Doc 2015-ETS-04

Item 5.3 – Classification of Learning Activities (CLA)

Meeting of the
Education and Training Statistics Working Group
Luxembourg, 16-17th June 2015
BECH Building – Room AMPERE

Executive summary

This document presents Eurostat's proposals for the update of the Classification of Learning Activities (CLA), particularly in the scope of the 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES) data collection.

The document describes the proposals themselves with the rationale for the changes. The annexes contain the draft version of the updated CLA as well as the history of the proposed changes for information.

The ETS working group is invited to:

- *Comment on the proposals at the meeting or by the end of August 2015 for the latest (updates are highlighted in yellow in the draft update of the CLA); after this round of comments the ETS WG will be asked to adopt the new CLA in written procedure.*

- *Provide additional examples for improving the data collections on formal, non-formal education and training and especially on informal learning (for the annex to the manual).*

- *Take note of the history and rationale for the update.*

The following acronyms are largely used throughout the document: **FED**, **NFE** and **INF**. They respectively refer to formal education and training, non-formal education and training and informal learning. The acronym **CLA** stands for Classification of Learning Activities.

Proposals for the updated Classification of Learning Activities (CLA)

The CLA is needed to explain the implementation aspects of ISCED and complement it. Indeed, even if the ISCED is the most important international classification on education, the definitions of formal and non-formal education and training it provides are not sufficient for implementation purposes. Moreover the definitions set in the 2006 version of the CLA (i.e. at the time of ISCED 1997) are not fully in line with those currently included in the ISCED 2011. Due to the complexity to bring education classifications fully in line with one another and in order to finally come to a stable and broadly agreed version of the CLA, Eurostat makes the following set of proposals.

The main proposal consists in <u>aligning the CLA to the ISCED 2011</u> (i.e. to ISCED 2011 definitions) to describe <u>formal education</u>. This concern was particularly aroused at the occasion of the work on core social variables (see item 8.2 on the agenda and document 2015-ETS-06).

The reason lying behind is to avoid confusion caused by divergent concepts of formal education and training[1] across classifications and therefore across data collections on education and training. Furthermore Eurostat considers that this alignment would not be harmful as regards the recent data collection on adult education through the 2011 AES as many operational criteria (like the one on duration for instance) have then been used by countries. Eurostat would appreciate some feedback on this in particular.

This updated CLA shall already be used for the 2016 AES data collection – the 2016 AES manual being revised accordingly after its adoption – as well as for educational variables in the LFS and other household surveys (the LFS explanatory notes already refer to formal education and training according to ISCED 2011).

1 – Updates due to the ISCED 2011 and clarification of the border between FED and NFE

1.1) Definitions and references to ISCED updated

ISCED definitions and references are used in the body of the CLA. In view of ISCED 2011 they have been updated accordingly wherever needed. The table below gives the items concerned by the changes, the corresponding page of the updated version of the CLA and the ISCED 2011 section from which the quote was taken.

Items concerned	Type of change	Section in ISCED 2011
Lifelong learning (page 8)	Definition	§14
Deliberate action for learning (page 9)	Reference	§12
Organised learning (page 10)	Definition	§15
Fields of education and training (page 11)	New classification	Annex IV
Course (page 11)	Definition	Glossary
Programme (page 12)	Definition	§11
Formal and non-formal education and training (page 13)	Definitions	§36 and §39
Recognition of formal programmes (16)	Definition	§36
Hierarchy level for formal education and training (page 17)	Definition	§47
National and European Qualification Frameworks (page 19)	Reference	§25

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[1] The definition of education in ISCED includes training. Eurostat prefers to write out 'education and training', both when referring to formal and non-formal education and training.

1.2) Operational criteria for formal education and training in CLA

Along with these updates, it is proposed to further align the definition of formal education and training in the CLA with that of the ISCED 2011, and to that extent **make all data collections on formal education and training coherent, that is to say household surveys (AES, Labour Force Survey - LFS, etc.) and UOE[2]**.

* List of criteria

> **Eurostat proposes to insert in the updated CLA the following criteria** recommended in the report of the Task force on measuring lifelong learning[3] – these were absent from the previous version of the CLA but largely used while implementing the 2011 AES – and slightly adapted here to fit the current situation (alignment with new ISCED and UOE). This proposal aims at avoiding any confusion, making sure that countries are classifying learning activities of the same 'nature' as being formal, irrespective of any reference to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Criterion (i) is added for that purpose in the list as compared to the list in the report drafted after the Task force on measuring lifelong learning.

