CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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SHAPING LEARNING AND SKILLS FOR EUROPE

# Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

## An analysis of past 20 years and policy scenarios towards 2040

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**Conference Making learning progression a reality**
**Policy scenarios towards 2040**

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# OUR AIM

- ✓ Set the scene
- ✓ Share knowledge
- ✓ Gather your input and reflections

# WHAT YOU WILL HEAR…

Part 1 → A brief introduction

Part 2 → EU & national developments

Part 3 → What has changed for individuals

Part 4 → Alternative scenarios for 2040

In 2022 Cedefop launched a study to explore, over **a 20-year time period**, the efforts at European and national level to increase **flexibility and pereambility of learning systems** enabling individuals to access and combine learning as needed.

Aim to inform policy discussion on the way

**Project on transparency and transferability of learning outcomes 2022-2025**

# Few definitions….

**Learning outcomes:** statements of what a learner is expected to know, be able to do and understand following the completion of a learning process.

**Transparency of qualifications:** degree of visibility and legibility of qualifications, their content and value on the (sectoral, regional, national or international) labour market and in education and training systems.

**Transferability:** the degree to which knowledge, skills and competences can be used in a new occupational or educational environment, and/or be validated and certified.

**Formal learning:** it takes place in an organised and structured environment, dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification (certificate or diploma), it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education

**Non-formal learning:** it takes place through planned activities, some form of learning support is present; it includes in-company training or courses organised by civil society.

**Informal learning:** skills, knowledge and competences acquired through daily activities related to work, family, volunteering, or leisure; learning is not organised or structured.

# WHAT WE DID

- Mapped the main policy initiatives promoting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes
- Analysed their coherence and join contributions
- Analysed what has changed for learners
- Developed a set of policy scenarios towards 2040 illustrating alterative policy choices and their implications

# Methodology

| Work assignment 1<br>European level<br>2022-2023 | Work assignment 2<br>National level<br>2022-2023 | Work assignment 3<br>Individual level<br>2023-2024 | Work assignment 4<br>Future scenarios<br>2024-2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Literature review<br>• 20 interviews with policy experts<br>• Online expert workshops | • Literature review<br>• Case studies (8) with desk research and interviews (55)<br>• Online survey (98 respondents) | • Literature review<br>• Country cases with stakeholder and learner interviews (70, focus groups (54 stakeholders), case histories (20)<br>• Statistical comparative analysis | • Literature review<br>• 2 expert workshops |

# Main publications and events

Theme 1 and 2: European and national policies supporting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

**Research paper**: Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey

**Workshop** 2022:Making learning progression a reality: Building on lessons from European transparency tools

**Seminar** 2023:Empowering individuals for better mobility – transparency and recognition of qualifications

Theme 3: Lifelong learning in 2000 and in 2020: what has changed for the individual citizen?

**Research paper:** upcoming

**Workshop** 2024: Making learning progression a reality - Learners in the spotlight

Theme 4: Scenarios for lifelong and life-wide learning: policy options and implications

**Research paper:** upcoming

**Conference 2025**: Making learning progression a reality: policy scenarios towards 2040

# KEY QUESTION OF THE CONFERENCE

What drives or hinders lifelong learning for all – what should be strengthened, and what needs to change?

# Part 2:

# Transparency tools EU and national developments

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# Main barriers to lifelong learning

- **Limited recognition and trust in learning outcomes** acquired outside formal education and training.
- **Increasing diversity and complexity** of education and training systems.
- **Rigid, 'siloed' education systems** with limited opportunities for individual tailoring and flexibility.

