RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SKILLS AND EQF (LEARNING OUTCOMES) AREA IN EUROPE

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EUROPEAN
YEAR OF
SKILLS

Changing labour markets

Atypical forms of work

More frequent professional transitions

Shifting employment between sectors

Shifting skills needs

Demographic changes

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Skills shortages as a *challenge* and skilled workforce as an *enabler*

38 occupations were classified as shortages in 2022

74% of SMEs reported that they face skills shortages in 2023

adult learning remains low - with a participation rate of around **37%**

over 90% of jobs require digital skills, however **54% of the adult** population in Europe has **basic digital skills**

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Why a European Year of Skills?

To further promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling

Investment
Increased, more effective and inclusive investment

Skills relevance
Strengthening skills relevance by close cooperation

Matching aspirations
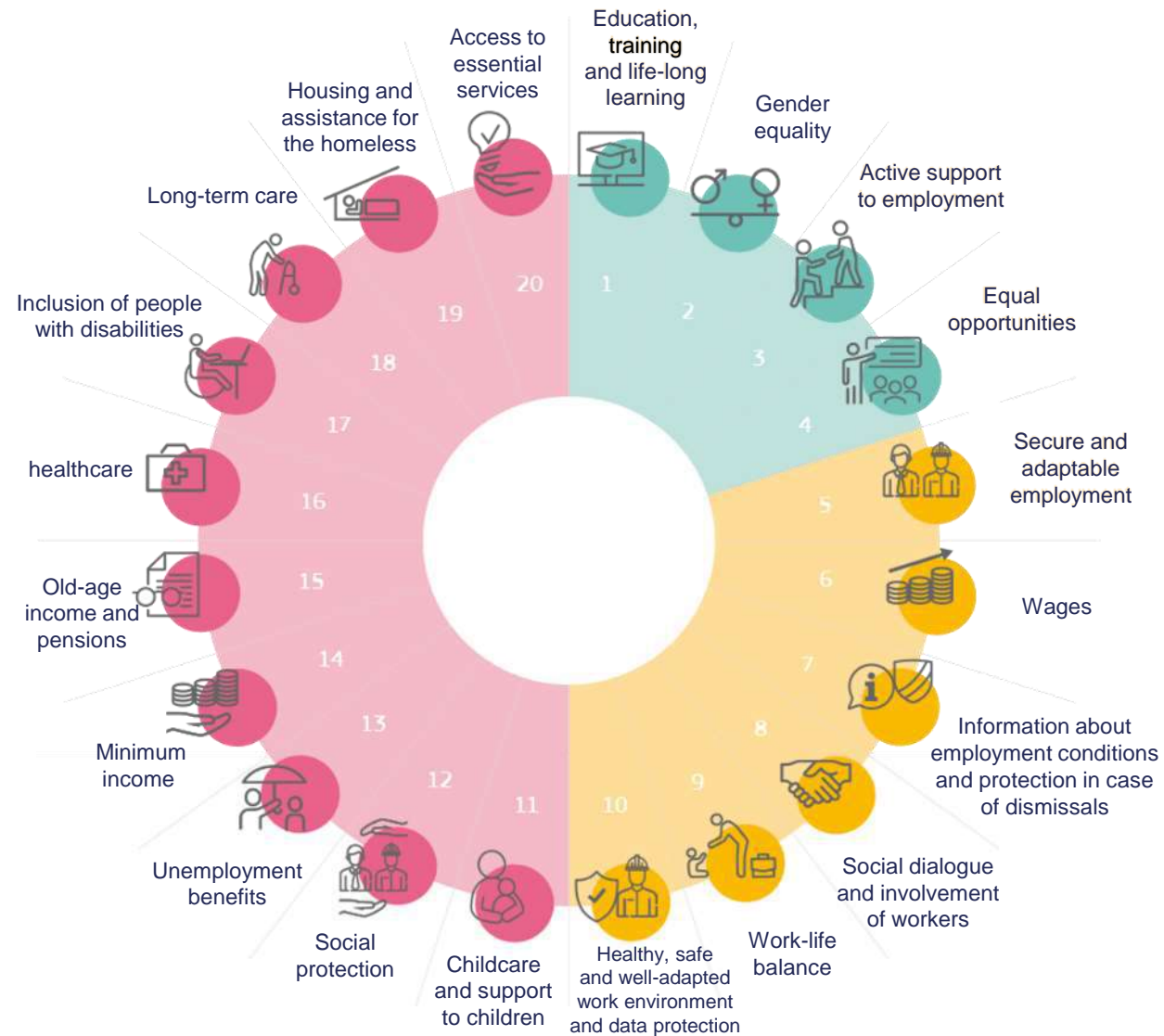Matching people's aspirations and skills-set with labour market opportunities

Attracting third country talent
Attracting people from third countries with the skills needed

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European Pillar of Social Rights

News ▾   Events   Programme ▾   Presidency ▾   Media ▾   🔍

Press release | 16 April 2024

EU, social partners and civil society renew their commitment to a social Europe

Family photo | © Belgian presidency

At the High-Level Conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights today in La Hulpe in Belgium, the EU, social partners and civil society have renewed their commitment to a stronger social Europe.

