



EN

**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX 1**

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the  
financing of the multiannual action plan in favour of Sub-Saharan Africa for 2022-2024 Part 1

**Action Document for the Support to the Implementation of the African Continental  
Qualifications Framework (ACQF II)**

**MULTI-ANNUAL PLAN**

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plans in the sense of Article 23(2) of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

## 1. SYNOPSIS

### 1.1. Action Summary Table

<b>1. Title</b> <b>CRIS/OPSYS</b> <b>business reference</b> <b>Basic Act</b>	Support to the Implementation of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF II) CRIS number: 043-851 OPSYS reference: ACT-60641  Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
<b>2. Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>3. Zone benefiting from the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in Africa (African Union).
<b>4. Programming document</b>	Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa 2021-2027
<b>5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results</b>	Priority Area 1: Human Development  Result 2.3: Regional and continental integration mechanisms to contribute to a more inclusive knowledge-based society and economy are promoted.
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>	
<b>6. Priority Area(s), sectors</b>	Priority Area 1: Human Development
<b>7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	Main SDG (1 only): Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls SDG Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.
<b>8 a) DAC code(s)</b>	DAC code 11110 – Education policy and administrative management- 100%

<b>8 b) Main Delivery Channel @</b>	European Union Institution - 42000			
<b>9. Targets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance <sup>2</sup>			
<b>10. Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>11. Internal markers and Tags:</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>
Digitalisation @ Tags: digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity @ Tags: digital connectivity		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>1</sup> This target is specific to INTPA. If the action is marked as contributing to the Education target, please make sure the target on "Social inclusion and Human Development" is also marked.

<sup>2</sup> Thematic target for geographic programmes (at least 15%) in delegated act.

	energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
<b>12. Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line(s): BGUE-B2022-14.020120-C1-INTPA WEST AFRICA: EUR 1 750 000  BGUE-B2022-14.020121-C1-INTPA EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA: EUR 1 750 000  BGUE-B2022-14.020122-C1-INTPA SOUTHERN AFRICA AND INDIAN OCEAN: EUR 1 500 000  Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 000 000 European Training Foundation contribution (in kind): EUR 850 000 Total estimated cost: EUR 5 850 000			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
<b>13. Type of financing</b>	Indirect management with the European Training Foundation (ETF)			

## 1.2. Summary of the Action

The proposed Action intends to contribute to the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa 2021-2027 Priority area 1 – Human Development

**Specific Objective 2:** Enhance regional and continental (Intra-Africa) integration for improved quality of education and skills development; and EU-Africa policy dialogue and cooperation in the fields of education, skills development, youth learning mobility, and teacher governance, leadership, training and professional development.

**Expected Result 2.3:** Regional and continental integration mechanisms to contribute to a more inclusive knowledge-based society and economy are promoted.

This Action is aligned with the priorities set under the Joint Communication Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa (March 2020), especially with the proposed “Partnership for sustainable growth and jobs”, and Africa-EU Partnership Actions related with the AfCFTA and skills for the digital and green transitions. This Action cooperates with the project Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA), especially on matters related to African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, reflection on governance options and other tools.

### **The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)**

This Action builds on the existing substantive policy and technical basis (indicated hereafter) and aims to support the shift to practical implementation with a view towards sustainable and effective functioning of the ACQF as a policy instrument. The Action will support the implementation of selected priority areas of the multi-annual (2022-2026) action plan accompanying the Policy and Technical document of the African Continental Qualifications Framework

(ACQF), which is a home-grown initiative of the African Union (AU). More information on the ACQF policy and technical basis is available on [ACQF website](#).

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 cooperates with AU initiatives, such as the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) and the Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth (2019-2028).

The Policy and Technical Document of the ACQF, developed in 2021-2022, defines the objectives and principles of the ACQF, its conceptual-technical design, scope of the digital Qualifications Platform and the main areas of activity. A compendium of ten ACQF technical Guidelines, and ten Training Modules accompany the Policy and Technical Document. This policy basis lays the foundations for further ACQF implementation, defining ACQF as the common referencing qualifications framework for Africa. The ACQF is a comprehensive and inclusive qualifications framework, oriented to lifelong learning, and to parity of esteem of learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, and all levels of education and training (from primary to higher education), thereby contributing to social inclusion and equity. All sub-sectors of education and training are represented in ACQF development and implementation activities.

ACQF aims to: (i) enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications and support lifelong learning; (ii) facilitate recognition of learning from various contexts and mobility of learners and workers; (iii) promote and support qualifications frameworks and systems through relevant actions and instruments without prejudice to national and regional policies and systems' diversity; (iv) promote cooperation and mutual trust, by means of referencing with qualifications frameworks in Africa and worldwide.

ACQF supports knowledge sharing between African countries, stimulating peer exchanges and mutual understanding between different education and qualifications systems. Countries developing and reforming their NQF can use the ACQF as example, but ACQF is neither intended to standardise national qualifications frameworks or systems across the continent, nor to replace them.

Governance of the ACQF builds on the political support and steering of the AU, the participation of all AU countries and regions, partnerships with stakeholders from the world of education, training, qualifications and work and sustainable implementation capacity. An Advisory Group (40 members) established in 2019 gained experience in the ACQF development process through 2022 and can be further strengthened. ACQF will work in cooperation and complementarity with national qualifications frameworks across the continent, and as adequate also with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

To advance these goals the ACQF Policy and Technical document defines seven key areas of activity, wherein this action contributes (more information in this Action Document - Section 2.1 Context).

### **Emphasis of this Action**

Support to prepare and start implementation of priority areas of the Action Plan accompanying the ACQF Policy and Technical document. The Action will focus on: 1) Capacity development: strengthen capacities at continental (AU Commission), national and regional levels, enabling the implementation of the ACQF functions and services; 2) Support to development and consolidation of national qualifications frameworks, and contribute to regional qualifications frameworks if adequate; 3) Support to set-up and operationalise the ACQF systems necessary for: (i) referencing national qualifications frameworks to ACQF, including a qualifications management system (e.g ACQF Qualifications Platform), (ii) broadening recognition of skills and qualifications, especially of non-formal and informal learning, (iii) build cooperation with similar frameworks in other regions, notably with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and (iv) in cooperation with sectoral-professional associations and the business community: development of common qualifications profiles relevant for priority sectors of African economic integration and free trade, contributing to ease portability and mobility across African countries.

The Action will build on the foundations and outputs of the ACQF development phase 2019-2022 and will collaborate and synergise with HAQAA and cooperate with the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States (Addis Convention).

The Action will include a number of pilot projects to test and improve approaches and tools, contextualise experiences and generate stakeholders' buy-in. The scope of pilot projects will be co-defined with ACQF governance structure and stakeholders, and target activities with likelihood of impact, e.g., capacity development adapted to needs of different countries and regions, development of national qualifications frameworks and implementation capacities, practical use of the digital ACQF qualifications platform by countries, new initiatives of validation of non-formal and informal learning in promising sectors and countries. All supported pilot projects will include aspects related to skills

for the digital and green transition, and mainstream gender equality and empowerment. The outputs and activities related with countries' qualifications frameworks will be implemented in synergy and cooperation with EU Delegations in charge of national envelopes.

The action will be implemented in indirect management with the European Training Foundation (ETF). The African Union Commission through its Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation assures the political steering of ACQF governance and provides political support to facilitate operational management of the action. In addition, a range of stakeholders (sectoral-professional associations, business community, learners, education and training providers, social partners) will be involved in the implementation/governance structures cooperating with the action.

The total cost of the action is EUR 5 850 000, of which the EU contribution will be EUR 5 000 000, while EUR 850 000 will be contributed in-kind from ETF.

In alignment with INTPA's general education policies, the overarching SDG target being pursued is Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Other significant SDGs connected to this are: SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth. Consequently, the concerned DAC code is related to - DAC Code 11110 – Education policy and administrative management.

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Context

The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is an initiative of the African Union (AU), explicitly mentioned in major policy acts. The AU is implementing a range of integration policies wherein the ACQF shall contribute, spanning from education and training (Continental Education Strategy for Africa – CESA 16-25) to free trade (AfCFTA) and free movement of people (AU Free Movement Protocol). The AU has developed several youth development policies and programmes at continental level aimed at ensuring the continent benefits from its demographic dividend. The policies include the African Youth Charter, Youth Decade Plan of Action, and the Malabo Decision on Youth Empowerment, all of which are implemented through various AU Agenda 2063 programmes and initiatives.

Enablers and opportunities of the ACQF relate to the demographic dividend of the continent, projected advances in human development, the significant flagship policies and strategies for continental integration related to the African Union's Agenda 2063, but also those strategies promoting green recovery and digital transformation. Most importantly, there is a growing number of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in development and consultation and NQFs approved and advancing in implementation.

CESA 16–25 strategic objective 4 aims to “ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration”. Particularly, goals (c) and (d) of strategic objective 4 explicitly refer to the establishment of qualifications frameworks, notably a continental qualifications framework linked with NQFs and RQFs.