Addressing these barriers would require to:

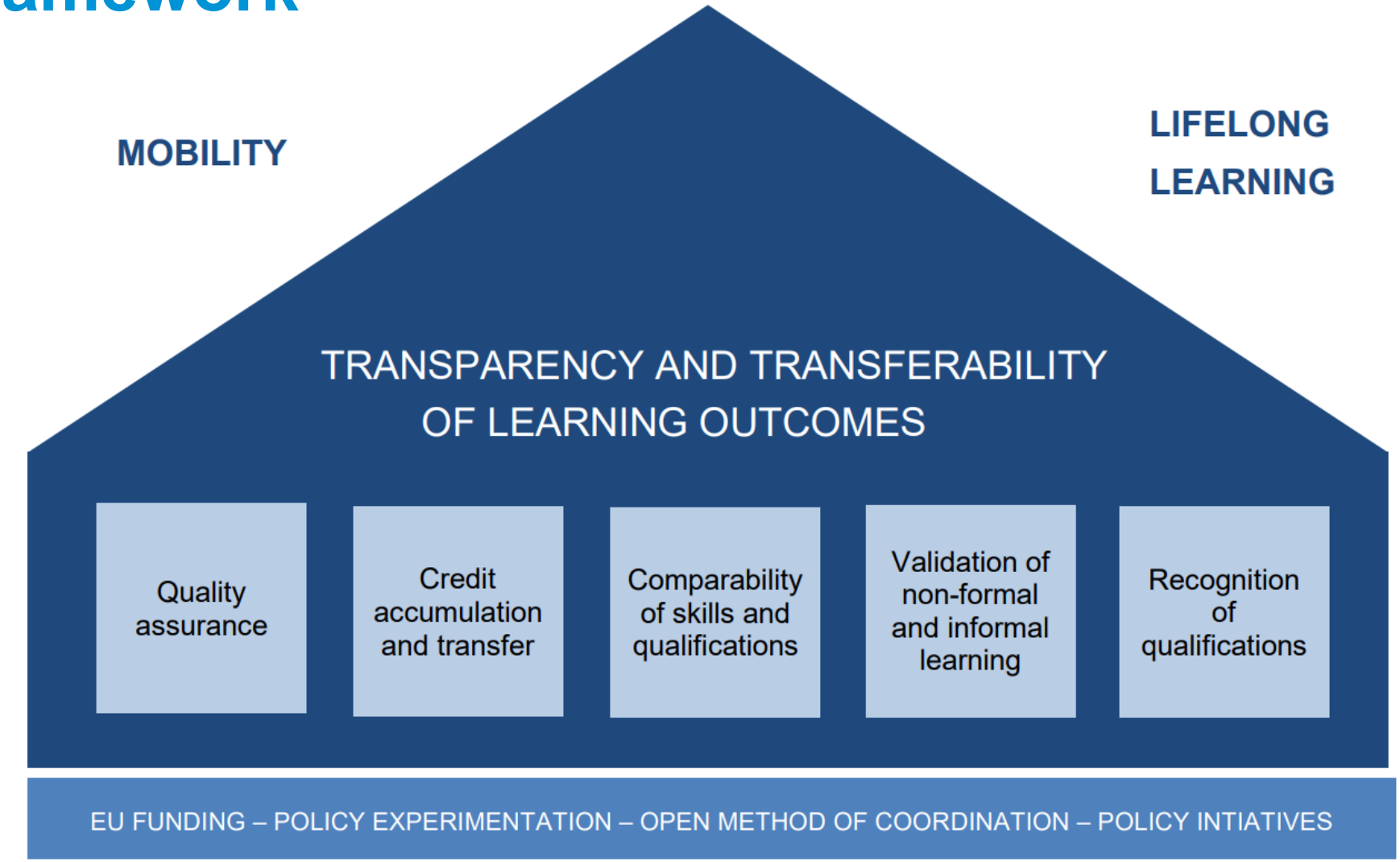
- Design education and training with reference to learning outcomes acquired **in formal as well as non-formal and informal settings**;
- Increase the **transparency of systems and qualifications**;
- Allow for and ensure **transferability of learning outcomes**.