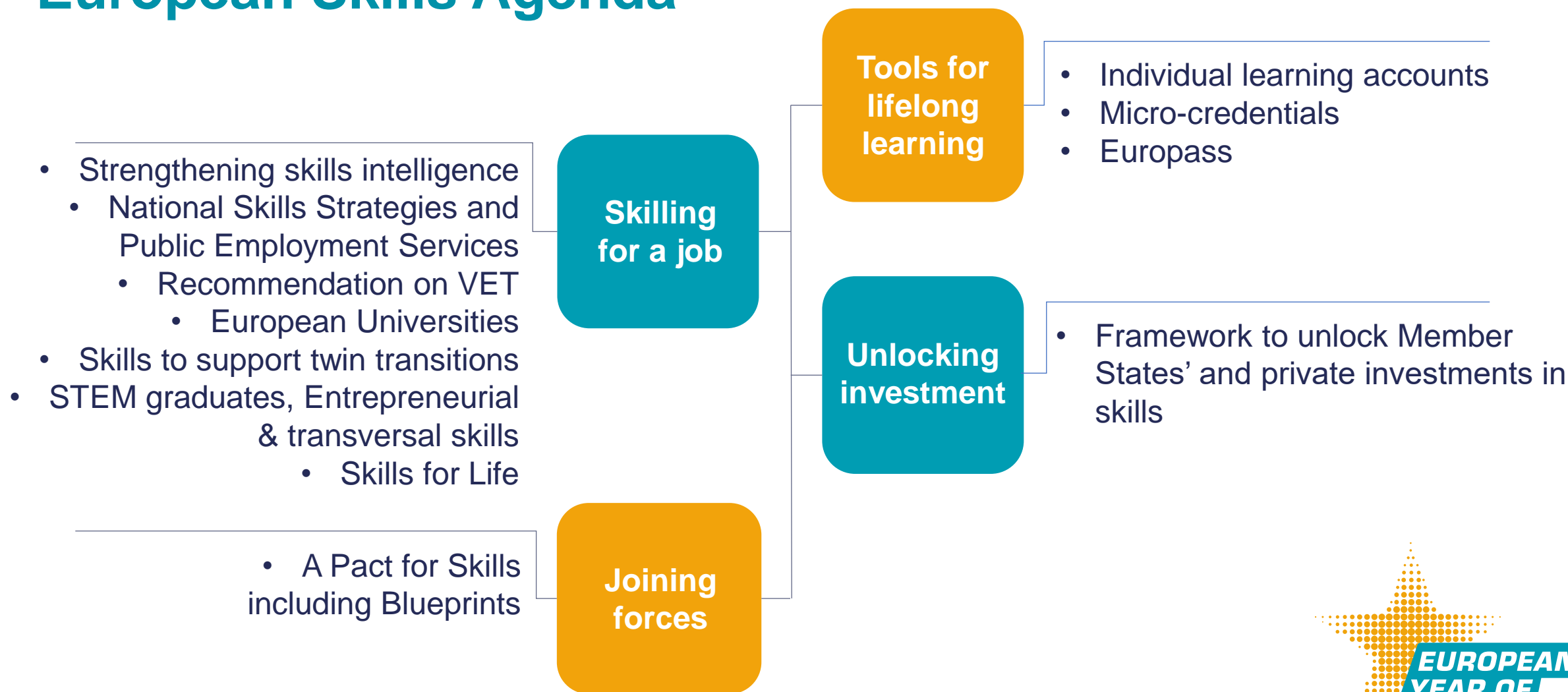# European Pillar of Social Rights - Targets

(2021 → 2030)

At least: **78%** of the population aged 20 to 64 should **be in employment** by 2030

Current level: 73.1% (2019)

60% of all adults should **participate in training** every year by 2030

Current level: 37.4% (2016)

Reduce by **15 million** the number of people at **risk of poverty or social exclusion** by 2030

Current level: 91 million persons (2019)

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European Skills Agenda

- Strengthening skills intelligence
  - National Skills Strategies and Public Employment Services
    - Recommendation on VET
      - European Universities
- Skills to support twin transitions
- STEM graduates, Entrepreneurial & transversal skills
  - Skills for Life

Skilling for a job

Tools for lifelong learning

- Individual learning accounts
- Micro-credentials
- Europass

Unlocking investment

- Framework to unlock Member States' and private investments in skills

- A Pact for Skills including Blueprints

Joining forces

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20 Large Scale Skills Partnerships now launched in all key industrial ecosystems.

