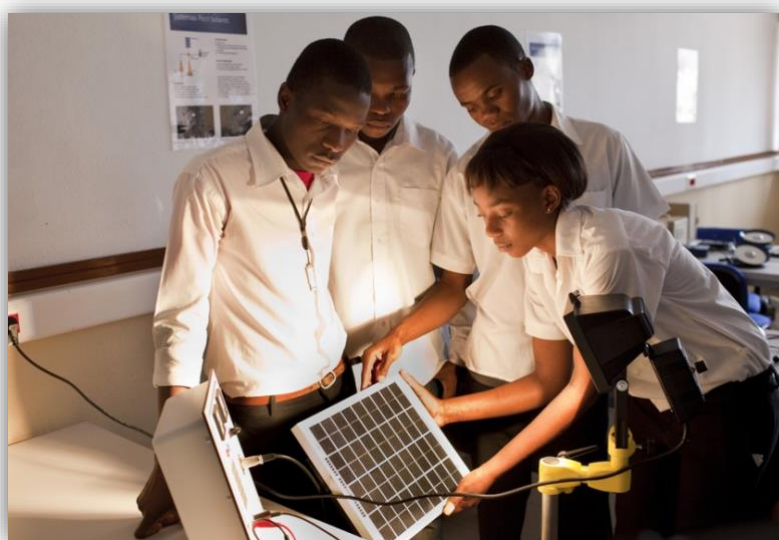


# Project Supporting Implementation of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF-II)

## Brief Project Description



**April 2023**

## 1. ACQF-II: brief project information

This summary of the project ACQF-II is for public dissemination.

### Concise summary of main outputs (ACQF-I)

#### ACQF-I:

- Finalised the ACQF Policy Document; political validation process in preparation, driven by AUC.
- Technical and methodological foundations for implementation of ACQF: 10 Guidelines and Training Modules, tools supporting implementation of the Guidelines; ACQF Mapping Study on NQFs in Africa; Snapshot of NQFs in Africa.
- Governance: ACQF Advisory Group: tested and consolidated working methods in 5 meetings.
- Organised comprehensive capacity development programme, with full set of training materials and didactic recordings. Approx. 1000 stakeholders trained in programme of 20 peer learning webinars and 2 Training Weeks.
- [ACQF Website](#).

#### Rationale

The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) contributes to development of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks, in accordance with the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025). Establishment of the ACQF is a policy initiative of the African Union (AU), required by key continental integration strategies and initiatives in the fields of education and training, free movement of persons and free trade.

The ACQF development process (2020-2022) involved over 40 African countries in the different types of activities, from the initial mapping study to the programme of capacity development and knowledge-sharing, and support to countries. Comprehensive information on ACQF development process and outputs is accessible on [ACQF website](#).

**Project title:** Support to the implementation of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) – (*further “ACQF-II”*).

**Project duration:** The project ACQF-II is operational from 1 April 2023 to end December 2026.

#### Project Objective

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to contribute to improved mobility, lifelong learning opportunities for African youth, as a result of enhanced comparability and transparency of qualifications, recognition of skills and diplomas, improved mutual trust and information-sharing between qualifications frameworks and systems on the continent.

Through the diversity of the planned activities, the project ACQF-II aims to reach out and cooperate with all regions and countries of the African continent.

#### Main planned outcomes and outputs:

1. **Outcome 1:** Strengthened capacities at national, regional and continental levels to develop and implement qualifications frameworks (NQF) and systems and cooperate with ACQF.

This component combines different modalities and types of activities: training programmes (country-specific and multi-country - online and hybrid), regular conferences, study visits, thematic webinars, peer-sharing on lessons learned and good practice. Communication and

advocacy activities are essential to generate take-up and visibility of the ACQF for institutions and end-users.

2. **Outcome 2:** National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) developed and implemented in African countries

Expert support to countries developing and implementing their NQFs, and related policies, working in close cooperation with the national institutions and stakeholders. Research and surveys on NQFs, micro-credentials and other thematic areas.

3. **Outcome 3:** ACQF implemented

Output 3.1: Consolidated governance of ACQF and launched ACQF Qualifications Platform; cooperation and networking with other regional and international qualifications frameworks and with relevant Conventions (such as UNESCO recognition conventions) and relevant Networks.

The ACQF Qualifications Platform will cater for the needs of individual countries and the continent. Cooperation with the Addis Recognition Convention Committee will address the linkages between NQFs and recognition of qualifications and stimulate reflection on other forms of recognition of learning outcomes such as Recognition of Prior Learning and micro-credentials.

