



NQF and NQS in Estonia

Olav Aarna

Estonian Qualifications Authority



National Qualifications Framework

- **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** means an **instrument for the classification of qualifications** according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which **aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society**

Recommendation on the EQF 2008 and 2017

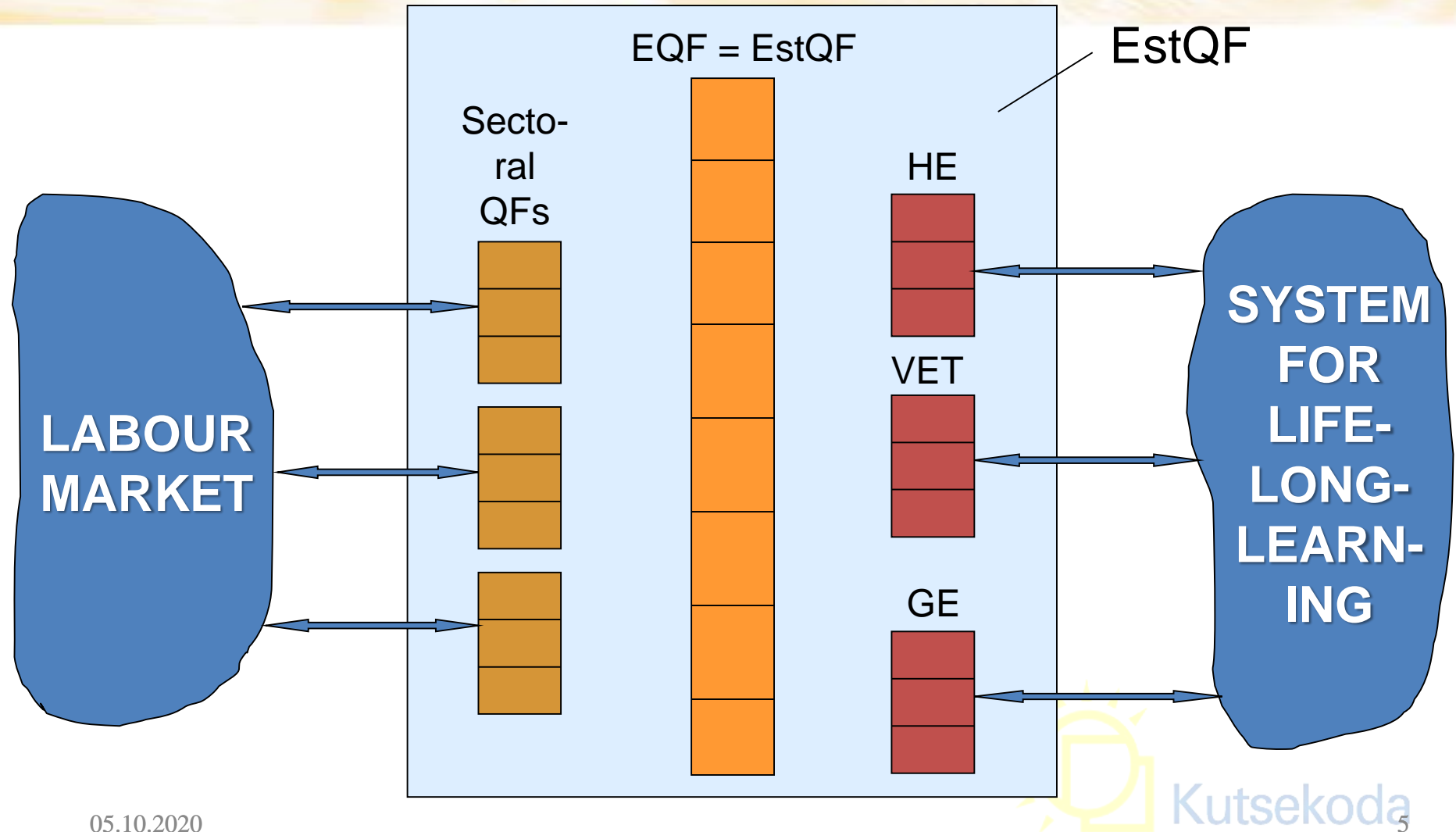
Estonian qualifications framework

- EstQF is an **8-level overarching framework**, established by the **Occupational Qualifications Act** (Professions Act) in 2008 (amended in 2015)
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/501072015005/consolide>
- EstQF consists of **four sub-frameworks**: for general education, VET, higher education and occupational qualifications with relevant quality assurance systems
- EstQF **includes all state recognised** (quality assured) **qualifications**, which meet two criteria:
 - Are defined in learning outcomes-based qualification standards (e.g. national curriculum or occupational qualification standard)
 - Awarded by state recognised institutions

Sub-frameworks of qualifications

- **Formal education qualifications:**
 - Sub-framework for **higher education qualifications** (levels 6-8)
 - Sub-framework for **initial and continuous VET qualifications** (levels 2-5)
 - Sub-framework for **general education qualifications** (levels 1,2 and 4)
- Sub-framework for **occupational** (sectoral, work based) **qualifications:**
 - Sectoral qualifications on levels 2-8