Together, committed to provide **up- and reskilling opportunities to over 10 million people** in the coming years.

Most recent partnerships: Health Industry and Digitalisation of the Energy System (December 2023).

More than 1,500 joined the Pact from all Member States and sectors.

Now **focus on** developing **the regional dimension** of the Pact and, in particular, promoting the establishment of **new regional skills partnerships**. Two partnerships launched in Lombardy Region and in the European Chemical Regions Network. Three more in preparation.

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Individual Learning Accounts

Objective:
- support **all working-age adults** to access training, including for professional transitions and **irrespective of their labour force or professional status;**
- increase individuals' incentives and **motivation** to seek training.

Targeting
- Universal but differentiated support

Single portal

Registry

Guidance

Individual learning accounts

Paid training leave

Validation
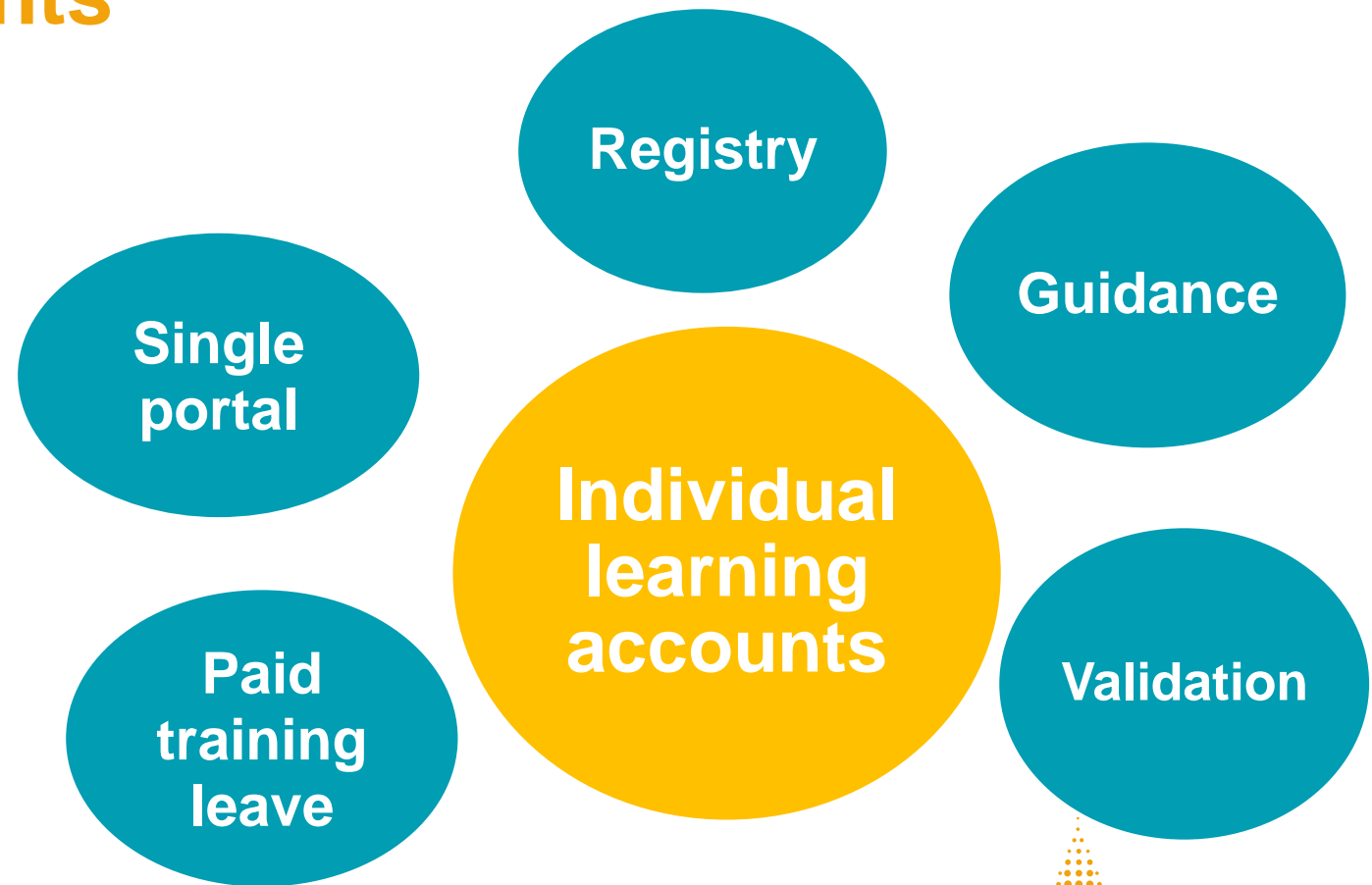
Council Recommendation of June 2022 on individual learning accounts

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Micro-credentials

Council Recommendation of June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials

Targeted, relevant learning
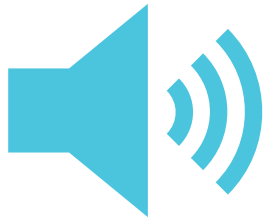
Small volume, short in duration

Flexibility to fit with how people live, learn and work

Potential benefits for the workplace

- improve employee motivation
- improve retention of employees
- build a culture of continuing professional development
- support speedier responses to needs of employers
- flexible upskilling and reskilling relevant to labour market needs

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Rationale of the Council Recommendation

Quality	Trust	Uptake

To make micro-credentials more **comparable** and **understandable**

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European Commission

Ongoing work on micro-credentials

Reporting on the Council Recommendation by Member States

Erasmus+ Policy Experimentation Call

Peer Learning Activity May 2024

European Commission

Further research on micro-credentials

Micro-credentials for labour market education and training

1. *Mapping microcredentials in EU labour-market-related education and training* (Octuber 2022).
2. *Microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems* (February 2023).
3. *Microcredentials and the added value for end-users* (December 2023).

Guide to design, issue and recognise micro-credentials (May 2023).

Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (March 2023).

Public policies for effective micro-credential learning (December 2023).

Micro-credential policy implementation in Finland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain (December 2023).

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

- A **translation grid** for qualifications across countries

- Defined in terms of **learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills, responsibility & autonomy)

- 8-Level reference framework, covering **all types and all levels of qualifications**

CHALLENGE

Education and training systems differ across countries. Qualifications are diverse and reflect national rules and traditions.

WIDER IMPACTS

- Employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners
- Foster lifelong learning
- Modernising education and training systems

OBJECTIVES

To improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications

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Structure of the draft European guidelines for short descriptions

1. **Introduction**
   1. The importance of short learning-outcomes based descriptions of qualifications
   2. Aim of guidelines
   3. Users and application of the guidelines
   4. Scope of the guidelines
   5. Use of short learning outcomes descriptions
   6. How to navigate the guidelines
   7. Additional considerations
2. **Learning outcomes-based short descriptions: main building blocks**
   1. Formal aspects
   2. Content aspects
3. **Useful links and resources**
4. **Annexes**
   1. Action verbs
   2. Qualifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
   3. EQF level descriptors
   4. Examples

Images and tables
Explanations
Examples
Guiding questions
Recommendations
Tips and considerations
Links and resources
Annexes

Elements for data fields for the electronic publication of information on qualifications with an EQF level

DATA			Required/Optional
Title of the qualification			Required
Field (*)			Required
Country/Region code			Required
EQF level			Required
Description of the qualification (**)	Either:	Knowledge	Required
		Skills	Required
		Responsibility and autonomy	Required
	Or	Open text field describing what the learner is expected to know, understand and able to do	Required
Awarding body or competent authority (**)			Required
Credit points/notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes			Optional
Internal quality assurance processes			Optional
External quality assurance/regulatory body			Optional
Further information on the qualification			Optional
Source of information			Optional
Link to relevant supplement			Optional
URL of the qualification			Optional
Information language (code)			Optional
Entry requirements			Optional
Expiry date (if relevant)			Optional

Annex VI EQF Recommendation

Example of short description

Qualification: Clinical psychologist

The clinical psychologist (EQF/NQF 7) independently develops and applies the theories, methods and techniques from scientific clinical psychology in the health promotion, screening, psychological diagnostics and evaluation of health problems, as well as in the prevention, guidance and treatment of persons with care or support needs. By doing so the health care users are supported from the start both by working on their development as well as optimising their functional independence and wellbeing.

Holding the visa of clinical psychologist as determined in the Law on Mental Health Professions is a prerequisite to perform the profession.

The clinical psychologist is able to:

- draw up a psychological evaluation
- apply interventions to relieve suffering and to promote health and wellbeing of individuals, groups and organisations
- generate research and findings that contribute to the professional knowledge and/or evaluates the efficiency of diverse professional activities
- integrate research and clinical expertise in coordination with the care user and the context
- apply scientific insights and methods
- act according to the code of ethics
- develop and maintain a professional working relation with the care user
- practice the profession in a professional and societally responsible way
- develop and maintain own expertise
- reflect, carry out self-evaluation and self-care
- interact with professionals from multiple disciplines

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Learning outcomes-based short descriptions: main building blocks

A. Formal aspects

A1- Length (750 – 1500 characters without space)

A2 - Format of the description (narrative and bullet points)

B. Content aspects

B1 - Overall objectives and orientation of the qualification in the form of a narrative