As the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) takes the first steps, stakeholders and policy makers agree that free trade and free movement will be hampered if the continent does not operationalise a common framework for comparability of qualifications, facilitating recognition and validation of learning, and mobility in the context of learning, employment, and business development.

The ACQF will be the largest of the regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs) globally, as it cooperates with 55 countries and 8 regional economic communities (RECs). It is in fact the only RQF interacting with two different levels – national and regional. The interplay between emerging RQFs, the various NQFs across Africa and the ACQF will be a critical factor for future work in this area. While NQFs are quite distinct in their orientation and purpose, the potential cooperation and complementarity between the RQFs and the ACQF needs a foundation based on a shared vision, acknowledgement of specific key regional interests and goals, and consideration of economies of scale. The action will support a layered interaction with countries and regions, based on complementarity, mutual benefit and maximisation of impacts.

The ACQF Policy and Technical document proposes a layered interaction with countries and regions. By virtue of the provisions of Strategic objective 4 of CESA (16–25) and in line with African Union cooperation and governance, the ACQF interacts, collaborates with and supports the national competent authorities and stakeholders, without prejudice to the established relationship of countries with regions and regional economic communities. The ACQF will cooperate and contribute to development of national qualifications frameworks and systems, and work in coordination with the regional authorities to advance the common objectives of comparability, transparency and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks or systems in the context of the regions and the continent. The ACQF will support the regions and regional economic communities through relevant and adequate actions. For the countries, referencing to the ACQF is undertaken by the competent bodies responsible for national qualifications frameworks or systems. For the regions, referencing to ACQF can be planned as regional qualifications frameworks will increase in maturity. Planning and monitoring of implementation of ACQF activities with member countries and with regions will be facilitated by participation in coordination activities and the ACQF governing structure. ACQF representatives will participate in coordination activities and governing structures of the regional qualifications frameworks.

NQFs in Africa are at different stages of development and implementation. Considering a total of 41 countries included in the data collected by the [ACQF Mapping Study](#), the continent has a higher number of qualifications frameworks (approved, implementation started or implementation advanced) than other larger regions had when they enacted their overarching RQFs. Although thirteen years separate the advent of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the development of the ACQF, it is useful to note that when the legal base of the EQF was approved (2008), only three countries had NQFs in place and operational (France, Ireland and the United Kingdom). Currently there are over 20 countries in Africa with NQFs approved and implementation started or advanced, and eight countries with NQFs in development and consultation.

The development of the ACQF started with an action funded through the Development Cooperation Instrument/PanAfrican Programme, the AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability Programme (DCI/PANAF/2018-41286) implemented with the political steering of the African Union Commission (AUC), in partnership with GIZ and the European Training Foundation (ETF). This project delivered a relevant basis preparing the shift to implementation of the goals and functions of the ACQF, composed of the policy and technical document with action plan, Guidelines on all key policy and technical components of ACQF and NQFs, a specialised website, the ACQF capacity development programme with training materials, trained experts, an e-learning management system and the community of ACQF stakeholders.

The Policy and Technical Document of the ACQF, developed in 2021-2022 in close cooperation with the AUC and ACQF Advisory Group (40 members - representing countries, regions, social partners, students, specialised associations), defines the objectives and principles of the ACQF, its conceptual-technical design, the main areas of activity, the scope of referencing to ACQF, the goals and benefits of the digital ACQF Qualifications Platform, and main elements of governance. A compendium of ten ACQF technical Guidelines, and ten Training Modules accompany the Policy and Technical Document. This policy basis defines the ACQF as the common referencing qualifications framework for Africa. ACQF will offer new horizons for African integration through its continental scope, its function as a connector of Africa's national qualifications frameworks or systems, and as a promoter of pan-African trust and international transparency of skills and qualifications. The ACQF is conceived as comprehensive and inclusive qualifications framework, supporting a holistic and systemic vision of learning, qualifications, and credentials. The ACQF is oriented to lifelong learning, and to parity of esteem of learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, and all levels of education and training (from primary to higher education), thereby contributing to social inclusion and equity.

ACQF aims to: (i) enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications and support lifelong learning; (ii) facilitate recognition of learning from various contexts and mobility of learners and workers; (iii) promote and support qualifications frameworks and systems through relevant actions and instruments without prejudice to national and regional policies and systems' diversity; (iv) promote cooperation and mutual trust, by means of referencing with qualifications frameworks in Africa and worldwide.

To advance these goals the ACQF Policy and Technical document defines key areas of activity, as follows: (1) Referencing to ACQF of national (and regional, if adequate) qualifications frameworks or systems, based on ACQF Guidelines, and providing support to national teams; (2) Support recognition of prior learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning; (3) Set-up and promote the digital ACQF Qualifications Platform (Database) to foster transparency and broad information-sharing on skills and qualifications; (4) Support renewal of qualifications profiles to meet the needs of priority sectors and occupations of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), other continental sectoral strategies (e.g tourism services) and the digital and green transitions in employment and learning; (5) Capacity development: training in the relevant thematic areas, e-learning platform, peer-learning activities.



Knowledge creation, cooperation and mutual learning across African regions for advancement of national qualifications frameworks and systems, preparation for referencing with ACQF; (6) Communication and networking with relevant authorities and stakeholders in Africa and with regional and national qualifications frameworks and partners globally; (7) Analysis, monitoring and evaluation on ACQF implementation and other policy and technical themes relevant for the continuing improvement of the ACQF and its instruments.

This Action will contribute to the Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025), especially to the thematic area “promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women”.

## 2.2. Problem Analysis

With a median age of 19.7 in 2020 Africa's population is the youngest in the world. In 2020, Africa's population under 35 represents almost a billion people (540.8 million 0-14 year old and 454.5 million 15-34 year old), amounting to 22.7% of the world's total youth population, the second largest after Asia's (58.0%). Africa's young demographic could provide a powerful opportunity for development and beyond. But despite the growth in GDP of the last decade, African countries struggle to create decent jobs and to equip young people with the skills required to service their economies and societies. This lack of economic opportunity is often combined with political disenfranchisement thus creating a potential cause of instability<sup>3</sup>.

The accomplishment of the potentialities of the African demographic dividend in the post-Covid-19 economic recovery will also depend on the development of the right mix of skills of the population and the quality and comparability of qualifications of all levels and sectors of education and training systems across countries. Learning must be lifelong and life-wide, to enable transitions to new and to changing jobs in high productivity sectors, adaptation to new skills requirements in the green and digital economies, and to support inclusion in decent jobs and in the formal economy of small artisans and self-employed, and of the population with limited formal schooling but with practical professional and life experience, especially women and young people.

With the coming into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), African leaders and the African Union (AU) Commission have recognised that the full potential of free movement of services and goods can only be achieved if there is freer movement of people as well. Among its policy recommendations, the 'African Economic Outlook 2020' (AFDB 2020) emphasises the need to address obstacles to labour mobility to enhance growth's inclusiveness within sector productivity growth and cross-sector labour reallocations to reduce poverty in Africa. At continental level, the mobility of learners and workers is essential to achieve the benefits of economic integration from one side, and improved matching of skills and qualifications with existing job vacancies across different countries from the other side. Easier movement of persons on the continent would make African labour markets more efficient, enabling companies to bridge skills gaps by recruiting from other countries; improved conditions for mobility of workers has the potential to lower unemployment rates. However, Africa remains largely fragmented and has the lowest levels of mobility of its citizens, trading with each other and even integration and comparability of its training and education sectors. The first year of AfCFTA (2021) has been difficult and low impact amid the restrictions and border closures of the Covid-19 pandemic and an economic downturn on the continent. Intra-African trade accounts for 17% of African exports, which is low compared to 59% for Asia and 68% for Europe (World Economic Forum). According to the survey conducted by Afro Barometer in 2021, two-thirds of Africans find it difficult to cross borders for work or trade in their region, whereas only 21% find it easy to move across borders.

Currently labour and learning mobility is hampered, among others, by lack of information and of understanding between countries on the respective qualifications systems, qualifications profiles and qualifications levels, which adversely affects the efficacy of recognition of qualifications and the opportunities for fair migration and integration in employment matching qualifications profiles and levels.

The African continent is marked by a wide diversity of education and qualifications systems, with different structures and typology of qualifications and limited updated information on qualifications in the public domain. International qualifications related to dynamic professional sectors, technologies and global companies gain ground, but often are not linked with qualifications frameworks and systems. A range of new transversal, digital and green skills are required for people to adapt and be employable in the context of the transformation of work and learning, digitalisation of public and private organisations and demands for a greener and sustainable economy. Migrants and refugees carry potentialities, skills, hope for safer life and work – but often no qualifications documents. Furthermore, continental

<sup>3</sup> Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Africa's Youth (2021): Action needed how to support the continent's greatest asset, <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-08/international-youth-day-research-brief.pdf>

free trade has started operations in a range of sectors, a process likely to trigger demand for new skills and qualifications and more efficient recognition. The informal sector of the economy shows no signs of abating and there is a vast need for good quality programmes of recognition of prior learning and access to modular skills development opportunities with certification.