**Lifelong learning has been a thread running through Europe's evolving social and educational landscape for more than two decades:**

- 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning
- 1999 Bologna process and following communiqués
- 2000 Lisbon strategy
- 2001 Memorandum on Lifelong Learning
- 2002 The Copenhagen process and following communiqués, declarations and conclusions
- [...]
- 2010, 2020 Education and Training
- 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights
- 2020 Skills agenda
- 2020 Osnabrück Declaration
- 2023-2024 European year of skills

# Conceptual framework

The study identified five thematic policy areas supporting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes



# Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

## Quality assurance

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)

European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)

## Recognition of qualifications

Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)

Directive on Professional Qualifications (PQD)

EU Council Recommendation on Automatic Recognition (AR)

## Credit transfer and accumulation

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

European Credit System for VET (ECVET)

## Comparability

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA

Europass documents (certificate and diploma supplements) and portal

Key Competences Framework

European Multilingual Classification of European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO)

Microcredentials (MC)

## Validation of non-formal and informal learning

EU Council Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)

| POLICY AREAS / POLICY INITIATIVES | Quality assurance | Credit transfer and accumulation | Comparability of skills and qualifications (*) | Validation of non-formal and informal learning | Recognition of qualifications |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ESG | Moderate with EQAVET | High with ECTS | High overall | Moderate overall | Moderate overall |
| EQAVET | Moderate with ESG | Limited with ECVET | Moderate overall | Limited overall | Limited overall |
| ECTS | High with ESG | Limited with ECVET | High overall | Moderate overall | High overall |
| ECVET | Limited with EQAVET | Limited with ECTS | Limited overall | Limited overall | Limited overall |
| QF-EHEA | High with ESG | High with ECTS | High overall | Moderate overall | High overall |
| EQF | Moderate overall | Moderate overall | High overall | High overall | Moderate overall |
| Europass diploma supplement | High with ESG | High with ECTS | High overall | Moderate overall | Moderate overall |
| Europass certificate supplement | Limited overall | Limited overall | Moderate overall | Moderate overall | Limited overall |
| Europass new portal (digital credentials, etc) (*) | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high |
| Microcredentials (*) | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high |
| ESCO | No explicit links found | No explicit links found | Moderate with EQF | Moderate overall | Limited overall |
| Key competence framework | No explicit links found | No explicit links found | Moderate with EQF | Moderate overall | No explicit links found |
| VNFIL Recommendation | Moderate overall | Moderate overall | High overall | n/a since only one examined initiative | Limited overall |
| Professional Qualifications Directive | Limited overall | Moderate with ECTS | Moderate overall | Limited overall | Moderate overall |
| Lisbon Recognition Convention | High with ESG | High with ECTS | High overall | Moderate overall | Moderate overall |
| Automatic Recognition Recommendation (**) | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high | Potentially high |

# Considerations on coherence

- EU Member States' sustained commitment and efforts over 20 years offer **'a successful story of European cooperation in education and training'**, given its voluntary nature.
- **Increasingly coherent policy framework** aimed at promoting learning mobility and progression, with **LOs as unifying element for this coherence**.
- **Sector-based synergies are stronger:** Synergies are more frequently found between initiatives within the same education and training sector rather than the same policy thematic area.
- **Higher education synergies are more prevalent:** European initiatives associated with higher education tend to have stronger synergies than those associated with VET.
- **Integration opportunities in VET:** Initiatives on quality assurance, credits, qualifications frameworks, and recognition are more integrated in higher education, indicating areas where further work could be promoted in VET.

# Considerations on impact

**Over the past 20 years (2000-2020),** European policy initiatives have:

- Increased the focus on **learning outcomes**
- Increased attention to **learning outside formal settings**
- Promoted **convergences** across initiatives and countries
- Promoted commitment to **transparent, comparable and recognised qualifications**
- Emphasised the need for **more flexible learning pathways**

# Part 3:

# Lifelong learning in 2000 and in 2020:

# Barriers & changes for individuals

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What has **changed** for the individuals from **2000** to **2020**?

Which **initiatives** have made a **difference**?

