  o How many professional occupations would be covered?  
  o There are concerns about unregulated occupations.  
• Intermediaries will have to play a key role in maintaining the CTF, if and when it is established  
• High standards of training and learning outcomes should be guaranteed |

5. Session 3

5.1. The Lisbon Recognition Convention and its addendum

Carita Blomqvist, Head of Unit, Recognition and International Comparability of Qualifications, Finnish National Board of Education, provided the first presentation in Session 3 explaining the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the subsidiary text on recognition and qualifications frameworks. Recognition using EQF can work if it is timely; fair; transparent; has a clear appeals process and when all participants can identify clear value. The biggest hesitation about using QF in the recognition process is often transparency and trust in the quality assurance. Consequently, QFs will not guarantee automatic recognition, but can facilitate recognition by:

• improving transparency;  
• increasing the information level, especially concerning the level and learning outcomes of the qualification:  
• helping to make judgments more accurate; and  
• helping to see similarities.
5.2. An ENIC-NARIC network case

Elizabeth Zamorano, Deputy Department Recognition of Diplomas, ENIC-NARIC France, gave the second presentation of Session 3, focusing on how QFs can support the assessment of levels, learning outcomes, quality assurance and workload in Higher Education.

She presented the development of NARIC (from 1984) and ENIC (from 1997) into the ENIC-NARIC centres showing how international collaboration adds richness to national information and knowledge in a pan-European context.

In the context of the French centre and the EQF, advice from the Centre is not mandatory, but can increase a successful outcome of a recognition process for both academic and professional purposes. The Centre uses a transparent assessment grid covering eligibility, formal indicators, and quality assurance.

Even with the years of development, many higher education institutions are still conservative about recognition, and EQF is not often used. In conclusion:

- It is important to be in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) principles and apply the recommendations of the subsidiary text.
- QFs do not guarantee automatic recognition but they help to facilitate the recognition work.
- QFs are intrinsically linked to learning outcomes and ECTS credits.
- The implementation of QFs implies, in principle, a transparent link to quality assurance.
- The transposition work done by the country and the competent authorities should be respected and trusted.

5.3. Roundtable Discussions – Round 3

This set of discussions focused on the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its addendum. The participants were asked to discuss the following three questions

Q1: How and to what extent do NQFs facilitate and support recognition decisions?
Q2: What needs to change for NQFs to facilitate recognition decisions further?
Q3: Does the shift to learning outcomes facilitate or complicate recognition decisions?

Table 3 summarises the main points of the discussion.

Table 3: Summary of table discussion – round 3

- Good information enables quick and effective decisions about recognition. It will help to build a body of case studies that can help others to establish good practice. Trust and quality of information are essential.
- The recognition process also needs to cope with ‘old’ qualifications, and understand the challenges in connection with obtaining enough detail about them from the time when detail was not provided.
- Recognition also needs to cope with ‘portfolio’ life-long learning – learning at different times and in different forms.
- It is important to ensure that the EQF recognition process is combined effectively with other recognition processes such as those of the Bologna Process.
- Use the expertise of other countries. Even if a country fully references the EQF in national law, the country where a given qualification has been gained will always be asked for guidance on how it relates to EQF in a recognition process. Therefore, the validation process is undertaken
6. Day 2


The first presentation of Day 2 was provided by Ralf Maier, Head of Department 'Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications', Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany.

Germany has an overarching Act for recognition. This Act has built resilience for Germany in a dynamic labour market, where recent challenges of migration and refugees can be addressed as effectively as possible.

The Federal State, Länder and chambers of commerce (that are trusted by local companies) collaborate closely. The Act is based on 2005/36/EC (regulated professions) but also covers non-regulated professions and non-EU qualifications.

The key objective is to match people more effectively to jobs, especially since German companies prefer employees with a form of officially recognised qualification and skills.

Professional qualifications are assessed through an Assessment Act. There are 60 professional and vocational acts and 16 Länder recognition acts.

The new Recognition Act gives a legal entitlement to an individual assessment. There are standardised criteria, a uniform assessment method, and a decision given within 3 months. The nationality of the applicant is not a factor – their qualifications and skills are the important criteria. An application can be submitted before going to Germany.

The recognition process comprises six steps. Information on living and working conditions is provided along with a telephone helpline (eight languages). Information on recognition processes is then provided, including a face-to-face counselling process. Finally, an application can be submitted. There is an online recognition finder, and the process combines online automatic data and individual support.

Decisions can recommend compensation measures, adaption measures, immediate requirements, and an external examination. The process can deal with incomplete documents, which helps refugees.

