

# **European Qualifications Framework – EQF in the Context of Tertiary Education**

## **Analysis based on a comparison of selected countries**

**Presentation at the Meeting of the Directors General for Higher Education (DGHE)  
University of Graz, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

# Agenda

- EQF – EHEA: Common features and differences
  - Country comparison:  
Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Austria
  - Options for Action: strategic
- Options for action: institutional

# Agenda

- EQF – EHEA: Common features and differences

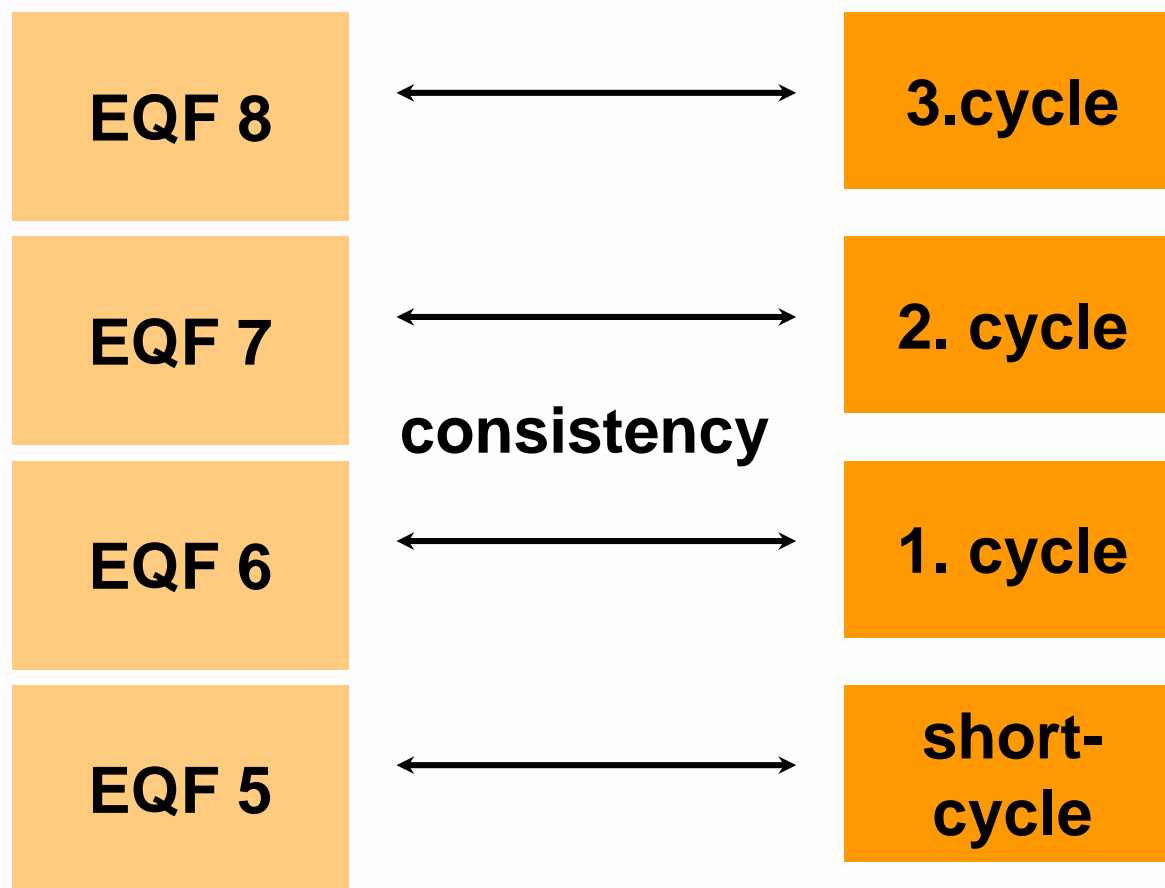
# Purposes of a qualification frame

- **Translation** of qualifications
- **Transparency** of education and training programmes
- Comparable and understandable **signals** in education and labour markets
  - International **mobility** in both markets
- **Permeability** of education and training systems
  - Support of **lifelong learning**

# EQF: an overarching frame

- 8 common reference levels
- Descriptors based on learning outcomes:
  - *Knowledge*
  - *skills*
  - *competences*

# EQF-Levels and Bologna-cycles



# Communalities and Differences

## Communalities

Outcome and competence orientation

## Differences

Additional aspects of EQF:

Exclusively related to learning outcomes

Systems of recognition of non-formal, informal qualifications

Additional aspects of EHEA:

Sectoral framework within EQF?

