

# ACCOUNTANCY EDUCATION BENCHMARKING STUDY

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Road to Europe: Program of Accounting  
Reform and Institutional Strengthening

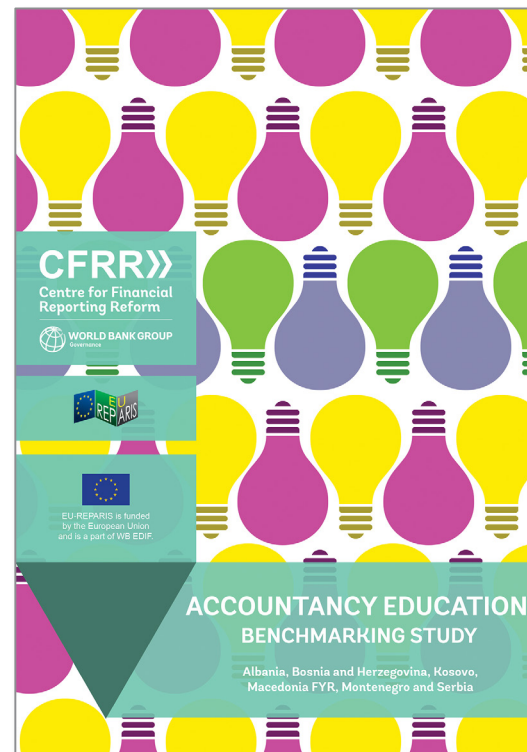


EU-REPARIS is funded by the  
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WB EDIF.



# Outline

- » About the Study
- » Methodology and Approach
- » Study Outcomes
- » Benefits and Practical Application
- » Next Steps





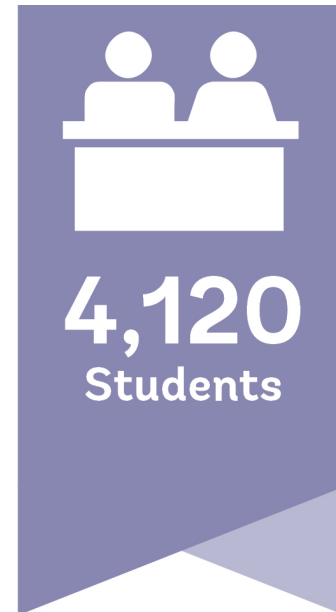


# About the Study, Methodology and Approach



# Scope & Objectives

- » 14 Universities and PAOs from six Western Balkan countries, members of the EU-REPARIS Education CoP participated
- » The Study enabled an assessment of the accountancy education at both academic and professional levels by covering 25 education programs with estimated 4,120 enrolled students
- » The Study did not specifically target public sector education, but some of the largest accountancy education providers in each country were covered
- » The EU REPARIS Education CoP had 4 Objectives set at the outset of the project:





# Project Timeline: 2 years long!



 Ongoing consultations and support from IAESB and IFAC staff





# Methodology and Approach



## Questionnaires

# 1  
Universities

# 2  
Profession

Collected data to provide:

- context to the broader accountancy education environment in countries
- draw on the principles of IESs (practical experience, CPD, etc.)



## Diagnostic “Profiling” Tool

Integrated  
Sections for  
University &  
Profession

Map the curricula content, learning outcomes and proficiency levels of the accountancy programs and compare them against internationally-recognized benchmarks



# Benchmarks



IES

- Primary benchmark with international relevance
- IES 2 Technical Competence, IES 4 Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes, IES 8 Competences for Audit Partners



ACCA

- Existing links with EU-REPARIS countries
- Existing links with academic programs
- Possibility for up to 9 exemptions



CIPFA

- Widely recognized qualification in public sector
- Existing links with EU-REPARIS countries
- Possibility for 6 exemptions



# IES Benchmarks



IES

## University section

- IES 2 Technical Competence (except Taxation and Business Law)
- IES 4 Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes

## Professional section

- IES 2 Technical Competence (except Taxation and Business Law)
- IES 4 Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes
- IES 8 Competences for Audit Partners (except for Taxation, Business Law & professional skills)