The ACQF and the Qualifications Platform (database) will provide a contribution of continental scope to address these issues, complementing and enhancing national policies and systems and regional cooperation on these matters. Systematised information-sharing on qualifications types and their competence profiles (learning outcomes) is a key objective of ACQF referencing and the Qualifications Platform. Broad and updated information on qualifications profiles and supply of skills is important to plan and implement measures addressing skills matching, and minimising skills shortages and gaps in national and regional labour markets. Qualifications supply data complements demand side labour market data produced by labour market observatories.

There has been insufficient knowledge circulation between countries and regions in Africa on the features and developments of NQFs and qualifications systems, and there was no dedicated continental online platform or sustained network for information-sharing and awareness raising on qualifications and qualifications systems. The first ACQF development project established such a qualifications and NQF information platform and capacity development programme accessible in the [ACQF website](#), with numerous [analyses](#), [learning materials](#), Guidelines, library, glossary, and news from the countries.

Currently there is some dynamism in construction and strengthening of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in a larger number of countries across all regions of Africa. At regional level it is worth noticing measures taken by two Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to (i) enhance implementation mechanisms and dynamics of the RQF (case of SADC Qualifications Framework), and (ii) to put in place harmonised standards and guidelines for TVET qualifications (case of newly announced East Africa Community Qualifications Framework for TVET). Some of these emerging NQFs are being developed with support of EU bilateral projects, others are home-grown initiatives and build on national expertise and partnerships.

This new generation of NQFs testifies to the relevance of these instruments for the development, classification, and articulation of qualifications of all types and levels, by improving the transparency, access, progression, and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society. NQFs are oriented to all learning modalities and types of qualifications, and support recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal. Besides their role in domestic qualifications and employment policies, new NQFs are instruments for international and cross-border cooperation, by supporting comparability of qualifications profiles and levels and facilitating portability and fair mobility of learners, graduates, and workers.

NQFs are policy instruments that require relevant implementation capacity at national and institutional level and operate in synergy with wider education and training system. NQF implementation requires a legal basis and relevant mandate for operations, governance with participation of stakeholders from the worlds of education and skills development and the world of work, technical capacities and tools for qualifications management and monitoring, and communication with the end-users (learners, graduates, employers, education and training providers, career guidance counselors, civil society groups). The first ACQF project mapped the existing NQF governance types in Africa and identified 21 countries with NQF implementation and coordination bodies, with resources from the public budget and other sources, such as service fees. The maturity, experience and technical capacity of these NQF-NQS coordination and implementation organs differs, in function of the national context, but the basis is established and can be strengthened and expanded through the cooperation Network of NQF agencies and stakeholders supported by the ACQF project since 2021. Annex 1 to this Action Document summarises the mapping of NQF bodies.

In this context of cross-country cooperation and transparency, the role of the continental qualifications framework is fundamental as a translation device to reference and connect the different types of NQFs, and clarify the correspondence between levels of different NQFs.

The ACQF, as a qualifications framework, has the capacity and potential to cooperate with other regional and national qualifications frameworks beyond Africa, contributing to referencing, and to improve transparency, non-discrimination, mobility and international currency of African qualifications. Such cooperation between continents can be envisaged with Europe, the closest neighbour of Africa, and other regions.

As the continent adopts new strategic initiatives to build back better beyond Covid-19, the implementation of the ACQF can support the green and digital adaptation of qualifications profiles and education and training programmes, thereby contributing to the continental policies supporting the green and digital transition, and inclusive education and training.



Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action:

The key stakeholders of the proposed action are the AUC, RECs, national and regional Quality Assurance Agencies, National Qualification Authorities/Agencies, Employers' Associations and trade unions, the private sector, and government ministries. The specific roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders will be as follows:

1. AUC: primarily with the Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation. In addition, the Action will cooperate with the Department of Employment and Social Affairs, given its responsibility in labour migration initiatives, hence interested in recognition of qualifications, portability of skills and validation of non-formal and informal learning.  
AUC assures the political steering of ACQF governance and provides political support to operational management; AfCFTA: Secretariat and / or relevant unit in AUC will take political lead on actions related with AfCFTA relevant skills and qualifications.
2. Regional Economic Communities and their constituent countries: advocacy, dissemination on ACQF benefits, tools and actions. The project will interact with the relevant departments of the Secretariats of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and of the East African Community (EAC) on matters related with the respective regional qualifications frameworks, and with other RECs, as adequate and relevant in the context of action.
3. Network (Partnership) of African national qualifications agencies and councils and NQF stakeholders (sectoral-professional associations, business community, learners, education and training providers, social partners). These stakeholders will function together with the ACQF Project Management Unit that will be the main implementation capacity of ACQF and foreseeable as a unit in the structure of this Network (Partnership) established with status of legal entity. Memorandum of cooperation and service contract between this Network (Partnership) and ETF can be foreseen.

The final beneficiaries of the action will be young men and women of Africa through improved opportunities for mobility and lifelong learning hence improving their prospects for increased employability and/or job creation.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

#### 3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

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.

The Specific Objectives (Outcomes) of this action are to:

1. Strengthen capacities at continental (AU), national and regional levels enabling the implementation of the ACQF functions and services.
2. Support the development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks and systems, and cooperation with regional qualifications frameworks.
3. Set-up and operationalise the ACQF systems for delivery of the services and results in (i) referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems and ACQF, (ii) ACQF qualifications management system, (iii) recognition of skills and qualifications, (iv) cooperation with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), (v) cooperation with AfCFTA in development of qualifications for priority sectors and inclusive economic integration.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

##### 1.1 Contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

**Output 1.1.1 :** ACQF capacity development, awareness raising and partnerships activities expanded to all countries and regions, and include representatives of state institutions, partners from the world of work, business community, social partners, education and training institutions, innovation and technological sectors, informal sector, civil society (youth, students, women's organisations). Established upgraded learning management tool and capacity to maintain and update it.

##### 2.1 Contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)

**Output 2.1.1:** Increased number of NQFs in African countries at stage 4-5 (approved, implementation started and advanced) equipped with qualifications database and monitoring system. In synergy and cooperation with the EU Delegations responsible for country and regional portfolios. Established digital tool to support countries and regions.

### 3.1 Contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3)

**Output 3.1.1 :** ACQF governance partnership and operational setting established to implement and monitor the ACQF Action Plan (2022-2026).

ACQF Management Information System (ACQF MIS), comprising digital qualifications information-sharing platform, ACQF referencing tool, skills recognition support tool, and monitoring and data system is established and operational, and training delivered to assure effective deployment and maintenance. ACQF Website updated and linked to ACQF tools.

Established dialogue, comparison and cooperation with other regional and national qualifications frameworks in the world, notably with EQF.

**Output 3.1.2 :** National qualifications frameworks (NQF) referenced to ACQF, in accordance with ACQF Guidelines, and based on national contribution and ownership. Established upgraded digital referencing tool.

**Output 3.1.3 :** Increased access to skills recognition systems and established a common approach for inclusive and trusted validation and certification of skills and learning from all contexts (non-formal, informal, work-based), taking account of good practice and new developments with digitalisation of certificates. Established digital tool supporting skills recognition activities and projects.

**Output 3.1.4 :** Developed new profiles and standards of qualifications of different levels fit for the priority and emerging sectors and occupations in the context of AfCFTA, and information disseminated through ACQF website and networks.

### 3.2. Indicative Activities

#### Specific Objective 1

Activities related to Output 1.1.1:

- a) Define and validate the detailed action plan of the output for the period of the Action.
- b) Review and update the existing ACQF Handbook of 10 Guidelines and 10 Training Modules.
- c) Train pool of African NQF coaches / experts and include in ACQF database – to support countries' NQF development (at least 30% are women).
- d) Develop and conduct 2 training programmes in blended / hybrid modality on ACQF implementation and monitoring for national and regional ACQF focal points; and for managers, technical experts, facilitators involved in the ACQF implementation structure, in relevant AUC departments, and AfCFTA Secretariat.
- e) Continuously improve and use ACQF Training programme and e-learning platform (increased number of learners from all countries) (at least 30% are women).
- f) Conduct at least 4 in-depth training programmes / per year on qualifications development and management and ACQF themes and tools – with involvement of participants from at least 45 countries and 3 RECs (at least 30% are women). Training programmes tailored to the needs of different groups of countries, and of stakeholders (education and training institutions, qualifications and sector councils, curriculum developers, social partners, professional associations, government bodies and decision makers).
- g) Develop and offer at least 3 training modules on ACQF and NQF – with African education institutions - for regular students.
- h) Conduct at least 2 ACQF conferences per year.
- i) Publish at least 4 ACQF Newsletters per year, including articles submitted by ACQF national focal points and stakeholders.
- j) Continuously maintain and improve the already existing ACQF website to support experience-sharing, capacity development, updated information on NQFs and RQFs.
- k) Information and communication on ACQF support, in synergy and cooperation with EU Delegations (countries and regions).

