



An overview of the diversity of qualification frameworks and types of qualifications

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Conference: Openness of the Latvian Qualifications Framework for different qualifications and skills
Riga, 1 November 2023



Who we are, what we do

- ✓ We are one of the first 'decentralised' EU agencies
- ✓ specialising in vocational education and training (VET), skills and qualifications policy
- ✓ acting as a knowledge broker between the European and national levels
- ✓ set up in 1975 in Berlin, moved to Thessaloniki in 1995



CEDEFOP'S strands of work and evidence

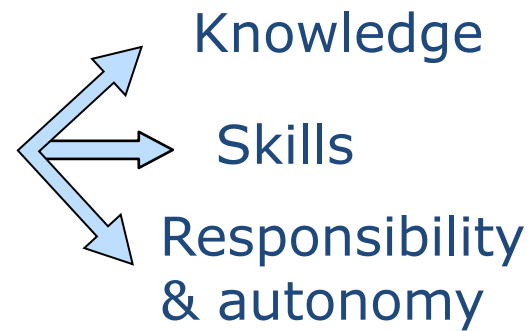


Qualification Frameworks

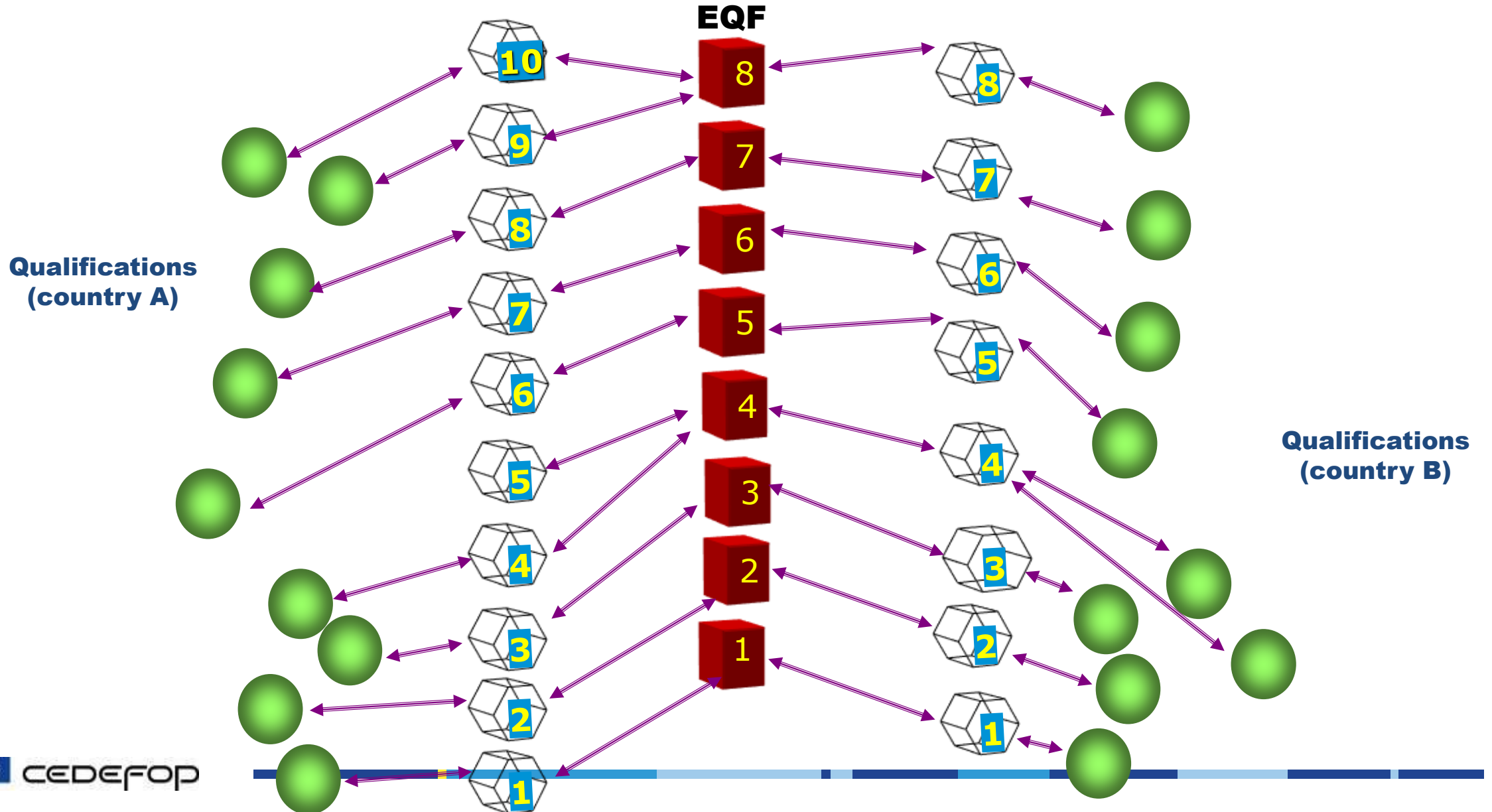


What is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?