	Criteria	Formal	Non-formal	Informal
(a)	Intention to learn	X	X	X
(b)	Organisation	X	X	
(c)	Institutional framework and location	X	X	
(d)	Hierarchy level-grade structure ('ladder')	X		
(e)	Admission requirements	X		
(f)	Registration	X	(X)	
(g)	Teaching/learning methods (predetermined/not flexible)	X	X	(X)
(h)	Duration of at least 6 months and scheduling	X		
(i)	*Programmes recognised by the relevant national education or equivalent authorities*	*X*		

* Programmes recognised by relevant national education or equivalent authorities

One of the main proposals alongside (see criterion (i)) is to remove the reference to the NFQ as the major dichotomous choice to single out formal from non-formal education and training. This is motivated by the fact that:

[2] Joint UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat (UOE) data collection on education systems.

[3] Based on the 1996 UNESCO "Manual on non-formal education".

- NFQ is qualification-oriented and not programme-oriented; therefore it focuses on educational attainment rather than on participation in education and training;
- The NFQ does not necessarily exist in all countries (yet);
- NFQ has a 'broader' coverage than ISCED's definition of formal education, i.e. NFQ encompasses programmes that are not classified as formal according to ISCED 2011. On the other hand, according to the flow chart in CLA 2006 (see figure 2 in Annex 1) a programme is classified as formal if it is included in the NFQ. Therefore, some programmes that are not classified as formal according to ISCED 2011 would be classified as formal according to CLA.

As a consequence for the CLA, Eurostat proposes:

- new recommendations in the draft manual **regarding the operationalization of the classifying process** (see chapters 3.5 Scope of education and learning and categories of Learning Activities and 5.2 Explanatory notes);

- an updated summary decision-making flow chart replacing the previous one which was directly referring to NFQ as the final dichotomous choice to single out formal from non-formal education and training (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3 - *New decision-making flow chart*
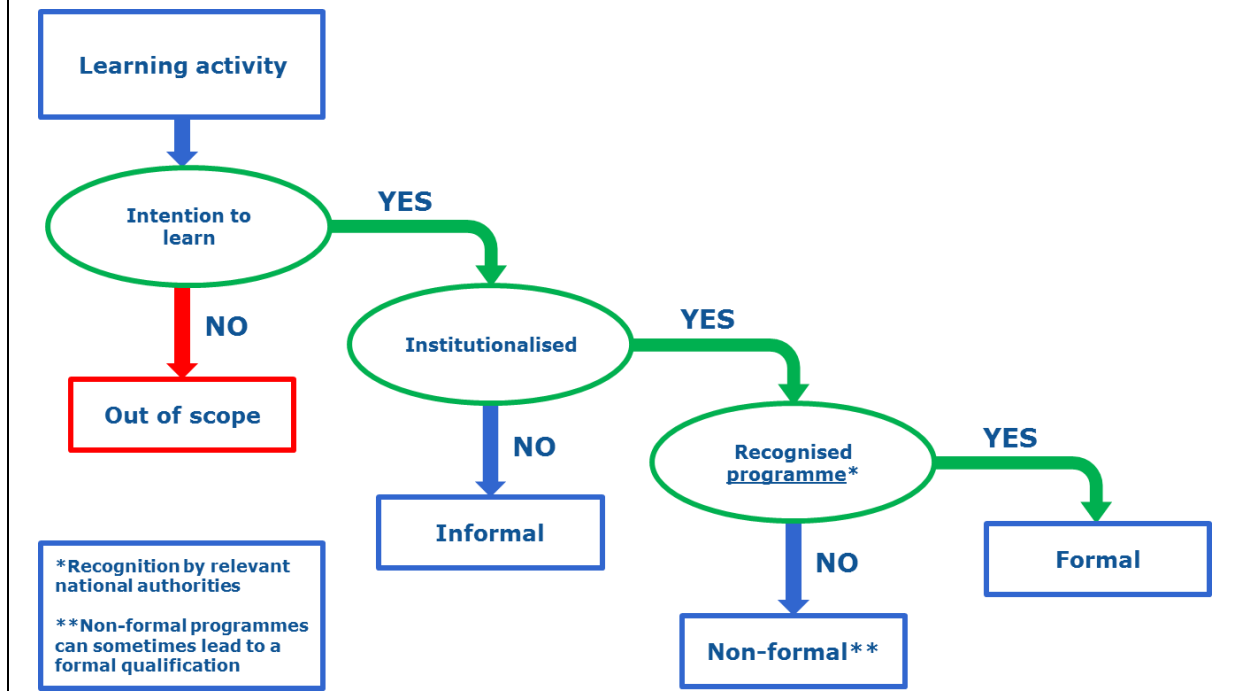
If a programme leads (either automatically or via a validation procedure) to a qualification recognised as equivalent to a formal qualification by the relevant national education or equivalent authorities, this does not imply that the programme itself is to be considered as formal. A programme is only formal if the **programme** is recognised by the relevant national education or equivalent authorities.

