

# **NQF developments and the EQF referencing process**

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**20th April 2009**

## **European exchanges indicate a key role for NQFs**

- **in reforming national education and training systems;**
- **in addressing lifelong learning;**
- **in taking forward the shift to learning outcomes;**
- **in addressing the needs of individual learners by improving transparency and clarifying progression;**
- **making the referencing to the EQF easier.**

# **Conclusions from the London peer learning meeting**

- **NQFs require strong political commitment. It is a long term process and is a challenge to to maintain the momentum and funding**
- **Development of consensus across the variety of actors concerned is crucial for trust and openness of the framework**
- **NQFs evolve, therefore it is possible to have more modest expectations in the beginning and improve the framework over the years.**
- **NQFs have to suit their national contexts, this includes technical features of NQFs. Just because a country chooses eight levels the referencing to EQF levels will not be automatic.**
- **NQFs can support many policy objectives, however these will not appear automatically, other related policies and practices have to be related to the NQF in order to create added value.**
- **It is impossible to differentiate between the added value that arises from clear qualifications levels and that from learning outcomes.**

## Added value depends on framework type

Type of framework	Characteristics
<b>Implicit</b>	No explicit expression of a framework (diagram, levels, descriptors). However qualifications levels are known by citizens (e.g. what qualification is needed for university, to enter the labour market as a skilled worker) Obviously no links between different education or training sectors
<b>Sector</b>	Defined series of qualification levels for one or more education and training sectors (general, VET, HE, Adult), some sector frameworks will have level descriptors. No explicit links between the sector frameworks for different education or training sectors.
<b>Bridging</b>	In its weakest form there is a set of common levels covering all education sectors which is the basis for relating to each education and training sector framework. In its strongest form these common levels can have a set of descriptors that are different to those of the sector frameworks they relate to. Separate sector frameworks exist as a basis to this Bridging framework. The Bridging framework forms an formal link between different education or training sectors
<b>Integrating</b>	A single set of levels and descriptors covering all education and training sectors, each sector uses this set of levels and descriptors as its own framework. No separate sector frameworks exist. The integrating framework forms a formal link between different education or training sectors.

# Possible aspects of added value

- 1. Increased consistency of qualifications**
- 2. Better transparency for individuals and employers**
- 3. Increased currency of single qualifications**
- 4. A broader range of learning forms are recognised**
- 5. A national/external reference point for qualifications standards**
- 6. Clarification of learning pathways and progression**
- 7. Increased portability of qualifications**
- 8. Acting as a platform for stakeholders for strengthening cooperation and commitment**
- 9. Greater coherence of national reform policies**
- 10. A stronger basis for international co-operation, understanding and comparison**