- 8-Level reference framework, covering **all** types and all levels of qualifications
- Defined in terms of **learning outcomes**
- A **map and translation grid** for qualifications across countries



Linking National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) with the EQF



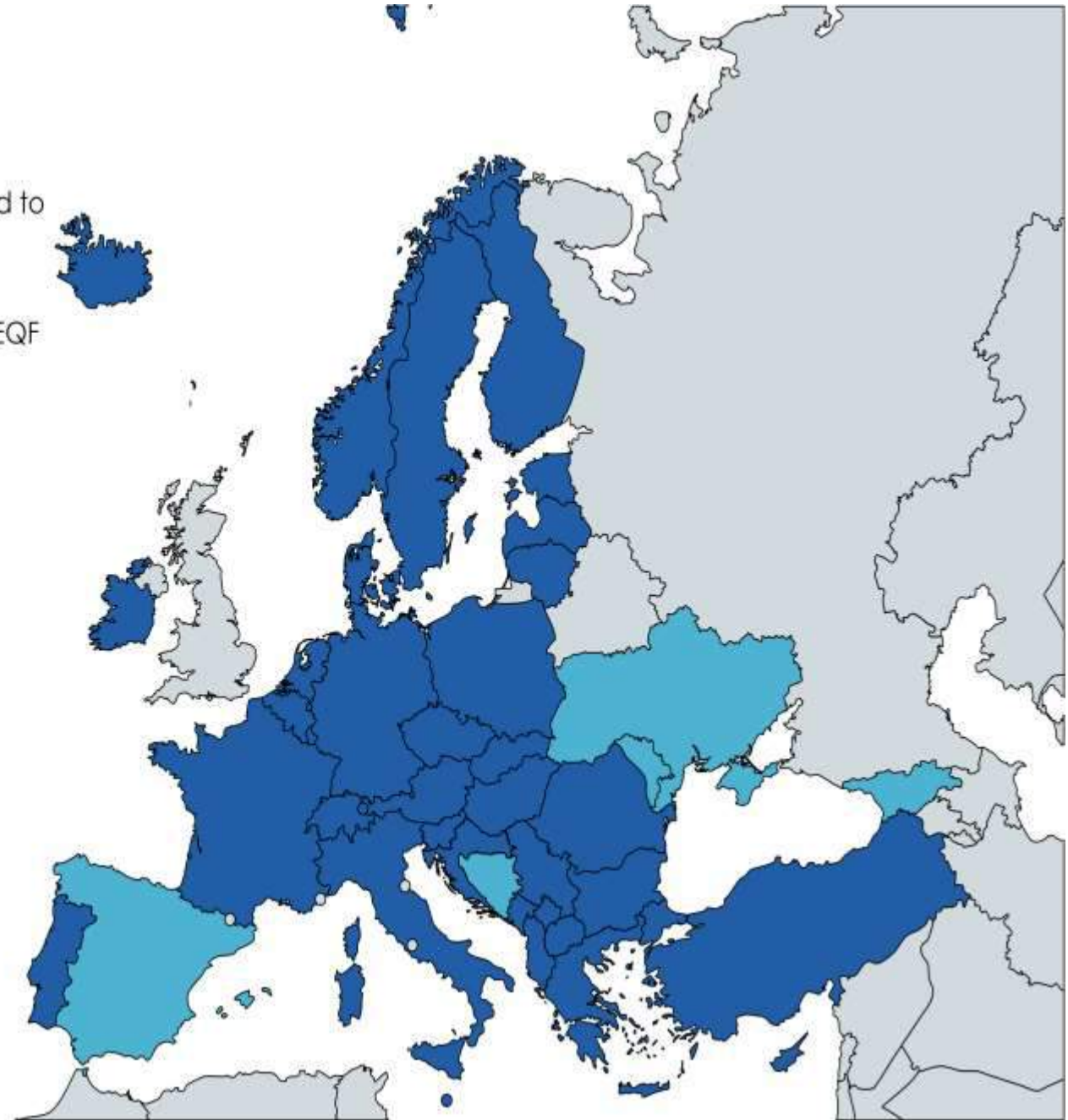
Countries in the EQF process

41 EQF countries - 36 countries have linked their NQFs to EQF

The sample of this analysis is 38 country-specific reports

EQF countries

- NQF referenced to EQF
- NQF not yet referenced to EQF



Created with mapshack.net

Overview of NQF developments across Europe

European NQFs are advanced

23 are at operational stage

13 are at activation stage



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Overview of NQF developments across Europe

