



Learning outcomes: the European policy context

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Two different policy processes

- Bologna process
- Lisbon objectives process

Bologna process

Declaration and communiqués:

- Bologna – 1999
- Prague – 2001
- Berlin – 2003
- Bergen – 2005
- London - 2007

Bologna 1999

1. Easily readable and comparable degrees – employability and international competitiveness of European HE system
2. 2 cycles (undergraduate and graduate)
3. ECTS – student mobility – also non-HE contexts, including LLL
4. Mobility – students and teachers
5. Quality assurance
6. European dimension in HE curriculum

Prague 2001

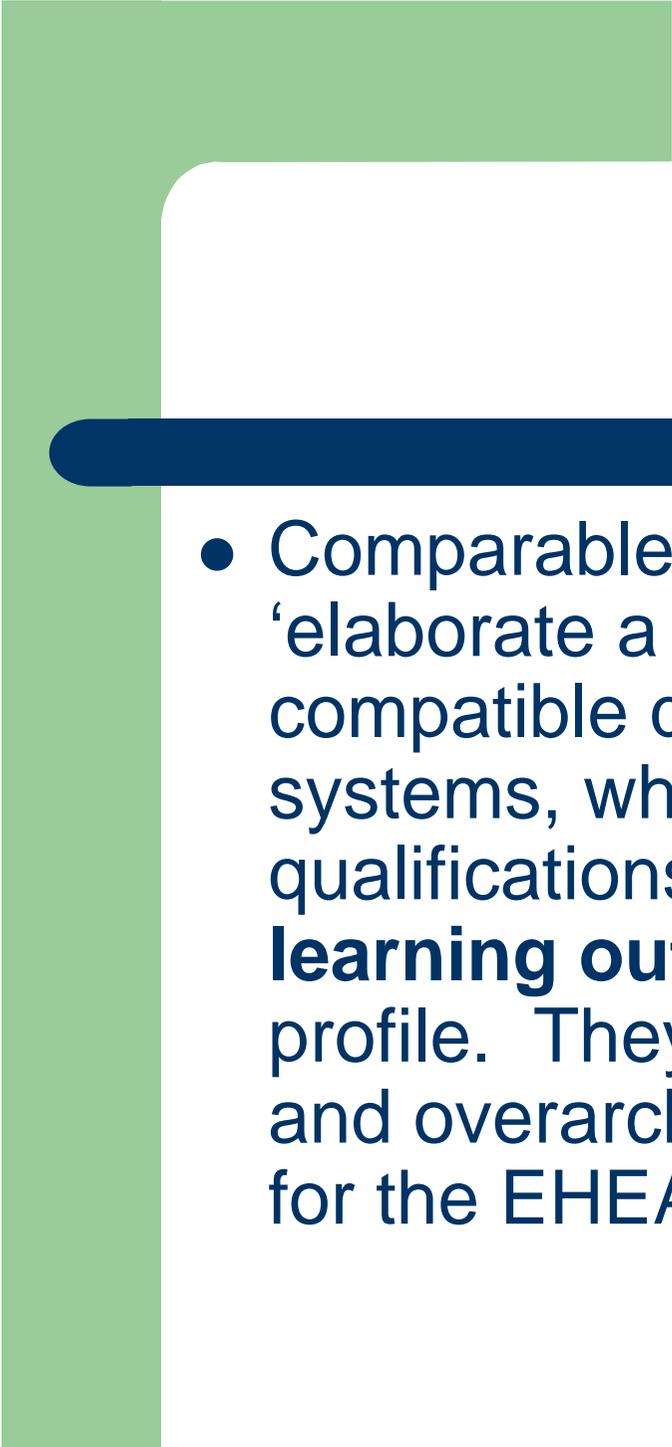
- Re-affirmed same objectives
- 2 cycles now Bachelors and Masters (or comparable)