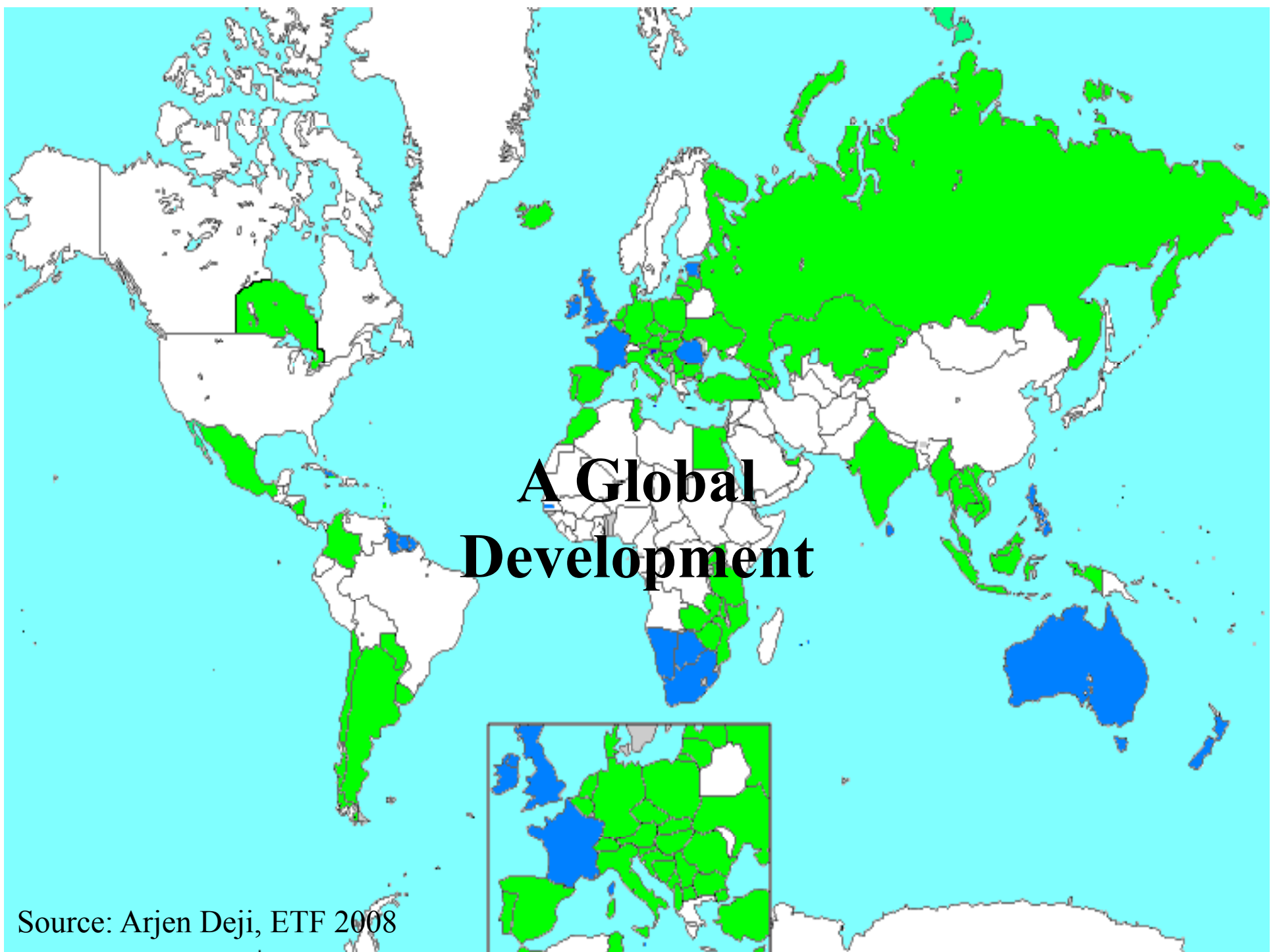


**European countries that are developing  
National Qualifications Frameworks  
2008**

The map shows Europe with a grid overlay. Countries highlighted in cyan, indicating they were developing National Qualifications Frameworks in 2008, include: Ireland, United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey. Other countries are shown in green, and non-European regions like Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and parts of Russia are shown in white.

Source: Arjen Deji, ETF 2008

# A Global Development



Source: Arjen Deji, ETF 2008

# **EQF – Where are we now?**

## **Formal adoption**

**Formal signing of the EQF Recommendation by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the European Council (22 April 2008)**

## **Promotion of the EQF**

**‘Political’ launch in Lisbon (26-27 Nov. 2007)**

**‘Implementation’ launch in Brussels (3-4 June 2008)**

## **Implementation of the EQF**

**Countries are invited to refer their national qualifications levels to the EQF by 2010 and to introduce references to EQF in certificates and diplomas by 2012**

# **Working structure**

## **Advisory Board**

**‘Provide overall coherence, Promote transparency of the process of relating NQS to EQF’, Plenary meetings, 2 to 4 times a year**

## **Sub-groups of the Advisory Board**

**On referencing criteria, quality assurance and sector issues. The peer learning cluster on the recognition of learning outcomes**

## **National Contact Points**

**‘Relate levels of qualifications to EQF levels, ...’**

## **EQF Pilot Projects**

**EQF Project Call 2006, 2007 and 2008, 23 ongoing projects**

# **Current and future work at EU level**

- **Disseminate good practice for ‘self referencing’**
- **Use NCPs as a route to development funding**
- **Develop further guidance material, e.g. on ‘best fit’**
- **Start work on quality assurance of EQF procedures**
- **Strengthen the relationship between EHEA and EQF**
- **Start to work systematically on the sectoral issue**
- **Develop common internet based platform for EQF**

# **Some challenges**

- **Learning outcomes - the big challenge**
- **How to regulate the referencing process to optimise trust**
- **If EQF descriptors are used as NQF descriptors...**
- **Non-academic Qualifications on level 6, 7 and 8**
- **International qualifications**
- **The regulated professions and the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications**
- **Developing processes for the validation formal and non-formal/informal learning and the role of indicators**

# **European Policy Initiatives based on LO**

- **‘Bologna’ Framework (EHEA)**
- **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**
- **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)**
- **European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET)**
- **European principles and guidelines on validation of non- and informal learning**
- **EU language portfolio**
- **EU Key competences**
- **Europass**