The dominant NQF model has an 8-level structure

32 have an 8-level structure

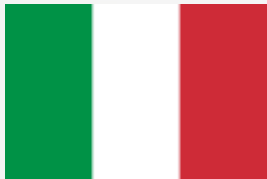
There are frameworks with 7-, 10- and 13-level structure

Why countries use sublevels?

Hierarchical sublevels can better represent the diversity of qualifications regarding the coverage of the elements of each level descriptor; only qualifications at the higher sublevel fully cover the level descriptors.



Sublevels indicate if different qualification types allow direct access to programmes at the next NQF level or not, if they are micro-qualifications or international qualifications.



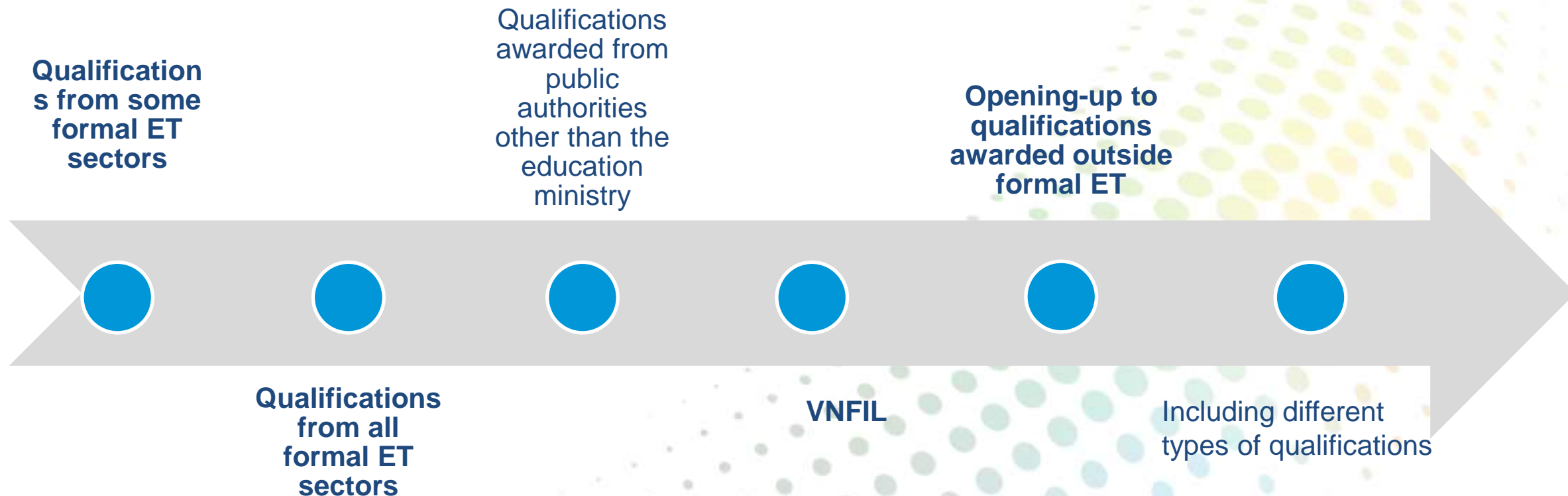
Sublevels indicate if different qualification types lead to the next NQF level or not and if they refer to a specialisation course that learners should hold a qualification at a higher sublevel to attend them.