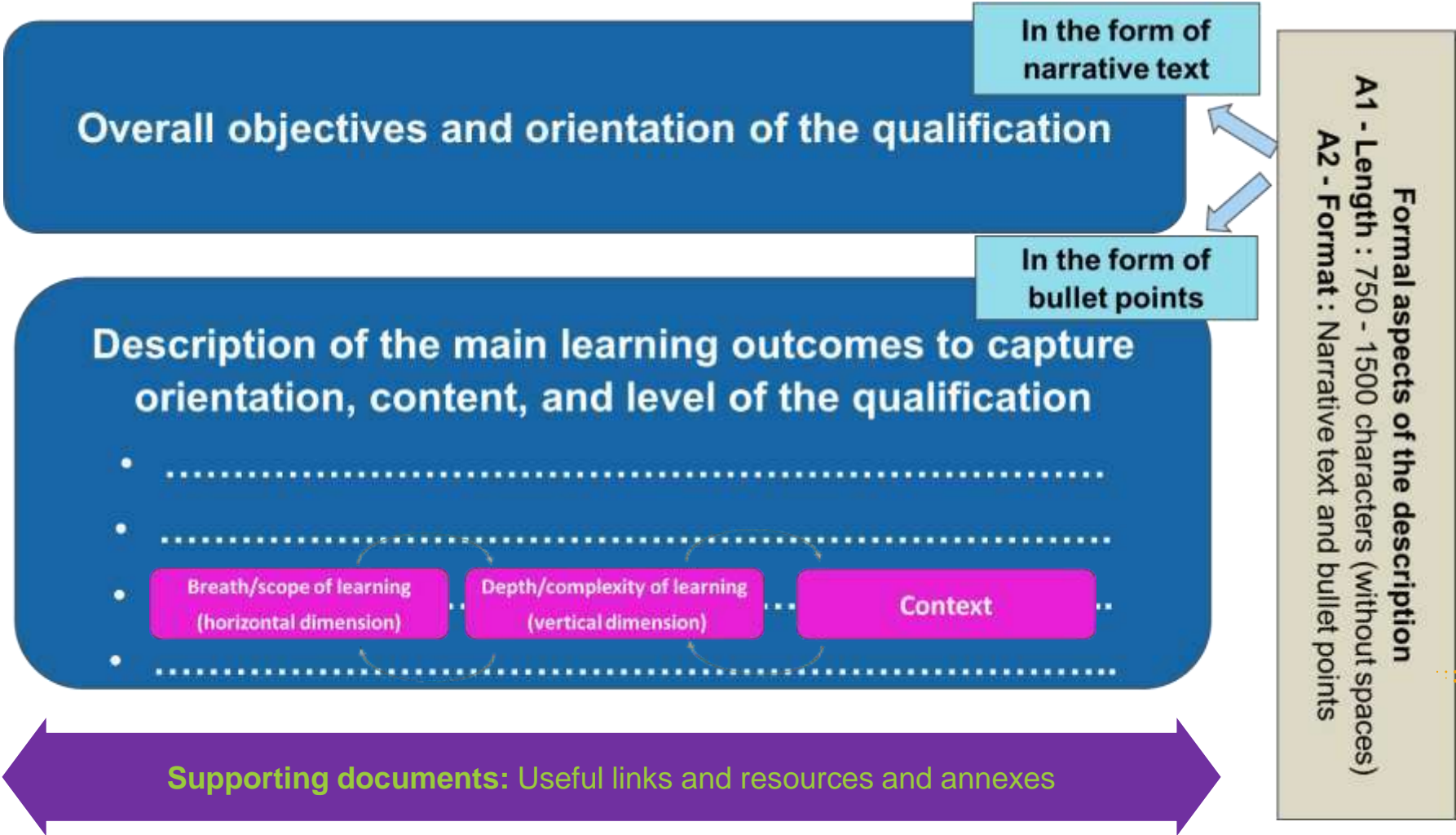**B2 - Learning outcomes in bullet points**

    B.2.1. Breadth/scope of learning acquired

    B.2.2. Depth/complexity of learning acquired

    B.2.3. Context

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"Simplified visualisation"

Overall objectives and orientation of the qualification

In the form of narrative text

Description of the main learning outcomes to capture orientation, content, and level of the qualification

In the form of bullet points

- ....
- ....
- Breath/scope of learning (horizontal dimension) — Depth/complexity of learning (vertical dimension) — Context
- ....

Supporting documents: Useful links and resources and annexes

Formal aspects of the description
A1 - Length : 750 - 1500 characters (without spaces)
A2 - Format : Narrative text and bullet points

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Europass

Europass infosite

Presents information as described on the Europass decision and the first access point to register and use the digital tools.

e-Portfolio

Set of online tools & information to manage every step of your learning and career.

Jobs, Courses, and Qualifications Search

Central database to search for courses, qualifications, accreditation throughout Europe and link with EURES

Digital skills self-assessment test

Open source tool to assess and improve digital skills. Based on the Digital Competence Framework.

Digital Credentials

Set of standards, services & software allowing institutions to issue digital, tamper-proof qualifications and other learning credentials.

europass

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Why do we need digital credentials?

