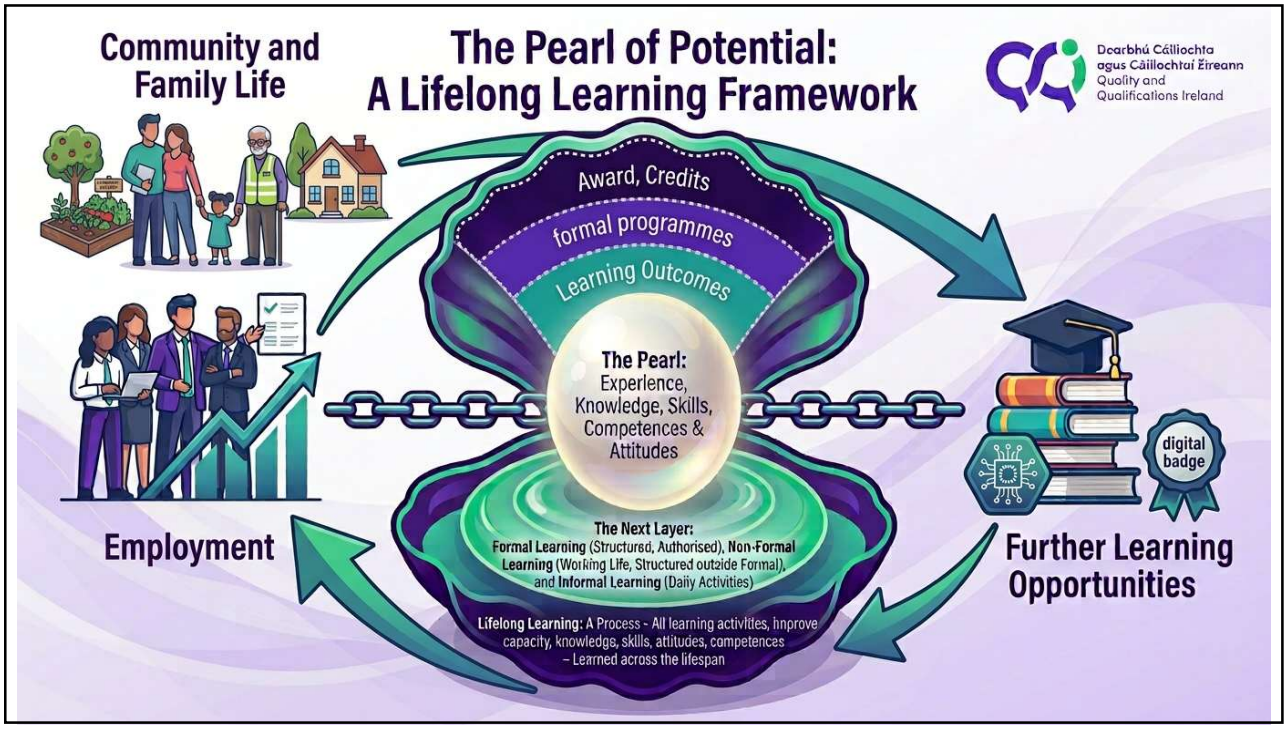
Pathways and Promises:

What is our mandate and ambition for the recognition of qualifications and the validation of prior learning (RPL)? Why?

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland

1



2

What do we need to know?

Regulation- GRC, LRC, 2012 Rec, CEDEFOP
Global regions- EHEA, EEA +4
National, Sectoral, primary *and* secondary

Key policy themes -
Skills, Inclusion and Mobility, fair recognition, automatic recognition, burden of proof, fraud

Taking a client history
What process, what tools, what proofs…

Recognition, validation and R&V
2 different methods

Game changers
Credential diversity, Green and Digital Transitions, Skills First, Demographics, Mixed methods

Pathways and promises



3

3

Essential legal and normative framework

Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC):
Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (2004)

- *HE qualifications, periods of study, partial qualifications*
- *'Access' Qualifications (Q-Entry* Q-ENTRY – International Database on Higher Education Entry Qualifications)