Sequential requirements for access

Student workload and characteristics of study programmes included

*Own time frame, decisions already taken*

# EHEA and EQF Descriptors

<b>Dublin Descriptors (EHEA)</b>	<b>EQF Descriptors</b>
Knowledge and understanding	Knowledge
Applying knowledge and understanding	Skills
Making judgements	Competences in a broader sense: (i) autonomy and responsibility (ii) learning competence (iii) communication and social competence (iv) professional and vocational competence
Communication skills	
Learning skills	



# EQF: Supporting issues for reform

- Quality assurance (ENQA, CQAF)
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning
  - Guidance and counselling systems
    - Fostering of key competences

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# What did we see in Germany?

- National qualifications framework in higher education agreed in 2005
  - Should be extended to other levels
- HE framework based on generic Dublin descriptors
  - Detailed description task of HE institutions
    - Question: EQF 6-8 reserved for HE?

# What did we see in Denmark?

- Frame for higher education consisting of three components:
  - competence profiles (general)
  - competence objectives (specific, intellectual, professional/academic, practical)
  - formal aspects (workload, access criteria, options for CVT, recognition, institutions)
- implementation will be started by pilot projects
  - based on acceptance of actors

# What did we see in Ireland?

- NFQ 2003 for the whole system, prior experience with similar principles
  - Intermediary bodies, and autonomy of „old“ universities
  - 10 levels, 7-10 reserved for higher education
- 3 types of learning outcomes (with 8 components)
  - knowledge
  - know-how/skills,
  - competence

# What did we see in Austria?

- Bologna implementation under way since beginning
  - Qualifications Framework not agreed so far, preference for integrated frame
- Time frame of national higher education reform does not fit well to European initiatives
  - Tension between profiling vs. standardisation of programmes

# Summary country comparison

**D:** National generic frame separate for HE, decentralised implementation

**DK:** Frame for HE, three components, implementation via pilot projects

**IRL:** frame for whole system implemented, HE separate levels 7-10, intermediary bodies, autonomous universities

**A:** Frame under discussion, tensions with big HE reform, feeling of „overload“

# Challenges

## Using the Bologna reform potential in-depth

- Learning outcome- and competence orientation
  - Learner orientation

## Design of transitions

- Access modalities: entitlement system - selection

## Incentive system for the promotion of LLL

- Permeability towards competences from outside of the formal educational system



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# Options for action: strategic

Strategic dimensions based on Austrian case

## Reform:

- Learner orientation  
Learning outcomes
- Access, transition, permeability

## Organisation:

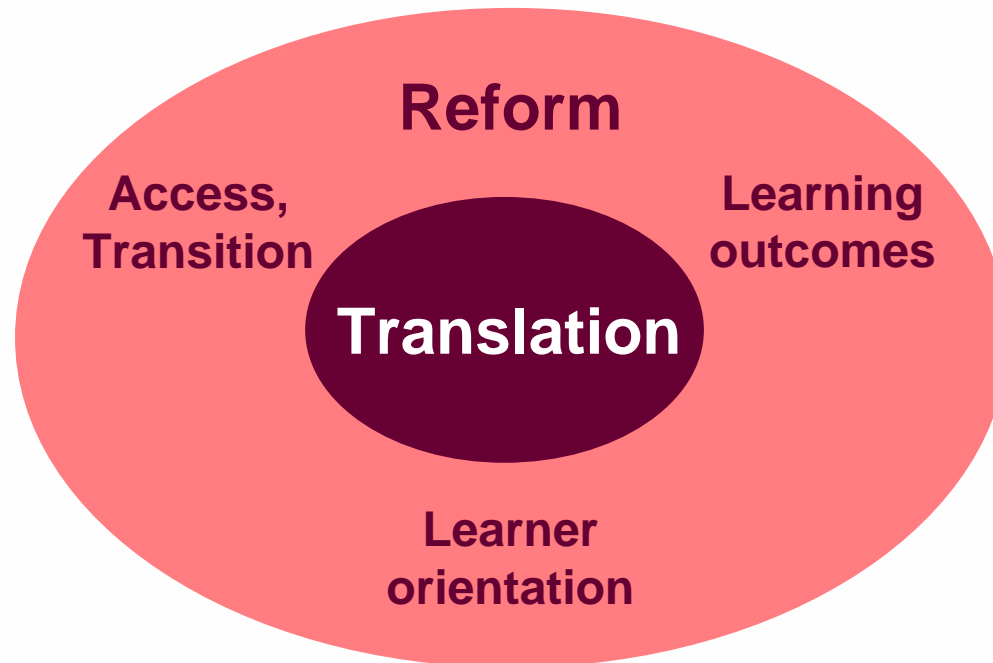
Top down	Bottom-up
Internal actors	External actors
Existing Structures	New structures
Temporary	Permanent