Digitalising world   Security & Trust   Recognition   Showcasing Knowledge & Skills   Ownership of data

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Supporting Validation and Recognition

- **Focus on any learning achievements** (formal, non-formal, informal)

- **Verify the origin**: eSeals provide trust in origin

- **Structured data**: A single way of providing data. Improve the understanding of information and interoperability through the use of a single datamodel for learning related information (**European Learning Model**)

- **Multilingual by default**: Provide and navigate content in 29 different languages

- **Interoperability**: Aligned with existing frameworks (EQF/NQF, ISCED-F, ESCO micro-credentials recommendation, etc)

- **Accreditation**: Instantly verify whether an institution is accredited to award a certain qualification

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Transparency and Portability

487 properties describe

- Credential owner
- Organisations
- Achievements
- Activities
- Assessments
- Entitlements

Digital Credentials and ESCO

European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)

- describing, identifying and classifying professional occupations and skills relevant for the EU labour market and education and training area

- systematically showing the relations between those occupations and skills

- ELM allows allows the cross-references

Skills and Talent Mobility Package

An EU Talent Pool Regulation
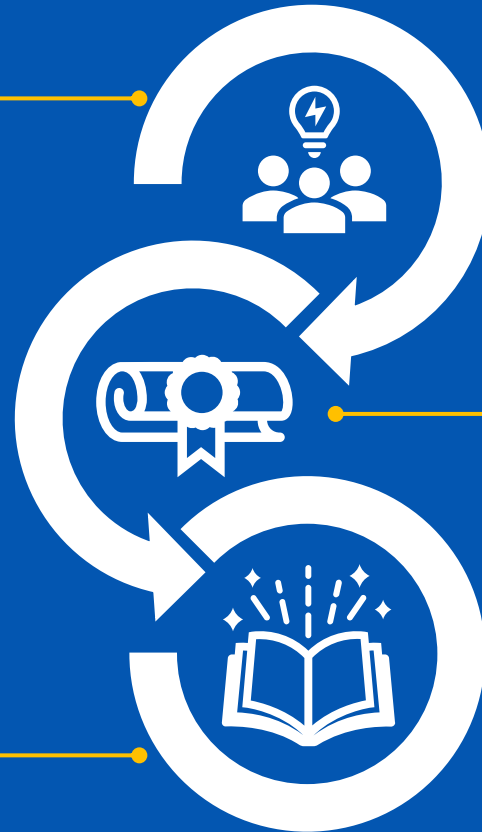
Recommendation on the recognition of third country nationals' qualifications

Recommendation on Learners' Mobility

Key labour market challenges

Geopolitics: A skilled workforce is key to the EU's competitiveness and capacity for growth and innovation

The solution starts at home: but work to upskill, reskill and activate the domestic workforce will not alone be enough

Demographic changes: Europe is an ageing society

Green: The green transition will create 1-2.5 million additional jobs by 2030

Digital: still 11 million short of the EU target of employing 20 million ICT professionals by 2030

Care sector growing needs: from 17.4 million workers in 2008 to around 22 million workers in 2022

European Commission

Outline of Commission Recommendation

Objectives
Scope
Definitions
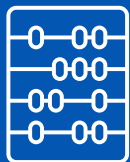
Principles

Organisation

Recognition of Professional Qualifications

Recognition of skills and qualifications for labour migration

Equal Treatment

Commission Support

European Commission

Objectives

Simplifying and expedite the recognition of the skills and qualifications of third-country nationals by Member States with a view to making the Union's labour market more attractive to third-country nationals and to facilitate their integration into the labour market in line with the needs of the Union economy and society

Procedures for the recognition of the skills and qualifications of third-country nationals should be part of **holistic, 'whole-of-government' approaches to managing the availability of skills.**

European Commission

Examples of recommendations made to Member States

- Staff development: language skills
- Data management: use European Learning Model
- Knowledge development: interoperable databases

- Pre-arrival access to recognition procedures
- Information exchange, study visits, joint projects
- Processes to authenticate documents

- User-friendly, complete and up-to-date
- Co-ordinated approaches to information provision
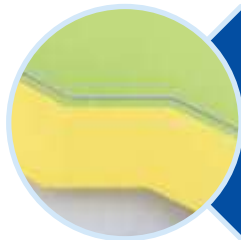
- Minimise translation requirements
- Avoid undue burden re: authentication
- Processing applications

European Commission

Commission Support

01

Facilitate exchange of information and cooperation

02

Support work on semantically interoperable databases

Continue support for ENIC-NARIC

Updates to Regulated Professions Database

Online information

03

Use Union tools and services to promote understanding

- European Training Foundation (ETF)
- European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- Europass
- Translations

European Commission

An EU Talent Pool

Open to all Skills Levels

For third country nationals worldwide, from bus drivers to doctors

Voluntary for Member States

An opt-in system leaving Member States in the driver's seat

Targeting key shortage occupations

Only where the supply already in the EU is not enough to meet the demand

A foreign policy tool

Supporting the implementation of Talent Partnerships and discouraging irregular migration

European Commission

For which shortage occupations?