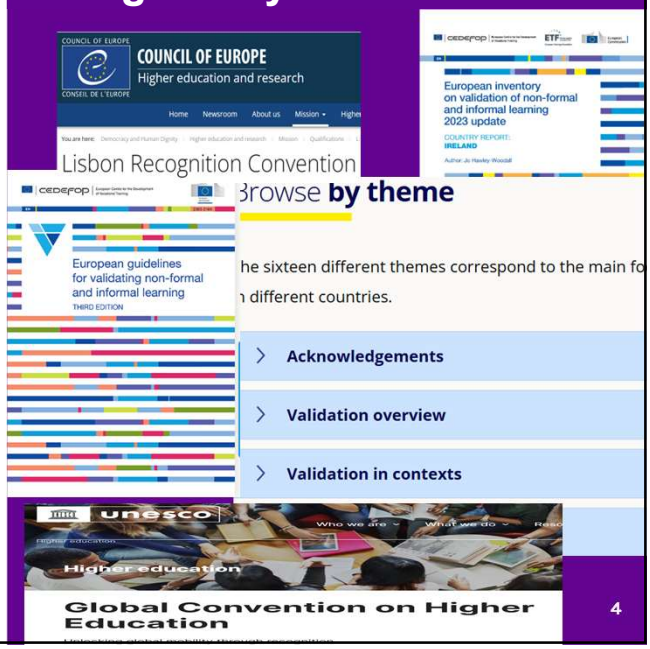
Global Recognition Convention

+prior learning, study periods earned through non-traditional modes, study periods completed remotely
Definitional clarity

2012 Council *Recommendation* on the validation of nonformal and informal learning

- National systems across EU by 2018
- Identification, documentation, assessment, certification *(+information/reception, impact!)*

Regulatory Framework



4

4

www.enic-naric.net



5

5

National legislation

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012 (amended)
- RPL is a legislative right
- All awards can be achieved through RPL
- Credit applies to *enrolled learners*- but E/T Institutions also must allow for *learners* to have prior learning assessed. (Access – or?)
- Awarding bodies must ensure that the relevant standards associated with the level of the award within the Framework has been acquired before the award is made

TU and Universities Acts
- Allow RPL for staff in relation to PhDs

University Act 1997 revised-
- *Programme* provider, educational provider, providing programmes of education and training

HEA Act 2022
- RPL, recognition not mentioned
- Make a case as an 'issue' under e.g. supporting equality, diversity, inclusion, participation, success of priority groups
- Efficiency, cost base

All require that HE supports/contributes to the realisation of national economic and social development, facilitating LLL through the provision of adult education, and provision for higher level professional technical and managerial staff



6

6

- **Further Education and Training Act 2013**

- Provides for the provision of training, retraining for employment, and to assist in and coordinate the provision of such training
- Promote an appreciation of the value of FET
- Promote equality of opportunity
- May provide e/t overseas for those ordinarily resident here
- Promote, develop and encourage literacy and numeracy
- Consult- Teagasc, HEA, Enterprise Ireland, QQI
- No specific mandate for/clarification of Recognition or RPL/validation

- **The Education Act**
- no reference to recognition or RPL, but applies to the conduct of assessments and examinations, to supporting the authentication of credentials through combatting fraud, and to specific examinations for which recognition might apply or RPL build upon

Education and Training Boards Act 2013
- Interpretations differentiate "learner" from "student", with both interpretations included. A *learner* is a person, *other than a student*, *who is acquiring or who has acquired knowledge, skill or competence* (not in a recognised school/centre)
- *including provision for the purposes of employment*, and ancillary services

National legislation



7

7

Recognition

A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the ***value*** *of a foreign educational* ***qualification*** *with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.*
(2012 Recommendation, LRC1994)

A formal acknowledgment by a competent recognition authority of the ***validity and academic level*** *of a foreign education* ***qualification****,*
of ***partial studies****, or*
of ***prior learning***

for the purpose of providing an applicant with outcomes including, but not limited to:

(a) the right to ***apply for admission*** *to higher education; and/or*

(b) the possibility to ***seek employment*** *opportunities*

(GRC 2019)

What are we talking about?