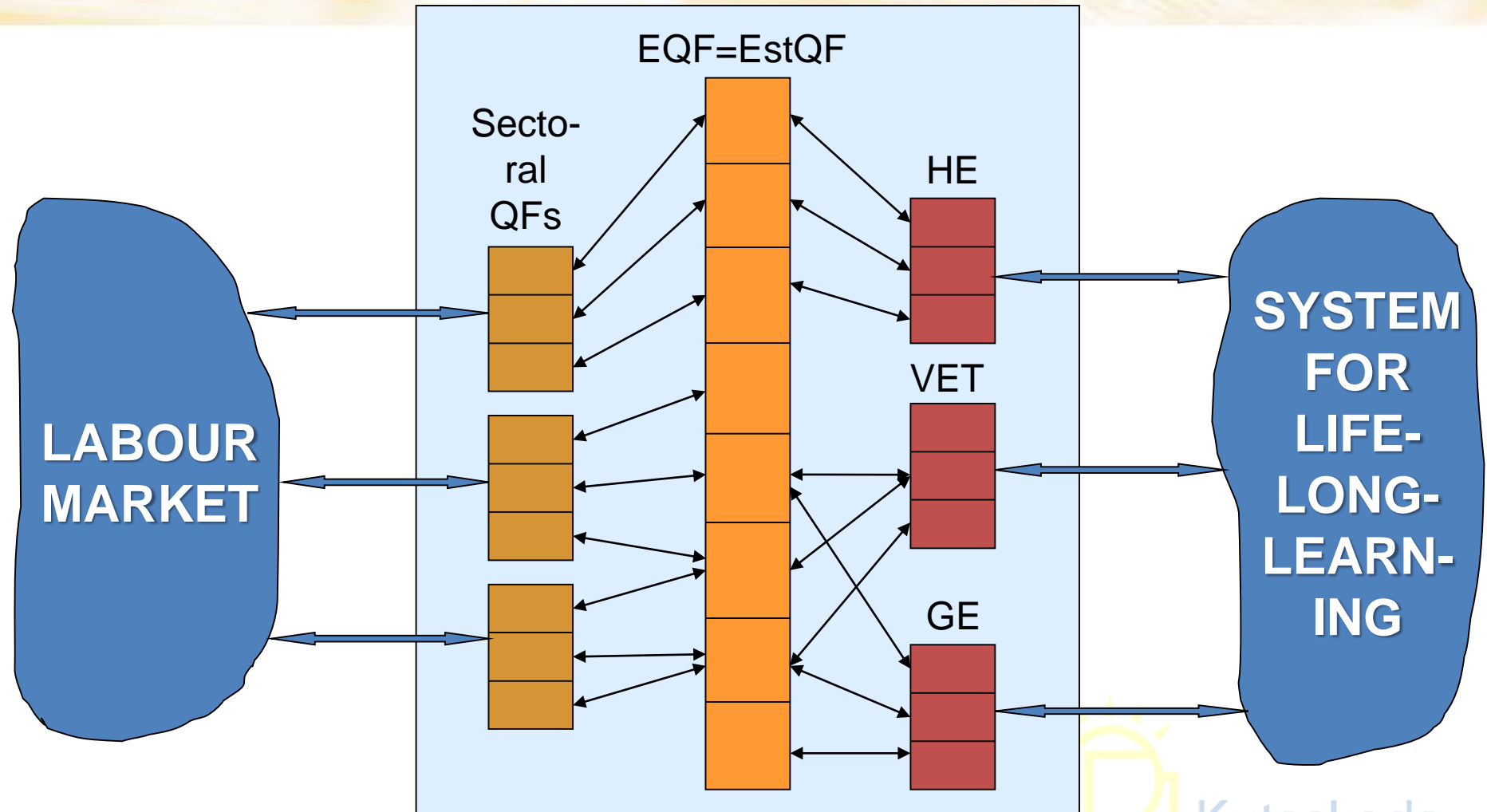
Estonian Qualifications Framework (2008)



Qualification standards and EstQF

- General trend of development – **towards learning outcomes based standards:**
 - Higher education standard (2008)
 - Vocational education standard (2009, 2013) + national curricula for VET (54)
 - National curriculum for basic school (2011)
 - National curriculum for upper secondary school (2011)
 - New generation of occupational qualification standards (2010-...)

Estonian Qualifications Framework (2011)



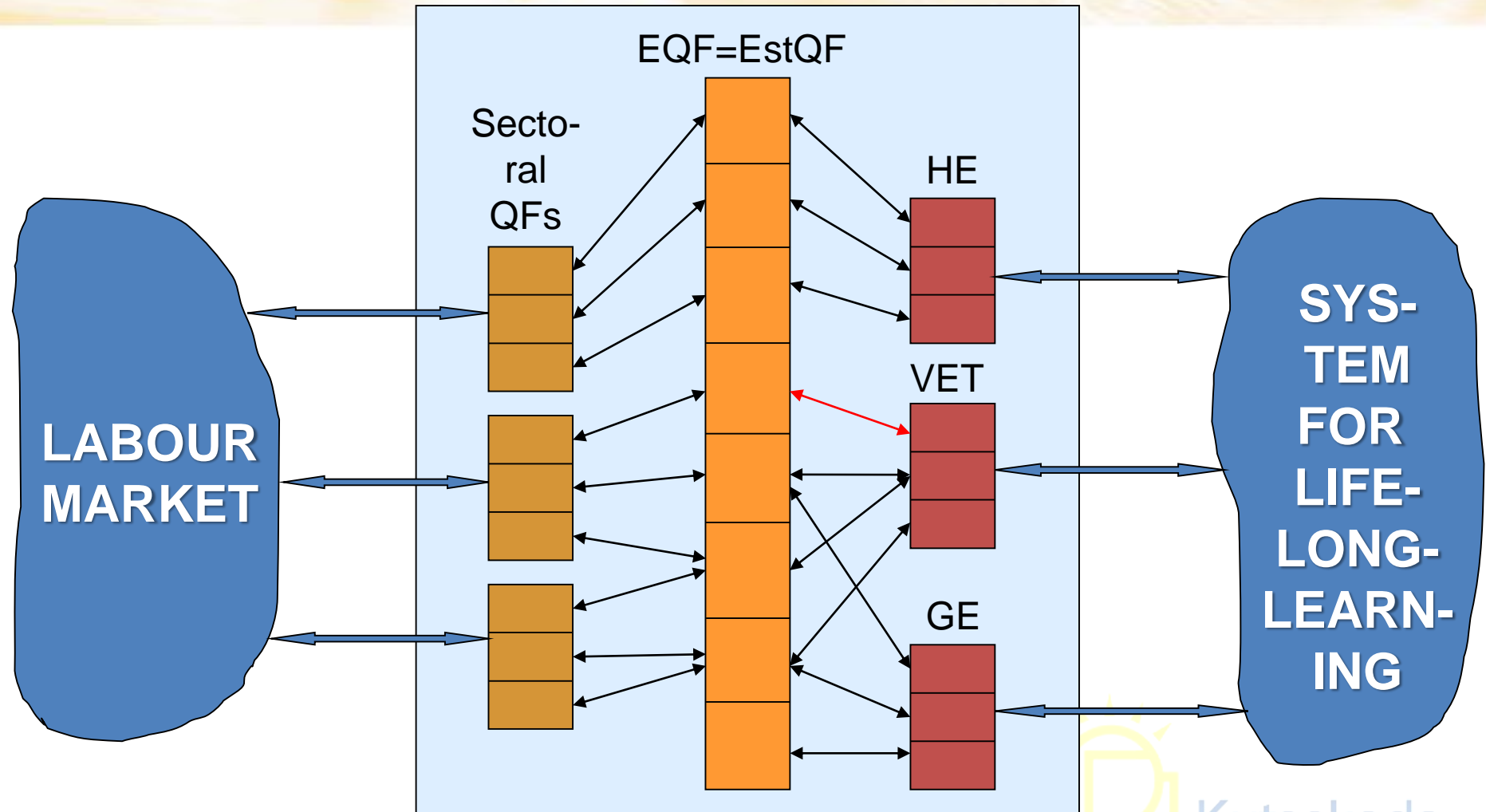
EQF implementation and referencing process (1)