## Specific Objective 2

### Activities related to Output 2.1.1.

- a) Define and validate the detailed action plan of the output for the period of the Action.
- b) Select interest countries, identify the needs and agree a roadmap for cooperation with representative task forces / working groups in charge of qualifications frameworks developments and policies. Spell out and consider the gender dimensions in planning and implementation.
- c) Define and support pilot projects adapted to context and contributing to national ownership and visibility of the ACQF as a continental qualifications framework supporting national developments.
- d) Raise awareness and provide essential information on NQF development to national working groups / task forces, lead authorities, social partners, civil society organisations (youth, women, students, green), sectoral-professional organisations.
- e) Support analysis and reviews of state-of-play of national qualifications systems and roadmaps for NQF development. Spell out and consider the gender dimension.
- f) Include all involved countries and stakeholders in training programs bearing in mind the gender dimension.
- g) Support at least 3 new NQFs to move from stages 2 / 3 (NQF in early thinking and in development and consultation) to stage 4 (NQF approved, implementation started), working in synergy with EU Delegations and EU projects. NQF stages are defined in ACQF Mapping Study and [ACQF Feasibility Report](#) 2021.

## Specific Objective 3

### Activities related to Output 3.1.1.

- a) Define and validate the detailed action plan of the output for the period of the Action.
- b) Review the existing feasibility study on ACQF governance, update it considering the changing AUC context and other conditions.
- c) Agree and sign a Memorandum of cooperation on ACQF consolidation and implementation (2022-2026) with relevant organisation(s) - with action plan, milestones, responsibilities, accountability, resources.
- d) Establish an adequate format of partnership / network gathering African qualifications agencies and stakeholders as a legal entity - with statute, governance structure, membership, financial management, accountability mechanisms, management and technical implementation unit. Stakeholders include: qualifications authorities (diverse legal structure, including ministerial departments, coordination units and autonomous agencies), social partners, sectoral-professional bodies, students – at various levels (national, regional and continental levels),
- e) Put in place ACQF implementation unit / structure, which will be strengthened and trained on the job, and prepare the conditions for future sustainability of ACQF operations. This ACQF implementation unit is coached, supported, coordinated and monitored by the ETF, and reports to the project Steering Committee. It carries out technical work related with the agreed outputs of the Action. The implementation unit is composed of thematic experts with experience in the key domains of the Action: referencing, qualifications frameworks, qualifications development, validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, digital and hybrid training management, digital communication and website content management, digital databases and tools for qualifications, monitoring, communication, outreach and feedback management. Co-funding: project budget, annual resources of national (and regional) parties included in the Network of African qualifications agencies (staff, national and regional events), AUC resources (staff, high level continental events).
- f) ACQF website: upgrade functionalities, update content and include access to different ACQF tools (e.g. Qualifications Platform, E-Learning System, Intranet for referencing, Intranet for governance).
- g) Establish network of ACQF focal points at national and regional levels (at least 60% of the countries and all Regional Economic Communities (REC), functioning on own national annual budgets.
- h) Networking and organised cooperation with existing and newly established RQFs to advance common agenda, generate synergies, and build and sustain capacities. Existing cooperation with SACDQF and EAC Qualifications Framework (higher education and TVET) will be continued and strengthened.
- i) Design, develop and establish ACQF management information system, with digital platform for information-sharing on skills and qualifications, instrument for digital credentials, tools for management of ACQF referencing and system for monitoring and evaluation of the ACQF (with indicators, data collection and analysis, reporting disaggregated minimum by sex).
- j) Establish digital qualifications database (ACQF Qualifications Platform), linked with ACQF management information system, with specific operational handbook and technical support for implementation at ACQF

level and applications at national level. Platform is scalable and open and for use by countries for registration of their national qualifications.

- k) Established principles, template and digital tool for regular updates of information on NQFs and RQFs (at least 20 countries regularly send updates to ACQF).
- l) Develop a common qualifications description / template and disseminate and apply it in qualifications database, in accordance with existing ACQF Guidelines.
- m) Develop an infrastructure for ACQF Digital certificates
- n) Maintain and further develop the ACQF website for services related with this output.
- o) Training and coaching countries Trained focal points at national and continental level to maintain and update the DB and assure its integrity. Consider the gender dimension - at least 30% are women.
- p) Show case, outreach, communicate - ACQF Website, events, ACQF focal points. Relevant information disseminated to all countries.
- q) Cooperate with youth and students' organisations and employers stakeholders, invite them to ACQF training programmes, create a pool of young ACQF coaches, involve them in the campaign on validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, promotion of the ACQF and the Qualifications Platform, and dissemination activities.
- r) Establish dialogue with European Qualifications Framework – towards preparation for ulterior comparison ACQF-EQF and sharing of information and practice.
- s) Plan a joint roadmap for cooperation with EQF, targeting themes and issues of high priority for both sides, an enabling reinforcement of ACQF capacities, tools and visibility.
- t) Establish cooperation with other (national and regional) qualifications frameworks, using available networks and based on mutual interest.
- u) Promote the ACQF and enhance its presence and visibility in relevant international networks and platforms
- v) Establish cooperation with national information centres (ENIC-NARIC), Addis Convention (recognition of qualifications) national information / resource centres, organisations dealing with recognition of international qualifications, and with recognition and quality assurance agencies and networks.
- w) Plan and agree activities of mutual interest with EU Delegations, organise information exchanges to ensure transparent collaboration and benefit of the leverage of EU Delegations to reach out to national authorities and stakeholders for ACQF activities related with capacity building, development of NQFs and comparability of qualifications.

#### Activities related to Output 3.1.2:

- a) Define and validate the detailed action plan for ACQF referencing for the period of the Action.
- b) Establish a referencing support group within the ACQF implementation unit, trained and mandated to plan, coordinate, follow-up referencing processes with the interested countries and support and coach the national referencing groups. AUC staff to be involved in this referencing support group to ensure political steering and support.
- c) Review, streamline and digitalise the ACQF referencing criteria and procedures – based on the existing ACQF Guidelines, and review and update the digital tool (e.g. Intranet for Referencing).
- d) Conduct information and advocacy campaign on ACQF referencing, based on the existing ACQF Guidelines - in cooperation with EU delegations (countries and regions).
- e) Present and disseminate information on the use of the digital tools supporting ACQF referencing
- f) Build capacity of ACQF focal points at national and regional level on ACQF referencing process, criteria and procedures (at least 30% are women).
- g) At least 30% of all African NQFs at stage 4 and 5 (approved and started implementation, NQF reviewed) conduct referencing to ACQF, using the ACQF Guidelines and digital tools, and publish the final reports upon validation by the ACQF referencing
- h) Develop and validate rules applicable to use of ACQF levels in national qualifications documents and databases upon successful referencing to ACQF.
- i) Initiate / test the use of ACQF levels on National qualifications with upon successful referencing to ACQF.
- j) Analyse results of ACQF referencing including: good practice, gaps and challenges, achieved benefits for national developments, effectiveness for ACQF objectives of comparability, mutual trust and mobility. Report including lessons for further improvement of ACQF policies and Guidelines.
- k) Conduct one annual conference with all countries and stakeholders.

#### Activities related to Output 3.1.3:

- a) Define and validate the detailed action plan for the Output on validation and recognition of outcomes from non-formal and informal learning / Recognition of Prior Learning (further: “RPL”) for the period of the Action
- b) Develop and implement a wider agenda and campaign for fair and trusted validation and recognition of outcomes from non-formal and informal learning / Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to enable easier access of beneficiaries – in synergy and cooperation with AU delegations (countries and regions).
- c) Plan and support pilot projects with relevant institutions and stakeholders, addressing effective, innovative, and contextualised solutions of RPL, and contributing to national ownership.
- d) Develop and carry out RPL programmes for target beneficiaries (workers, small artisans and informal businesses, women, young people) with countries and regions to test the approach and show case it – in synergy and cooperation with EU delegations.
- e) Review, improve and disseminate the ACQF Guideline on validation of learning, encompassing Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Accumulation and Transfer Systems.
- f) Develop and adopt a common specific RPL technical-methodological package and tools to support implementation of quality assured RPL for the continent, with links to NQFs and ACQF.
- g) Train RPL coaches, counsellors, facilitators and evaluators and create a pool of trained / certified professionals. At least 40% of participants are women.
- h) Collect and disseminate information on good practice (diverse sources – internal and external to the Action)
- i) Analyse the results of the RPL campaign, pilot projects and application of ACQF RPL tools and guidelines, including: achieved benefits, challenges and gaps, prospects for further improvement and expansion, lessons and recommendations.
- j) Conduct one annual conference with all countries and stakeholders.