It is important to note that **the CLA remains consistent with this principle** as the previous version of the CLA was explicitly mentioning that *'the fact that national authorities may have established procedures for the recognition of prior work experience or non-formal or informal activities (like self-learning) would not change the category in which the activity of the person would be classified: an activity is considered formal only when the programme is recognised by the relevant education authorities'*[4].

* Duration of one semester

Neither the CLA 2006 nor the ISCED 2011 explicitly mention any minimum duration as such for formal education and training. The UOE manual on the other hand explicitly mentions a minimum duration (one semester): the scope of UOE therefore differs from that of the CLA.

It was discussed when drafting the new version of the ISCED to insert such a criterion in the classification explicitly for all formal education and training programmes to be classified through ISCED. This was not done in the end. Nevertheless, a 'minimum one semester' duration can be implicitly 'deducted' from the section on the 'Duration and cumulative duration criteria' (paragraphs 69 to 72 on page 17 of the ISCED 2011). Indeed 6 months is the least of the minimum duration for all levels from ISCED 1 to ISCED 8. It is set for ISCED level 4 in particular, the duration of which '*typically* varies from 6 months to 2 or 3 years' as the document states. However, the ISCED states that there are discrepancies across countries (paragraph 73 on page 18 of the ISCED 2011).

Moreover, many countries reported to have used a 6 months duration criterion while implementing the 2011 AES. This criterion is also currently used in the LFS educational variables (there is a reference to the UOE coverage included in the LFS explanatory notes, thus implicitly referring to the duration of one semester) and was included in the proposal for a core social variable on 'Participation in formal education and training' (see item 8.2).

Eurostat proposes to include the one semester duration as a criterion in the CLA for defining formal education and training. Any learning activity that has the characteristics of a formal programme but is shorter than one semester should then be classified as non-formal.

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2 – NFE: borderline cases between NFE and INF

The proposed updates to clarify borders between NFE and INF focus on two specific issues: that of the operational criteria to single-out guided-on-the-job training from informal learning through colleagues at work and the presence of an instructor for NFE.

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[4] CLA manual – 2006 version, page 17. The quote has been adapted here: the reference to NFQ was substituted by a reference to the programme being recognised by the relevant education authorities.

2.1) The case of guided-on-the-job training

The 2016 AES Task force recommended to add into the 2016 AES manual the following criteria suggested at the 2012 ETS WG (see issues on NFE in annex 1):

Eurostat proposes to explicitly mention that guided-on-the-job training:

- is work-based (takes place at the workplace)
- consists in planned periods of training
- takes place with the presence of a tutor or instructor
- is organised (or initiated) by the employer
- is an individual-based and practical activity

2.2) Presence of a tutor ('taught' learning)

The presence of an instructor being appointed by the institution through which the learning activity is taking place (i.e. the learning is institutionalised) is essential to classify an activity as non-formal education and training and therefore distinguish the activity from informal learning with an instructor coming from the entourage (family, friends…) for instance.

The presence of an instructor, certified and/or working as such in an institution, for the learning activity is not sufficient a criterion to classify the activity as non-formal education and training, especially when the instructor is a friend or a relative informally teaching some knowledge to their entourage at home or at work for instance.

An emphasis was put on this matter in chapter 5.2 Explanatory notes: in that extent the sentence 'Informal learning may or may not involve taught learning but it must not be institutionalised' is further clarified.