- Value
- Validity
- Academic level
- formal learning and qualifications
- prior learning (may)
- is a 'right'
- confers 'rights'

- **Who can make a formal acknowledgement?**
- **Diversity of credentials?**

8

8

Partial recognition *(shall)*
the partial recognition of a full and completed ***qualification*** *which cannot be fully recognized on account of the demonstration of* ***substantial differences*** *by a competent recognition authority* ***(may carry credit)***

Partial studies (shall)
any part of a higher-education programme which has been evaluated and, while not a complete programme in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies ***(may carry credit)***

Prior learning (may)
the experience, knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies which an individual has acquired as a result of formal, non-formal, or informal learning, ***assessed against*** *a given set of* ***learning outcomes****, objectives, or standards* ***(may/ may not carry credit)***

(GRC
unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373602/PDF/373602eng.pdf.multi.page=3)

Recognition is nuanced

9

9

Validation
means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has **acquired learning outcomes** measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

1. IDENTIFICATION *through dialogue* of particular *experiences* of an individual;
2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual's experiences;
3. a formal ASSESSMENT of these *experiences*; and
4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may *lead to a partial or full qualification*;

(j) recognition of prior learning means **the validation of *learning outcomes***, whether from formal *education* or non-formal or informal *learning*, acquired before requesting validation

(2012 Recommendation)

RPL - validation (*VPL, PLAR, APEL*)

'You have demonstrated the required learning and skills'

10

10

Burden of proof- Focus on success

The Competent Recognition Authority has to prove that

- the qualification
- Partial studies and or
- Prior learning

does *not meet* the relevant criteria

And, where this is the case, has to

- **Explain and outline a pathway to achieving recognition**

- Transparency
- Honesty
- Fair recognition
- **Substantial differences-significant differences** which would most *likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in a desired activity* (e.g. further study, research activities, or employment opportunities)
- Pathways, purposes
- Guidance.

11

11

Clarifying the relationship

Validation / RPL-
- of learning outcomes, based on *experiences*, identified through dialogue and documentation, (against a formal standard)
- *Informal, nonformal, formal- experiential?*

Recognition
- of a qualification (formal, full, complete)
- of prior learning assessed against learning outcomes, which may/*may* not involve a qualification, partial qualification (*formal, nonformal, informal*)

Recognition (value systems) includes

- Social recognition (includes open recognition)
- Professional recognition (license to practice)
- Formal recognition (an award, credits, access, advanced entry)

Clarity-
- a qualification, an award, a certificate, a credential…?
- holistic, academic, labour market





12

12

Fair recognition

- Non-discriminatory
- Success oriented- substantial difference
- Transparent, honest,
- Systematic (reliable)
- Is not recognition at any price

Automatic Recognition

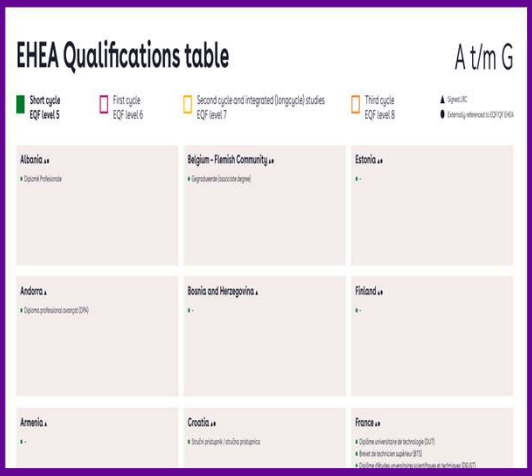
- System level recognition
- The national qualification framework is referenced to the EQF and/or QF European Higher Education Area
- 'Access' is eligible to apply for 'admission' (academic)
- Foregrounds the Multi Lateral Treaty on Automatic Recognition (Baltic, Benelux, + tbc, Poland and Ireland)
- Verification and authentication need is stronger