#### Activities related to Output 3.1.4

- Develop and agree a joint work plan ACQF and AfCFTA Secretariat with emphasis on matters related with skills and qualifications and priority sectors and occupations, with involvement of private sector, sectoral-professional organisations, civil society organisations, and relevant women’s rights organisations.
- Map and analyse the qualifications for priority sectors of AfCFTA in a representative sample of countries.
- Design and pilot the methodology and the approach for development of common (continental) profiles / minimum requirements for qualifications relevant for AfCFTA. . The profiles include emerging skills and the adequate green skills.
- Promote a green skills taxonomy as part of the methodological package for development of common qualifications profiles and apply it.
- Conduct training of qualifications development teams, resource persons (at least 30% are women).
- Develop and test at least 12 new profiles and qualifications linked to priority sectors which are likely to benefit from AfCFTA implementation.
- Create a database of common profiles for qualifications integrated in ACQF Qualifications Platform, and accessible for all countries.
- Dissemination, communication on the ACQF-AfCFTA common profiles for qualifications.

### 3.3. Mainstreaming

#### **Environmental Protection & Climate Change**



Given the nature of the Action, there is no need to undertake an SEA screening, EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening or a CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening.

The Action will have a substantive focus on climate change and environmental protection, especially y through activities related with green skills and qualifications for greening occupations. This green dimension will be part of the themes of training programmes and capacity development activities at national and regional levels (Output 1.1.1). Moreover, green skills will be included in actions of referencing of national qualifications frameworks to ACQF (Output 3.1.2) and in the common qualifications profiles targeting important sectors of the African Continental Free Trade Area (Output 3.1.4). The ACQF level descriptors developed in partnership with the African Union in 2021 include a green dimension in the domain of learning “Skills”. The Action will promote a green skills taxonomy (useful for design of courses and qualifications) and a flexible approach for self-assessment of education and training



institutions regarding their green policies, and degree of adaptation of teaching and learning to green requirements. Proposed pilot projects will include selection criteria and tools addressing green dimensions.

---

### **Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**



As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1.

At all stages gender-responsive human rights-based approach on participation, non-discrimination/equality, accountability and transparency applying to all rights will guide the planning and implementation of the Action. It will integrate gender aspects of the management of qualifications particularly in relation to those large sections of the African population that remain employed in low-productivity jobs in traditional agriculture and informal sector, majority of which are women. The action will ensure women participation and leadership by establishing a quota of minimum 30% for women in all organised training and activities as relevant. In addition, the action will make sure that the data collection, studies, etc. contain information that is disaggregated minimum by sex including the realisation of a gender sectoral analysis. Activities for validation and recognition outcomes from non-formal and informal learning will have a strong orientation to participation and empowerment of women.

---

### **Human Rights**

At all stages human rights-based approach principles participation, non-discrimination/equality, accountability and transparency applying to all rights will guide the planning and implementation of the Action. Specifically, the action will contribute to facilitating the rights of citizens to move and work freely, in line with the provisions set out in the AU protocol on free movement of persons.

The action will promote and contribute to improve access of vulnerable populations to processes of validation and recognition on outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, thereby supporting rights to employment and training, equity, and social inclusion.

---

### **Disability**



As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that no specific action targeting disability is foreseen. However, the envisaged participatory and human rights based approach will integrate efforts that will benefit disabled individuals to get better standardized qualifications thereby creating opportunities for better mobility and job creation.

---

### **Democracy**

The action does not tackle democratic processes. However, it is based on wide participation of stakeholders and networks, and will contribute to build better institutions and accountability (e.g. network of Qualification Agencies, and to improving the coordination with social partners such as employers, trade unions, sectoral/professional associations, etc. By enhancing regulatory frameworks the action supports good governance and the environment that facilitates improved access and quality of qualifications, education and training programmes.

---

### **Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience**

N/A

---

### **Disaster Risk Reduction**

N/A

---

### **Other considerations if relevant**

The recognition of qualifications and especially validation and certification of individuals' skills and competences acquired in migration experiences are essential policy instruments to be further improved across all countries and regions on the continent. In this regard, a wider agenda/campaign for fair and trusted Recognition of Prior Learning will be part of the ACQF strategy.

The Action will contribute to raise awareness on the green transition and the necessary adaptation of training and qualifications to greening the economy and occupation, and inclusion of green skills in training programmes and curricula.

### 3.4. Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
Different stages of development of NQFs among African countries.	Risk 1	High	Medium	ACQF implementation activities must adopt a differentiated approach fit to different needs and capacities. The proposed capacity building activities aim at supporting further development of NQFs/RQFs and will be fit for the different stages.
Ownership by the national authorities / regional bodies	Risk 2	Low	Medium	Effectiveness of ACQF support needs political and budgetary national engagement of relevant national bodies, and cooperation with different partners. The Network of qualifications agencies and stakeholders aims to contribute to create critical mass and synergy.
Slow implementation of the ACQF as an AU policy instrument	Risk 3	Medium	Medium	The project will work closely with the African Union Commission, the Regional Economic Communities, and organisations involved in the relevant Thematic Clusters of the CESA 16-25 to ensure the political support. AUC assures political lead, but practical implementation capacity is driven by a competent unit linked with the Network of qualifications agencies and stakeholders. Capacity development provided by the ACQF project. The Network of qualifications agencies and stakeholders assembles specific practical experience and knowledge in the domain of NQFs – RQFs and can help leapfrogging implementation.

#### Lessons Learnt:

- The first ACQF project (2019-2022) developed the foundations of the ACQF, with a view to enable the move from political intentions to practical implementation at continental, regional and national levels. These foundations are of a twofold nature:
  - a) Technical and policy: the ACQF technical and policy document with action plan (2022-2026), handbook of 10 guidelines, thematic analyses and mapping of NQFs; ACQF website as a tool for knowledge management, capacity development, communication and networking. Digital ACQF tools initiated in the period 2019-2022 can be further reviewed, upgraded and inter-connected through the ACQF management information system (planned in Output 3.1.1 of this Action), in particular: (i) tool to support referencing, (ii) learning management tool, (iii) tool to support ACQF governance (meetings and documents of the ACQF Advisory Group), (iv) concept for tool to support monitoring and evaluation.
  - b) Networking and capacity development, trust building: ACQF Peer Learning programme (12 webinars in 2020-2021), ACQF training programme and modules, cooperation with specialised organisations to foster common goals (ex.: African Curriculum Association, African Qualifications Verification Network) and support to countries and RECs in developing capacities, roadmaps and analyses related with NQF (Guiné-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Cameroon, Egypt) and RQFs (SADC, EAC).
- The first ACQF project went beyond analyses, studies, and policy papers, and supported a community of interested stakeholders and experts from all regions, participating in experience-sharing activities and Advisory Group meetings. These activities were organised in systematic and regular manner, and contributed to create knowledge and share good practice, which was used by several countries in their national context.
- For the first time African countries have access to well organised and easy to access information and practical experiences of qualifications frameworks, systems of recognition of prior learning, quality assurance and recognition practices, qualifications databases and other dimensions of qualifications systems in Africa. This

knowledge was gathered through the Peer Learning programme (2020-2022) and systematised in the ACQF website.

- The ACQF Advisory Group established by the first ACQF project gathered experience in working together and actively contributed to co-create the ACQF policy and technical document, the guidelines and the ACQF governance setting supporting implementation. This ACQF AG can be further strengthened and be invited to participate in the implementation phase.
- Several countries expressed interest in participating in the Network of qualifications bodies and stakeholders and the AUC welcomes the emergence of champions of the ACQF in form of relevant and strong NQF agencies and bodies, able to promote the potential benefits of the ACQF as an African policy instrument for approximation, mutual trust and portability of skills and qualifications.
- AUC has limited human resources to actively participate and contribute to all ACQF functions and activities.

### 3.5. The Intervention Logic

A qualification framework is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of level descriptors. The European Qualifications Framework Recommendation of 2017 defines a qualification framework as ‘a policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, equal access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

The role of qualifications frameworks in the context of transformation accelerated by the Covid-19 might usefully be unpacked under these three headings:

- Recognition (individual learning achievements and newer forms of certification);
- Accessibility (NQFs could do more to insist on access as a principle for qualifications to be included); and
- Quality assurance of NQFs and constituent qualifications, so that Covid-19 does not present a threat to the quality, reputation or recognition status.
- Openness to change: innovation in learning, emerging skills for digital and green transition, new types of qualifications emerging in response to global drivers of transformation.
- Cooperation, sharing and joint development of solutions to common global / continental issues related with skills development for inclusive, sustainable, digital, and green societies.
- Engagement of stakeholders, especially employers and youth to benefit from future-oriented views and foster empowerment of young generations.

The underlying intervention logic for this Action is to support the shift to implementation of the African Union’s ACQF, as a continental referencing qualifications framework, and will build on the already existing ACQF Policy and Technical document, action plan and guidelines. The Action supports the operationalisation of the ACQF’s concepts and processes, e.g. the policy goals, capabilities and the processes of cooperation and dialogue indispensable for ACQF’s common continental aim of transparency, mutual trust and support to lifelong learning and mobility. The ACQF supports, connects and creates mutual trust, while respecting national diversity and qualifications systems. Although countries developing and reforming their NQF can use the ACQF as example, it is neither intended to standardise NQFs across the continent, nor to replace them.