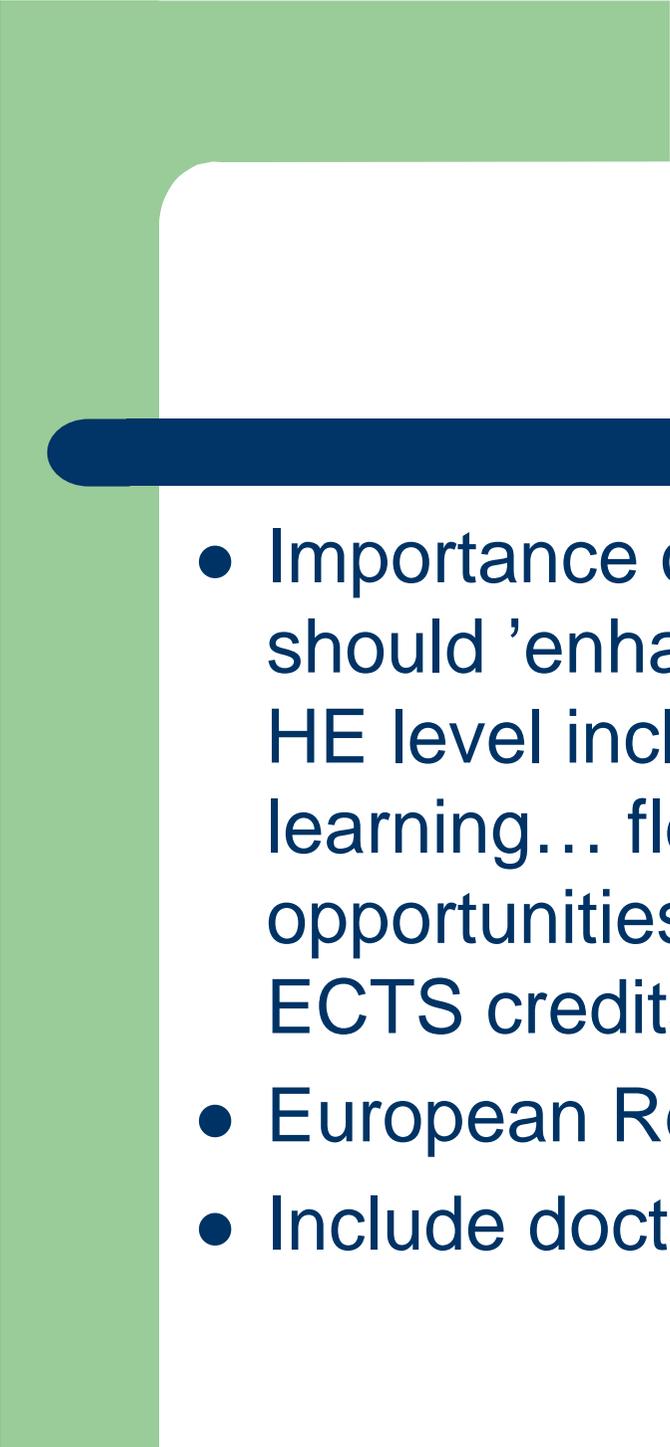
Also emphasised:

- LLL
- Students should be part of the process
- Structure for follow-up work
- Seminars to explore objectives, issues and obstacles

Berlin 2003

- Link with Lisbon process - took into account Lisbon 2000 and Barcelona 2002
- Preserve cultural richness and diversity
- Quality assurance – wish to see ‘an agreed set of standards...’
- Underline the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- More involvement of students and their issues

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- Comparable degrees – encourage MSs to ‘elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their HE systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, **learning outcomes**, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate and overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA’.