8 country cases (FI, FR, DE, IE, IT, NL, PL, RO) and when possible other EU countries considered

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# Analytical framework: three macro-areas to analyse barriers and changes to enter, re-enter and accumulate learning

**Within and between formal education and training subsystems**

**Combining formal, non-formal and informal learning**

**Portability of qualifications across countries**

# Main challenges and changes within and between formal education and training subsystems

## Challenges in 2000

- Disconnected and rigid education and training subsystems and learning pathways
- Limited opportunities for transitions
- Low status of VET
- Educational segregation

## Changes up to 2020

- Modular learning pathways
- Broader curricula
- Increasing comparability and quality of learning opportunities
- More flexible admission requirements
- Measures to reduce segregation

# Main challenges and changes in combining formal, non-formal and informal learning

## Challenges in 2000

- Limited attention to learning after initial training
- Unrecognised and fragmented learning outside formal education and training systems

## Changes up to 2020

- Increased quality and relevance of learning outside formal systems
- Strengthened lifelong learning strategies
- More opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning

# Main challenges and changes in the portability of qualifications across countries

## Challenges in 2000

- Underdeveloped mutual recognition frameworks (mainly bilateral agreements)
- Complex procedures

## Changes up to 2020

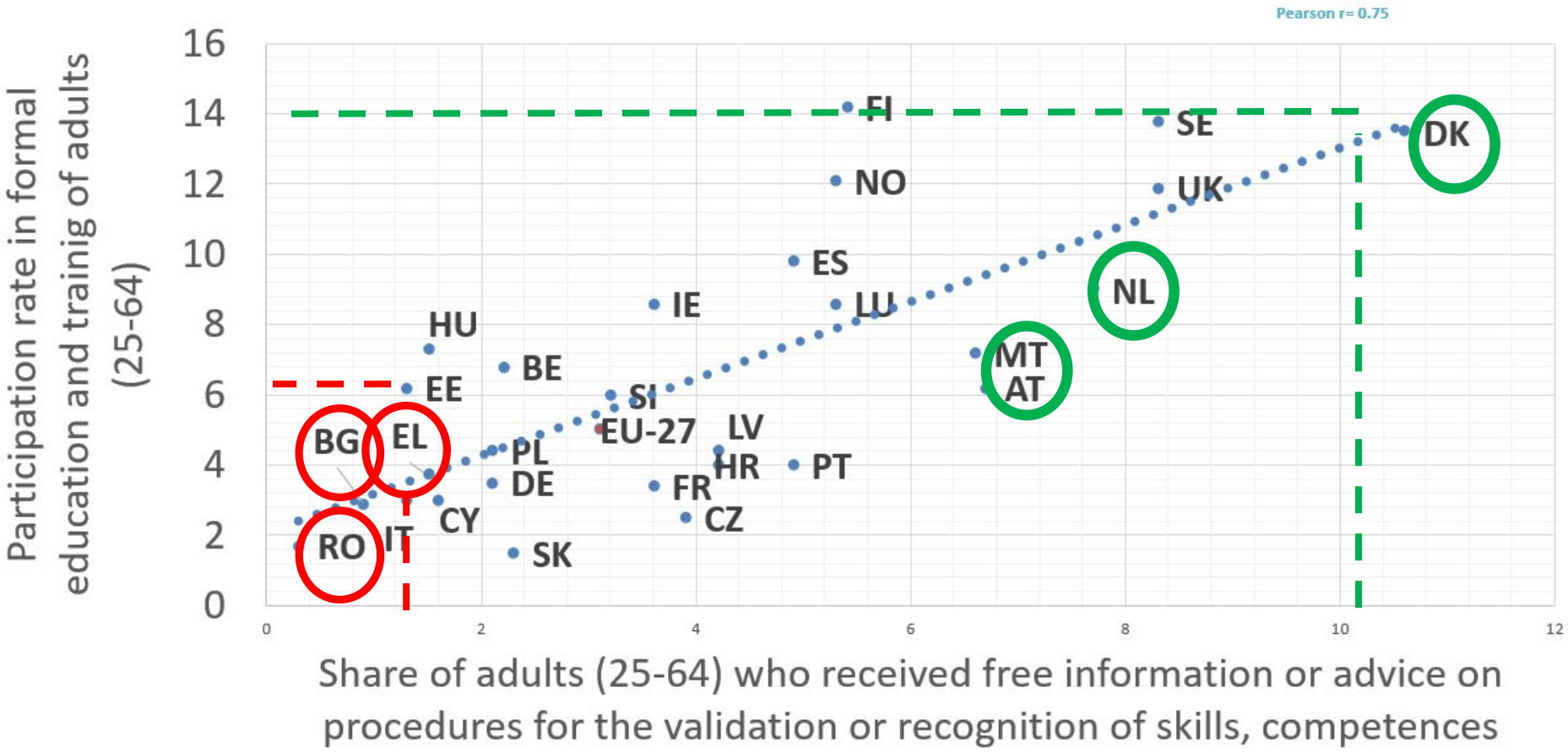
- Development of recognition frameworks
- Simplified recognition of qualifications
- Greater support for learner mobility, including disadvantaged groups