# ACCA Benchmarks



## University section

### Foundation level papers in:

F1: Accountant in Business	F8: Audit and Assurance
F2: Management Accounting	F9: Financial Management
F3: Financial Accounting	
F5: Performance Management	
F7: Financial Reporting	

## Professional section

### Additional Professional level papers in:

P1: Governance, Risk and Ethics	P5: Advanced Performance Management
P2: Corporate Reporting	P7: Advanced Audit and Assurance
P3: Business Analysis	
P4: Advanced Financial Management	



# CIPFA Benchmarks

## University section

### Diploma level papers in:

- Financial Accounting
- Management Accounting
- Public Sector Financial Reporting
- Audit and Assurance
- Managing Organizations
- Managing Finance

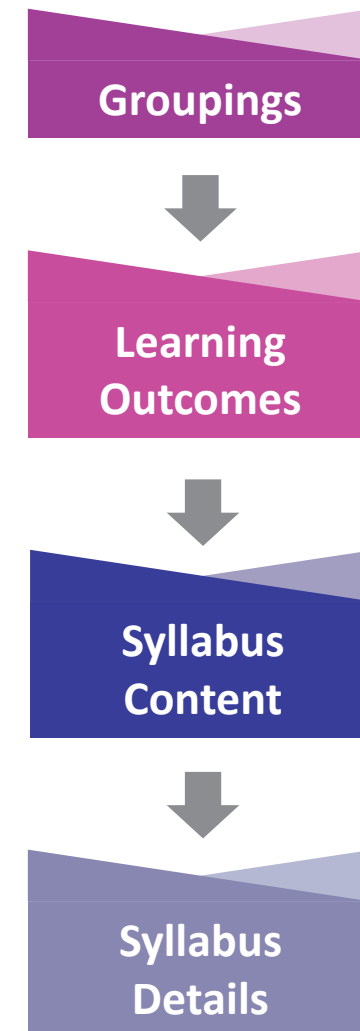
## Professional section





# The Benchmarking Tool - Features

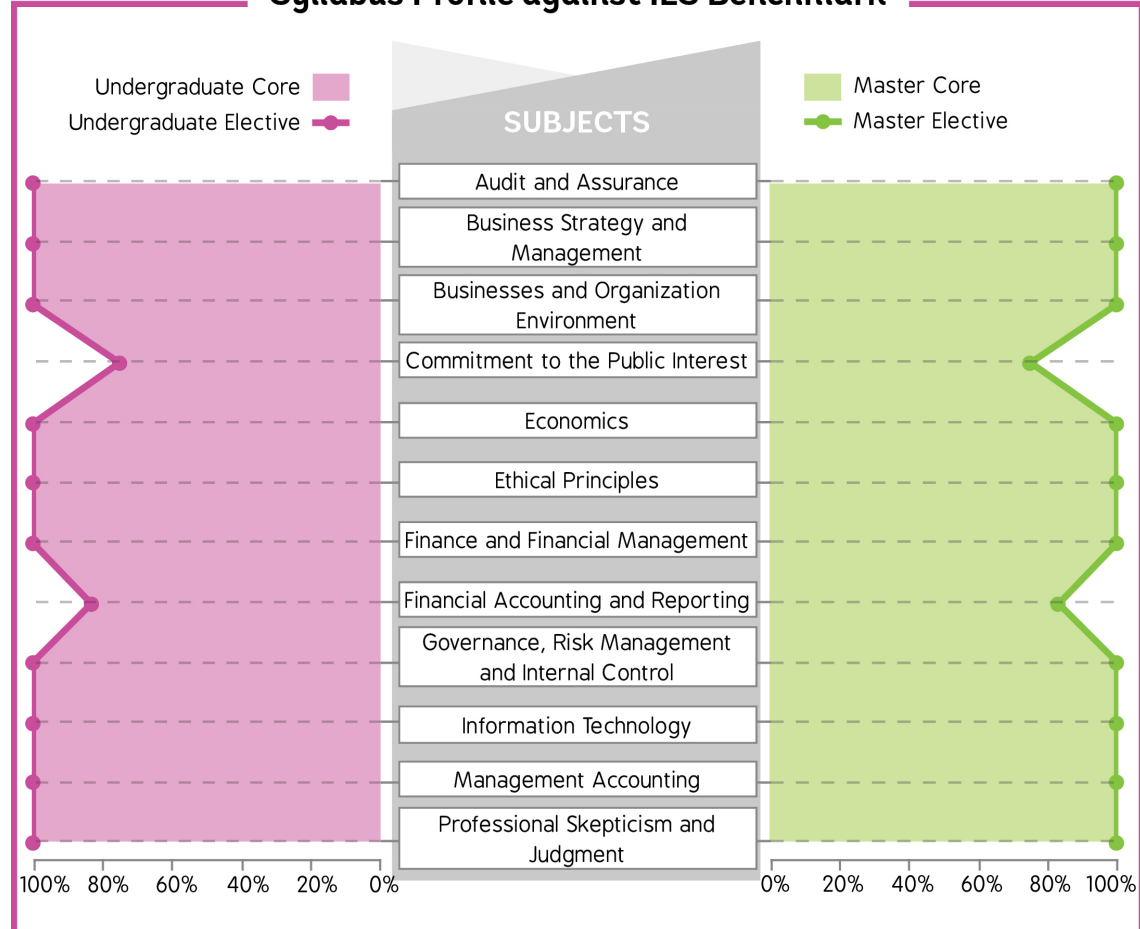
- » **Excel based model**, easy to navigate, modify and adapt
- » **Maps the curricula content, learning outcomes and proficiency levels** of the accountancy programs and compares them against internationally-recognized benchmarks
- » **Integrated sections** for both University & Profession
  - » Modules can be used on stand alone basis or
  - » Integrated analysis of programs, in which case relationships can be analyzed