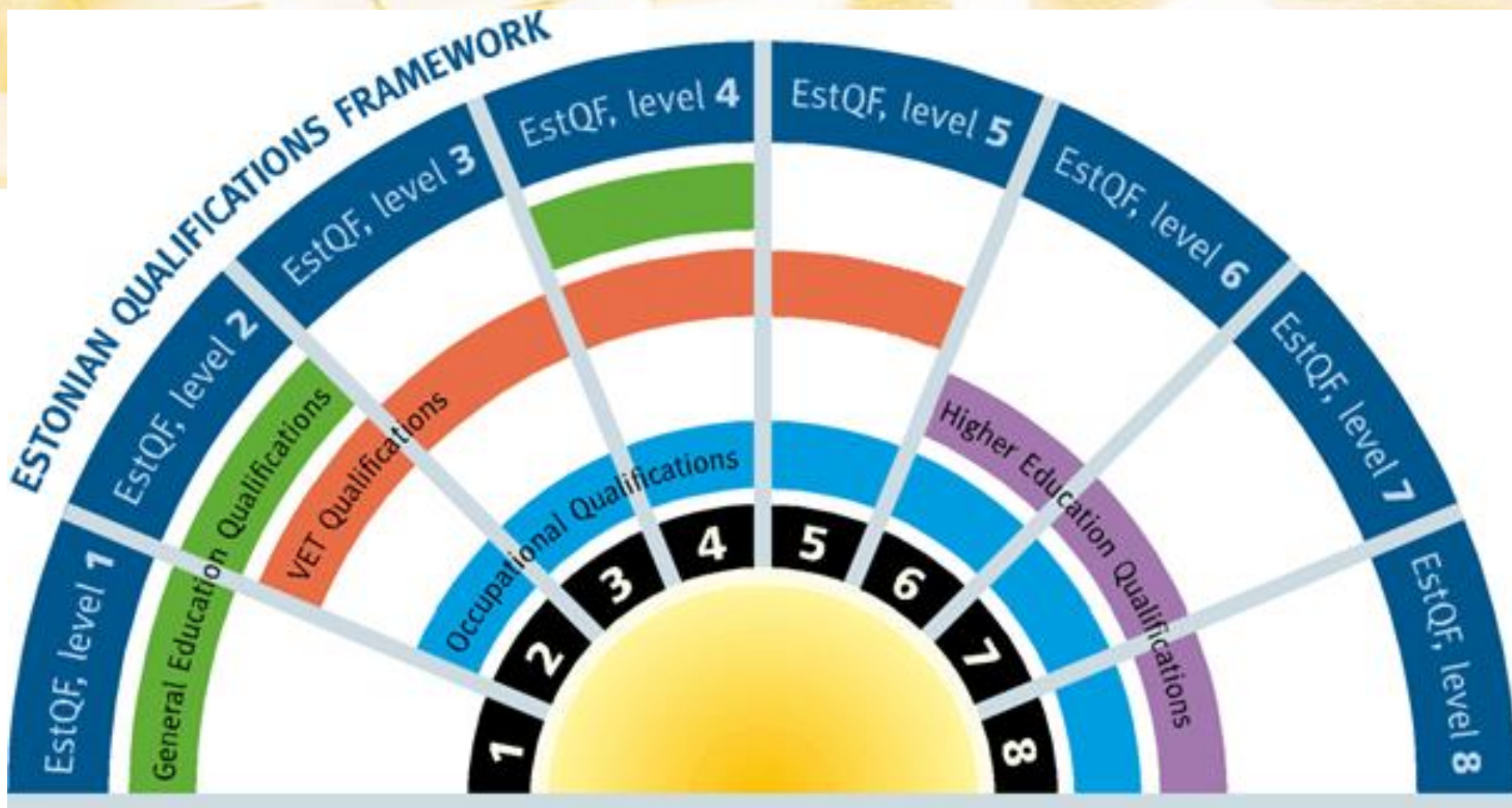
- The EstQF established with the **Occupational Qualifications Act** (01.09.2008)
- The process of **referencing** the EstQF to the EQF initiated, **steering committee involving key stakeholders established** (January 2010)
- *Kutsekoda* nominated as the **national coordination point for implementation of the EQF in Estonia** (February 2010)
- The first version of the referencing report prepared (May–November 2010)
- Referencing report discussed with stakeholders (December 2010–March 2011)
- Three **international experts involved** (December 2010–August 2011)
- Final version of the referencing report prepared (May–August 2011)
- **Referencing report endorsed by the steering committee submitted to the EQF Advisory Group** (September 2011)
- Referencing **report presented in the EQF Advisory Group** (October 2011)

