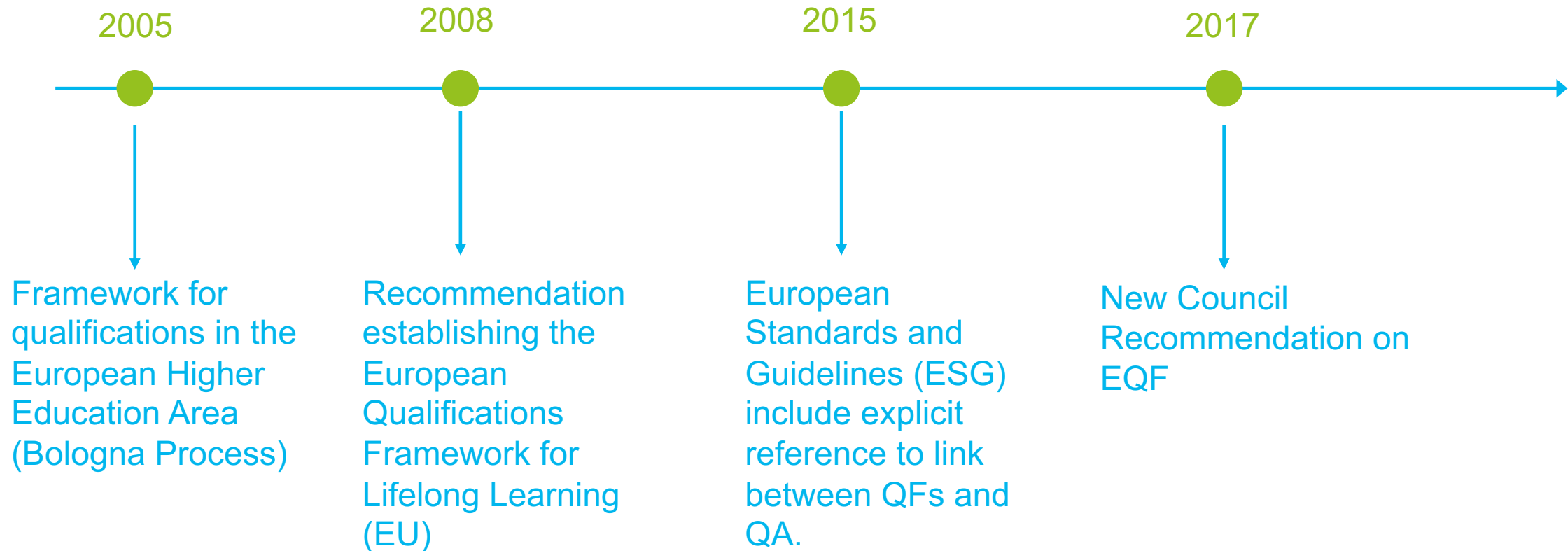


Qualifications frameworks in the European context

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Milestones

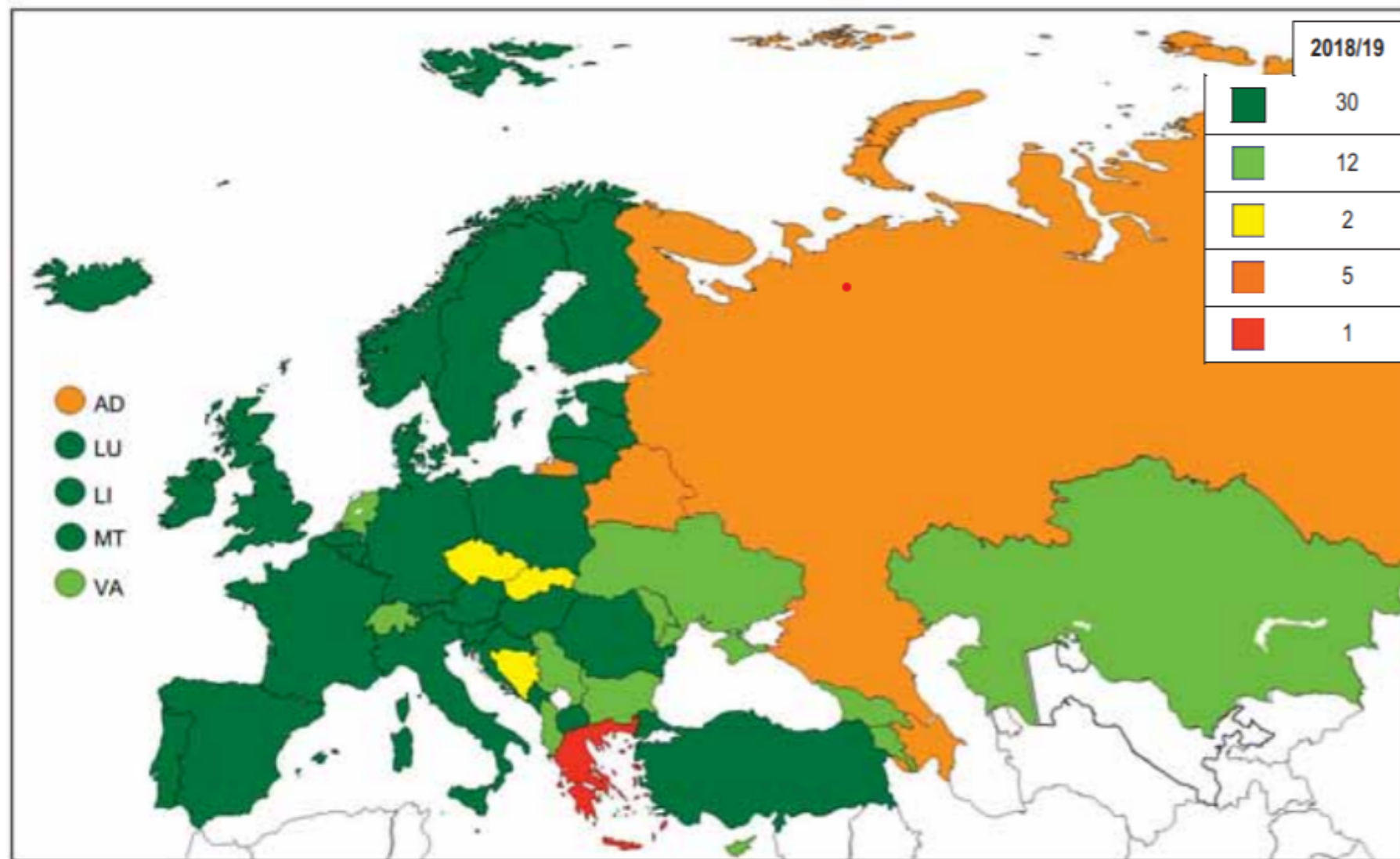


At national or system level

- EU-level: EQF Advisory Group (run by the European Commission)
- Point for constant monitoring in the Bologna Process: e.g. Communiqués in 2007 and 2009 stated that NQFs should be implemented by 2010 (2012).
- Since 2015, a peer-group on exchanging practices re. QFs in the Bologna Process.
- 2015 Bologna Implementation Report:
 - ✓ Substantial progress regarding the implementation of NQFs
 - ✓ At the same time, most countries still face challenges in including non-formal qualifications in NQFs self-certified against QF-EHEA

Development and use of NQFs by national authorities 2018-2019

Figure 2.9: Scorecard indicator n°3:
Implementation of national qualifications frameworks, 2018/19



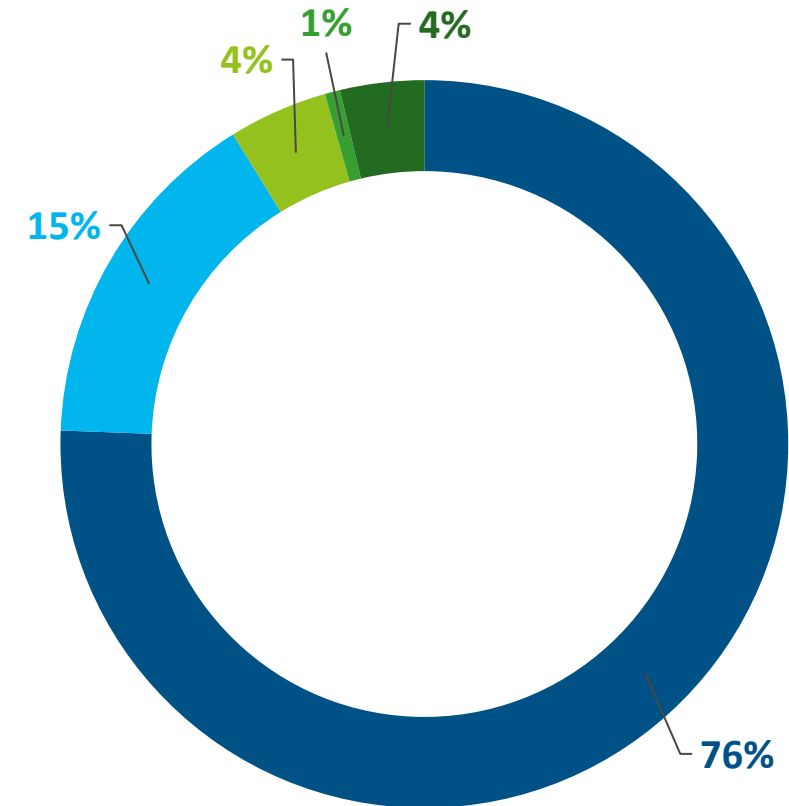
Source:

2020 Bologna Process Implementation Report (Eurydice/European Commission), Chapter 2.

Source: BFUG data collection.