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- Importance of making LLL a reality - all should 'enhance the possibilities for LLL at HE level including the recognition of prior learning... flexible learning paths ... opportunities to make appropriate use of ECTS credits...'
 - European Research Area
 - Include doctoral level as 3rd cycle

Bergen 2005

- 'We adopt the overarching framework of 3 cycles (...), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in 1st and 2nd cycles.'
- 'We commit ourselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework ... by 2010'
- 'We see the development of national and European frameworks for qualifications as an opportunity to further embed LLL in HE'
- 'We will work ... to improve recognition of prior learning including where possible non-formal and informal learning ...'
- 'Academic values should prevail



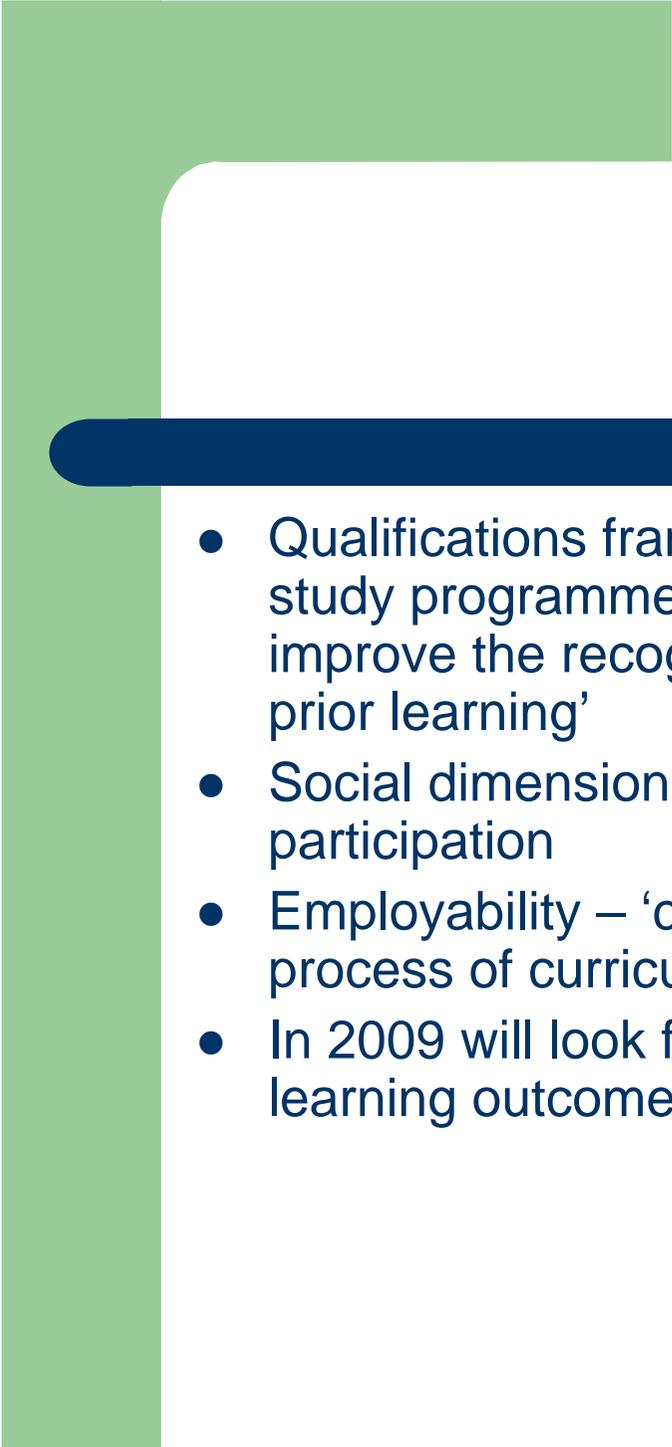
Look for progress in:

- Implementation of standards and guidelines for quality assurance
- Implementation of national frameworks for qualifications
- Awarding and recognition of joint degrees
- Flexible learning paths and recognition of prior learning

London 2007

Degree structure:

- efforts should concentrate ‘on removing barriers to access and progression and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload’
- Importance of improving graduate employability

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- Qualifications frameworks: ‘help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning’
 - Social dimension: flexible learning pathways and widen participation
 - Employability – ‘co-operation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes’
 - In 2009 will look for progress on (inter alia) frameworks, learning outcomes, credits, LLL and RPL