EQF implementation and referencing process (2)

- Referencing report placed into the EQF portal (July 2012)
- **International launching conference** for the EstQF organised (October 2012)
- **New VET Institutions Act** adopted (September 2013)
- **New Standard for VET** adopted (September 2013)
- **New national curricula for VET** developed and implemented (September 2013 - ...)
- **New quality assurance system for VET** developed and implemented (September 2012 - ...)
- Referencing report revised and amended (September-November 2014)
- Referencing report **endorsed by the EstQF steering committee** (March 2015)
<http://kutsekoda.ee/fwkc/contenthelper/10604836/10604837>
- Referencing report presented to the EQF Advisory Group (April 2015)

Estonian Qualifications Framework (2015)





Formal education qualifications	EstQF levels	Examples of occupational qualifications
Basic education certificate based on curriculum for students with moderate and severe learning disabilities	1	
Basic education certificate based on simplified curriculum Basic education certificate VET qualification certificate, level 2	2	Assistant gardener, Logger
VET qualification certificate, level 3	3	Electronic equipment assembler, Woodworking bench operator
Upper secondary general education certificate Upper secondary VET certificate VET qualification certificate, level 4	4	Harvester operator, Veterinary assistant
VET qualification certificate, level 5	5	Biogas plant operator, Mechatronic-technician
Diploma of Bachelor's degree, Diploma of professional higher education	6	Physiotherapist, Civil Engineer, Applied Architect
Diploma of Master's degree	7	Diploma engineer, Diploma architect
Diploma of Doctoral degree	8	Chartered civil engineer, Chartered architect

Lessons learned

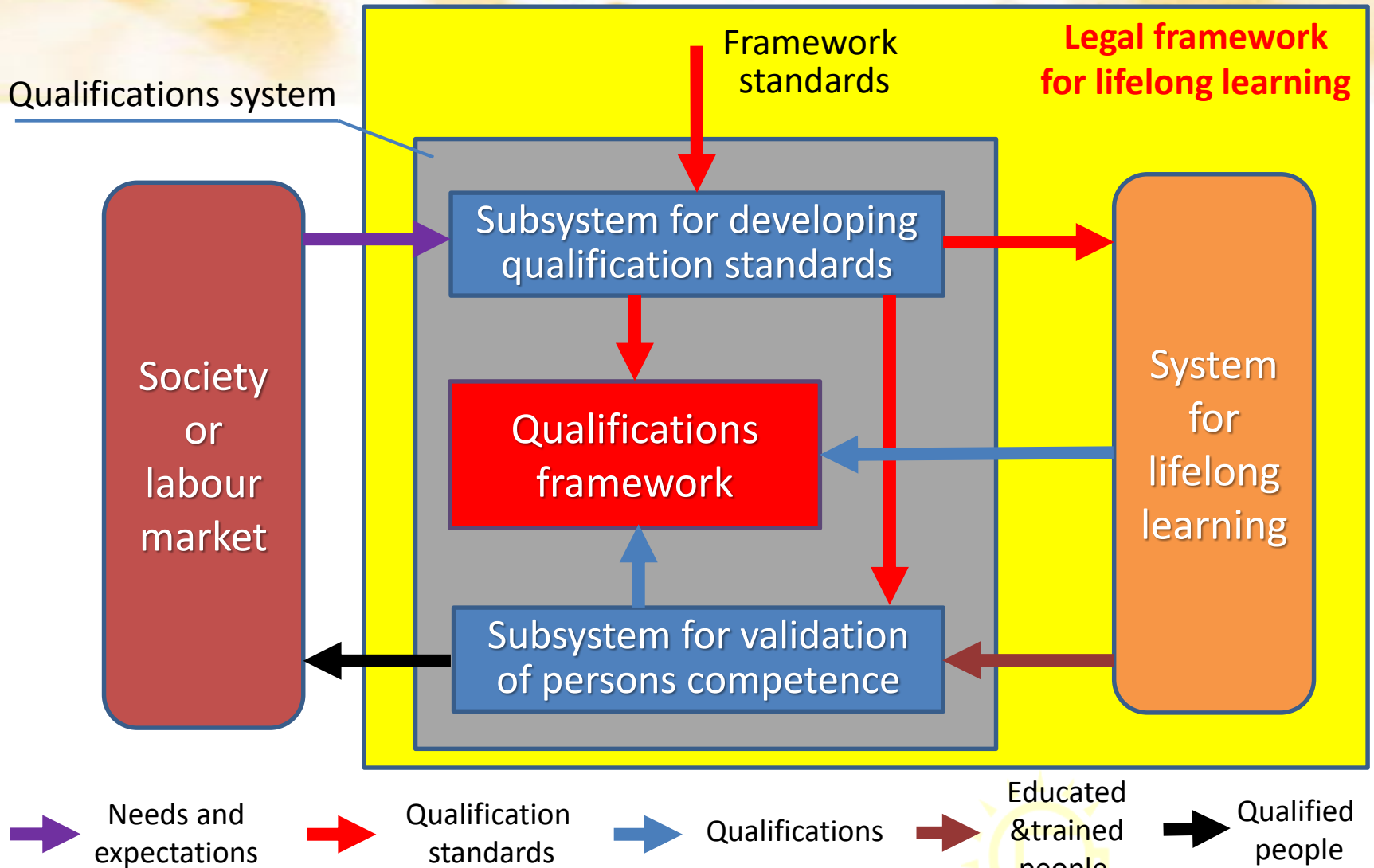
- Strategic planning and management of the processes
- Clearly defined conceptual framework supporting implementation of an overarching (integrated) NQF
- Real involvement of stakeholders
- Importance of involvement in the EQF implementation process, incl. EQF referencing
- **Implementation of the NQF is a process of incorporating it into the existing NQS**

