

ASEM DIALOGUE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION  
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# **Regional Qualifications Frameworks: Complexities, Demands and Impacts**

**ATTY. TERESITA R. MANZALA**

Chairperson, Professional Regulation Commission

Chairperson, Task Force ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework



Republic of the Philippines

Professional Regulation Commission





# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## I. BACKGROUND

- Basis for an AQRF is derived from the **ASEAN Charter** signed by the 10 ASEAN Leaders in Singapore on **20 November 2007**, where aspirations to become a single entity that is ASEAN Community was reinforced.
- **ASEAN Charter aims:**
  1. to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the people of ASEAN and for strengthening of the ASEAN Community and
  2. to enhance the well being and livelihood of the people of ASEAN by providing them with equitable access to opportunities for human development, social welfare and justice;



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## Regional Context

ASEAN is a robust entity and has been active in building mutual economic and social cooperation between member countries.

The ASEAN region is typical of other regions in the patterns of NQF development across countries. Some have established National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), while others have a well established sectoral framework, and others are yet to develop or implement qualifications frameworks.

AQRF aims to accommodate different types of NQFs that are at different stages of development, ranging from those that are initial conceptual proposals to those that are fully developed, functioning NQFs.



# GOVERNANCE

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## Composition of Task Force on ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework

- **Chair** : PRC Chairperson Teresita Manzala (Philippines)
- **Vice-Chair** : Megawati Santoso (Indonesia)
- **Members** : Representatives from ASEAN Member States (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour/Manpower Development, other relevant Ministries and Qualification Agencies), Australia and New Zealand (non-voting members)

**Chairmanship** : 2012 - 2015



# TASK FORCE ON AQRF





# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE ON ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

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- **Mandate:** to design an ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) as a common reference framework for the region
  
- **Functions:**
  1. Promote and facilitate **peer dialogue**, sharing of knowledge and information, collective learning and support aimed towards developing mutual trust in NQFs and qualification systems between and among ASEAN Member States;
  2. **Consult** with relevant **public-private** to arrive at a consistent and national position in the development of the draft AQRF.
  3. Regularly **update the TF-AQRF**, including through inter-sessional discussions, on the outcomes of such consultations including comments and feedback on issues.
  4. The Chair shall **report the outputs** and progress of the TF-AQRF's work to the AANZFTA Committee on Trade in Services, SOM-ED and SLOM for information, input and coordination.



# Finalization of the AQRF

## □ **Structure :**

- Scope
- Purpose
- Principles
- Quality Assurance

## □ **Components of the Framework**

- Learning outcomes
- Level descriptors
- Credit or amount of learning
- linking national qualifications frameworks

## □ **Referencing**

- Referencing procedure
- Referencing criteria



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## SCOPE

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, a common reference framework, functions as a device to enable **comparisons of qualifications** across ASEAN Member States.

The AQRF addresses **education and training sectors** (incorporates informal, non formal and formal learning) and the wider objective of **promoting lifelong learning**.



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## PURPOSE

To enable comparisons of qualifications across countries that will:

1. Support **recognition** of qualifications
2. Encourage the **development of qualifications frameworks** that can facilitate lifelong learning
3. Encourage the **development of national approaches** to validating learning gained outside formal education
4. Promote and **encourage education** and learner mobility
5. **Promote worker** mobility
6. Lead to better **understood qualifications** systems
7. Promote **higher quality qualifications** systems

- will support and enhance each country's NQFs or Qualifications System while providing a mechanism to facilitate comparison, transparency and higher quality qualification systems



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA)

- A component of quality management and focused on **providing confidence** that quality requirements will be fulfilled
- Requires countries to refer to one or more established QA frameworks as the basis for the agreed QA principles and broad standards
- Used as a **benchmark for evaluating the QA systems** for the relevant education and training sectors
- **Promote QA of education** and training across the region
- Underpinned by a set of agreed QA principles and broad standards related to:
  1. The functions of the registering and accrediting agencies
  2. Systems for the assessment of learning and the issuing of qualifications
  3. Regulation of the issuance of certificates



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Emphasize **the results of learning** rather than focusing on inputs such as length of study and **support the transfer of qualifications**, including credit transfer and recognition of non-formal and informal learning\
- To facilitate the **linking of NQFs levels against the levels in the AQRF**, NQFs or Qualification Systems should have qualifications demonstrably based on learning outcomes
- A **hierarchy of levels of complexity of learning** which use learning outcomes as the metric for the hierarchy