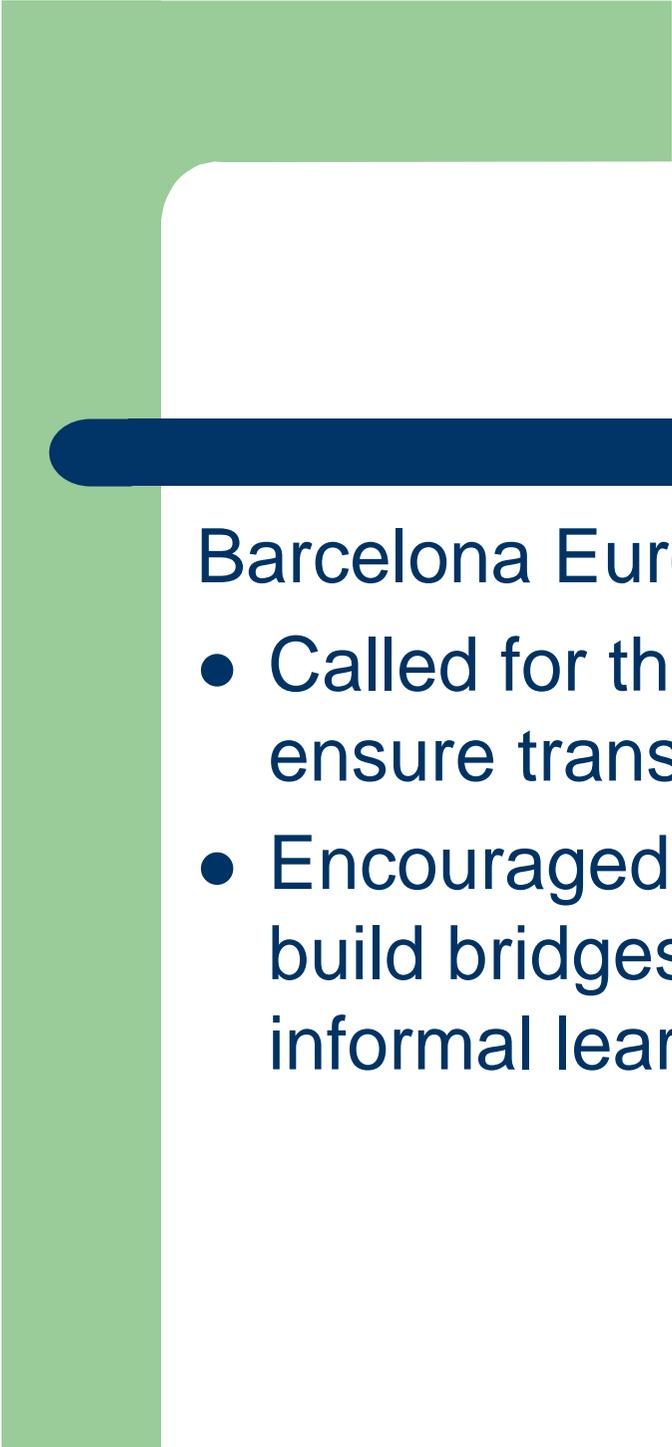
Lisbon process

Lisbon European Council 2000

- Essentially about the economy and international competitiveness

European education and training 'a world quality reference' by 2010

- Increased transparency of qualifications
- Lifelong learning
- Primarily about VET and regulated professions



Barcelona European Council 2002

- Called for the introduction of instruments to ensure transparency
- Encouraged Member States to co-operate to build bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning



2004 and 2005 – calls for a European Qualifications Framework

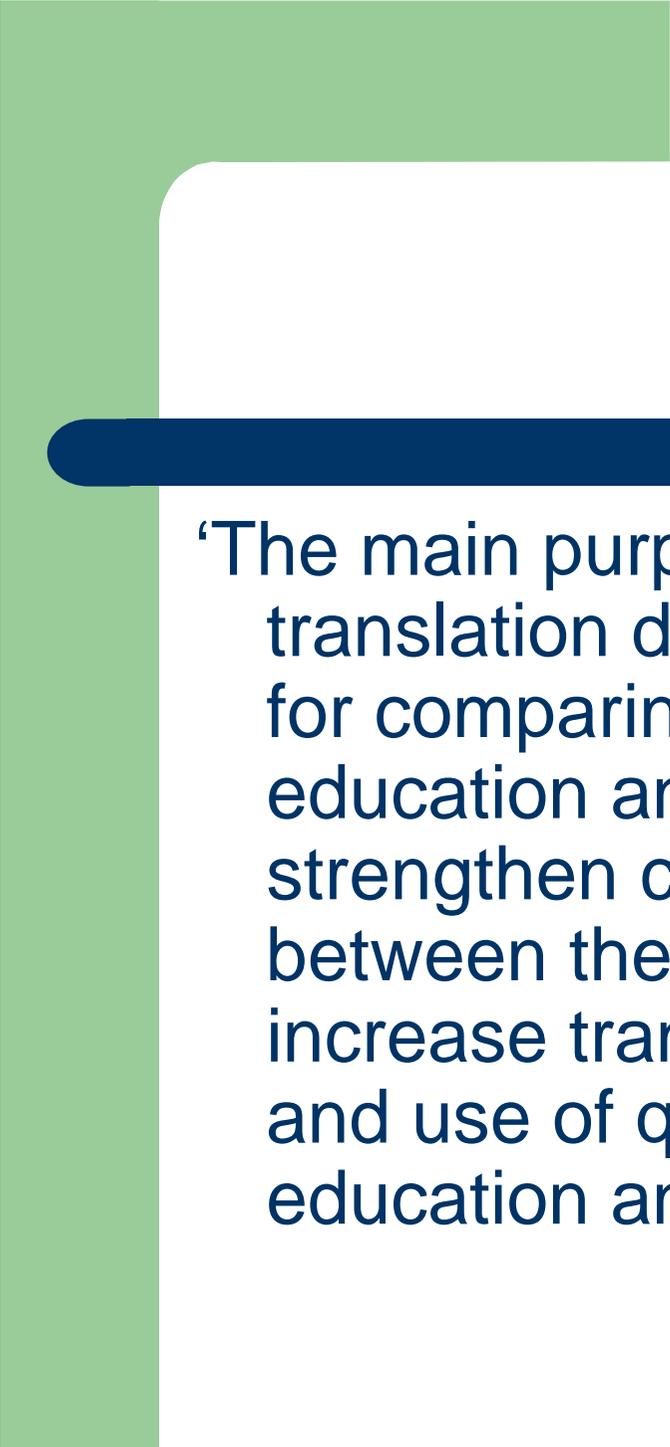
- Joint Report of the EU Council and European Commission - 2004
- Copenhagen process – EU Council – 2004
- Lisbon strategy – Employment strategy for 2005-8: flexible learning pathways, more opportunities for mobility by improving definitions and transparency