National Qualifications System

- **National Qualifications System (NQS)** means all aspects of a Member State's activity related to the recognition of learning and other mechanisms that **link education and training to the labour market and civil society**
- NQS includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and processes relating to **quality assurance, assessment and the award of qualifications**
- NQS **may be composed of several subsystems** and may include NQF

Recommendation on the EQF 2008 and 2017

Conceptual model of qualifications system

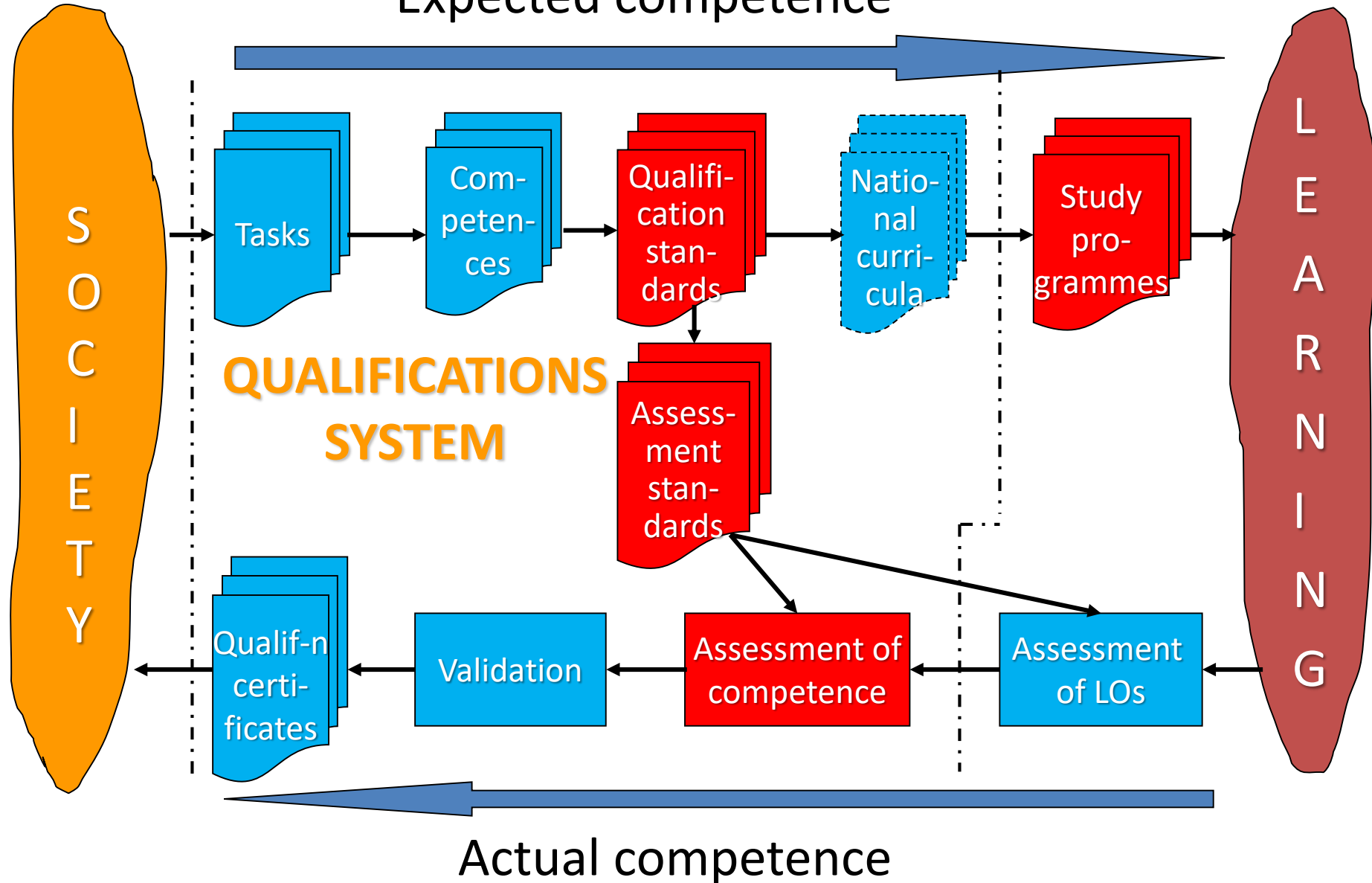


Guiding Principles (1)

- **Qualifications system (QS)** is an **interface between the society and the system for lifelong learning**
- **Occupational QS** is a sub-system of qualifications system (an **interface between the labour market and the system for lifelong learning**)
- QS in Estonia follows **overarching (integrated) qualifications system model**
- QS is a **quality assurance system**
- **Quality** – a measure of compliance of an entity's characteristics' to stakeholders needs and expectations (ISO 9000)