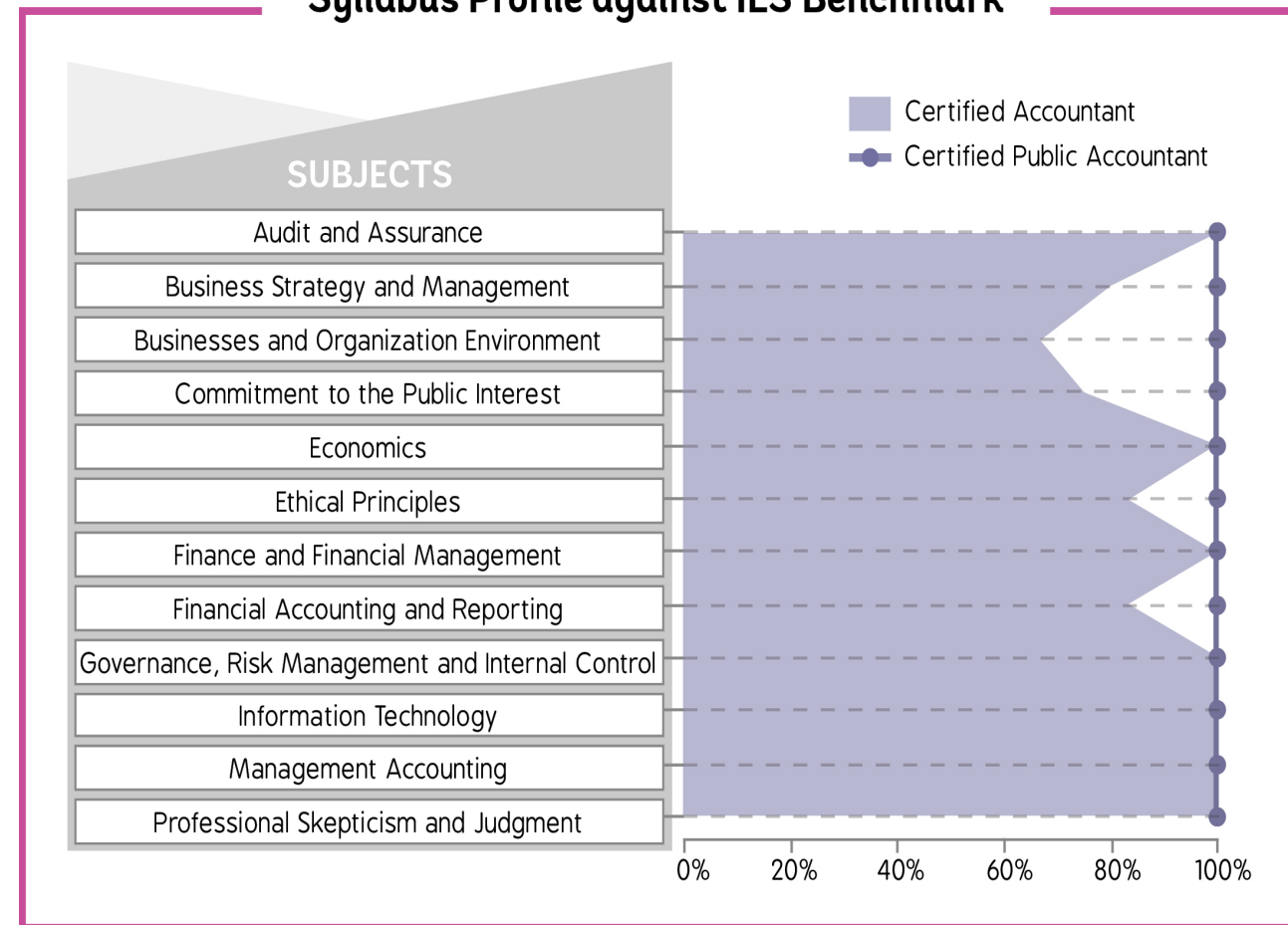


# Benchmarking Tool – University and Professional Results

Syllabus Profile against IES Benchmark



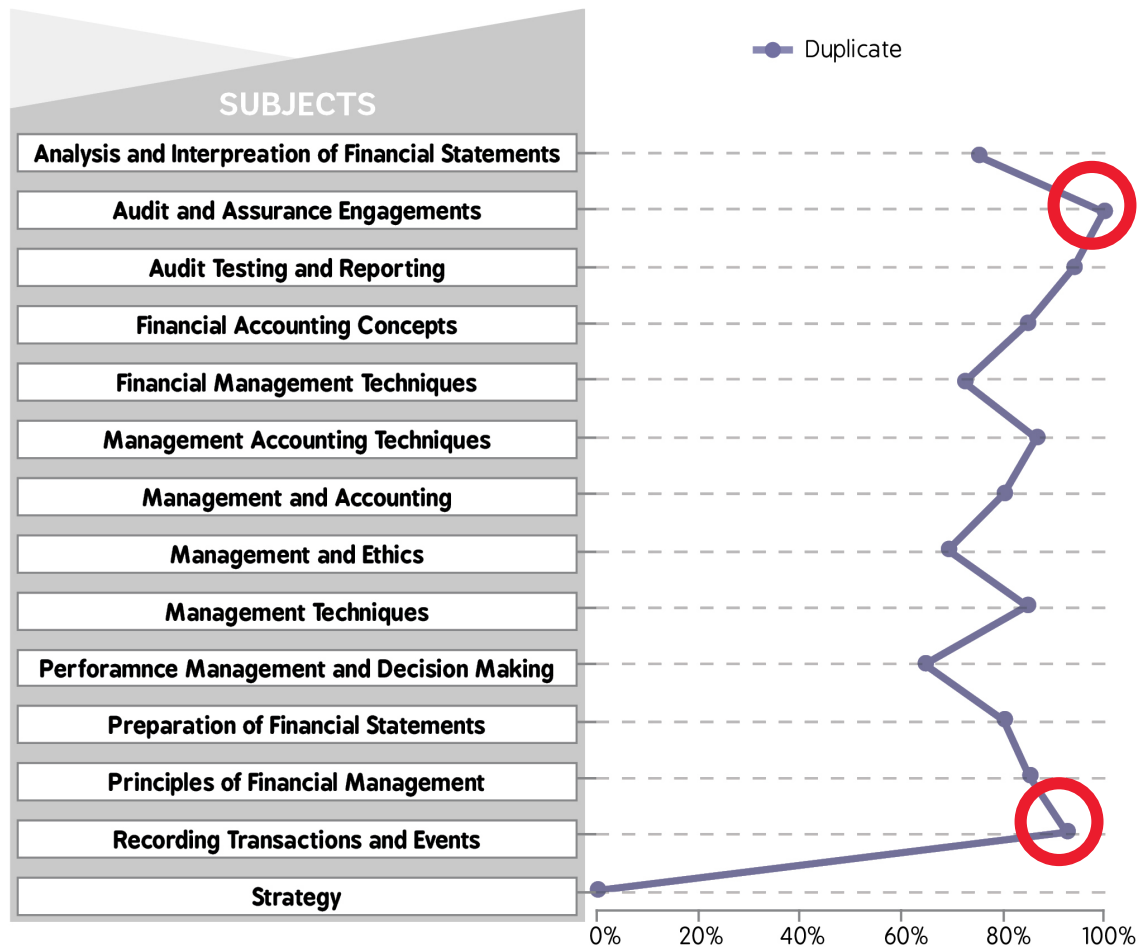
Syllabus Profile against IES Benchmark



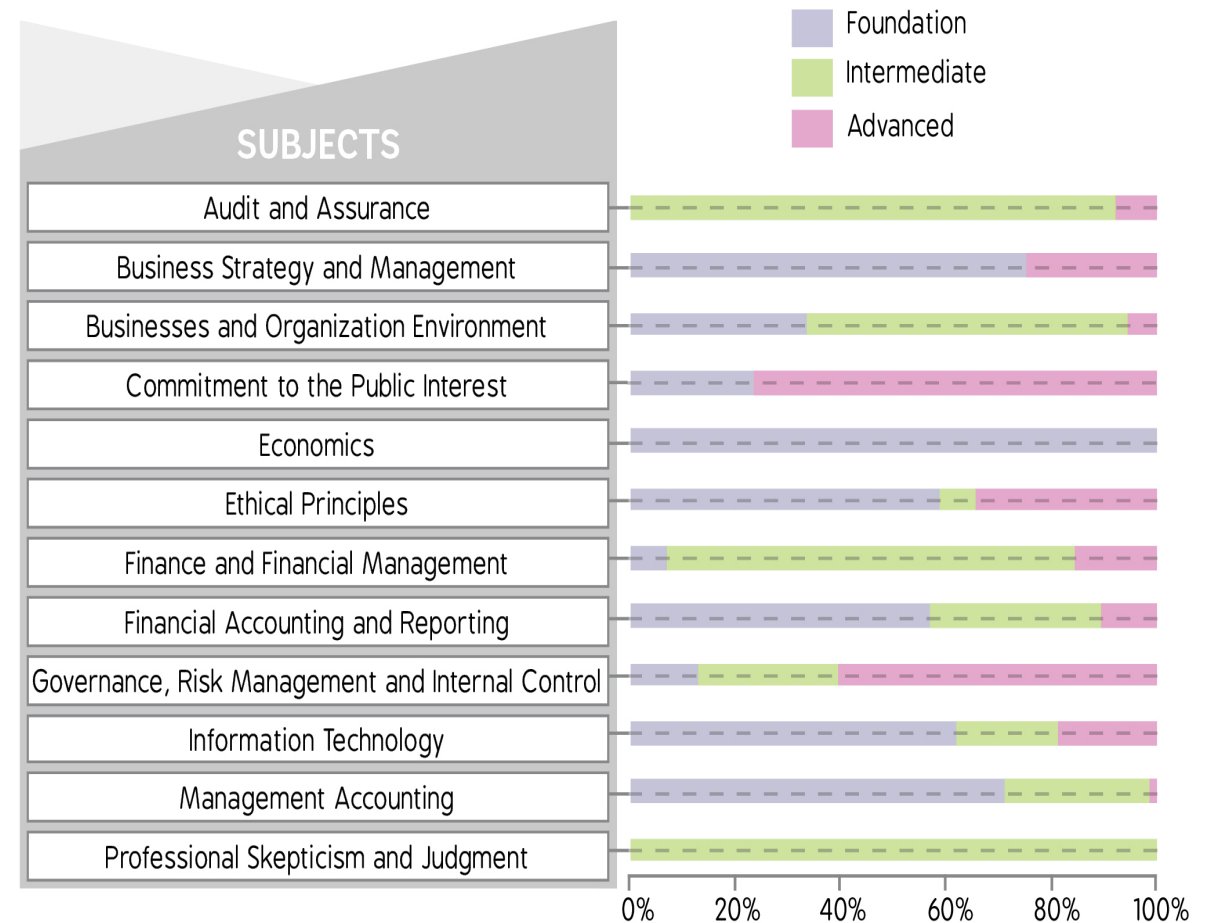


# Benchmarking Tool – Combined Analysis

## Syllabus Profile by Subject Area



## Syllabus Profile against IES Benchmark







# Study Outcomes



# Study Outcome # 1: Key Opportunities

- » The Study identified a number of opportunities that can be explored in future accountancy education reforms
- » For each opportunity, the Study also proposes a few practical tips which, when combined with the good practices identified, can help accountancy education providers to seize the key opportunities and implement reforms.



## Opportunity # 1

**Integrate academic and professional accountancy education**



## Opportunity # 2

**Achieve greater international integration of programs**



## Opportunity #3

**Expand the offerings of public sector education**



## Opportunity # 4

**Enhance CPD systems and training programs**



## Opportunity # 5

**Improve practical experience requirements and workplace assessments**



# Study Outcome # 2: Good Practices

» The regional study highlighted a number of good practices implemented by universities and PAOs. These were cataloged in a side publication under 5 thematic

-  **1 Focus on Practical Experience**
-  **2 Commitment to Lifelong Learning**
-  **3 Assessment of Professional Competence**
-  **4 Supporting a Quality Learning Environment**
-  **5 Collaboration and Partnerships**





## Study Outcome # 3: Cross Cutting Areas

- » Generalizing findings was very challenging as accounting systems differ in each country
- » Consideration was given to avoid “comparisons” but rather focus on good practices

### Cross Cutting Issues



Sources of  
Funding



Demand &  
Trends



International  
Recognition &  
Accreditation



Professional  
Values, Ethics  
& Attitudes



Resources &  
Capacity



Gender  
Profiles



Curricula  
Benchmarking



CPD



# Study Outcome # 4: IES Implementation challenges

## Practical Experience

- Very often measured purely on length of time employed under supervision of qualified accountant, with no requirement to document skills and competencies
- Difficulties with sourcing qualified mentors and supervisors
- Lack of approved employer schemes

## Professional values, ethics and attitudes

## Output based approaches

- Ethics is sometimes not covered at all progression levels of professional certification programs or is an elective subject
- Few examples when ethics was integrated in the curricula
- Textbook approach to teaching ethics – lack of case studies and other participative approaches

## CPD

## Keeping up with change



# Study Outcome # 4: IES Implementation challenges

## Practical Experience

- Input-based measurement for CPD and practical experience are dominantly applied
- There is a need to move toward output based systems that demonstrate more clearly that competences have been developed and maintained
- Introducing more workplace assessments

## Professional values, ethics and attitudes

## Output based approaches

- It is not the quantity but the quality of CPD that often presents an issue
- Modernizing delivery methods, more “soft skills” topics and further flexibility in the systems

## CPD

## Keeping up with change

- Lack of resources to sustain and develop teaching materials
- Infrequent curricula update cycles – outdated syllabus





# Benefits of Benchmarking and Next Steps



# Perspectives

## Students

## University

## Employers

## PAOs

## Policymakers Regulators

- Enables visibility of syllabus
- Assists decision-making during course selection (e.g. core vs. elective, undergraduate vs. master's program)
- Increased awareness of skills and knowledge required.