# Changes in participation, EU 27

*From 2004 to 2019 (EU-ELF):*

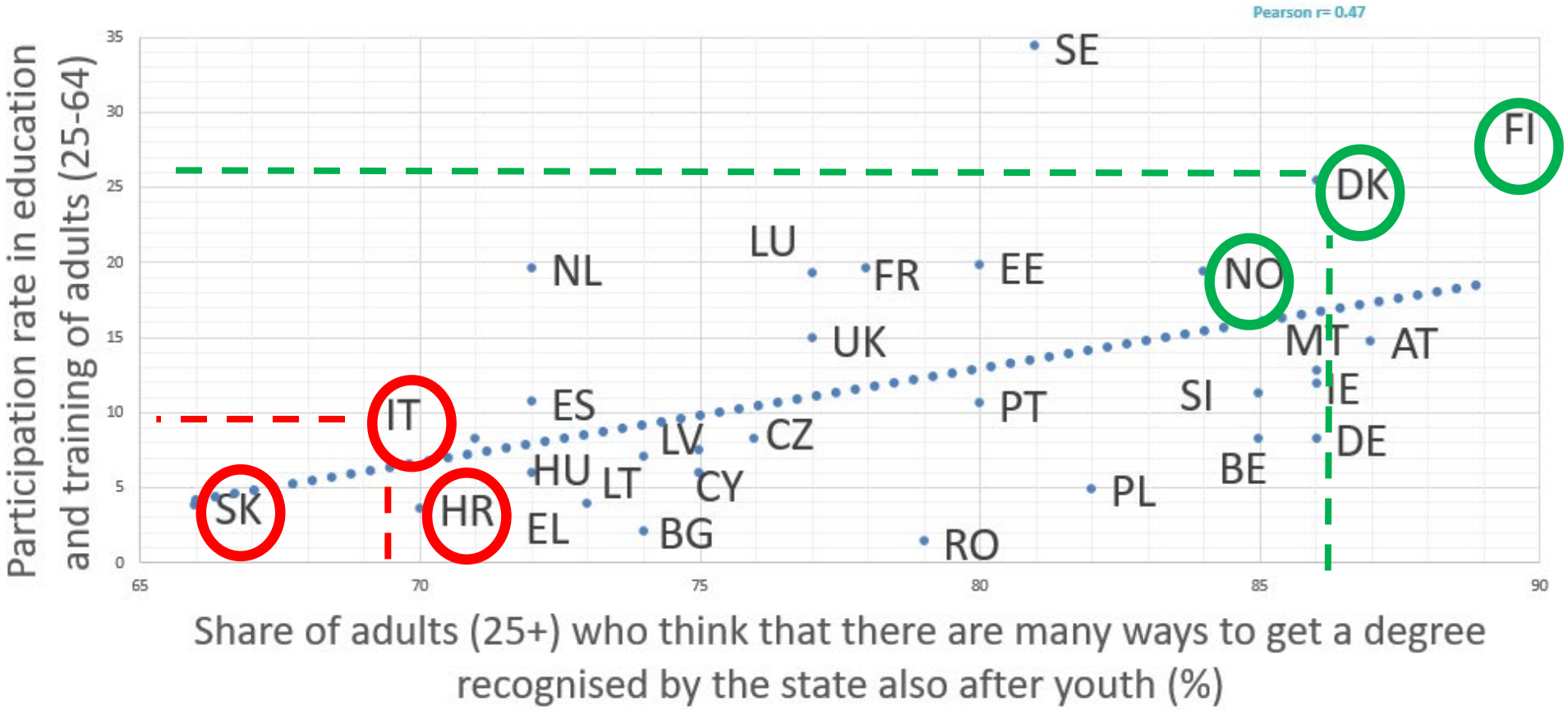
- Participation in non-formal learning has doubled among young and adults
  - especially employees in stable jobs and to some extent also unemployed
- Participation in formal learning has increased for young people and remained low for adults (3%) with wide disparities between countries
  - In most countries unemployed and inactive more than employed