3 – Extending the list of examples for INF

In order to better harmonise the data collection on informal learning, Eurostat suggests that countries which had a proper list and/or further examples of informal learning activities sends them to Eurostat so that the list of examples provided in the annex to the CLA manual (Annex I – Cases: classification into broad categories) can be improved.

Annex 1 – Rationale for the update of the Classification of Learning Activities (CLA)

This annex gives the history of the discussions leading to the proposed update of the Classification of Learning Activities (CLA). Some clarifications have to be added in the CLA, following the implementation rules which were applied in the 2011 AES and in view of the update of the ISCED (1997 version to 2011 version).

The issues were discussed at several meetings in 2012/2013, the outcomes of which were not conclusive, partly because the ISCED 2011 and its operational manual were not yet final or available then. Some of the issues were also discussed very briefly at the third and last meeting of the 2016 AES Task force while preparing the 2016 AES manual in order to improve the data collection.

1. ETS WG June 2012

1.1) Concepts of education and training in CLA

* Scope of education (and training) in CLA

The CLA introduces four types of learning activities, in a similar way as ISCED 2011:

1) Formal education and training
2) Non-formal education and training
3) Informal learning
4) Random learning

A key criterion to separate the first three forms from the fourth is the 'intention to learn': in the 'learning' process, we distinguish what is intentional (red box below) from what is incidental (random learning). Figure 1 below shows the scope of what is considered as 'learning' in the CLA (red square).

The CLA focuses on **intentional learning**, i.e. formal and non-formal education and training and on informal learning.

Figure 1 – *Scope of 'learning'*
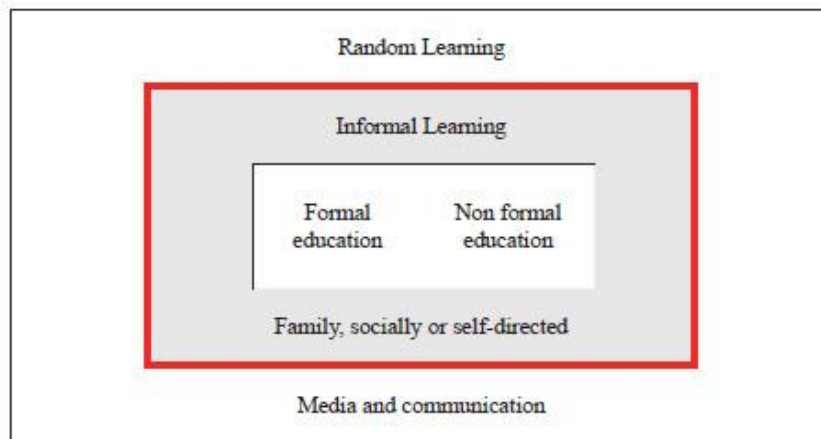
* How to allocate a learning activity

Three main criteria allow for classifying any learning activity.
- *Intention to learn*
- *Institutionalised*
- *Included in National Framework of Qualification* → **Reference to NFQ removed**

Figure 2 below shows the flow of the dichotomous questions allowing for classification along the types of learning activities *(this flow chart will change as for the last rule to single out formal education and training).*

Figure 2 – *Decision-making flow chart*
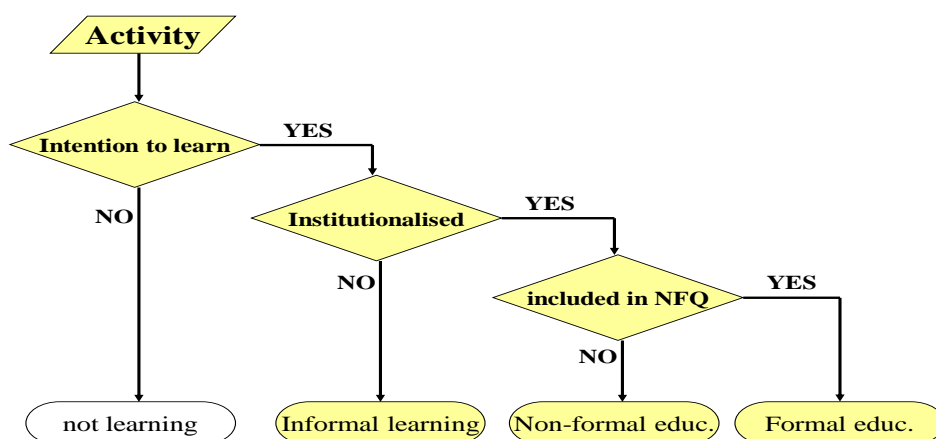
1.2) Problems to be solved