The ACQF aims to contribute and enable qualifications frameworks’ development on the continent. Output 1.2. Supporting development of NQFs should be contextualised, while also learning from other experiences, and be fit for purpose. Several layers of differentiation of qualifications frameworks have been found by the ACQF mapping study. African countries are at different levels of NQF development, and the allocation of countries to stages of development can be quite fluid given the current dynamics, and should therefore be reviewed and updated, as more countries are moving between stages.

- Overall, for countries where NQF is in advanced stage of implementation, this action will facilitate referencing to ACQF, use of ACQF Qualifications platform, use of ACQF levels on national qualifications documents (upon referencing), networking and peer review, monitoring and renewal of aspects of the NQF conceptual-technical design and tools. Streamlined monitoring and evaluation, with consideration of key goals and inclusion and gender dimensions. Alignment with other policies such as employment and labour migration. These NQFs should share their experiences, challenges and perspectives with all other NQF initiatives in Africa.

- For the other NQFs at stage of approval and started implementation, the Action can adjust the interventions (e.g. Outputs 2.1.1 and 3.1.2) to technical support and peer learning related with key implementation factors (dimensions), such as: organisational shaping and planning, operational instruments, register of qualifications, methodology package; governance and management of NQF for sustainability and impact; inventory of existing qualifications.
- For the countries with NQFs in the stage of development and consultation, the intervention will likely involve technical support and peer learning related the systemic view of the NQF working with the relevant components, qualifications development mechanisms, major policy and technical issues and themes, unlocking key obstacles, guidance on regulatory-legal aspects, governance setting, involvement of social partners and the business community in planning and funding, planning of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The feasibility analysis carried out in the first phase developed an enabling vision, scope, and implementation modalities of the ACQF. The different options considered for the ACQF as a sustainable policy instrument have been structured in the form of Scenarios. The proposed scenarios are designed on the basis of a developmental and cumulative set of features. The proposed scenarios are:

- Scenario 1: ‘**ACQF connects**’ (2023) underscores support to effective networking, experience and knowledge-sharing, capacity development and communication. The ACQF website is fundamental, and the ACQF is a platform for all countries and RECs on the continent.
- Scenario 2: ‘**ACQF creates mutual trust**’ (2026) beyond experience sharing and communication, this scenario focuses on referencing of NQFs / RQFs to ACQF, and eventually adoption by the countries of ACQF levels on qualifications of the referenced NQFs. As a qualifications framework for the African continent, the ACQF aims at connecting the national (and regional) qualifications frameworks of the community of African Union (AU) member states. This core function is based on the process of referencing national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) or systems to the ACQF, following agreed criteria and procedures and peer review by the member countries. Further to the referencing process, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications framework or system (e.g., certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and / or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, to the appropriate ACQF level. The adoption of ACQF levels alongside the NQF level is a voluntary process, decided by the national authorities. As an example: in the context of the European Qualifications Framework 31 countries are using EQF levels on their qualifications documents; referencing and use of EQF levels facilitate recognition of qualifications between countries. (Source: EQF Advisory Group meeting 57, November 2021).
- Scenario 3: ‘**ACQF opens new horizons**’ (2027) besides being a meta-framework for referencing, ACQF promotes new / common qualifications (standards, profiles) of continental scope, supports automatic mutual recognition of qualifications (based on quality assurance and other considerations) and supports digital certification..

- a) As a continental policy instrument, ACQF will support other relevant flagships of the AU, such as the AfCFTA – it is in this context that scenario 3 ACQF considers “promote new / common qualifications profiles” relevant for priority sectors and occupations of AfCFTA.

Among ACQF’s functions: Qualifications - a range of activities such as research, and design of common approaches and methodologies. Development of qualifications profiles adequate for common continental use related with new and emerging tasks, technologies, skills, and occupations linked with continental integration policies such as AfCFTA; and with continental strategies in specific economic sectors, especially sustainable agriculture poised to be a major contributor to inclusive growth and decent jobs.

- b) Automatic mutual recognition of qualifications (mentioned in ACQF Scenario 3): A referencing qualifications framework, such as ACQF, is an important condition in establishing the mechanisms of automatic mutual recognition of qualifications. For example: [Council Recommendation of 26/11/2018, 2.a](#)) – “Acknowledging the importance of fostering transparency and building trust in each other’s higher education system to achieve automatic mutual recognition for the purpose of further learning, agree on fulfilling the following conditions, in which: a) national qualifications frameworks or systems are referenced to the European Qualifications Framework with the referencing reviewed and updated, when relevant (...)”. The referencing qualifications framework supports and facilitates, but recognition policies and processes are managed and conducted by the relevant competent bodies.
- c) More generally on recognition of qualifications: As any other meta qualifications framework, the ACQF aims to contribute and facilitate recognition of qualifications between countries; this is done by two means: i) The

ACQF and the qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to it can facilitate and enhance existing practices of recognition of qualifications thanks to the strengthened trust, clarity and comparability of qualifications they provide; ii) enhance information-sharing on qualifications and NQFs, in Africa and globally, building on referencing outcomes, ACQF website and other transparency tools. As the continental qualifications framework, the ACQF will cooperate with the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States (Addis Convention)<sup>4</sup>, and seek complementarities for mutual benefit.

The first phase of the ACQF project (2019-2022) is working towards the attainment of Scenario 1 ‘ACQF Connects’ which will be completed with the development and validation of the ACQF policy document supported by an action plan and package of guidelines and training modules, digital tools, website. Building on this, this proposed action will work on Scenario 2 ‘ACQF Creates Mutual Trust’, contributing to the achievement of ACQF objective related to referencing qualifications frameworks, for transparency and information-sharing and improvement of qualifications across Africa. The project will also engage with Scenario 3, notably the development of common qualifications profiles relevant for the priority sectors and occupations of AfCFTA.

To accomplish its objectives, the ACQF as a policy instrument of the AU has its policy and technical document supported by an Action Plan (horizon 2026) addressing a range of issues and objectives, namely the following:

1. To connect (reference) national qualifications frameworks / systems.
2. Work in complementarity with the relevant education, recognition, innovation, employment, trade and gender policies of the AU.
3. Establish and activate a continental approach for inclusive and trusted recognition of skills and learning from all contexts (informal, non-formal, work-based).

As a Referencing (regional) Qualifications Framework for LLL, the ACQF shall support recognition of prior learning (RPL) across the continent. The same goal and practice are well established in other regional qualifications frameworks, notably ASEAN QRF, SADCQF and EQF. RPL directly links with the principle of learning outcomes and with NQF’s goals and concepts. Candidates to RPL (other terms in Europe: VNFIL, VAE) may reach a part or full qualification by means of credible processes (identification, documentation, assessment, certification), and these qualifications are identical to the NQF qualifications. Example: EU – [Council Recommendation on VNFIL](#), of 12/2012. ACQF support to RPL by means of: wide awareness raising campaign, common guidelines, capacity development, peer learning.

4. Operationalise a digital tool for information-sharing on skills and qualifications, management of ACQF referencing and monitoring and evaluation of the ACQF, with data covering the relevant indicators, including inclusion and gender.
5. Develop capacities and raise awareness of target stakeholders and institutions, at national, regional and continental levels.
6. Support development of NQFs policies, partnerships, and roadmaps for implementation – working in partnership with EU delegations, AUC, partners from African business community and civil society including relevant women’s rights organisations.
7. Cooperate with AfCFTA on skills and qualifications standards for the priority sectors.
8. Support networking and partnerships with relevant stakeholders and organisations from the world of work and qualifications systems.
9. Engage in cooperation with European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and other relevant international frameworks and networks towards global transparency of qualifications.
10. Establish and strengthen capacities and resources of the ACQF governance and implementation setting.

On options for ACQF governance: There are 5 operational referencing (regional) qualifications frameworks in the world, but none is governed by a higher education accreditation agency. The roles and responsibilities of accreditation and quality assurance and those of qualifications frameworks are not overlapping, and do not have the same scope of work – they complement each other. Several important features differentiate the ACQF from PAQAA, notably the landscape of stakeholders, the main objectives, the scope (lifelong learning for ACQF, much wider and complex than Higher education) and the main instruments. ACQF is about referencing NQFs, supporting access and equity in access to qualifications by promoting RPL, contributing to AfCFTA with new common qualifications profiles, information-

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO. Addis Convention. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49282&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html#STATE\\_PARTIES](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49282&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html#STATE_PARTIES).

Adopted on 12/12/2014 and entered into force on 15/11/2019.



sharing via the ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) and cooperating with other Regional Qualifications Frameworks in the world.