Output 3.2: NQFs referenced to ACQF

Countries with NQFs at stage of implementation will be invited to reference to the ACQF, stimulating renewed national reflection and continuous improvement of the NQF, and contributing to an area of trusted qualifications and transparency between NQFs on the continent. Upon referencing, countries can use ACQF levels on newly issued qualifications documents and qualifications databases – improving the mutual understanding between NQFs.

Output 3.3: RPL campaign supporting policies and practices at national and regional levels; and wider dissemination and outreach to different users groups.

All learning throughout life is valuable, but not all learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning are visible. RPL policies and measures provide solutions to this gap. The RPL Campaign will support dissemination of information and good practice, develop technical capacities and encourage countries and regions to foster RPL policies and implementation programmes. The Campaign links RPL with NQFs, and the role RPL plays in inclusion in lifelong learning and decent work. As NQFs are instruments for lifelong learning they support recognition of skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, and a growing number of NQFs include non-formal and informal learning in their scope.

Output 3.4: Developed common profiles of qualifications relevant for emerging occupations, green and digital skills and free trade in Africa.

Countries with NQFs at stage of implementation will be invited to reference to the ACQF, stimulating renewed national reflection and continuous improvement of the NQF, and contributing to an area of trusted qualifications and transparency between NQFs on the continent.

**Implementation:** The European Training Foundation is the main project implementation agency. ETF works in cooperation with African Union Commission (AU Commission) ESTI department Division for Education, with the ACQF Advisory Group, and institutions and stakeholders relevant for the project at national, regional, and continental levels.

**ACQF-II Implementation team:** the ACQF-II establishes a team of experts with outstanding experience and expertise in the relevant thematic and policy domains, and knowledge of the contextual characteristics of different regions and countries in Africa. The implementation team will combine expertise in the domains

of qualifications and credentials, qualifications frameworks and systems, recognition of prior learning (RPL), governance of NQFs, credit accumulation and transfer systems, quality assurance of qualifications, digital online registers and databases of qualifications, referencing between NQFs / RQFs and the ACQF, monitoring and evaluation of NQFs and ACQF, communication and outreach, delivery of training and capacity development programmes for stakeholders, website content management and development.

The implementation team will integrate experts from different countries and languages, able to communicate and engage with stakeholders and deliver the outputs of high quality, contextualised to countries and oriented to users' needs.

While contributing to build and enhance *African knowledge* and African NQF experiences and analysis, the implementation team will consider relevant global good practice, take account of innovations in learning and qualifications systems, and be ready to learn and adapt to new demands and developments related with the green and digital transition.

The ACQF Guidelines, Training Modules, Thematic Briefs and other ACQF research, e.g., the Mapping Study, are the main conceptual and technical references of the implementation team, to ensure coherence and a harmonised methodological framework for work with countries and regions. The team will likewise refer to new literature, methods and tools, for constant improvement of quality, relevance and adaptation to innovation required in a time of big transformation.

### **Main project documents and sources**

- Description of Action. Defines the project strategy in the wider continental context, detailed implementation plan, communication plan and Logframe.
- *Annex 1 to the Commission Implementation Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan in favour of Sub-Saharan Africa for 2023-2024 Part 1.*

## **2. Baseline situation**

The project ACQF-II builds on the policy and technical basis developed by the first phase of the ACQF project (2019-2022) and briefly described hereafter. The project aims to support implementation of the main areas of activity defined in the ACQF Policy Document (final version of 17 November 2022, section 3.4), thereby establishing the basis for sustainable and effective functioning of the ACQF as a policy instrument.

- **Key reference document:** [Final activity report](#) of ACQF-I project (December 2022).

The ACQF policy and technical basis forming the baseline of the ACQF-II comprises:

- ACQF policy document. The version of 17 November 2022 was validated by the African Union (AU) Commissioner for Education Science Technology and Innovation (ESTI), who also instructed the ESTI Division for Education to undertake the necessary steps towards rapid official approval of the document. The validation process is driven by AUC ESTI (Division for Education), working in cooperation with the AU Member States.
- Package of [10 ACQF Guidelines](#), [10 Training Modules](#), [ACQF Handbook](#), Handbook on Competence-Based Training, accompany the Policy Document to support further technical implementation at continental, regional and national levels. Specific tools accompany several ACQF Guidelines and are accessible on ACQF website: tool of [Guideline 7](#) on Monitoring and Evaluation; [Guideline 9](#) on Innovation and Technology.
- Governance set-up based on a) political steering by the AUC and b) participation and consultation of stakeholders. Positive experience of the ACQF Advisory Group (ACQF AG), composed of 40 members representing AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities, African social partners, All-Africa Students' Union, CESA Clusters and a range of regional networks and councils

working in the domains of recognition of qualifications, quality assurance and development of education and training policies and practices.