Competence circle

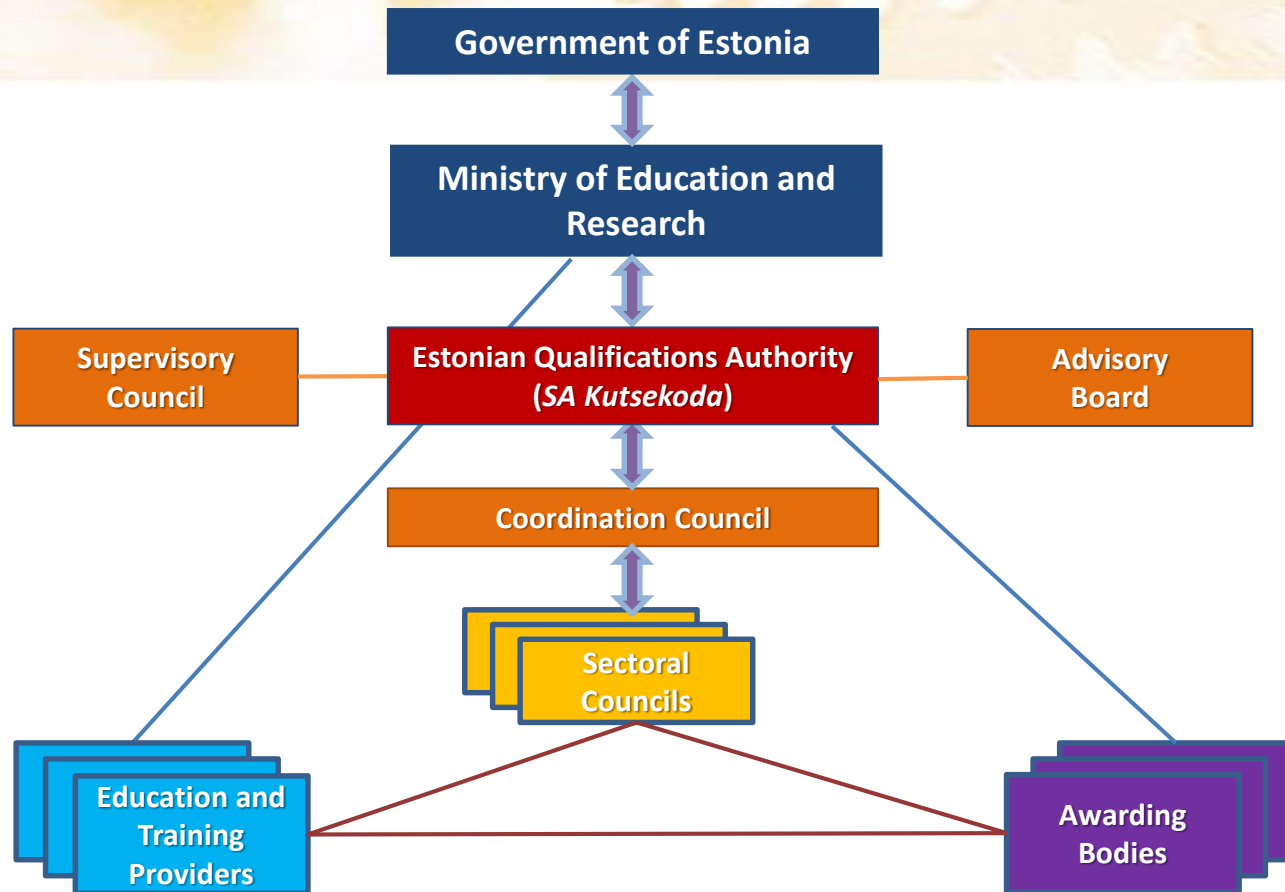
Expected competence



Guiding Principles (2)

- **Social partnership** of the stakeholders (Government, employers' organisations, employees' organisations, learners organisations, education and training providers organisations) is of crucial importance
- **NQF is a backbone** of the NQS
- **Development and implementation of the NQF is a process of incorporating it into the NQS**
- Development and implementation of the **NQF is the driver of NQS innovation**

Governance structure of the Estonian NQS



No single steering committee for the EstQF development and implementation!

Institutions involved in quality and qualifications system

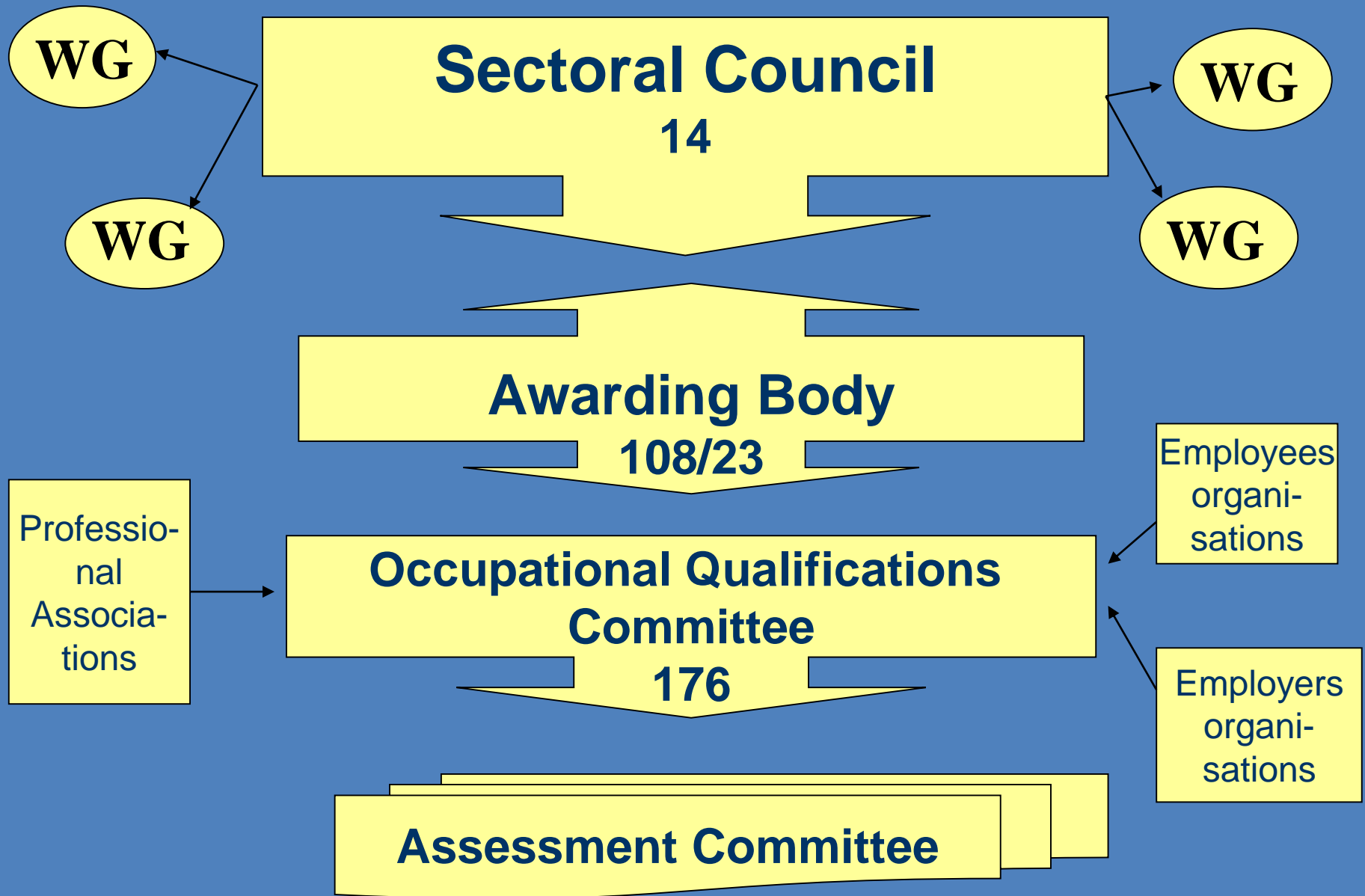
- **Ministry of Education and Research** <http://hm.ee/en>:
 - Strategic management of the system
 - Licensing of education and training providers
 - Keeping the register of formal education qualifications
- **Estonian Qualifications Authority** (*Kutsekoda*)
<http://kutsekoda.ee/en/kutsekoda>
- **Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education** (EKKA) <http://ekka.archimedes.ee/en/>
- **Foundation *Innove*** (recently integrated with the Education and Youth Board) <http://www.innove.ee/en>