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

- ❑ Aim to provide a **reference point** for the levels in NQFs and Qualification Systems
- ❑ To facilitate the referencing process the AQRF is based on broad level of descriptors
- ❑ Has **8 levels of complexity** of learning outcomes expressed as descriptors



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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It includes:

- ❑ **Cognitive competence** involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially
- ❑ **Functional competence** (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area
- ❑ **Personal competence** involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation
- ❑ **Ethical competence** involving the possession of certain personal and professional values



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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Level Descriptors include two domains

1. Knowledge and skills
2. Application/responsibility



	Knowledge and skills	Application and Responsibility
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is basic, general knowledge</li> <li>▪ involve simple, straightforward and routine actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ involve structured routine processes</li> <li>▪ involve close levels of support and supervision</li> </ul>
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is general and factual</li> <li>▪ involve use of standard processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ involve structured processes</li> <li>▪ involve supervision and some discretion for judgement on resolving familiar issues</li> </ul>
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ includes general principles and some conceptual aspects</li> <li>▪ involve selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ are stable with some aspects subject to change</li> <li>▪ involve general guidance and require judgement and planning to resolve some issues independently.</li> </ul>



	Knowledge and skills	Application and Responsibility
LEVEL 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is technical and theoretical with general coverage of a field</li> <li>involve adapting processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are generally predictable but subject to change</li> <li>involve broad guidance requiring some self direction, and coordination to resolve unfamiliar issues</li> </ul>
LEVEL 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is detailed technical and theoretical knowledge of a general field</li> <li>involve analytical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are often subject to change</li> <li>involve independent evaluation of activities to resolve complex and sometimes abstract issues</li> </ul>
LEVEL 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is specialized technical and theoretical within a specific field</li> <li>involve critical and analytical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are complex and changing</li> <li>require initiative and adaptability as well as strategies to improve activities and to solve complex and abstract issues</li> </ul>



	Knowledge and skills	Application and Responsibility
<b>LEVEL 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is at the forefront of a field and show mastery of a body of knowledge</li> <li>▪ involve critical and independent thinking as the basis for research to extend or redefine knowledge or practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ are complex and unpredictable and involve the development and testing of innovative solutions to resolve issues</li> <li>▪ require expert judgement and significant responsibility for professional knowledge, practice and management</li> </ul>
<b>LEVEL 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is at the most advanced and specialised level and at the frontier of a field</li> <li>▪ involve independent and original thinking and research, resulting in the creation of new knowledge or practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ are highly specialised and complex involving the development and testing of new theories and new solutions to resolve complex, abstract issues</li> <li>▪ require authoritative and expert judgement in management of research or an organization and significant responsibility for extending professional knowledge and practice and creation of new ideas and or processes.</li> </ul>



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## **Credit or amount of learning:**

- no specification for credit or amount of learning defined in the AQRF. However, such measure could facilitate comparisons across member states that is complementary with the goals of regional qualifications frameworks.
- Countries could develop a credit or amount of learning measures within their own NQF and utilize this measure for recognition process