European Commission Proposal - 2006

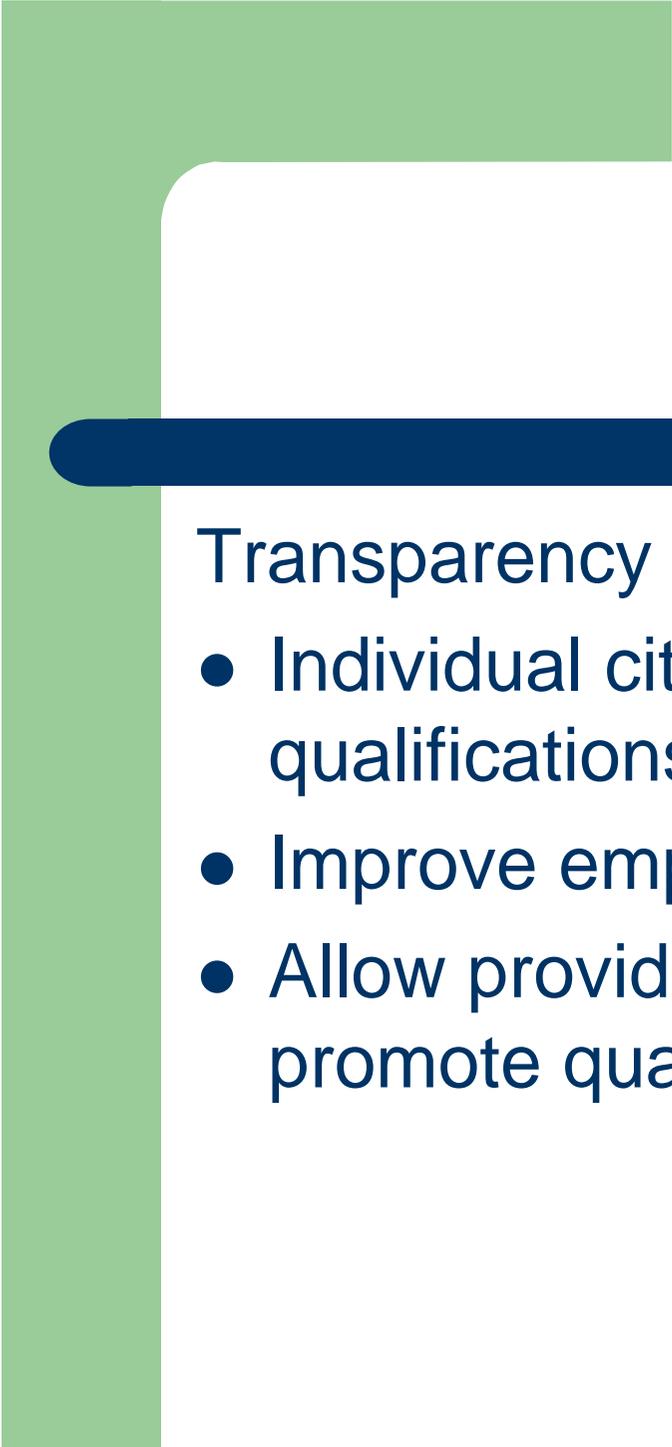
European Qualifications Framework – EQF:

‘EQF is central to the fulfilment of the EU’s objectives in the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs’

Diversity is important: Councils (2000 and 2002) ‘recognised increased transparency of qualifications as a necessary pre-condition for turning this diversity into an asset’.



‘The main purpose of the EQF is to act as a translation device and neutral reference point for comparing qualifications across different education and training systems and to strengthen co-operation and mutual trust between the relevant stakeholders. This will increase transparency , facilitate the transfer and use of qualifications across different education and training systems and levels.’