At institutional level:

Development of LOs in the EHEA



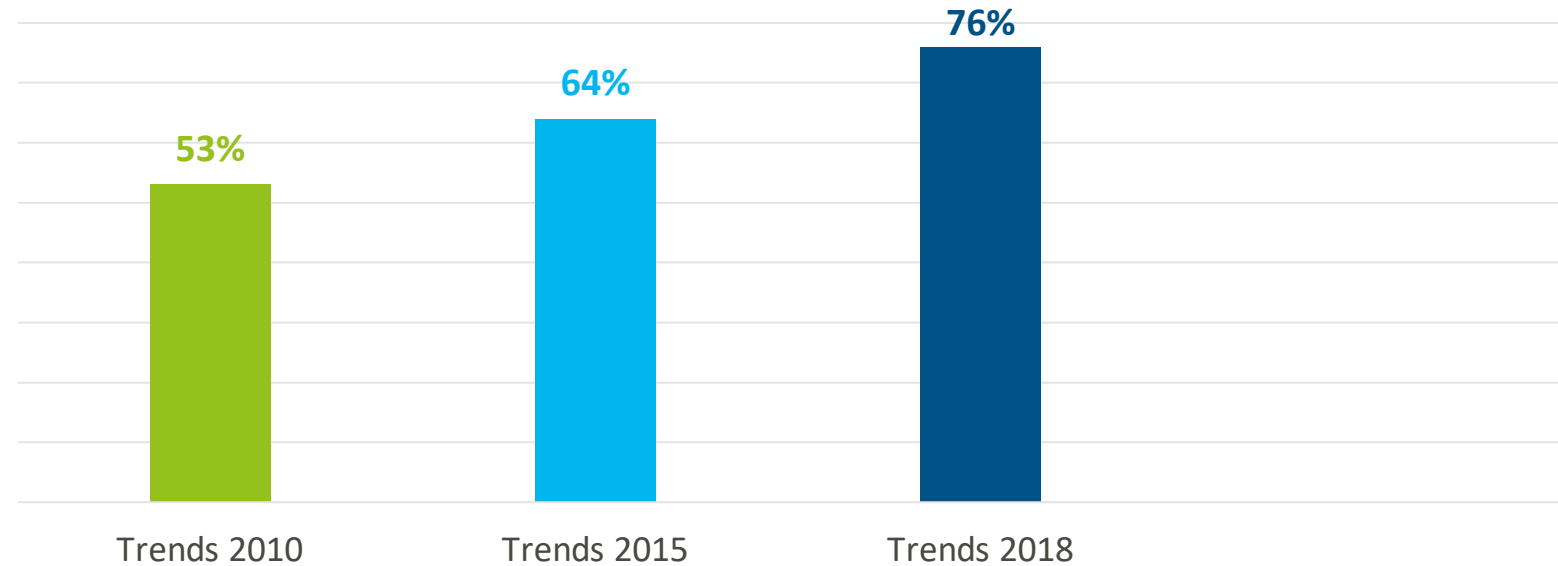
- Yes, for all courses (across the institution)
- Yes, for some courses
- No, but we intend to develop them
- No
- Information unavailable

Source:

Trends 2018: Learning and teaching in the EHEA (EUA), Chapter 3.

Trends 2018. Q. 22

Learning outcomes for all courses



- At least half of HEIs: LOs have improved recognition, led to revisions of course content and assessment, improved collaboration among teachers, contributed to methodological change, and raised awareness towards learning objectives among students.
- 1/3 HEIs still struggles with the implementation of LOs, 1/3 have solved them, and another 1/3 reported having never had them. **Insufficient resources to support staff in implementing learning outcomes** is one of the most frequently cited continuous problems (40%).
- Only 7%: no measures in place to assess whether LOs are implemented appropriately. **The vast majority of institutions ensures adequate workloads through an interplay of mechanisms and responsibilities.**

Trends 2018. Q. 22, Q. 22.1

Trends 2015. Q. 36

Trends 2010. Q. 19

One example of NQF development:

Poland

Law on Higher Education (2011):

- Shift to LOs as a means to describe study programmes and resulting qualifications
- Formal introduction of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQF for HE)
- All study programmes offered in academic year 2012/2013 and later required to comply with the NQF for HE