Fraud

- Credential tampering, fraudulent claims- a concern
- Fraud-Act, Fraud-Scan, Verif-AI, AR 2030
- NAIN, GAIN- National and Global Academic Integrity Networks
- Digital Credentials- Europass- **European Digital Wallet**

Learning outcomes-' '*…what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy*'. Learning outcomes | CEDEFOP

Key policy themes



13

13

Skills First

Draghi report: European competitiveness, capacity to innovate and commercialise

Demographic shift- the 'silver tsunami' Labour Market shortage, skills mismatch

Rise in and need for mobility

Recognition of qualifications of third country nationals

Skills Portability Initiative (SPI)

- Within the EU- digitisation of qualifications
- **Regulatory change** for professional recognition and supporting unregulated professions (AR)
- EU Talent Pool; Talent Partnerships
- Engagement with employers

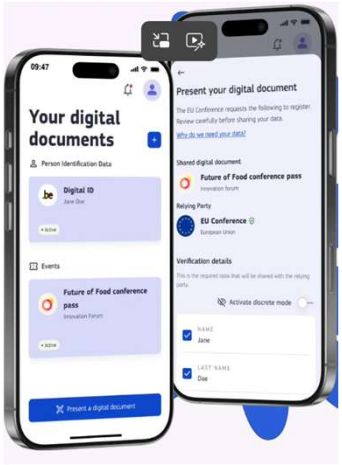
Data Interoperability

ESCO

ISCED

Make Skills visible

Issue credential directly to EU Digital Wallet (EIDAS, EDCL)



Build skills for quality lives and jobs

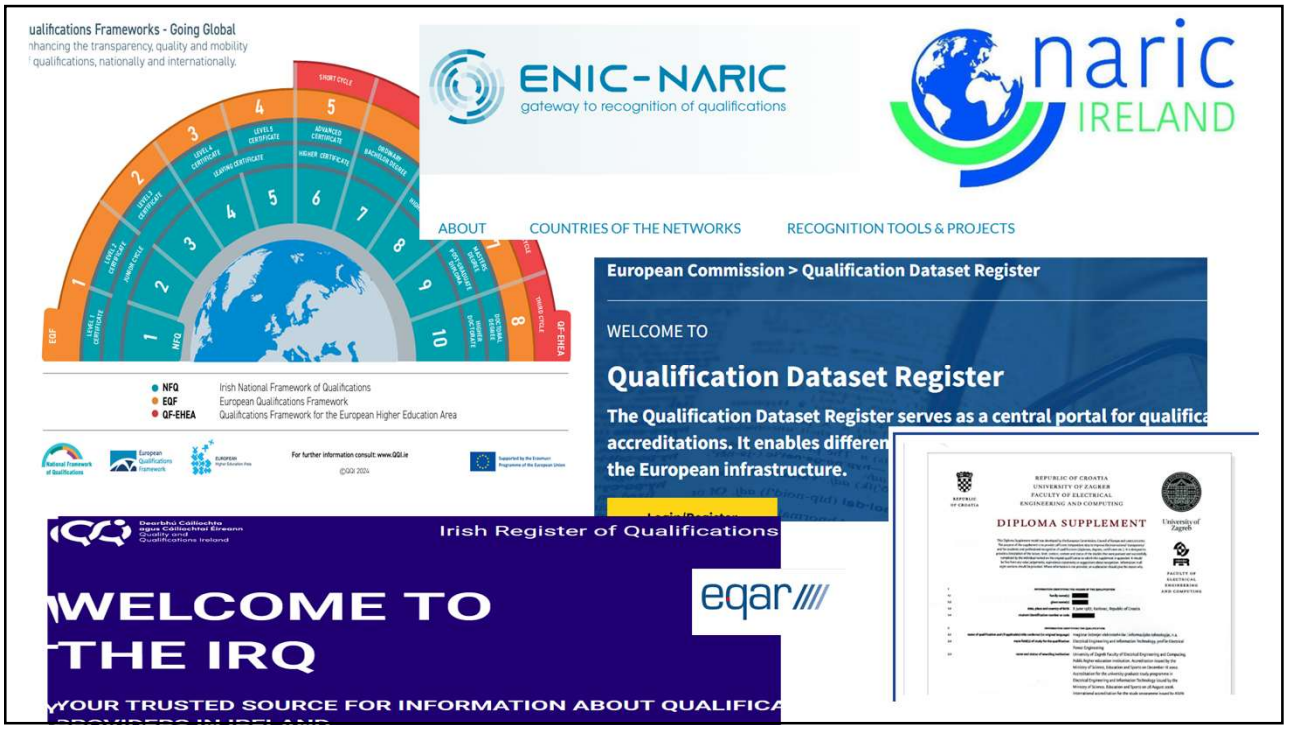
Upskill and reskill for the digital & green transition