- Constructive relations with several African Networks (e.g., African Qualifications Verification Network and RAFANAQ), with Regional Economic Communities (such as SADC, IGAD, EAC and ECOWAS), and relevant stakeholders' organisations (e.g., CAMES, All-African Student's Union, African Curriculum Association, Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, Business Africa).
- A total of 44 African countries participated in ACQF-I activities, notably, in the surveys and technical meetings of the ACQF mapping study, in ACQF peer learning program 2020-2022, in ACQF Training Weeks 2022 and in the meetings of ACQF Advisory Group. The participation and contributions of different countries to ACQF-I activities were fundamental building blocks for the success and outputs achieved by the project.
- ACQF [Feasibility Study](#)
- Comprehensive platform of [ACQF capacity development](#), training and networking with National and Regional Qualifications institutions and authorities. Includes robust set of [training materials](#), such as presentations and pedagogic recordings of all 20 Peer Learning Webinars and 2 Training Weeks (2020-2022). [Thematic briefs](#) explore a variety of topics and issues, and include a wide Glossary of relevant key terms. Information and products related with the activities supporting countries with their NQFs and related policies and tools are reflected on a dedicated page "[Support to countries](#)".
- Over 1,000 [trained African stakeholders](#)
- [ACQF Mapping study](#) collection, comprising the continental-wide comprehensive analysis, 14 national and 3 regional reports.
- [ACQF Inventory](#) of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks
- [ACQF research](#) and thematic studies
- [ACQF website](#)

Ample information on the ACQF policy and technical basis and outputs of ACQF-I is available on [ACQF website](#).

### 3. The ACQF in brief

The ACQF Policy Document defines the vision, policy objectives and main technical features of the ACQF, outlines the implementation modalities and instruments, and is accompanied by technical annexes. The ten ACQF Guidelines<sup>1</sup> and related Training Modules<sup>2</sup> support this policy document by defining technical and methodological foundations for implementation and dissemination by the competent entities. A synthesised version of the ten Guidelines is accessible in form of a brief ACQF Handbook<sup>3</sup>.

The ACQF Policy Document builds on analysis and evidence<sup>4</sup> regarding African qualifications frameworks and systems and takes into consideration lessons and experiences from other regional qualifications frameworks in Africa and globally. The Feasibility study<sup>5</sup> developed the scenarios of the ACQF, analysed

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<sup>1</sup> ACQF Guidelines. At: <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-guidelines>

<sup>2</sup> ACQF Training Modules. At: <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/training-modules>

<sup>3</sup> Brief ACQF Handbook. At: <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/brief-acqf-handbook>

<sup>4</sup> ACQF Mapping study was based on a continental survey, desk research, country technical visits and information from 12 peer learning webinars. At: <https://acqf.africa/resources/mapping-study>

<sup>5</sup> ACQF feasibility study was presented and discussed with ACQF Advisory Group on 28/07/2021. At: <https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/feasibility-study/acqf-feasibility-study>

their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges; and proposed ten key outputs for the ACQF action plan at horizon 2026.

### **ACQF – main features and objectives**

ACQF is a policy and instrument of continental scope to deliver on the objectives of enhanced transparency and comparability of qualifications and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for lifelong learning in Africa. The ACQF is inclusive and comprehensive, open to innovation to address new demands from the digital and green transformation, enables stakeholder participation and learning from relevant national, regional, and global experiences.

The ACQF is defined as an overarching reference qualifications framework of ten levels, serving as a connector and translation device between different qualifications frameworks or systems and their levels.

The ACQF will deliver on the areas of activity defined in this policy document, namely: a) referencing between qualifications frameworks; b) recognition of prior learning campaign; c) digital qualifications database; d) common profiles of qualifications; e) capacity development and support to national qualifications frameworks; f) networking, communication, and advocacy; g) analysis, monitoring, and evaluation.

The ACQF is not intended to change or supersede existing national or regional legislative-regulatory frameworks, guidelines, and practices, but to complement and contribute to development and implementation of qualifications frameworks, and to relevant innovation and improvement in the domain of lifelong learning, skills, and qualifications.

The ACQF is underpinned by strategic commitments and policies of the AU. The ACQF is designed to work in coordination and complementarity with these and other relevant policies mentioned in Chapter 2 of the Policy Document; with African Standards and Guidelines and UNESCO conventions listed in Annex 4 of the same document; and with national and regional policies related with qualifications and certification.

Contact: Eduarda Castel-Branco, [ecb@etf.europa.eu](mailto:ecb@etf.europa.eu)

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