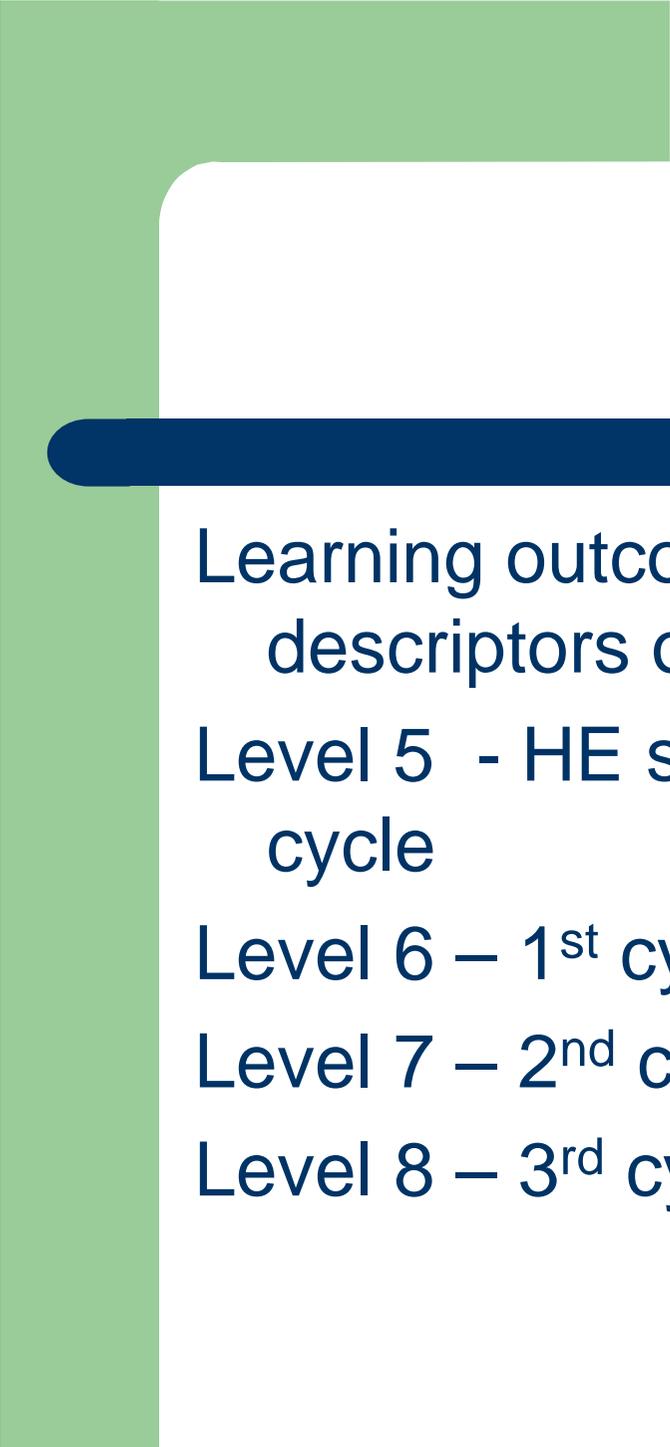
Transparency is important so that:

- Individual citizens can judge relative value of qualifications
- Improve employers ability to judge
- Allow providers to compare and therefore promote quality

Why learning outcomes?

Definitions:

- What a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process
- A combination of knowledge, skills and competences
- Generic and specific learning outcomes



Learning outcomes the basis of the Dublin descriptors of the EQF:

Level 5 - HE short cycle within or linked to 1st cycle

Level 6 – 1st cycle (Bachelors)

Level 7 – 2nd cycle (Masters)

Level 8 – 3rd cycle (Doctorate)

Advantages of Learning Outcomes

- Applicable at course, national and international level
- A change in emphasis from teaching and teachers to learning and learners
- Integration of academic and vocational, LLL and RPL
- Direct relationship with levels and level indicators
- Cannot be separated from teaching, learning and assessment
- Can help consistency across modules and programmes
- Aid curriculum design
- Promote reflection on assessment and diversity of assessment criteria and methods
- Increase transparency and comparability between and within qualifications
- Act as point of reference for establishing and assessing standards
- Clear information for learners, employers and civil society
- Contribute to mobility by facilitating recognition of qualifications
- Provide a common format for different forms of delivery and contexts of learning
- Have capacity to link vocational and academic provision
- Assist in the development of multiple progression routes through and between different education systems
- A common currency between different systems



PHEW!!!

So what's the problem?

Disadvantages of learning outcomes

- Academic values – learning is open-ended
- Target-led culture
- Limit learning, stifle creativity, reduce teaching to simplistics
- Instrumentalist approach
- Huge task – cost implications
- Technical problems
- Can be over-described and/or under-described
- Requires EQF for advantages to be realised
- Advantages are potential
- Implies a functionalist approach to learning
- Tends to be normative
- Relationship with ECTS and workload

Where are we now?

We are not really sure but:

- Seems to be developing in VET systems
- Problems in general education especially at Baccalaureat/Matura/Abitur level
- Trends V:
 - Institutions don't understand the purpose or value of E/NQF
 - Don't know whether there is one
 - Learning outcomes not understood