Considering the plans and needs of the period 2022–26, in which ACQF implementation should be initiated, the governance setting of the ACQF (Scenario 2) can be envisaged in a combination of functions:

- Political steering: AUC
- Implementation management: Professionally competent and credible structure. Two options can be considered:
  - a) Network / Association of NQF Agencies (to be established) – this option meets more specifically the scope and needs of the ACQF; b) Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (PAQAA), if future set-up and mandate encompasses all levels and subsectors of education and training, including non-formal and informal learning, and if enabled to carry out the functions of ACQF. In both cases, ACQF implementation will require: (i) Implementation unit staffed with trained and competent experts covering the range of thematic areas of the ACQF and mandated to implement all activities; (ii) ACQF Board with a mandate to oversee and report on management of ACQF activities. Diverse sources of funding to be considered to maximise sustainability as the ACQF grows in maturity and the ownership by African stakeholders and the AUC is reinforced.
- Stakeholders' engagement in policy process, buy-in and further development of the ACQF: ACQF Advisory Group (renewed and strengthened), including networks, unions and associations: students, sectoral organisations, labour market players, social partners, education and training organisations.

In the first phase of the project (2019-2022), an Advisory Group chaired by the AUC, comprising 39 representatives from the AU Member States (qualification and quality assurance agencies/authorities), the RECs, regional professional organisations/associations, employers' associations, business councils, and international organisations, has been set up to oversee the consultation process in the development of the ACQF policy and the technical guidelines. Following the nature of this action, this Advisory Group will evolve into a council/strategic committee to support/coordinate/steer the implementation of ACQF. The composition of the Strategic Committee will reflect the policy implementation mandate, meaning that it will include the AUC participating in the overall coordination and political steering role, but also key partners, including the private sector, professional associations, and other regional and international organizations, that will be directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the project.

To build the premises for sustainability, the project will promote an implementation model combining a) technical competence for operationalisation and implementation of ACQF functions, organised as an implementation unit embedded in the Network of Qualifications Agencies and b) political support and steering based on the policy role of AUC, CESA Clusters, AfCFTA Secretariat and other relevant AU bodies. This model allocates organisation, management and monitoring of technical functions to a unit with the required know-how, competence and time; and liberates from technical tasks those AU entities and Clusters whose value added lies with their policy and political role.

- Implementation of the ACQF functions, especially referencing, RPL and international cooperation must be based on technical competence, therefore the project builds capacity, technical tools and a specific MIS, as an investment in sustainable operations going forward. This capacity will be linked to a sustainable implementation unit, possibly linked with the Network of qualifications agencies and stakeholders. This model holds promise in terms of ownership by African qualifications agencies and stakeholders, buy-in in ACQF process by the relevant stakeholders, build-up of African expertise to move the ACQF forward and continuity.
- Political and local financial/budgetary support and steering of the ACQF process is another fundamental success factor for future sustainability. To this end, the project will foster interactions with the relevant AUC units, with CESA Clusters, AfCFTA secretariat and other AU bodies. The AUC will be part of project steering and of the governance of Network of qualifications agencies.

The project will build on the essential foundations laid out in the first phase that include policy and technical document with action plan and guidelines, analyses, capacity development programme and website. The key areas of intervention for the next phase will be setting up and strengthening a sustainable governance arrangement for implementation, widening capacity development to countries and stakeholders, establishing a database of qualifications and frameworks, deploying a campaign for recognition of prior learning and developing common profiles of qualifications relevant for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in partnership with sectoral-professional organisations and business associations.. The project outputs and activities related with countries qualifications frameworks will be implemented in synergy and cooperation with EU Delegations in charge of national envelopes.

At the African Union level, for the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025), a group of implementing partners are structured in the so-called CESA Thematic Clusters. These Clusters provide an umbrella cooperation and support for the implementation of the various CESA Strategic Objectives by tapping into the capabilities and buy-in of the various stakeholder groups, thereby enhancing stakeholder ownership of the African Union

Continental vision. There are 12 CESA Thematic Clusters, and some of their coordinating agencies and members participate in the ACQF Advisory Group –it is the case of the TVET Cluster, Curriculum Cluster, Teacher Cluster and Early Childhood Education Cluster. Cooperation activities have been jointly implemented with some of the clusters, e.g. the first African School Curriculum Mapping Study (ACQF and Curriculum Cluster) and peer learning activities. Depending on the status of CESA Clusters and their capabilities in the period of the Action, the most relevant Clusters can be further involved in the implementation of specific activities of the Action. This will provide added capacity for effective implementation, local / national ownership of the activities of this action, and support synergy and complementarity with CESA’s processes, goals and monitoring.

### 3.6. Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain (e): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (e): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to improved mobility and access to 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.	1 Level of mobility of learners and workers between countries and sectors. Data disaggregated by sex.	1 2	1 2	1. ACQF MIS and monitoring system 2. National statistics 3. AUC statistics	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	1 Strengthened capacities a continental (AU), national and regional levels enabling the implementation of the ACQF functions and services.	1.1 Level of satisfaction of participants of training programmes and other capacity development activities. Data disaggregated by sex and countries. 1.2 Level of mobilisation of trained coaches and facilitators in ACQF implementation unit and in countries support activities. Data disaggregated by sex. 1.3 Level of collaborations with education and training institutions, such as teacher training institutes, and with employers' associations and professional bodies for delivery of ACQF training programmes.	1.1 1.2	1.1 1.2	ACQF MIS and monitoring system National statistics AUC statistics	The ongoing process, and the political momentum, in the development of national and regional qualifications framework will be maintained.
Outcome 2	2. Increased number of operational NQFs/NQS	1.4 Level of expansion and operationalisation of NQFs in new countries. 1.5 Number of NQFs moving from early thinking stage to advanced development and consultation stage. 1.6 NQF country profiles and ACQF regional profiles produced and disseminated. 1.7 Active participation and satisfaction of employers associations in the set-				

		up and implementation of NQF/NQS.				
<b>Outcome 3</b>	3. ACQF implementation capacity and systems established for referencing NQF (and RQFs) to ACQF, qualifications platform for information-sharing and monitoring, recognition of prior learning, development of qualifications for priority sectors of AfCFTA, and cooperation with the EQF and other international networks.	<p>2.1 Level of use and recognition of RPL certificates in labour mobility and employment.</p> <p>2.2 Level of adoption and use of ACQF digital Qualifications Platform at national, regional and continental level (number of qualifications, number of countries).</p> <p>2.3 Level of expansion of data-sharing between countries on qualifications and systems.</p> <p>2.4 At least 30% of NQFs at operational stage are referenced to ACQF using the Guidelines and digital tool.</p> <p>2.5 At least 10 EU Delegations cooperate and benefit from ACQF project activities and expertise for national / regional portfolios and programming.</p> <p>2.6 Adopted plan of cooperation and comparison with EQF.</p>	<p>2.2 No NQF referenced to ACQF</p> <p>2.2 No countries</p>	<p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p>	<p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p>	<p>The AUC plays its political support role and contributes to engaging countries and regions.</p> <p>The qualifications agencies and stakeholders from different countries and regions activate the Network.</p>
	...					
<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 1</b>	ACQF capacity development, awareness raising and partnerships activities expanded to all countries and regions, and include partners from the world of work, social partners, education and training institutions, innovation and technological sectors, informal sector, civil society.	<p>1.1.1 Number of awareness raising trainings and advocacy campaigns,</p> <p>1.1.2 Number of people trained (disaggregated by country, sex, age and disability if possible)</p> <p>1.1.3 Number of African organisations receiving and applying know-how in their national context.</p> <p>1.1.4 Number of regional and country NQF profiles produced and disseminated</p>	<p>1.1.1</p> <p>1.1.2</p>	<p>1.1.1</p> <p>1.1.2</p>	<p>1.1.1</p> <p>1.1.2</p>	
<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 2</b>	Increased number of NQFs in African countries at stage 4-5 (approved, implementation started and advanced)	2.1.1 Number of countries with NQFs at stage of approval and implementation started.				



	equipped with qualifications database and monitoring system.	2.1.2 Number of countries with NQFs at stage of advanced implementation and review / renewal of the NQF.				
<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 3</b>	2.1 ACQF governance partnership and operational setting established to implement and monitor the ACQF Action Plan (2022-2026). ACQF Management Information System (ACQF MIS), comprising qualifications information-sharing platform, ACQF referencing tools, and monitoring and data system is established and operational, and training delivered to assure effective deployment and maintenance. Cooperation with EQF and other relevant international frameworks is established.	2.1.1 Level of operationalization of the ACQF governance and operational setting. 2.1.2 Level of use of ACQF website, tools, capacity development programmes by countries, regions and stakeholders groups 2.1.3 Level of use of ACQF MIS and dissemination of information to relevant stakeholders. 2.1.4 Number of joint activities and information-sharing with EQF	2.1.1 2.1.2	2.1.1 2.1.2	2.1.1 2.1.2	
<b>Output 2 related to Outcome 3</b>	2.2 National qualifications frameworks (NQF) referenced to ACQF, in accordance with ACQF Guidelines	2.2.1. Number of NQFs referenced to ACQF. 2.2.2. Number of referenced NQFs sharing good practice with other interested countries and regions.				
<b>Output 3 related to Outcome 3</b>	2.3. Increased access to skills recognition systems and established a common approach for inclusive and trusted validation and certification of skills and learning from all contexts (non-formal, informal, work-based).	2.3.1. At least 15 countries from different regions participate in the RPL /VAE campaign and apply the technical-methodological package in their national RPL / VAE systems. 2.3.2 Share of successful RPL projects in the involved countries and data reported by ACQF MIS.				
<b>Output 4 related to Outcome 3</b>	2.4. Developed new profiles and standards of qualifications of different levels fit for the priority and emerging sectors and occupations in the context of AfCFTA, and information disseminated.	2.4.1 Level of use of common qualifications profiles by sectoral-professional bodies and companies involved in AfCFTA. 2.4.2 Number of new profiles and standards of qualifications used by				

		education and training providers in Africa. 2.4.3 Number of qualifications based on new profiles which are registered in NQFs databases / registers.				
--	--	---	--	--	--	--

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the partner territory.