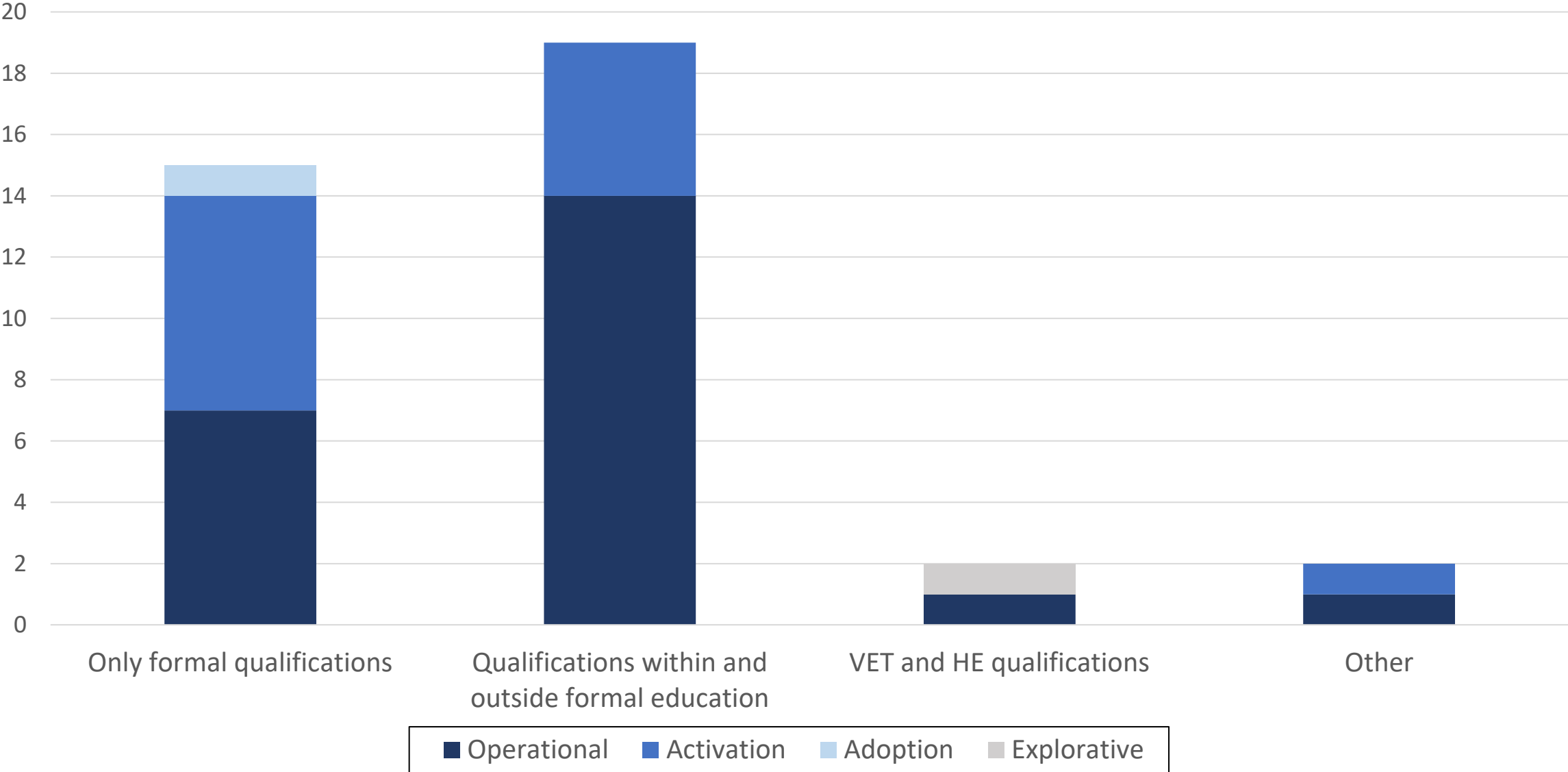
Opening-up of NQFs

QUALIFICATION

The continuum of opening-up NQFs



Scope and coverage of NQFs



Speeding-up the process

- ✓ In the last two years, Austria and Sweden have accelerated the pace of levelling such qualifications
- ✓ This is considered as a major success in the NQF implementation
- ✓ Levelling new qualifications is an important way to raise NQF awareness and use



Levelling qualifications awarded within and outside formal ET

- ✓ Formal/ state-regulated qualifications are often **automatically** included in the NQF (e.g. France) or their NQF levels are specified in **legal acts** (e.g. Greece, Poland)
- ✓ Qualifications awarded outside formal ET are levelled if they satisfy **specific criteria**
- ✓ Positive decisions on including such a qualification are in effect for a **specific period of time** (e.g. Sweden)
- ✓ In Malta all qualifications and awards should satisfy the **same conditions** to become accredited and included in the NQF

Country examples: the Netherlands

To be included in the NQF, a non-formal qualification must be:

- ✓ written in learning outcomes;
- ✓ concluded with a summative assessment that is independent of the learning path;
- ✓ considered substantial (learning time of at least 400 hours) or labour market relevant; and
- ✓ underpinned by quality assurance.

Requests for classification of qualifications into the NQF undergo a two-stage procedure:

- ✓ a validity check on the provider;
- ✓ the classification of the qualification at an NQF level.