Quality assurance of curricula and formal education qualifications

- **Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA):**
 - Quality assessment of study programme groups in HE
 - Institutional accreditation of HEIs
 - Thematic assessment in HE
 - Quality assessment of study programme groups in VET
 - Quality assessment of continuous training programmes
- **Foundation *Innove*:**
 - Development of national curricula for general education and upper secondary VET
 - Administering national examinations

Occupational qualifications system in Estonia

- Labour market is divided into **14 sectors**
- Each sector is managed by a **sectoral council (SC)** responsible for:
 - Development of **occupational qualification standards** in the sector
 - **Awarding of occupational qualifications** in the sector
 - Issuing licences for the awarding bodies



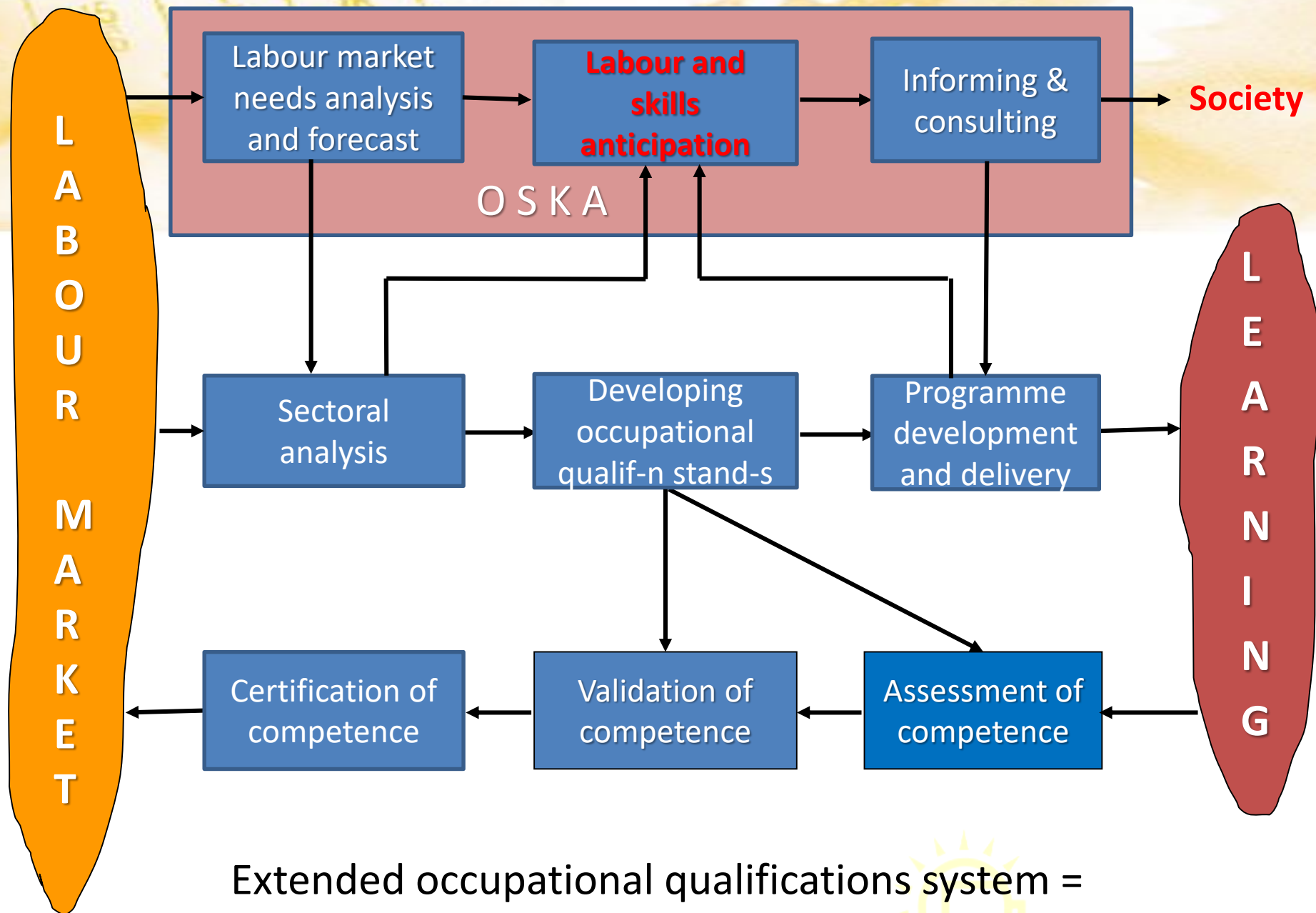
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Sectoral Councils