Target EU-wide shortage occupations **at all skills levels**

List of EU-wide shortage occupations annexed to the Regulation based on:

Shortage occupations **common to a significant number** of participating MS [e.g. engineers, medical practitioners, nurses, IT specialists, cooks, waiters, bricklayers]

Shortage occupations **linked to the green and digital transition** [e.g. environmental, chemical mechanical engineers]

MS can adjust the list to their needs **by adding or/and removing occupations**

Registration

Jobseekers' profiles	**Rolling out good practices – using** EUROPASS profile builder
Employers' job vacancies	Registration **via National Contact Points if** within EU-wide shortage occupations **and** open to TCNs

European Commission

'Europe on the Move' proposal

EEA initiative

delivers on Commission's and Council's commitment to make learning periods abroad a reality for everyone in the EEA

Driving principles

quality and inclusion of education

Framework proposal

Covers all education and training sectors

'Europe on the Move' – key features

Aiming to make learning mobility a standard and integral part off all education and training pathways

Proposing three ambitious EU-level targets for 2030

Aiming to increase accessibility and inclusiveness of learning mobility

Special focus on Teacher mobility and Apprentice mobility

Proposed EU-level targets by 2030

At least 25% of higher education graduates

At least 15% of vocational education and training learners

At least 20% people with fewer opportunities out of all learners benefiting from learning mobility

Additional actions in the Communication

The need for a targeted approach with skills intelligence as a springboard

Strategic approach to skills intelligence, use of latest labour market data

Engaging with Member States and PES

Boosting information on recognition procedures and comparability of qualifications

Interoperable databases

Online resource hubs on skills and qualifications

EU-level tool generating statements of comparability

Extending NARICs to VET

Building trust in qualifications and skills gained in third countries

Guidance on qualifications frameworks

Comparison with EQF

Assessments on accreditation and quality assurance

Translation of EU tool facilitating skills assessments

Cooperation with third countries in the framework of Talent Partnerships

Targeted analysis of qualifications frameworks

Capacity building with support of Erasmus+

Information and cooperation on recognition of qualifications

European Commission

2024 European Degree Package

Communication on a blueprint for a European Degree

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System in higher education

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education

2024 European Degree Package

Communication on a blueprint for a European Degree

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System in higher education

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education

European degree: Policy objectives

01

Increased employability
&
skills relevance

02

Cutting red tape for increased adaptability

&

visibility of higher education systems

03

A driver of

strategic cooperation &

global competitiveness

European Commission

European degree: Policy context

1   **European strategy for universities**

2   **Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation**

3   **Erasmus+ European policy experimentation projects**

European Commission

European degree: horizontal principles

MS / Region / Institution deliver =>
Subsidiarity √
Institutional autonomy √
Academic freedom √
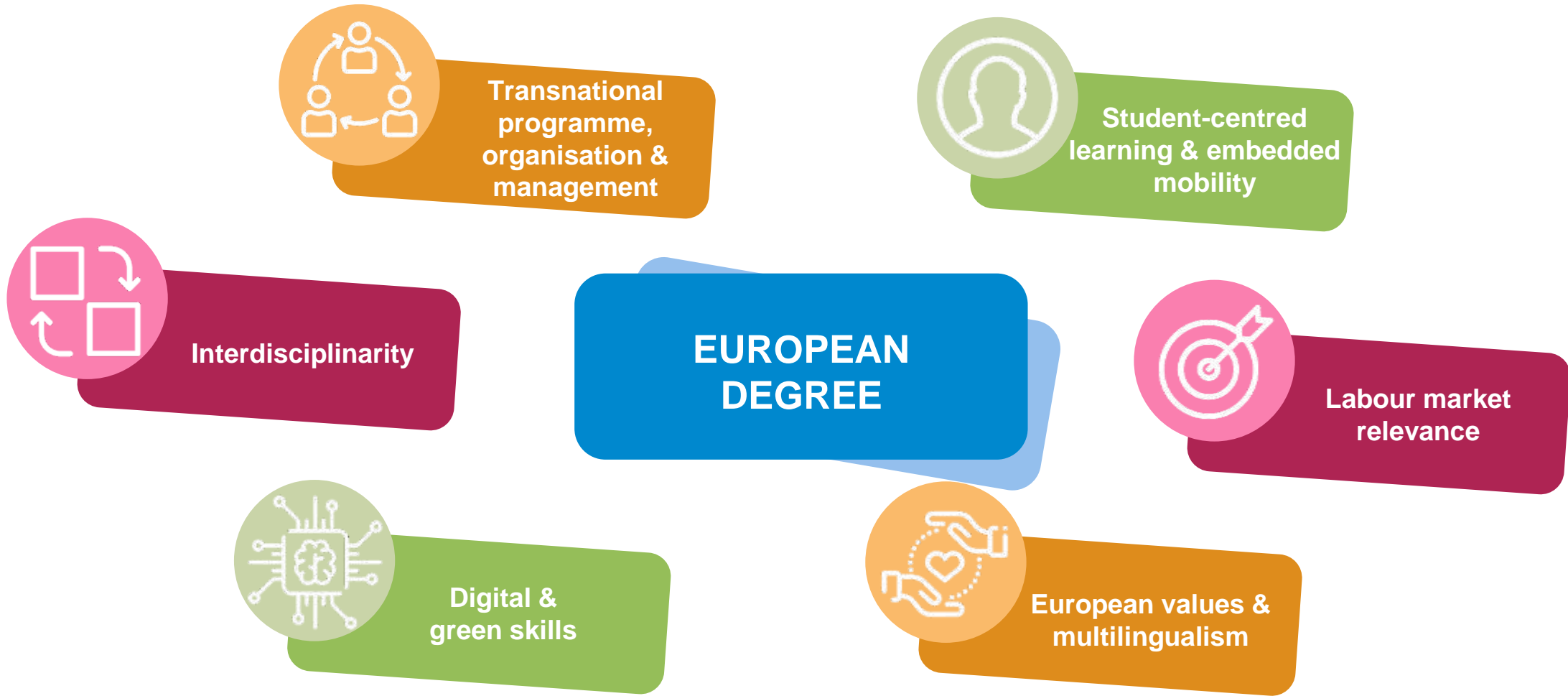
Universities award jointly - **on a voluntary basis**