Circulate skills across the EU for competitiveness

Attract, develop and retain talent for Europe's future

14

14



15

National Frameworks of qualifications
-always against a level
-includes policies (NFQ, IRQ, LAB, ATP)

Regional Frameworks
-the relationship of levels, systems

Sectoral approaches - Bologna Process, ACVT
-coherent understandings

Learning outcomes
- language- relating to skills

Award types
- may include microcredentials, nonformal, other awards- what is the award profile? Arrangements for credit? Is there a 'credit bank' approach?

QA of providers, awarding bodies, of QA agencies, awards, programmes, outcomes
-associated with formal E/T

- Increase in qualification types, NF, digital, MOOCs, on NFQ / not
- Developed by different entities than formal E/T- so what QA?

Infrastructure

16

16

Recognition of qualifications and prior learning

- Policies and procedures acknowledging the relationship, focused on learning outcomes
- Right touch regulation
- Toolkits for recognition and validation/RPL
- Building Capacity and Infrastructure, including coordination
- Sustainable funding
- Information and promotion
- Managing expectations

Questions…

17

17

Resource links

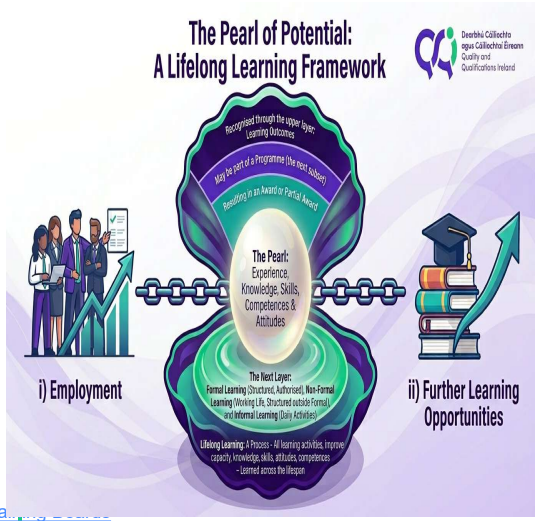
Qualification Frameworks
The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) | Europass
Compare Qualifications | Europass
Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global

Learning Information tools
Europass tools | Europass
Irish Register of Qualification qualification information, learning outcomes

Conventions, Countries, general information
ENIC-NARIC - gateway to recognition of qualifications
Recognition of foreign qualifications | Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Quality assurance- is the awarding body quality assured?
The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR

VPL/RPL
European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning | CEDEFOP
VPLCommunities of Practice- connection, resources
RPL Practitioners Network Ireland
(3) RPL Practitioner Network Ireland: Posts | LinkedIn
Home | Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Resources - A guide for landing pages - ETBI Digital Library at Education and Training Boards Ireland, ETBI
RPL - Document Library - ETBI Digital Library at Education and Training Boards Ireland, ETBI
RPL Practitioner Network Ireland : 'Recognition of Prior Learning: Closing the Skills Gap' – Fill out form



Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland

18

18