At the time of the 2012 ETS WG, ISCED 2011 had already been adopted but was not yet published, the ISCED 2011 operational manual was not yet finalised and the AES 2011 wave was ending. Issues and proposals to solve them as put forward at the meeting are summarised below. Paragraph a) is related to FED and paragraph b) to NFE.

a) Issues specific to formal education and training (FED)

	2011 AES criteria	**ISCED 2011**	**Comments made***
1	Main characteristic of the programme	Institutionalised, intentional, planned	Inherent to CLA although not clearly stated in AES. To be added anyhow.
2	"Hierarchy-level" criterion	Inherent to ISCED 2011 as it should "make up the formal education system of a country"	ISCED 2011 references to be added (definition).
		"consists mostly of initial education"..."	ISCED 2011 references to be added (examples).
3	Admission requirements	None	To be discussed.
4	Registration requirements	None, apart from a reference to providers "public organisations and recognised private bodies"	To be discussed.
5	Duration requirements	None (apart from minimal duration per level)	To be discussed.
6	Recognition requirements	"recognized as such by the relevant national educational authorities or equivalent, e.g. any other institution in co-operation with the national or sub-national educational authorities"	2011 AES and ISCED text to be consolidated in a coherent manner.
		"Qualifications from formal education are by definition recognised"	ISCED 2011 references to qualifications to be added, clarifications on the use of EQF to be inserted.

* These issues were raised and comments made <u>at the time of the meeting</u>.

FED – Proposals for updates made at that time

* Hierarchy-level criterion
(FED is a sequence, a "ladder": success in a programme is indispensable to reach the next level)

* Admission and registration requirements
(Age, prior requirements, formal enrolment)

* Duration of formal education programmes (6 months is proposed as a minimum duration)
- Modular programmes aiming at acquiring a formal qualification
- European credit transfer systems (ECTS, at least 30)
- Other programmes to be considered non-formal at EU level

* To be further clarified through examples:
- Relationship with European & National Qualification Frameworks
- Diversity of providers of formal education (especially from one country to another)

b) Issues specific to non-formal education and training (NFE)

	2011 AES criteria	**ISCED 2011**	**Comments made***
1	Main characteristic of the programme: institutionalised, intentional and planned	ISCED adds "by an education provider"	The ISCED 2011 terminology "education provider" would be too restrictive if understood in a strict sense. Under CLA, all training activities are covered.
		does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure	This precision could be added within criterion 1.
2	One central or main part of the programme (Single Learning Activity as defined by 2006 CLA) must be institutionalised <u>and taught</u>		The fact that a central or main part of the programme is taught (e.g. existence of a 'coach') is an important criterion to differentiate non-formal education and training from informal learning.
3	Consist mainly of private lessons, courses, workshops,	ISCED states "typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars"	There is no reference to guided-on-the-job training in ISCED. Clarifications need

	2011 AES criteria	ISCED 2011	Comments made*
	seminars, guided-on-the-job training		to be provided in CLA for 'long courses' as well as for courses aiming at completing a formal education programme (e.g. private courses)
		addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education	This precision could be added as an example.
4		Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognised as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all.	This precision could be added within a new criterion on qualifications.
		Nevertheless, qualifications recognised as equivalent to formal qualifications may be obtained through exclusive participation in specific non-formal educational programmes: this can happen when the programme completes the competencies obtained in another context.	This precision could be added within a new criterion on qualifications.

* These issues were raised and comments made <u>at the time of the meeting</u>.

NFE – proposals for updates made at that time

* Defining non-formal education and <u>training</u> (ISCED 2011 is limited to non-formal **<u>education</u>**)[5]

* In CLA and consequently in AES data collections, NFE scope includes courses, workshops and seminars, <u>guided</u>-on-the-job training and private lessons.

* Guided-on-the-job training is an important aspect of NFE (not collected in LFS but still in AES).