Linked to existing **EU / Bologna process tools**

Cutting red tape to establish joint degrees => **less administrative burden**

Based on **common European criteria** tested & agreed with **Member States, stakeholders and HEIs**.

European Commission

Co-developed European criteria: MS & stakeholders

Transnational programme, organisation & management

Student-centred learning & embedded mobility

Interdisciplinarity

EUROPEAN DEGREE

Labour market relevance

Digital & green skills

European values & multilingualism

European Commission

European degree: main principles

NOT awarded by a European body

NOT replacing national degrees

voluntarily offered by universities

European Commission

European degree: added value

For students

Strong sense of European belonging - around common European values

More opportunities to study in several European countries - innovative & transdisciplinary approaches

Skills & competences that lead to **higher employability**

For employers

Certified highly-skilled graduates: globally-minded, multilingual & multicultural skills, adaptable, etc.

Europe as a destination for talented students to acquire labour market-relevant skills

Increased possibilities to work with universities at European scale

European degree: added value
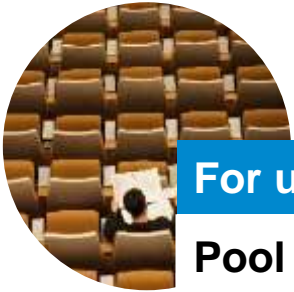
For universities

Pool resources to offer opportunities **together**

Cut red tape to setting up **more joint degree programmes**

Wider offer to students & staff

Support **internationalisation strategies**

For EU and Member States

Strengthen **global competitiveness & reputation** of European higher education systems

Attract talent from non-EU countries

Foster **balanced student & talent mobility** within the EU

Foster **European spirit of cooperation**

HOW TO GET THERE:
STEPS TOWARDS A EUROPEAN DEGREE

1

27 March 2024 The Commission proposes **European criteria** co-developed with the higher education sector **as a basis for the European degree, for adoption by the Council of the EU**

2

Development of **implementation guidelines** towards a European degree by a **European degree Policy Lab**

3

Member States to choose their entry level into the pathway towards a European degree and work towards integrating the European degree in their national or regional legislation as a new type of qualification

A preparatory European label certificate is given to students of joint degree programmes meeting the European criteria,

The **European degree** is awarded to students as a qualification following a transnational education experience either jointly by a group of universities across Europe or by a possible European legal entity established by several universities from different countries

HOW MEMBER STATES AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR WILL BE SUPPORTED:

- A **European degree Policy Lab** to develop detailed guidelines and action plans to guide the implementation of a European degree with experts from Member States, higher education institutions, quality assurance/accreditation agencies, students, and economic and social partners.

- A **new annual European degree Forum** to monitor progress and provide guidance, gathering high level representatives from Member States, key organisations in quality assurance and recognition, education social partners and representatives from economic and social partners

- **New Erasmus+ support:** for **European degree Pathway Projects** enabling Member States, together with their accreditation and quality assurance agencies, universities, students, economic and social partners, to navigate the pathway towards a European degree; and for **European degree Design Measures** to enable higher education institutions to adapt existing joint programmes or to create new ones leading to a European degree

Thank you!