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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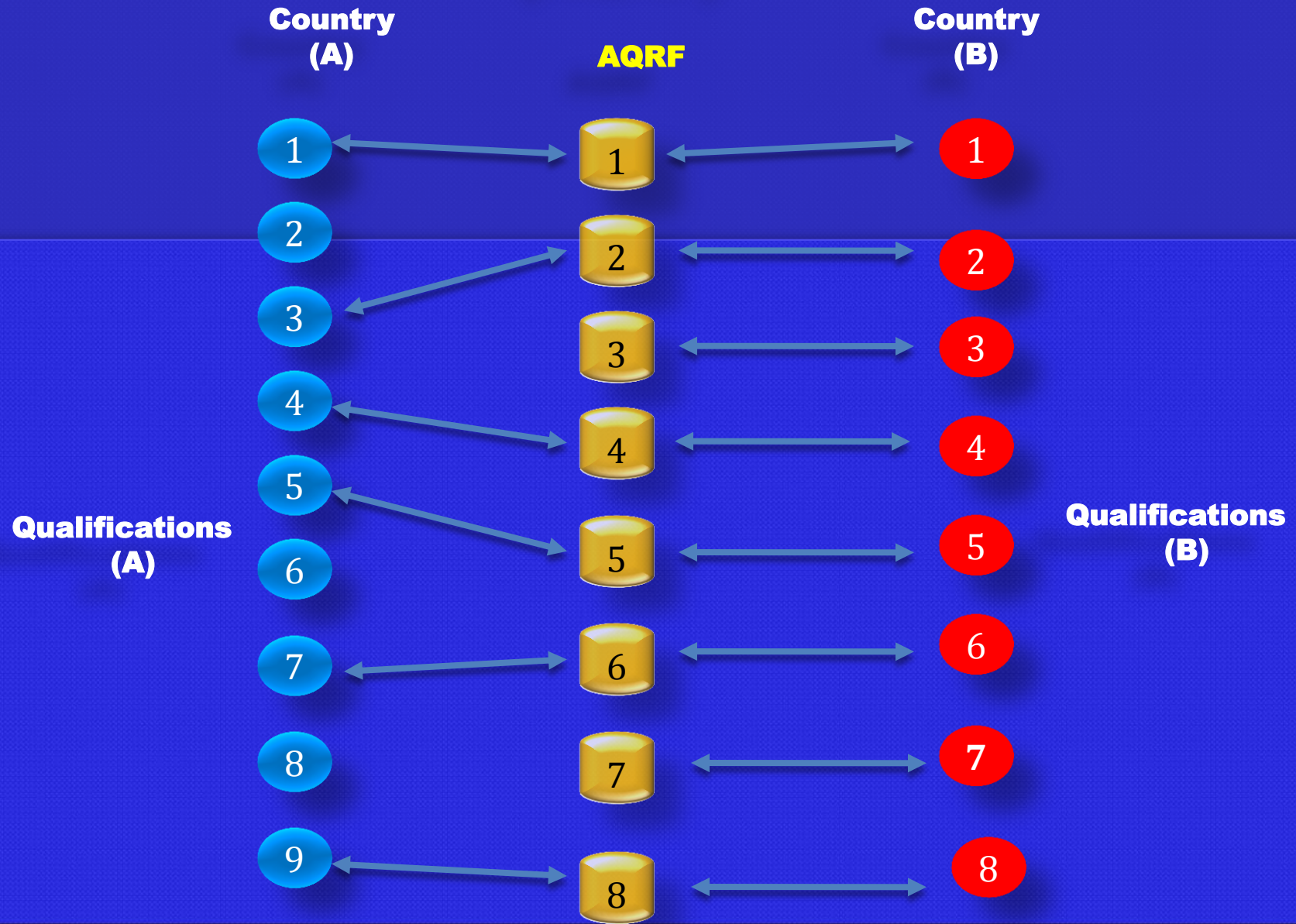
## REFERENCING PROCESS:

- ❑ For those countries **with a NQF**, identify in a broad sense the best fit of levels of the national frameworks to that of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- ❑ For those countries **without a NQF**, identify for national qualification types or for key qualifications, the best fit to the level of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- ❑ Include confirmation that the accrediting and registering agencies **meet agreed quality principles and broad standards**.

The referencing process includes a single report that is approved by major stakeholders.



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)





# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## Concept of Best Fit (Principle of benchmarking or comparability)

- Finding harmony between two sets of data (in matching NQF and AQRF level descriptors)
- It means that a qualification is not required to comply with all the descriptions of one level, but that it is positioned where the qualification best fits;
- It requires a common judgement from a range of stakeholders so that there can be confidence in the outcome of the approximation;



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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**REFERENCING PROCESS** : requires that each country sets up a REFERENCING PANEL of key stakeholders.

Panel :

1. at least 1 international representative/expert
2. observer from one of the other ASEAN Member States

## **International expert: Qualifications**

- Could be external to the ASEAN member States or internal to the ASEAN member States
- And should not be a representative of the referencing country or the observer's country



# ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

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## REFERENCING PROCEDURE :

Aims to:

1. Describe a common structure for linking NQFS to the AQRF
  2. Ensure that the linking process undertaken is robust and transparent
  3. Provide a common reporting structure for the referencing report
- **Using referencing criteria** : to optimize **consistency** and to make the process of referencing **transparent** as agreed upon by the ASEAN Member States

# REFERENCING PROCESS



1. Implementation of NQF
2. Documentation of processes, QA mechanisms
3. Referencing process (Proposed date: 2018)
4. Each country forms referencing panel
5. Panel includes international expert and one observer from another ASEAN country



# Referencing Criteria

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1. The structure of the education and training system is described
2. The responsibilities and legal basis of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the main public authority responsible for the referencing process
3. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent



# Referencing Criteria

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4. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the AQRF
5. The basis in agreed standards of the national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications is described
6. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system are described. All of the bodies responsible for quality assurance state their unequivocal support for the referencing outcome.