Validity checks cost between EUR 1 000 and 7 500. Submitting one qualification for inclusion is set at EUR 2 500. Re-evaluation of organisational validity and of the qualification classification (every 6 years) cost EUR 1 000 each.



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Country examples: Poland

The Integrated Qualifications System (IQS) act has set out the criteria for the inclusion in the IQS of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training.

The procedure is initiated by the awarding body that applies for inclusion and comprises:

- ✓ an expert assessment of the qualification's learning outcomes,
- ✓ a recommendation by industry stakeholders and
- ✓ a final decision by the relevant ministry.



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Country examples: Estonia

In the professional qualifications system, the sector skills councils are responsible for ensuring that each professional qualification standard added to the EstQF is assigned the correct level, i.e. the competences correspond to the EstQF level description.

Then, the councils submit a proposal to the **body of chairmen of sectoral councils** for approval of the relevant EstQF level.

They also supervise awarding bodies, **assessing whether they comply with all quality requirements.** The assessment criteria for awarding professional qualifications are described in the evaluation standards; they should be aligned with the EstQF level descriptors.

Country examples: Malta

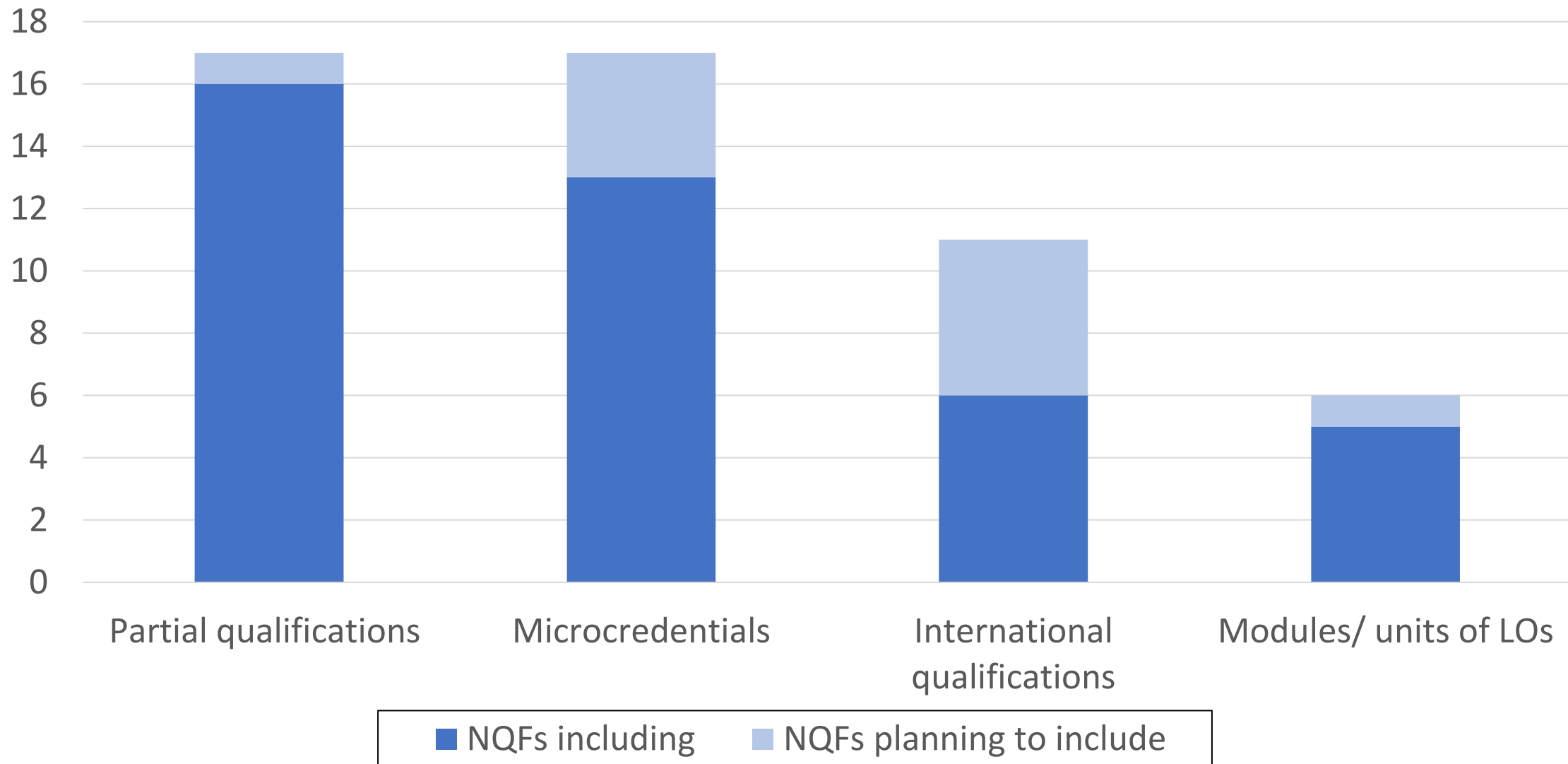
Qualifications and awards should satisfy the following conditions to become accredited and included in the MQF:

- ✓ be issued by accredited institutions;
- ✓ be based on learning outcomes;
- ✓ be internally and externally quality assured;
- ✓ be based on a workload with a specified credit value;
- ✓ be awarded on successful completion of formal assessment procedures.

Developing inclusive NQFs



Alternative types of NQF qualifications



Validation of non-formal and informal learning

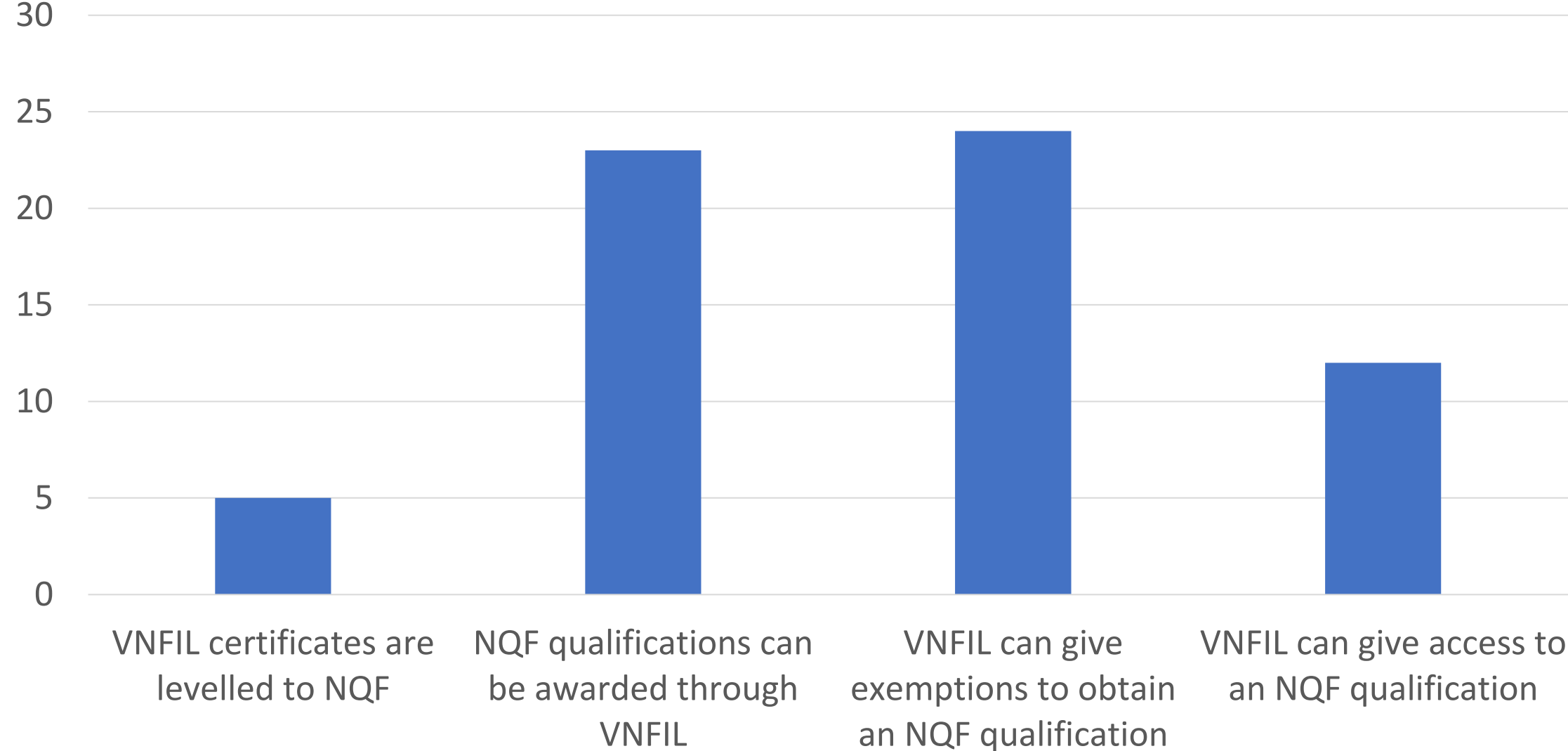
Linking an NQF with VNFIL is de facto another way to make the framework more inclusive.