# Key ideas for the UK

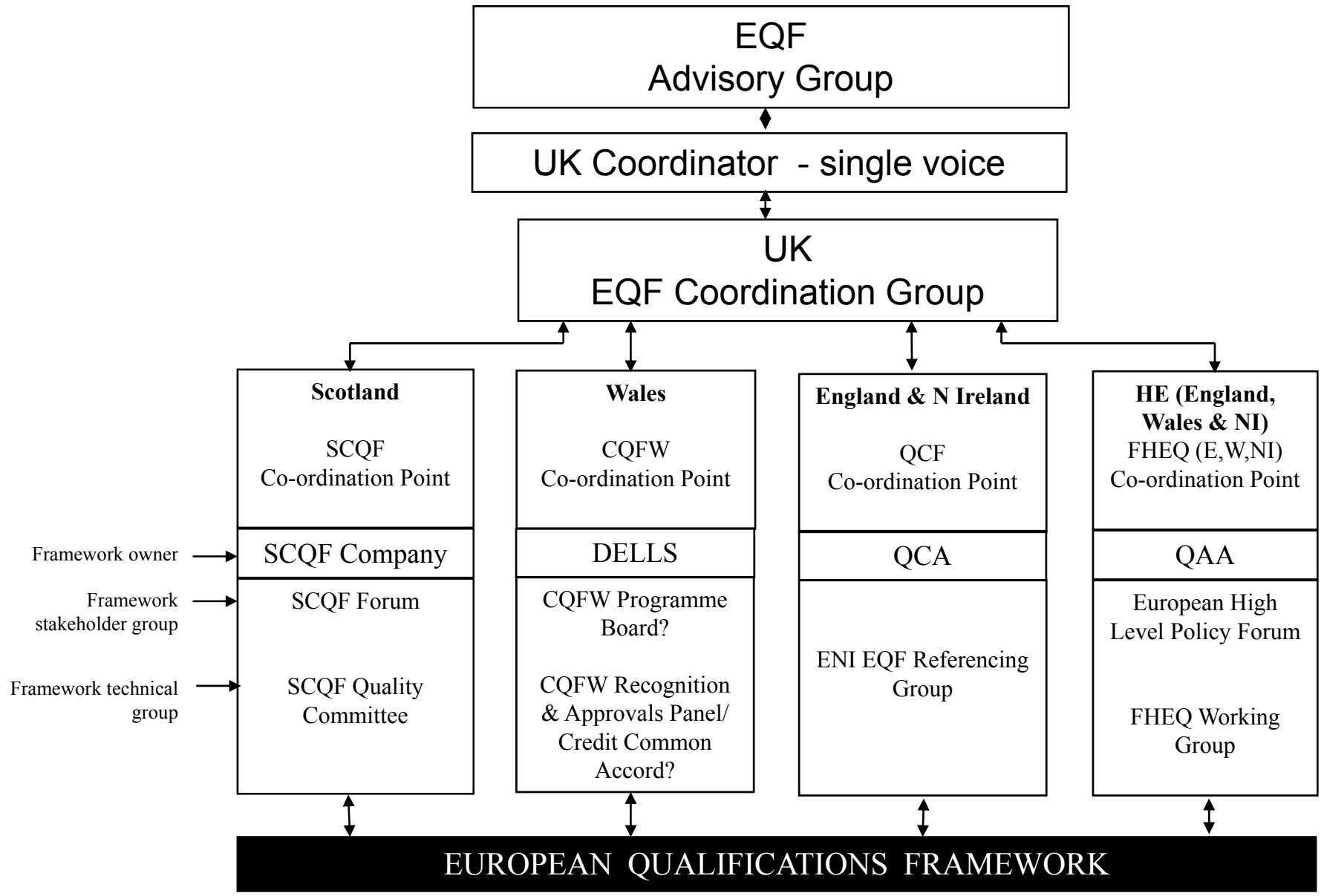
- **Qualifications that better meet the needs of individuals and employers (content, structure, size, evaluation methods)**
- **Qualifications that allow all people to participate in recognised learning (entry points, evaluation methods, units)**
- **High skills for more people recognised through qualifications**
- **Fit for purpose quality assurance for qualifications – a managed market and a free market**
- **Qualifications that support lifelong learning**

# UK Frameworks

- **Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), 8 levels + entry levels (EWNI), coexists with the NQF**
- **CQFW in Wales (uses the QCF, FHEQ and other validated learning)**
- **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, 12 levels, incorporates higher education levels**
- **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (EWNI), 4 levels matching the QCF/NQF highest levels**

## **What is the Qualifications and Credit Framework?**

- **A simple and rational organising structure**
- **Supports a new way of recognising achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications.**
- **Provides flexible routes to gaining full qualification**
- **Enables qualifications to be achieved in small steps.**
- **Social and economic aims – inclusion and valuable skills for the economy**



# **Basic methodology for the UK**

**Technical considerations: comparing descriptors in various ways**

**Political reality considerations: such as previous alignment exercises, common qualifications, qualifications can cross boundaries publication**

**Proposal to the public and interested parties**

**Consultation responses analysed**

**Final proposal agreed, in administrations and for the UK**

**Common communications strategy**

# Consulting on referencing the UK frameworks to the EQF

- Each NCPs conducted an initial referencing exercise of their framework to the EQF and consulted with relevant stakeholders about the outcome.
- It was necessary to raise awareness and knowledge of the EQF (events, relevant UK websites, publications and e updates).
- Consultation documents are on websites  
Scotland – [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)  
Wales - [www.cqfw.org.uk](http://www.cqfw.org.uk)  
Eng and NI – [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk) and [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)).
- The consultation timescales for the UK are :  
**Scotland:** September 2008 – November 2008  
**England/Northern Ireland:** November 2008 – January 2009.  
**Wales:** January to March 2009

**Publishing outcomes: this Summer - critical meeting coming up**

# **Some initial observations**

- **EQF vs QCF (priority?)**
- **Public perceptions and lack of awareness**
- **Allocating qualifications to EQF levels**
- **Holding the publication of results UK wide**
- **Trusting the judgments of other countries**
- **Use of international observers**