# Referencing Criteria

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7. The process of referencing has been devised by the main public authority and has been endorsed by the main stakeholders in the qualification system.
8. People from other countries who are experienced in the field of qualifications are involved in the referencing process and its reporting.
9. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent national bodies and shall address separately and in order each of the referencing criteria.



# Referencing Criteria

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10. The outcome of referencing is published by the ASEAN Secretariat and by the main national public body.
11. Following the referencing process, all certification and awarding bodies are encouraged to indicate a clear reference to the appropriate AQRF level on new qualification certificates, diplomas issued.



# Referencing Report

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The Report should include:

1. Information on the state of the report  
(first version, updated one)
2. Executive summary  
(related to 11 criteria and procedures)
3. Description of the national qualifications system  
and the NQF



# Referencing Report

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4. Background information
5. The eleven criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the AQRF
6. Further information  
(plans, intentions, next steps, challenges, expected impact, plans for revising decisions presented in referencing report)
7. Annexes



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# **Complexities, Demands, Impacts**

# Complexities

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- Challenge: application of the concepts and principles contained in the AQRF to NQF's of the various ASEAN Member States
- Example: Quality Assurance
  - Different QA frameworks and arrangements utilized by different countries
  - Bringing it down to the level of all stakeholders in different sectors
  - Use of international/regional benchmarks



# Lifelong Learning

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- ◉ Countries to develop systems to recognize, validate, and accredit formal, non-formal, informal learning
- ◉ AMS in different stages of development
- ◉ Need for capacity building for a number of countries



# Credit Transfer

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- ◉ Pathways and equivalencies need to be defined
- ◉ Credit assignment made clear
- ◉ Establish credit transfer system, both national and regional
- ◉ Involvement of relevant institutions (academe, industry, etc)



# Levels and Descriptors

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- ◉ Understanding and interpreting the different levels and their corresponding descriptors
- ◉ Determining process of assigning learners/workers to certain levels
- ◉ Consultation mechanisms involving stakeholders



# Quality Assurance

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- Description of the QA systems for education and training
- Involvement of all agencies/institutions that participate in implementation and maintenance of QA
- Benchmarked on established frameworks like the East Asia Summit, INQAAHE, AQAN



# Referencing Process

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- ⦿ Requirement:

1. Full implementation of a sector or several sectors

2. Documentation, participated in by qualification agencies, regulatory agencies, accrediting bodies, industry, academe, stakeholders



# Referencing Criteria

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- ◉ Adopted from the European Qualifications Framework
- ◉ Applied to national and regional conditions and context
- ◉ Transparency is observed



# International Alignment

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- Done at different levels

1. Education and training
2. Practice
3. Competency assessment
4. Awarding of qualifications
5. Continuing professional development



# Enhancement of Mobility

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- AQRF: device to enable comparisons of qualifications across ASEAN Member States
- Each worker/learner will have:
  - NQF Level
  - AQRF Level
- Qualification recognition process easier to implement



# Enhancement of Qualifications

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- Qualifications agencies look at qualifications frameworks from two perspectives



# Impact

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## Areas:

### 1. Facilitation of mobility

Learners

Skilled workers

Professionals

### 2. Promotion of lifelong learning

Recognition, validation, accreditation of  
all kinds of learning



3. Quality of national qualifications frameworks and systems
4. Quality of learners / workers
5. Development of national approaches to validation of non-formal and informal learning

# Impact

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6. Enhanced regional cooperation at different levels
7. Acceptable “zone of trust” among all ASEAN Member States
8. Acceptance and utilization of the AQRF by all ASEAN Member States



# Summary

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- ◉ The regional situation has been discussed with the status of development of qualifications frameworks
- ◉ The AQRF has been presented with the structures, components and referencing process
- ◉ Challenges were identified
- ◉ Impact assessment based on areas identified related to the purposes of the AQRF

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH  
FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!**