- Institutions represented at SC are nominated by the Minister of Education and Research (10-20 institutions)
- Persons representing institutions are nominated by the institutions
- Typically institutions represented at SC are:
 - Employers organisations of the sector
 - Employees organisations of the sector
 - Professional associations of the sector
 - Education and training providers
 - Responsible ministries and agencies

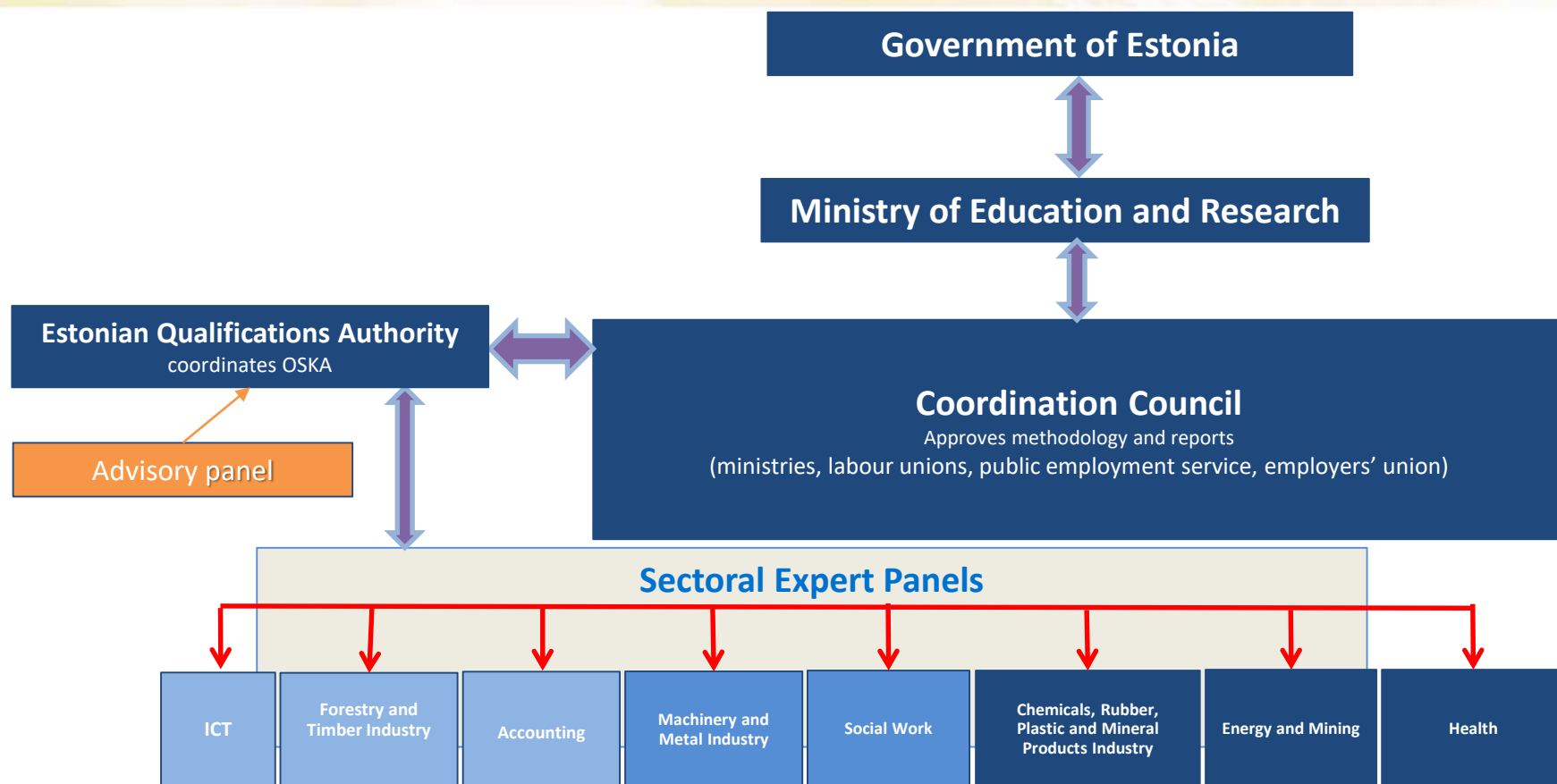
Awarding Bodies

- Awarding body is a legal entity nominated by SC as a result of public competition
- Awarding body establishes Occupational Qualifications Committee(s) (OQC) for awarding one or several qualifications of the sector
- OQC has the right to establish suitable number of Assessment Committees
- Typically institutions represented at OQC are:
 - Employers organisations of the sector
 - Professional associations of the sector
 - Education and training institutions



Extended occupational qualifications system =
= Existing OQS + the system for labour and skills anticipation OSKA

OSKA governance model



Lessons learned

- **Involve stakeholders** (government, employers, employees, learners, education and training providers) in a balanced way
- Train people on implementing the **learning outcomes based approach** and **constructive alignment**
- Importance of **validating nonformal and informal learning**
- Concentrating attention to the **quality of assessment and certification processes**
- **NQF is a mechanism to combine qualification standards development, their implementation and quality assurance of qualifications into a holistic system**



Thank you for your attention!

www.kutsekoda.ee

olav.aarna@kutsekoda.ee