# Strategic option 1: Translation

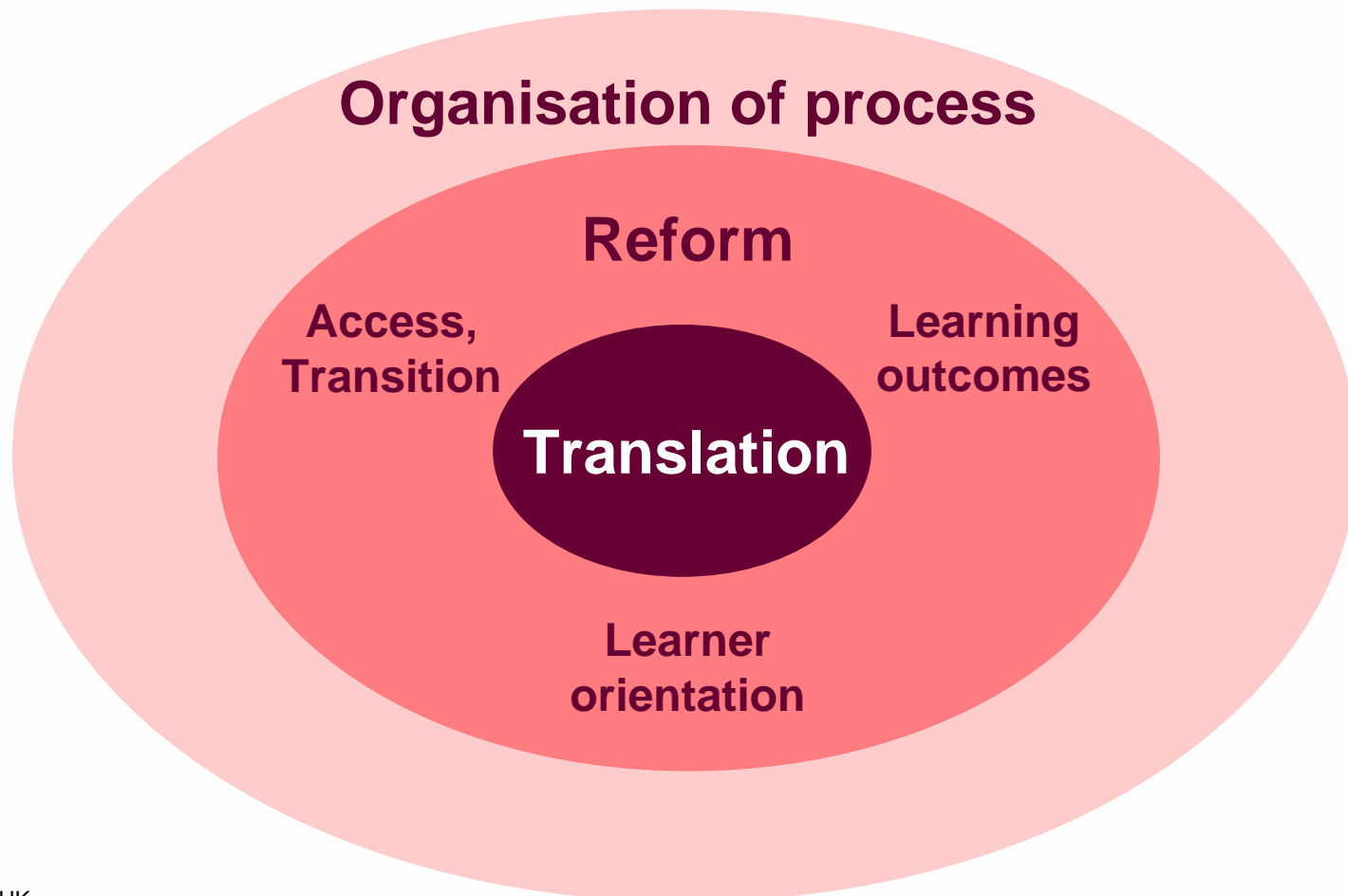


**Translation**

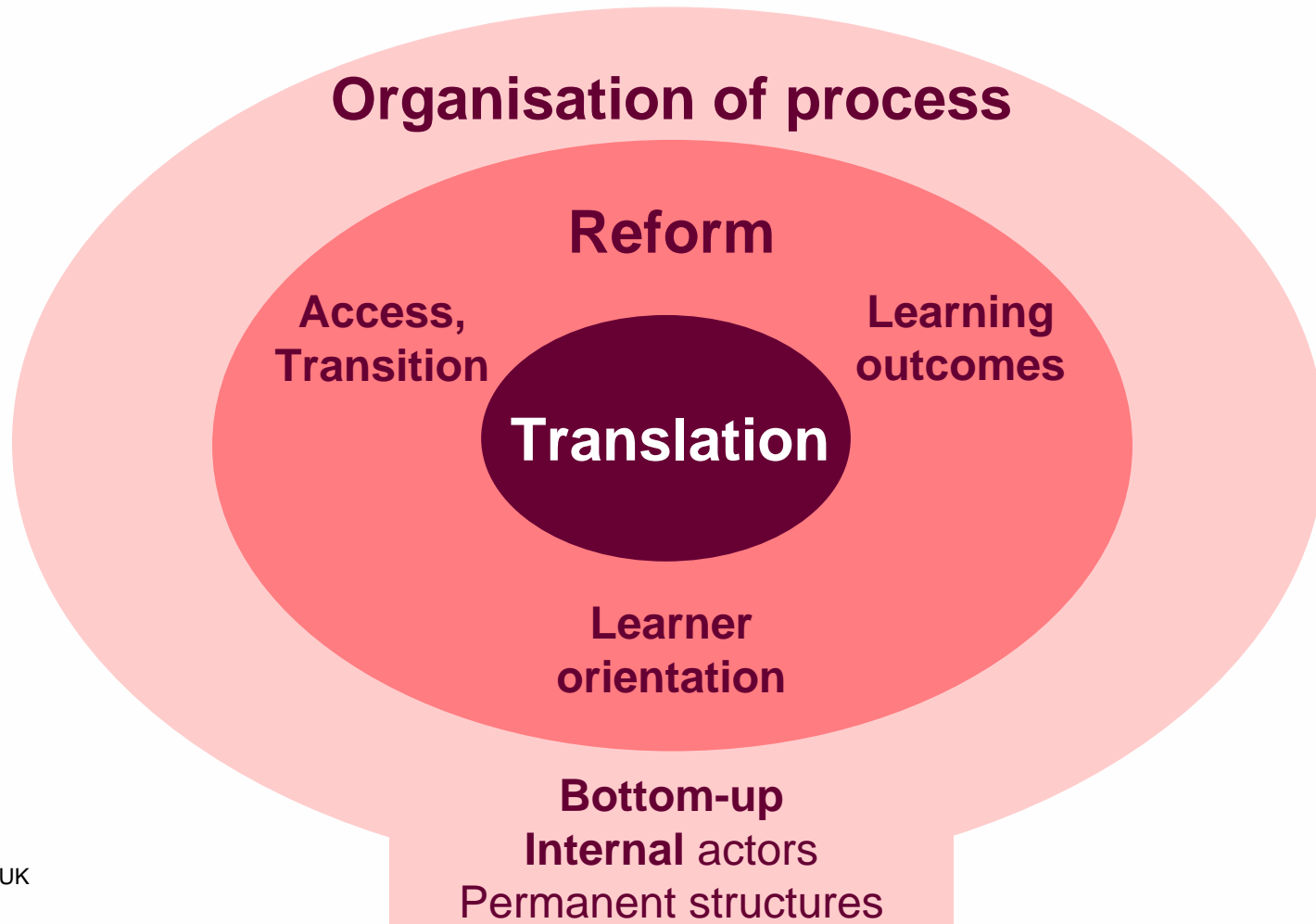
# Strategic option 2: Reform



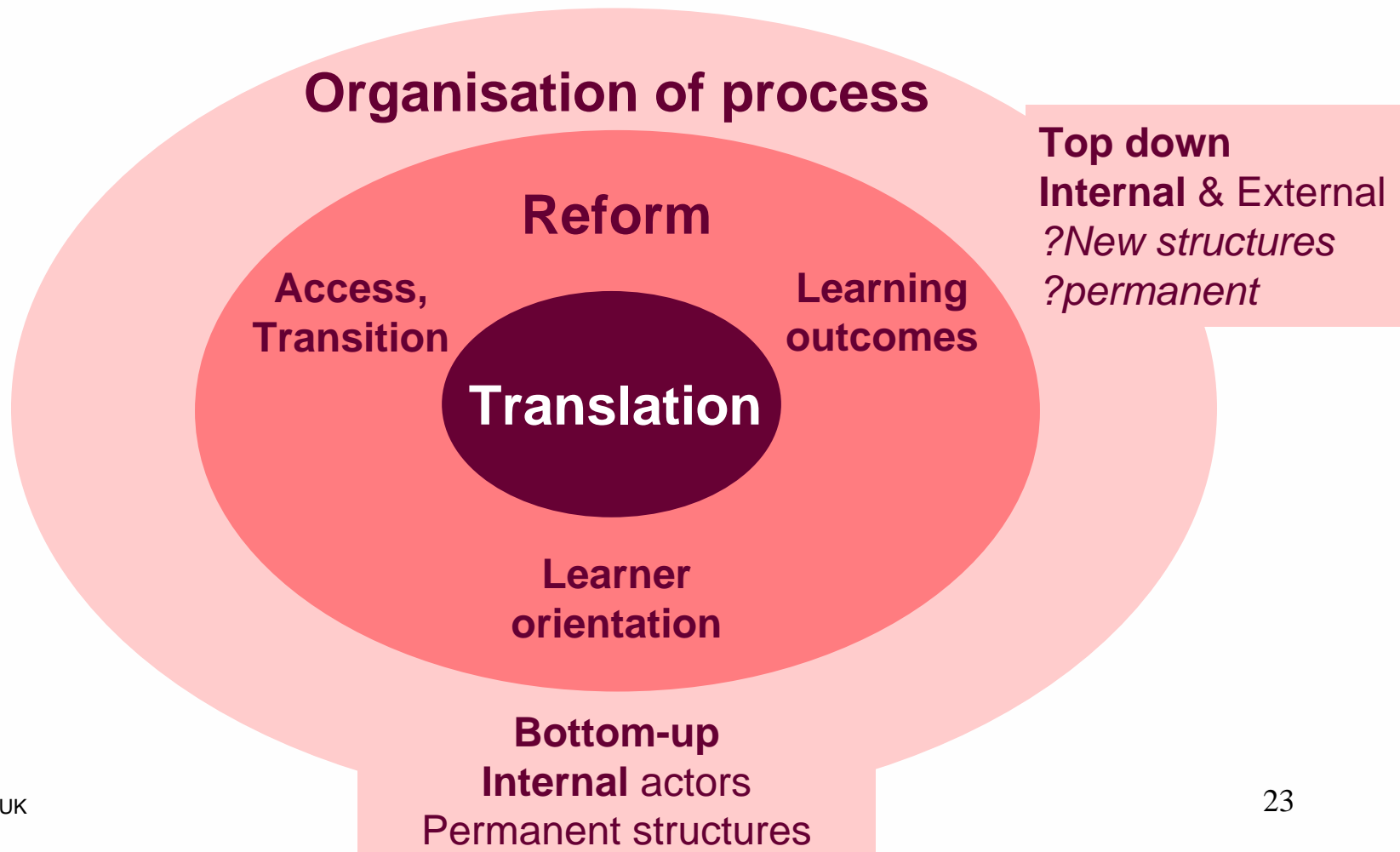
# Strategic option 3: Organisation



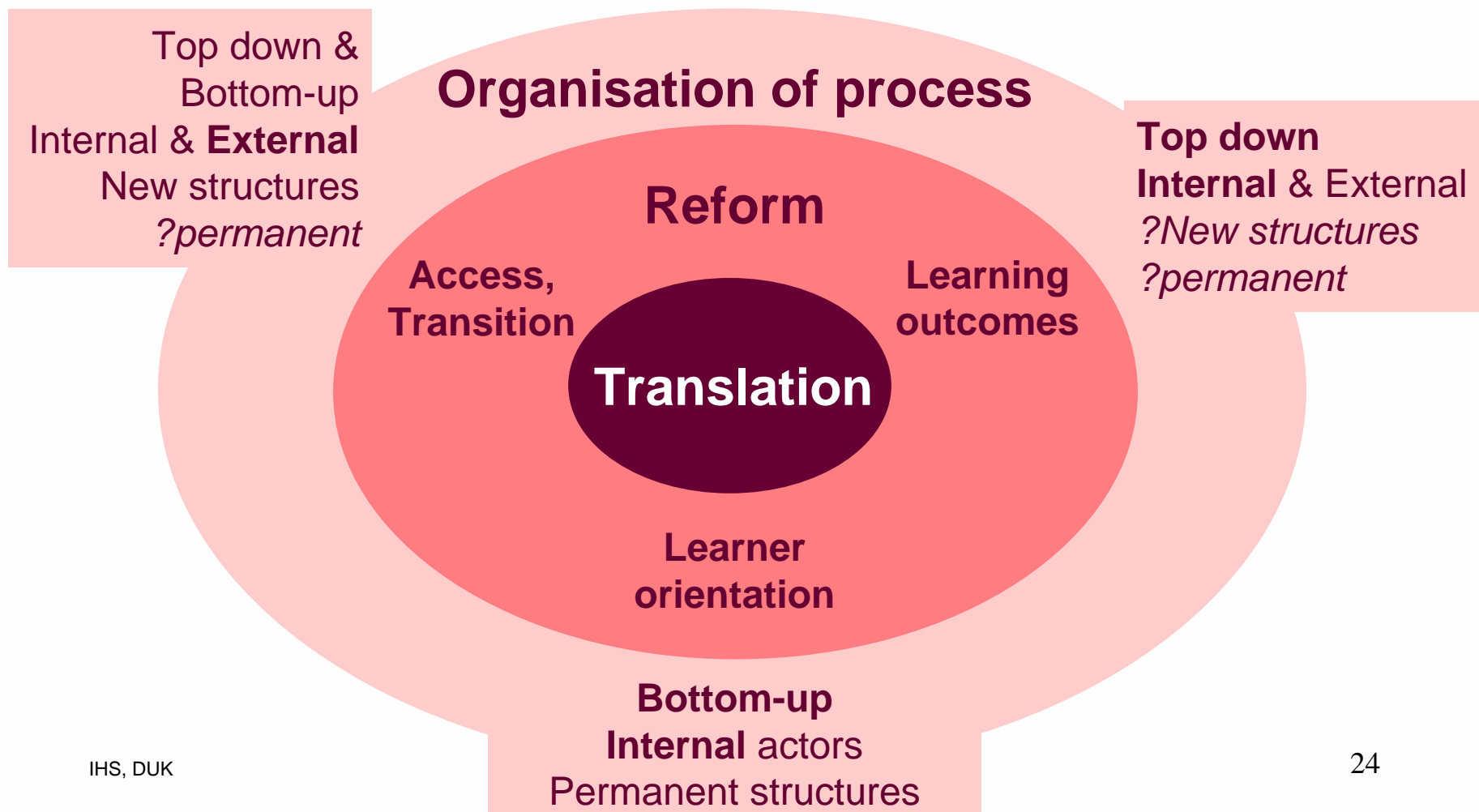
# Strategic option 3: Organisation



# Strategic option 3: Organisation



# Strategic option 3: Organisation





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# Options for action: institutional

- Systematic development of curricula and profiles
- Stocktaking/pilot projects regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning
  - Quality management
- Structuring of definitions of competences and learning outcomes
  - *Interplay between institutions and system*
  - *Monitoring the relation to the labour market*

# Summarising: Challenges for NQFs

- Based on learning outcomes
  - Transparent self-certification process
    - Inclusion of relevant national actors
- Integrated systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning
  - Common Principles for Quality Assurance

**The end**

**Thank you  
for your attention !**