## Positive correlation between the share of adults (25–64) who received free information or advice on procedures for the validation or recognition of skills, competences and participation rate in formal education and training (last 12 months) (%), 2016




*Source*: Cedefop on Eurostat data (TRNG_AES_101); European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2021): Eurostat AES (Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat)

## Positive correlation on the share of adults (25+) who (totally or tend to) agree with the statement 'There are many ways to get a degree recognised by the state, also after youth' and participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last four weeks) (%), 2019




*Source*: Cedefop on Eurostat (TRNG_LFS_09); Cedefop (2020). Perceptions on adult learning and CVET in Europe. Second opinion survey – Volume 1. Member States.

# Final considerations

1. Participation in learning has increased, but remains low and uneven across countries and for certain types of learners.
2. Progress made in promoting learning mobility within and across countries, but barriers remain.
3. Challenges in implementation. Different approaches, fragmentation, bureaucratic hurdles, limited cooperation.
4. Rapid technological changes require adaptation of policies and practices.

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# Part 4:

# Future policy scenarios Towards 2040

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# Scenario development process: three building blocks

1. **Identification of eight trends** (2000-2020) and related STEEP (Social, Technological, Environmental, Economic and Political) Drivers likely to be most dominant in shaping the future of lifelong and life-wide learning (EU and national level).