### 4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 2 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 51 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

### 4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4.3.1 Indirect Management with a pillar assessed entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management with the European Training Foundation (ETF) which is a EU specialised traditional agency. This implementation entails the achievement of specific objective 1, 2 and 3 and the execution of the corresponding outputs and activities applying the relevant budget and project implementation tasks: planning and monitoring of the thematic and technical activities; supporting and coaching the involved experts and AUC staff; monitoring and managing contracts; carrying out payments, management of procurements and recruitments, allocating expertise to execute project activities, facilitating networking and cooperation.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: regional organisation with sound long-standing experience in the domain of qualifications frameworks and systems proven by list of projects, research activities, publications and availability of a permanent project team of qualifications experts; experience and a mandate to work on education and training systems and reforms, labour markets policies, lifelong learning, skills anticipation and matching, and a permanent member of the Advisory Group of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) involved in the advancement of the international dimension of the EQF.

#### 4.3.2 Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

In case the envisaged entity would need to be replaced, the Commission's services may select another replacement entity using the same criteria. If the entity is replaced, the decision to replace it needs to be justified.

### 4.4. Indicative Budget

<sup>5</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

<b>Indicative Budget components</b>	<b>EU contribution (amount in EUR)</b>	<b>Third-party contribution, in currency identified<sup>6</sup></b>
<b>Implementation modalities</b> – cf. section 4.3 Indirect Management with European Training Foundation Contribution in Kind by the European Training Foundation contribution*		EUR 850 000
<b>Specific Objective 1</b> composed of	2 100 000	
Strengthen capacities at continental (AU), national and regional levels enabling the implementation of the ACQF functions and services.		
<b>Specific Objective 2</b> composed of	500 000	
Support the development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks and systems, and cooperation with regional qualifications frameworks.		
<b>Specific Objective 3</b> composed of	2 400 000	
Set-up and operationalise the ACQF systems for delivery of the services and results in (i) referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems and ACQF, (ii) ACQF qualifications management system, (iii) recognition of skills and qualifications, (iv) cooperation with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), (v) cooperation with AfCFTA in development of qualifications for priority sectors and inclusive economic integration.		
<b>Evaluation</b> – cf. section 5.2 <b>Audit</b> – cf. section 5.3	It will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
<b>Communication and visibility</b> – cf. section 6	N.A.	N.A.
		N.A.
<b>Totals</b>	5 000 000	850 000

#### 4.5. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Distinction is made between the structures for the implementation of this action and the structures for the implementation of the ACQF as a policy instrument of the African Union. The former deals with the governance arrangements for the execution of tasks that will be envisaged in the Contribution Agreement with ETF; and the latter refers to the mandate for implementation that will be foreseen in the policy document (cf Section 3.5 for more details on the indicative implementation arrangement of the ACQF policy instrument).

**Regarding the implementation of this action:** the EU Delegation to the African Union will be the delegation in charge of the programme. A Steering Committee gathering representatives from the EU, the African Union, ETF, and other relevant partners involved in the implementation of the different components of the action will be set-up

<sup>6</sup> See annex 1 for information from countries on the development of their National Qualification Frameworks, lead institutions and source of funding.

and will meet twice a year and advise a smaller project management committee that meets regularly, at least quarterly. The Steering Committee will ensure the strategic overview of the action and oversee and validate annual work plans and reports, and ensure adequate co-ordination between all institutions involved. Both committees will be supported by programme support structure that will be hosted by ETF. The AUC, particularly, will provide high level political steering and orientation. However, given the nature and organisation of the AUC, operations of ACQF are not to be directly carried out by the AUC. The AUC Education division will be resourced with one staff capacity seconded by ETF to support the continental steering and coordination, as adequate to needs and considering the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

As implementation agency, ETF will mobilise a project group/programme support structure composed of in-house qualifications and recognition experts, digital learning and communications team and project management and procurement team. ETF will further support and ascertain maintenance and upgrades of ACQF website and related tools, networks, and content. ETF Policy Advice Unit will play the lead and coordinating role, and will be supported by the thematic project 'Qualifications' and the Project Management Unit for financial management and procurement. ETF will also mobilise its networks and good relations, especially with EQF and other instruments related with the Skills Agenda for Europe (2020) that are relevant for cooperation with ACQF, such as the Pact for Skills (notably the Blueprint for sectoral cooperation in skills), the Europass platform and European digital credentials for learning.

To ascertain synergy, coherence and value-added, and building on the engagements under the current project, ETF will communicate and cooperate with EU delegations in charge of bilateral cooperation portfolios, share relevant technical information, consider recommendations related with the policy and institutional panorama of the countries, and the relevant stakeholders and social partners and plan joint organisation of certain activities as adequate and feasible. Similar cooperation can be activated with the EU Delegations to regions if the support actions can be maximised by involving the Regional Economic Community (REC).

ETF will structure the activities and allocate the resources to support ACQF implementation, applying a combination of coaching and "twinning" support, applying a practical learning methodology, within the context of the established partnership and governance setting. Capacity development programme targeting the national and regional qualification authorities as well as other stakeholders, social partners will be implemented particularly on developing the qualifications management and monitoring digital tools. In terms of technical expertise, ETF will facilitate the deployment of relevant thematic expertise mobilised in-house, and in African countries and Europe.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

## 5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

### 5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix. Indicators shall be disaggregated at least by sex. All monitoring and reporting shall assess how the action is taking into account the human rights-based approach and support to gender equality.

In collaboration with the relevant EU Delegations, the AUC and the Regional Economic Communities, the implementing partner will be in constant exchange and communication with all local partners to ensure timely implementation of activities and political steering.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

The implementing partner will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on indicators of the logframe matrix, including the collection of baselines and data collection in the inception phase of the action.

## 5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants or through a joint mission via an implementing partner.

It will be carried out for problem solving, accountability and learning purposes at various levels, taking into account in particular the fact that several innovative approaches will be tested in the evolving landscape of African qualifications framework which will produce valuable lessons learnt for the way forward. This evaluation will be undertaken in close collaboration with participating organizations.

All evaluations shall assess to what extent the action is taking into account the human rights-based approach as well as how it contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment. Expertise on human rights and gender equality will be ensured in the evaluation team.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with partner countries and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

The evaluation will be gender and human rights sensitive, assess gender equality and human rights results and implementation of rights-based approach working principles (participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency).

## 5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

# 6. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

It will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations or Headquarters to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

## APPENDIX 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

An Intervention<sup>7</sup> (also generally called project/programme) is the operational entity associated to a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Interventions are the most effective (hence optimal) entities for the operational follow-up by the Commission of its external development operations. As such, Interventions constitute the base unit for managing operational implementations, assessing performance, monitoring, evaluation, internal and external communication, reporting and aggregation.

Primary Interventions are those contracts or groups of contracts bearing reportable results and respecting the following business rule: 'a given contract can only contribute to one primary intervention and not more than one'. An individual contract that does not produce direct reportable results and cannot be logically grouped with other result reportable contracts is considered a 'support entities'. The addition of all primary interventions and support entities is equivalent to the full development portfolio of the Institution.

Primary Interventions are identified during the design of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).

The level of the Primary Intervention is defined in the related Action Document and it is revisable; it can be a(n) (group of) action(s) or a (group of) contract(s).

Tick in the left side column one of the three possible options for the level of definition of the Primary Intervention(s) identified in this action.

In the case of 'Group of actions' level, add references to the present action and other action concerning the same Primary Intervention.

In the case of 'Contract level', add the reference to the corresponding budgetary items in point 4.3.2, Indicative Budget.

<b>Option 1: Action level</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
<b>Option 2: Group of actions level</b>		
<b>Option 3: Contract level</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	Contribution Agreement

<sup>7</sup> [ARES \(2021\)4204912](#) - For the purpose of consistency between terms in OPSYS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI have harmonised 5 key terms, including 'action' and 'Intervention' where an 'action' is the content (or part of the content) of a Commission Financing Decision and 'Intervention' is a coherent set of activities and results which constitutes an effective level for the operational follow-up by the EC of its operations on the ground. See more on the [concept of intervention](#).