In 15 out of 38 countries, promoting VNFIL is an objective of the NQF.

In many more, one of the functions of their NQF is to support VNFIL procedures.

The most common approach is using level descriptors, learning outcomes and standards included in the NQF in VNFIL (at least 13 countries have reported such procedures).

How VNFIL is linked to NQF qualifications



Why opening-up NQFs?

- ✓ Improve transparency and comparability of qualifications
- ✓ Promote permeability of ET
- ✓ Support education progression and LLL
- ✓ Raise quality of qualifications/ strengthen trust
- ✓ Strengthen cooperation among stakeholders
- ✓ Improve connection between education and the labour market



Raising awareness of NQFs

Progress made... a long way to go

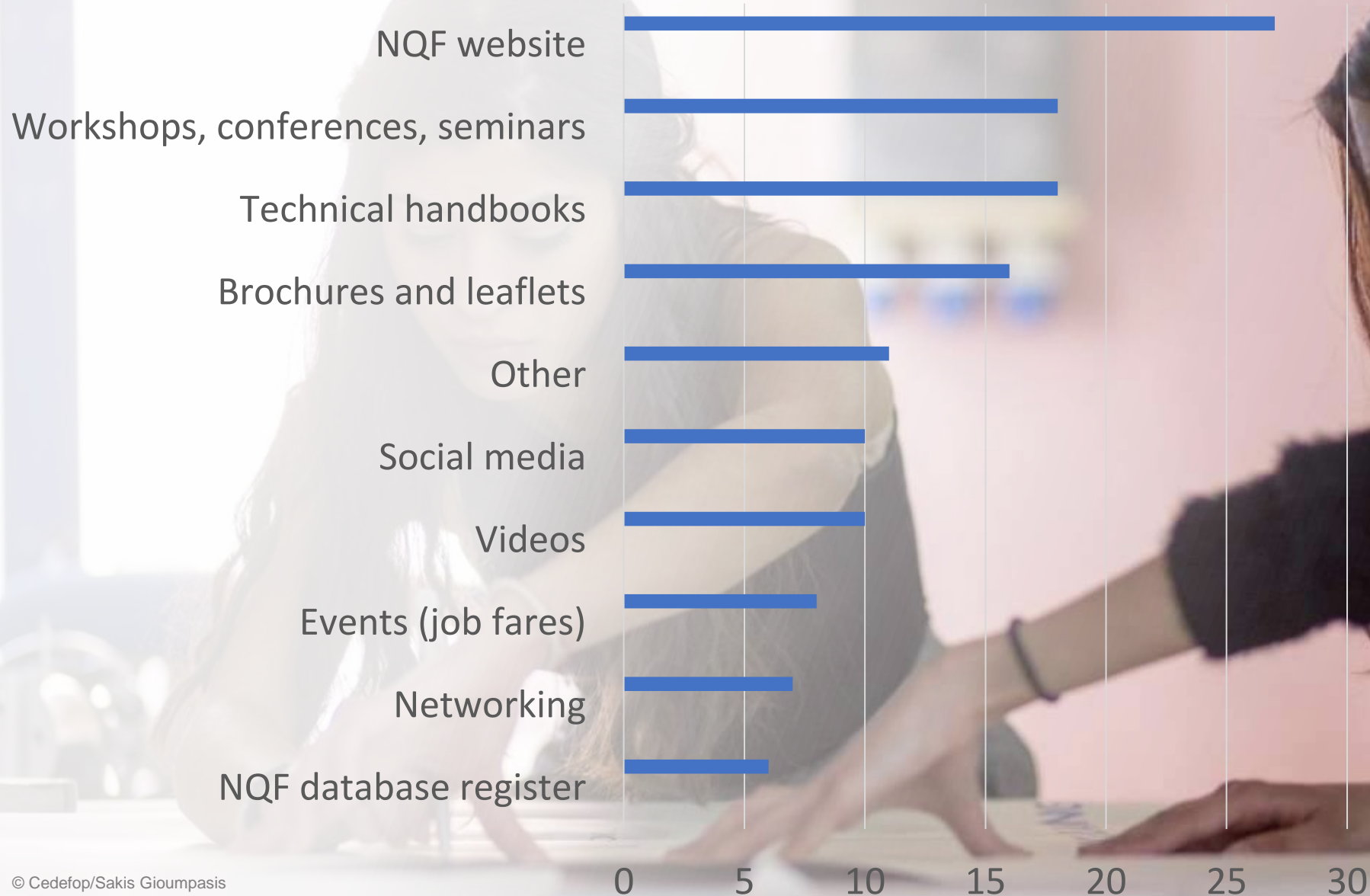
Two main target groups:

- ✓ NQF developers and implementers
- ✓ System's beneficiaries and end-users

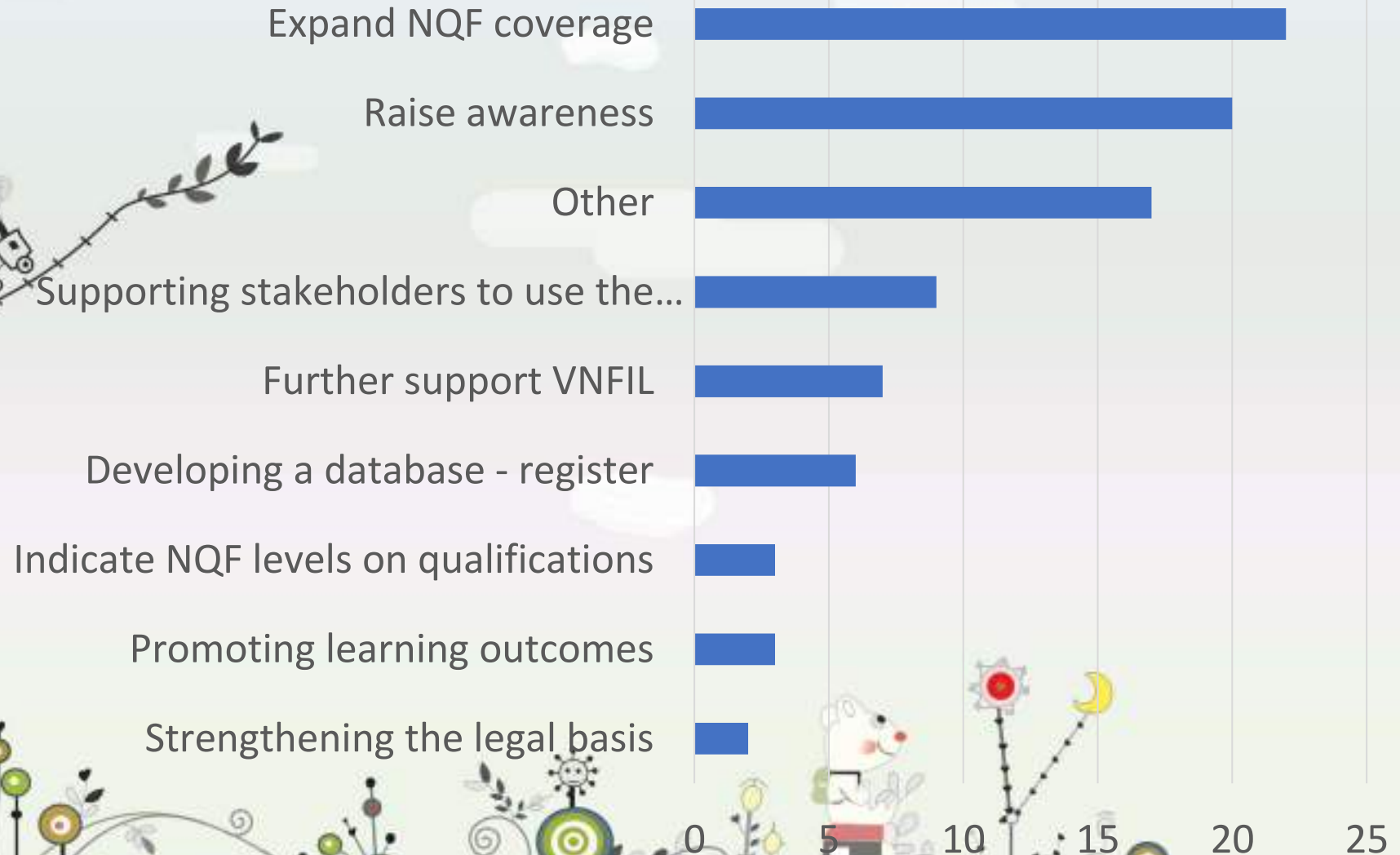
Satisfactory level of awareness among ET providers and professionals using the NQFs in daily practice.

Awareness among citizens (learners, workers and jobseekers) has gradually increased. However, often these target groups have the lowest level of awareness.

Main communication channels



Future priorities





Thank you

For further information:

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Project page

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf>

European Inventory of NQFs

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/european-inventory-of-nqfs>

NQF online tool

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool>

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