In 2013, Germany opened and facilitated opportunities for migrants with non-EU and non-regulated professions. This process aims to place migrants in jobs so they are economically productive and that it minimises the financial support needed by them from the German Federal State and Länder. In August 2015, a new bridging programme was introduced, where migrants can come to Germany to apply while also being given 18 months residence and working 10 hours a week in an unrelated field. Again, this aims to minimise the cost of supporting migrants, but it also gives them time to learn the language since speaking German is fundamentally important in the labour market.

Qualifications frameworks at the European level will not replace the national recognition procedures. The EQF is a mechanism to facilitate effective interaction between national systems, and it avoids each country building its own links to all other countries. However, only national recognition can ensure a high level of acceptance from employers and on the labour market.
6.2. A regional case: recognitions of qualifications in Hamburg, a report from practice

Claudia Meimbresse, Head of Recognition Unit, Chamber of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses, Hamburg, showed how local ‘personalisation’ of the recognition process can provide more effective outcomes and better social and economic integration, especially in a region where a large city is the centre of an economic region that is large and relatively coherent. However, it is important to note that each country and the regions/cities/areas within them form different types of labour markets, so a ‘one size fits all’ model cannot be applied.

In Hamburg, the Chamber of Skills Crafts and Small Businesses provides counselling (an important stage of talking to clients, and understanding their personal situation); analyses qualifications; makes decisions; and identifies adaption requirements, such as a practical test set by a craft guild.

In 2015, the Chamber of Skills Crafts and Small Businesses provided 470 face-to-face counselling processes for applicants from 50 nationalities, 50% of whom were already in the German labour market before starting the process. Twenty-nine qualifications were analysed, and the Chamber of Skills Crafts and Small Businesses made 154 decisions that required 91 adaptions. Language training is provided during the application process helping applicants to develop the required labour market ‘vocabulary’. 50 % of the applicants got a partial qualification and were acknowledged into adaptation measures.

The counselling costs EUR 100-600 per applicant, and employers as well as job centres will often pay the cost since this can help to accelerate an applicant into a well-matched job.

The recognition process starts only after the counselling process is completed, and there can be situations where further application is not recommended.

This is a local ‘rich’ process that in some way complements the national focus of an ENIC-NARIC centre, since the labour market qualifications landscape is much more diverse and complex than the academic one.

The impact is clear, and people who go through this process and do the necessary adaption are more likely to stay with employers.

6.3. Roundtable Discussions – Round 4

Following the two presentations from Germany, the participants were asked to discuss the following three questions:

Q1: As regards the German approach how does or could national legislation support recognition in your country?

Q2: To what extent can NQFs be embedded in recognition procedures?

Q3: How can recognition procedures and EQF/NQFs be used in recognition of third country nationals with or without documents?

Table 4 summarises the main points of the discussion.
Table 4: Summary of table discussions – round 4

- Outside the scope of the Directive, it is mostly the application of ad-hoc procedures when it comes to recognition.

- Norway has a fast track evaluation that is offered to employers requiring specific qualifications. It is aimed at foreigners with a higher education background. The recognition process should be completed in 5 days. The QF supports this process. The fast track evaluation process does not cover regulated professions.

- Luxembourg only has a few professions that they consider to be non-regulated. Luxembourg has a complete list of all regulated professions. For recognition, a diploma is required.

- The term regulated profession has different meanings in the countries.

- The Lisbon Recognition Convention is the basis of recognition. However, without national legislation, recognition is difficult. The legislation should be flexible.

- The EQF being a metaframework, NQFs should be used in recognition procedures at national level.

7. Lessons Learned and overall Conclusions

The speedy and effective recognition of qualifications can help facilitate labour mobility across the Single Market, and by matching skills to jobs, it can help drive up productivity and business growth. The presentations and discussions during the PLA in Luxembourg demonstrated that qualifications frameworks can indeed support recognition of qualifications. Their main role is to provide information about level and learning outcomes and function as a map and a gateway of qualifications to increase transparency. However, behind the systems, there needs to be support and guidance structures as the example from Hamburg shows. The less regulated professions, the more effort in the recognition process are needed. It is also important to keep in mind that the EQF/NQFs are still relatively young and embedded differently across MS.

The PLA also demonstrated that there are a lot of unanswered questions when it comes to the Common Training Frameworks. Even if the aim and principles of the CTF have been outlined, there is a lot of uncertainty about scope, scale, changeability, regulation and monitoring. Concerns were also raised by the business sector on how the CTF could add another layer of complexity and prevent mobility rather than support it, and that the establishment of a CTF could interfere with wage levels in some countries.

