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**Abstract**

One of the most significant European higher education reform initiatives of the last decade is the introduction of a European Qualification Framework (EQF) emphasizing Learning Outcomes (LOs) in higher education. The EQF is offered as a reform to contribute to increased transparency and mobility, and also implies a certain degree of standardization and comparability as to how these initiatives are implemented in European countries. The current article considers these changes in light of institutional perspectives that highlight how common HE reforms, in practice, often vary considerably. It investigates how factors of national policy-making contexts, reform traditions and broader reform agendas contribute to variations in contemporary interpretations and applications of LOs, here in the cases of Norwegian and English HE. It argues that (1) the characteristics of English and Norwegian higher education provided contexts where the perceptions of LOs evolved in very different ways, (2) the different political-administrative structures in the two countries were linked to

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different governance logics at the national level and institutional levels, and (3) despite these variations, some common mechanisms driving reform can be identified, in the role of intermediary and quality assurance bodies. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)