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[5] See footnote 1 of this document: the word education refers to both education **<u>and</u>** training. Footnotes 15 and 16 on page 12 of the CLA 2006 version (which are kept in the updated CLA) were already tackling the issue: '*Education meaning by convention education and training* '.

> *** Criteria for guided-on-the-job training (GOJT)**
>
> - It is work-based (takes place at the workplace)
> - Planned periods of training
> - Presence of a tutor or instructor
> - Organised (or initiated) by the employer
> - It is an individual-based and practical activity
>
> It is of utmost importance to properly place the border between GOJT and courses (*individual-based* versus *group* learning activity, which are both structured and organised by the employer) and GOJT and informal learning (*organised (or initiated) by the employer* versus *self-intended* learning, both taking place at the work place).

1.3) Reactions and conclusions of the meeting

OECD and UIS confirmed the intention to request only formal programmes and related qualifications in the UOE data collection. Some countries requested to re-discuss the rules for inclusion/exclusion in/of the UOE data collection for the sake of comparability across countries. This would encompass the semester threshold (proxies are to be set as duration is not an easy criterion to use in all cases), the 10% threshold related to the school based component (e.g. in NL, apprenticeship in professional organisations) or alternative pathways (e.g. "further education college" in the UK).

In that context, clarifications would be needed on:

- The duration criterion for formal education and more generally the hierarchy of criteria under ISCED 2011;
- Relationship between CLA, ISCED and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as education statisticians are not always involved in the development of EQF at national level;
- Programmes provided by certain ministries which have typical duration of one semester (although participation is often less, according to work experience for instance or traineeship);
- Measurement of the criterion proposed for modular programmes (intention of the student to obtain a formal qualification across different modules, difficult to measure) and minimum duration of non-formal programmes (although 'sustained' is already in the definition);
- Classification of certain courses like language courses for immigrants, certain courses for groups of employees (on a practical aspect, often under-estimated), short courses provided in universities (e.g. 'higher education institutes' in CH) or foreign educational programmes considered as formal in the country of origin, non-formal when taught abroad (e.g. US programmes);

- Qualifications obtained in private companies (type of qualification obtained, more examples to be provided); possible inconsistencies between policy and statistical frameworks (e.g. pre-school in LT which is considered as non-formal by national policy makers).
- Some delegates also requested to review the terminology used so far, in particular the use of 'guided-on-the-job training' (which could be part of 'private lessons' according to SE) or the use of informal learning for all activities which are not formal (DK).

Eurostat proposed to re-discuss during the following ISCED Workshop the terminology used in CLA (formal, non-formal, informal) in the light of ISCED 2011 and possible use among EU policy makers. It was reminded that CLA is supposed to guide data collections and allow for coherence of results (2016 AES, LFS, UOE as from 2014), in particular for formal education.

2 – ISCED Workshop February 2013

2.1) Link with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

A coherence issue was then pointed out between several education classifications: ISCED, EQF and CLA. The coherence should be reinforced, in particular review the circumstances in which non-formal programmes would lead to formal qualifications.

Three main issues:
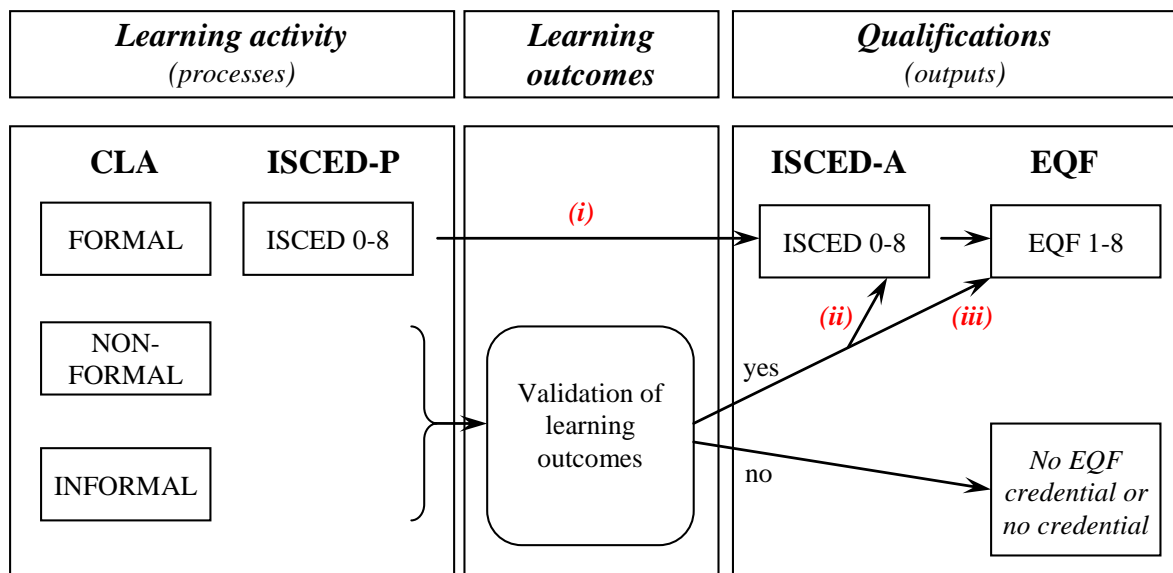
(i) Formal programmes in ISCED lead to formal qualifications