Development and implementation: process controlled and owned to a large extent by academic community

- 16 000 participants at conferences, seminars, workshops, panel discussions, public debates etc.,
- Leading role of members of the national team of Bologna experts as instructors, moderators and trainers at these events
- External stakeholders, incl. employers, involved in defining LOs and developing curricula
- 10-year process

Source:

A. Krasniewski for the the Polish Rectors' Conference (CRASP), presentation at the EQF 10th anniversary conference, March 2018

One example of NQF development:

Poland (2)

Source:

A. Krasniewski for the the Polish
Rectors' Conference (CRASP),
presentation at the EQF 10th
anniversary conference, March 2018

Benefits: redesigned curricula – NQF = reform tool for HE in Poland

- LO orientation
- Increased flexibility (more elective courses)
- Shift towards student-centred teaching (fewer lectures, more project-based learning modules, etc.)
- New, more comprehensive methods for verification of LOs achieved by students
- More active involvement of external stakeholders
- Components that make it easier to obtain professional qualifications

Difficulties:

- Ambiguous statements in legal acts; unnecessary overregulations, resulting in excessive bureaucracy
- Significant time pressure
- Insufficient engagement of some members of academic staff

Recommendation from Council for Science and HE (2015):

- Simplification of legal regulations
- De-bureaucratisation of implementation process at HEIs
- De-bureaucratisation of accreditation procedures

However, a shift from an openly demonstrated resistance to at least partial acceptance observed at many HEIs.

Another example of working with a NQF:

Ireland

Source:

Interview with C. O'Mahony
(CIRTL), University College Cork

Generally **good awareness** about NQF among staffs:

- The level is clearly a requirement for any legal/official documentation on curriculum.
- Any course with an external accreditation body involved will also require alignment with NQF.

Confirmed use for **mobility and cooperation** purposes:

- “Common currency” to help communication happen with potential E+ partners, but also with employers

NQF developed and used so to foster the national policy and priority for **lifelong learning**:

- “Springboard” for prior learning and professional learning: NQF supportive of a greater diversity of pathways while entering at university
- Encouraging RPL: partnership industry/government to identify crucial skills – transition courses – into degrees – utilising NQF to gain a level
- NQF with 10 levels also allows for greater breadth in catching various levels of the education system

Another example of working with a NQF:

Ireland (2)

Source:

Interview with C. O'Mahony
(CIRTL), University College Cork

Reference and departure point for **developing curricula**:

- Challenge and concern about discrepancy between the reference level for a study programme, and the overall levels for study years: too demanding and high for each year of the programme?

Ex.: What's the difference between 1st year and 3rd year research project within level 8?

- Alignment between levels and LOs can be tricky: LOs should always come together in discussing QFs

NQF = a communication tool

- There should be enough knowledge about this, but allows most of all a negotiation/discussion
- Not a norm-setting rubrik or a threshold, but a criteria for reference, with flexibility needed (students): a lot of work to be done in working out assessment and rubrics so that it works for all students

In the European Higher Education Area, the development of a regional QF has triggered the development of NQFs (with referencing to EQF). However, it is crucial to take into account **national contexts**: instruments and tools can be transferable and shared, not systems and policies.

Some conclusions

From transformative QFs that shape systems, NQFs nowadays tend to promote **transparency** within the education systems (across sectors) and **collaboration** between actors. The EQF aims to serve both systems and individuals in their lifelong learning path.

The development of the EQF/NQFs have been simultaneous to the rise of a **learning outcome**-based approach in higher education, and has contributed to it:

- What is ultimately being sought should focus on the added value in student learning (i.e. for the EHEA, shifting towards a student-centred learning approach).
- LOs are process-oriented, thus open to (re)negotiation and with relevance in different contexts (in NSFs, result-oriented, objective, measurable; in L&T, etc.).

QFs are ultimately a tool that helps **relating education provision with the wider society**.

Some conclusions

We are still looking into how to (1) better “measure” **impact** and (2) establish meaningful **comparability** between qualifications in an international context, for enhancing recognition and mobility.

In the Bologna context, and with policy support from the European Commission, **flexible learning paths** tend to be more and more the norm.

This means that, while a qualification is granted at the end, curriculum is becoming increasingly adaptable to students’ needs and personal learning journey.

This also means that reflection and discussions are needed on **the future of non-degree education** and alternative ways to « credentialise » and enhance recognition of prior learning: micro-credentials, short(er) programmes or courses, etc. How learning credits amount to a qualification may take diverse paths in the future. This conversation should also take place in a **lifelong learning** context.

Thank you for your attention!

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