- Highlights areas for improvement
- Possibility to compare programs
- Evidence to support an application for accreditation
- Analysis of gaps between academia and professional education
- Facilitates better linkage with PAOs (e.g. opportunities for exemptions)
- Tool to influence policymakers.



# Perspectives

**Students**

**University**

**Employers**

**PAOs**

**Policymakers  
Regulators**

- Self-assessment tool: shows to what extent the learning outcomes of a program compare with international benchmarks
- Gap analysis tool: aids conversion toward a learning outcomes approach required by IES
- Closes gaps between academia and professional bodies
- Supports comparability among different programs
- Evidence to support applications for recognition of qualifications
- Self-promotion tool used to attract new members to the profession





# Perspectives

## Students

## University

## Employers

## PAOs

## Policymakers Regulators

- Better skills and work readiness of the next generation of accountants
- Improved recruitment base
- Employees acquire international proficiency in accounting

- Overview of the education system at the country level
- Support to MoF, MoE and regulators in the legislative process
- Tool to support effective education resource allocation decisions
- Resource for National Accreditation Bodies when assessing new accountancy programs
- Tool to aid development of national competency frameworks.





# Practical Application of Benchmarking

Gap Analysis / Self  
assessment Tool

Baseline Assessment  
Tool

Decision making tool

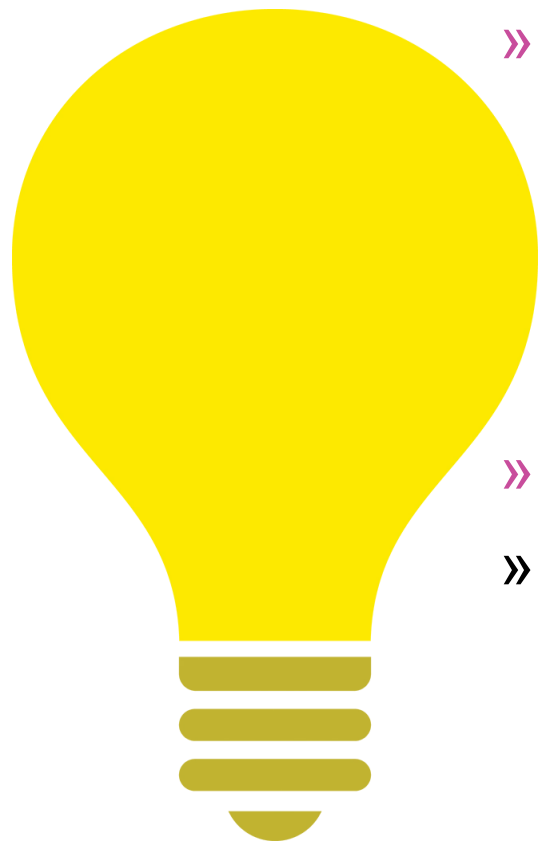
Diagnostic tool  
(e.g. input in ROSCs)

Schedules supporting  
syllabus content  
(e.g. for accreditations or  
international recognition)

- » Benchmarking identifies the problem, however **does not provide a solution!**
- » IFAC analysis has indicated that **IES adoption worldwide is low:**
  - » IES adoption is a **resource intensive** endeavor
  - » IES implementation is a **complex and multi-stakeholder commitment**
  - » IES adoption / implementation requires a coordinated national effort between both **private and public sector** stakeholders



## Next Steps



- » **Develop a tool to aid IES adoption**, in collaboration with IFAC by:
  - » performing assessments in jurisdictions and identifying gaps of adoption of revised IES;
  - » assisting private- and public-sector stakeholders to collaborate on roadmaps to implement IES;
  - » providing guidance materials and best practice advice on IES.
- » **Impacts:**
  - » **Education systems that develop competent accountants behaving with integrity and provide society with reliable financial information that underpins economic development.**
    - » fundamentally increase the implementation of IES worldwide,
    - » promote collaboration of public and private sector organizations,
    - » enable free movement of labor for regional economic integration





Thank you!  
Questions?