(ii) Non-formal (evening courses) or informal (self-learning) leading to a qualification usually obtained via formal programmes

(iii) Other qualifications (e.g. validation of competences)

2.2) Coherence between ISCED/CLA/EQF is not easy to reach

* ISCED and EQF: there are qualifications from formal programmes in both classifications;

* ISCED and EQF: there are a few non-formal programmes reported in those classifications (evening courses) - and even informal learning activities (even self-learning) - that are leading to formal qualifications;

* EQF only: there are qualifications in EQF that are not related to any qualification usually obtained via a formal programme (e.g. validation of competences).

* … and some training programmes that are found neither in ISCED nor in EQF (driving licence lessons for instance)

2.3) Reactions and conclusions of the meeting

Reactions

Discussions focused on the relationship between ISCED and EQF. Many delegates intervened on Eurostat's presentation underlining that there was no common understanding of the relationship between the two frameworks for tertiary education. DG EAC clarified that there was no need for a strict relationship between them but agreed that some clarifications would be required for the sake of transparency. It was first underlined by some delegates that the EQF was not yet finalised in some Member States and that not all formal qualifications are listed in the EQF in countries having already developed it.

Some countries recalled that EQF had been developed before ISCED 2011, reason for possible consistency issues at this stage. This remark was made by several delegations on the first discussion point proposed by Eurostat, i.e. qualifications from formal programmes (which are classified in ISCED) should a priori be listed in the EQF as well. Some delegates found it more relevant to illustrate this relationship between EQF and ISCED for their countries (for tertiary education).

Concerning non-formal education, DG EAC confirmed a recent initiative inviting Member States to promote validation of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. validation of competences). This would mean in particular: qualifications different from those usually obtained via a formal programme (and not classified under ISCED) although the focus in EQF so far is on major qualifications.

Finally, some countries invited Eurostat to avoid the terminology 'adult education' and 'evening courses' as both can refer to formal and non-formal education and training and it was suggested to continue the discussions in future EQF and ISCED related meetings and to document the relationship between ISCED and EQF in ISCED integrated mappings when possible (column 'EQF level').

As a conclusion, the following recommendations were made:
- correspondence between ISCED and CLA: ETS WG to discuss implementation issues on formal education in UOE and AES if any; AES Task force to discuss definitions of non-formal and informal for a revised CLA (not before 2014 ETS WG);
- correspondence between ISCED and EQF: there is a link but not a 'systematic' one; regular information to be shared in both groups (EQF Advisory Group & ETS WG); to include metadata when possible (e.g. specific EQF column in mappings).

3 – 2016 AES Task force May 2014 (third meeting)

The state of play regarding the previous discussions (see above) was given. The main recommendation is that definitions in the CLA should remain simple, easy to understand and to implement.

Many delegates reported that some of the suggested improvements (especially the one on the duration criterion for formal education) had already been used for the 2011 AES. In the 2011 AES manual, it was indeed already recommended to use such a criterion on duration (the manual was issued after the last version of the CLA and the CLA was not updated at that time).

Further discussion was postponed for later as more urgent issues (about the 2016 AES manual) needed to be discussed.

Annex 2 – draft updated CLA (separate document)