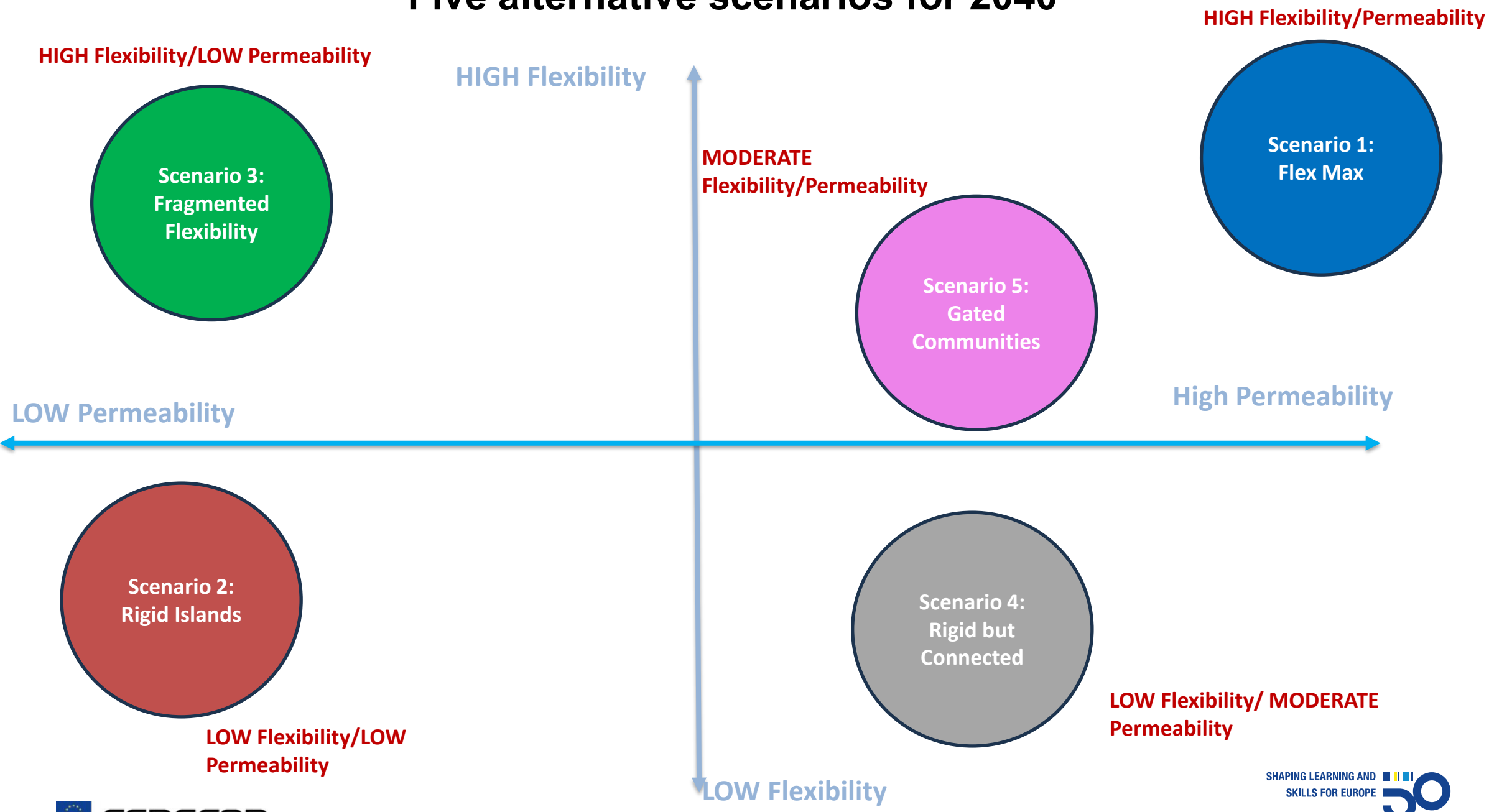
2. **Developing the scenario axes: choice of two primary variables**

   - **Flexibility:** the system allows leaners to customise their education and training to fit their needs, goals, and circumstances, with options in format, content, and assessment
   - **Permeability**: the system allows leaners to access and easily move between different levels, sectors, or systems of education and training, with the possibility to build on their qualifications and learning outcome

3. **Identifying 'indicators' for the two variables and their values (High, Low, Moderate):**
   - **Flexibility:** Personalisation; content; assessment; provision
   - **Permeability:** (e.g. existence/use of) compatible credit systems, processes/systems for validation, interoperable digital tool; mechanisms supporting transitions between educational sub-systems; qualification recognition; quality assurance coordination.

**Constructing, refining and validating the scenarios**: Once drafted, the five scenarios were tested, refined, and validated through expert input and validation workshops.

# Five alternative scenarios for 2040



# Implications for policy choices

| | **Flex Max** (HIGH Flexibility/Permeability): a seamless E+T ecosystem, enabling personalised pathways and mobility | **Fragmented Flexibility** (HIGH Flexibility/LOW permeability): An E&T system focused on flexibility of learning within sub-systems, with limited mobility across subsystems and borders. | **Gated Communities** (MODERATE): An E+T system that supports more flexible learning and prioritises increased permeability across subsystems within national borders. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Key implications i.e. what choices actors make | • Pursuing policies towards flexible learning pathways (e.g. modularised learning opportunities).<br>• Supporting further developments of (compatible) credit systems and recognition.<br>• Investing in inter-operability of qualification databases and related digital tools (within and across countries) | • Prioritising the expansion of flexible learning opportunities/ increasing personalisation.<br>• Putting less emphasis on progression.<br>• Choosing limited (e.g. bilateral or sector specific) agreements for the cross-border recognition of qualifications (e.g. focus on specific qualifications, skill areas, or learner groups). | • Expanding opportunities for flexible learning.<br>• Encouraging collaboration between national E+T stakeholders to increase permeability within and across sub-systems.<br>• Giving less prominence to cross-border recognition. |

# Thank you

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