Looking forward, some of the key messages from the roundtable discussions of the PLA were:

- If qualifications frameworks should support recognition of qualifications to a larger extent, the value of the learning outcomes plays a crucial role.
- Qualifications frameworks already support recognition of qualifications in some cases as the example from Germany showed. It would be important for further progress to share more practical experiences and include more practitioners in the future process including the EQF AG meetings.
- Even if automatic recognition of qualifications is the end target, it is important to leave space for countries to adapt to their own needs. Language, borders and different cultures still matter.

Susanne Lonscher-Räcke (EC) and Jos Noesen (Luxembourg) then closed the event with the following remarks:

- The EQF/NQF development is considered as "young", the need to have operational NQFs for using them in the recognition process was acknowledged. The need to have the second milestone (EQF/NQF level visible on all certificates and diploma) was underlined.
- The clear distinction between the EQF/NQF as a transparency instrument at system level and the recognition process at the level of the individual was made.
- The recognition at national level as the only way to receive acceptance at employers was emphasised by some.
- Reluctance and lack of clarity about the future CTFs was stated.
- The lack of information and use of QFs at ENIC-NARIC level came out.
- Participants saw this PLA as a start for further reflection on the topic. The discussion with regard to the Bologna process should be deepened. It was proposed to have presentations on the implementation of the EQF/NQFs at EQF AG meetings.
Annex A – Agenda

How can qualifications frameworks support recognition of qualifications?

Peer Learning Activity Luxembourg
17-18 March 2016

Hôtel Parc Belle-Vue 5, Avenue Marie-Thérèse Luxembourg L-2981 Luxembourg.

AGENDA

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<td>08:30-09:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00-09:15</td>
<td>Welcome address&lt;br&gt;León Diederich, Premier Conseiller de Gouvernement Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Luxembourg</td>
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<td>09.15-10.00</td>
<td>Setting the scene&lt;br&gt;Recognition of qualifications; conceptual challenges&lt;br&gt;Karin van der Sanden, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG EMPL&lt;br&gt;NQF's; their existing and potential role in supporting recognition&lt;br&gt;Jens Bjornavold, Expert, Cedefop&lt;br&gt;First results of the ongoing Study on 'Obstacles to Recognition of Skills and Qualifications'&lt;br&gt;Vicky Donlevy, Director, Ecorys UK Ltd.</td>
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<td>10.00-10.45</td>
<td>Table discussions</td>
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<td>10.45-11.05</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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<td>11.05-11.30</td>
<td>Reports from tables (Rapporteurs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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| 11.30-12.10 | The approach of the Common Training Frameworks (in the Amended Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications)  
Rules, constraints, possibilities and opportunities  
*Sophie Weisswange, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG GROW*  
A Member State’s perspective  
*Wilfried Boomgaert, Deputy Director Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Belgium*  
A Country’s craft sector case. Recognition of professional qualifications, a point of view from the craft sector in Luxemburg  
*Charles Bassing, Deputy managing director Chamber of Crafts, Luxembourg* |
| 12.10-13.00 | Table discussions                                                                                  |
| 13.00-14.00 | Lunch                                                                                             |
| 14.00-14.30 | Reports from tables (Rapporteurs)                                                                 |
| 14.30-15.10 | The Lisbon Recognition Convention and its addendum  
*Carita Blomqvist, Head of Unit, Recognition and International Comparability of Qualifications, Finnish National Board of Education*  
An ENIC-NARIC network case. How do QF’s support the assessment of level, learning outcomes, quality assurance and workload  
*Elizabeth Zamorano, Deputy Department Recognition of diplomas, ENIC-NARIC France* |
<p>| 15.10-16.00 | Table discussions                                                                                  |
| 16.00-16.20 | Coffee break                                                                                      |
| 16.20-16.50 | Plenary: Reporting from tables (Rapporteurs)                                                       |
| 16.50-17.15 | Summary of first day and emerging key points (Facilitator)                                        |</p>
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<th>Time</th>
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| 09:15-10:15 | Qualifications not covered by the Directive and the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The German Federal Recognition Act  
          | Ralf Maier, Head of department 'Recognition of foreign professional qualifications', Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany  
          | A Regional case. Recognitions of Qualifications in Hamburg, a report from practice  
          | Claudia Meimbresse, Head of Recognition Unit, Chamber of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses Hamburg |
| 10.15-11.00 | Table discussions                                                      |
| 11.00-11.20 | Coffee break                                                          |
| 11.20-11.50 | Reports from tables (Rapporteurs)                                      |
| 11.50-12.30 | Conclusions and results of the PLA (Facilitator)  
          | Closing remarks (European Commission and Luxemburg)                    |
| 12.30-13.30 | Lunch                                                                   |