

# **Comparative Analysis of Professional Qualification Verification Systems: Institutional Models and Emerging Non-State Frameworks**

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## **Abstract**

The globalization of labor markets and the increasing mobility of professionals have intensified the need for reliable systems capable of confirming professional qualifications across institutional and national boundaries. Traditional mechanisms of qualification recognition—primarily based on national education systems, professional licensing frameworks, and bureaucratic certification procedures—often struggle to provide coherent verification of professional identity in transnational contexts.

This study provides a comparative analysis of several institutional models used to confirm professional qualifications and competencies, including state-based frameworks such as Europass and emerging non-state professional identification initiatives such as Amerpass. The paper examines their structural principles, verification mechanisms, governance models, and their capacity to support professional mobility.

Special attention is given to the role of non-state institutional design in situations where traditional administrative frameworks fail to adequately represent professional legitimacy—particularly in cases involving migration, professional displacement, or fragmented career trajectories.

The research argues that hybrid systems combining digital verification tools, professional community validation, and standardized documentation formats may represent an emerging model of professional credential governance in the 21st century.

## **Keywords**

professional identity  
qualification verification  
professional mobility  
Europass  
Amerpass  
credential governance  
migration and professional recognition  
non-state institutional frameworks

## 1. Introduction

The rapid internationalization of professional activity has created a growing demand for mechanisms capable of reliably confirming professional qualifications across borders. Engineers, journalists, researchers, designers, and other professionals increasingly operate within transnational environments where traditional national credential systems often prove insufficient.

Historically, the recognition of qualifications has been closely tied to national institutions such as universities, licensing bodies, and state regulatory authorities. These systems typically rely on diplomas, certificates, and licensing documentation issued by recognized institutions within a specific jurisdiction. While effective within national contexts, such mechanisms frequently encounter limitations when professionals move between countries or operate within global professional networks.

One of the most widely recognized institutional attempts to address this challenge is the **Europass framework**, developed by the European Union to increase transparency and comparability of qualifications across European countries. Europass provides standardized digital tools that allow individuals to document their skills, education, and work experience in a format designed to facilitate cross-border professional mobility.

Complementing this framework is the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**, which introduces an eight-level structure allowing qualifications from different countries to be compared according to learning outcomes, skills, and competencies. This system functions as a translation tool between national qualification frameworks and aims to improve transparency and portability of qualifications within the European labor market.

Despite the progress made by such initiatives, existing frameworks remain strongly tied to formal educational institutions and national administrative systems. As a result, professionals with non-linear career paths, independent professional activity, or cross-border experience may still encounter difficulties demonstrating their professional legitimacy.

In response to these challenges, new models of professional identification have begun to emerge. Among them are **non-state credential frameworks** designed to provide standardized

documentation of professional activity independent of national administrative structures. One example of such initiatives is the **Amerpass professional identification system**, which seeks to create secure credential formats for professionals whose work frequently crosses institutional and national boundaries.

This study explores how these emerging models compare to traditional institutional frameworks. By analyzing their governance structures, verification mechanisms, and practical usability, the research aims to identify the strengths and limitations of existing systems and evaluate their potential role in the evolving landscape of professional credential recognition.

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **2.1. Qualification Verification as an Institutional Problem**

In contemporary transnational labor markets, the issue of qualification verification extends far beyond the simple confirmation of educational credentials. It concerns the broader institutional problem of how professional competence, experience, and legitimacy can be documented, interpreted, and trusted across jurisdictions, sectors, and organizational environments. Traditional systems were designed primarily for relatively stable national contexts in which education, licensing, and employment were structurally linked. Under conditions of migration, platform labor, disrupted careers, and cross-border professional mobility, these systems increasingly reveal important limitations. Europass itself reflects this shift by allowing users to collect work, education, language, digital, volunteering, and achievement records in one secure profile rather than relying only on a single diploma or certificate.

The problem is especially visible in relation to internationally mobile professionals. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was created precisely because qualifications issued in one national system are not automatically understandable in another. The EQF functions as an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based translation tool intended to improve transparency, comparability, and portability of qualifications across countries and institutions. Its very existence demonstrates that qualification recognition is not a purely educational matter but an institutional coordination problem requiring common interpretive frameworks.

UNESCO approaches the same issue from a global governance perspective. The Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education emphasizes fair and transparent recognition procedures, academic integrity, and international mobility. This indicates that recognition is not merely a technical verification exercise; it is also a normative process shaped by trust, procedural fairness, and cross-border cooperation.

From the standpoint of migration policy, OECD research shows that when recognition procedures are too slow, migrants may remain unemployed or work in positions below their skill level for prolonged periods, which can lead to depreciation of professional skills and long-term

scarring effects. This finding is especially important for the present study because it shifts the discussion from formal comparability of diplomas to the socio-economic cost of delayed or inadequate recognition.

Accordingly, qualification verification should be understood as a multi-layered institutional process involving at least four dimensions:

- (1) documentary evidence,
- (2) interpretive comparability,
- (3) procedural trust, and
- (4) usability in real labor-market settings.

A system may be strong in one of these dimensions and weak in another. For example, a state diploma may possess high formal validity but low portability, while a digital profile may provide high visibility but weaker institutional accountability.

## **2.2. State, Supranational, and Non-State Models of Verification**

The literature and current institutional practice make it possible to distinguish at least three broad models of qualification verification.

The first model is the **state-centered model**, in which qualifications are confirmed by ministries, universities, licensing boards, or officially delegated agencies. Its strength lies in formal legal authority. Its weakness lies in territorial dependence: documents are often most meaningful inside the jurisdiction in which they were issued. This creates difficulties for migrants, displaced professionals, and individuals whose careers span several countries or sectors. UNESCO's recognition framework exists largely because these barriers persist at the international level.

The second model is the **supranational standardization model**, represented most clearly by Europass and the EQF. Europass offers a free multilingual profile and document environment where users can store qualifications, work experience, language skills, project information, diplomas, and reference letters. The EQF complements this by translating qualifications into a common outcomes-based scale. In addition, the European Commission has developed European Digital Credentials infrastructure, including electronically sealed digital credentials that can be issued, stored, shared, and verified in alignment with European standards.

The third model is the **non-state or soft-institutional model**, which seeks to document professional identity outside direct state control while still maintaining structure, procedure, and verifiability. The Zenodo article *Amerpass as a Non-State System of Transnational Professional Identification* describes Amerpass as an evolving non-state framework aimed at evidentiary and reputational fixation of professional identity beyond sovereign and commercial dependencies. It explicitly contrasts Amerpass with Europass and LinkedIn, arguing that administrative compatibility and digital visibility do not by themselves create reputationally accountable professional coherence in crisis contexts.

This distinction is analytically important. It shows that the question is not simply whether one system is “better” than another, but rather **what kind of institutional problem each system is designed to solve**. State systems solve legal recognition. Supranational systems solve comparability and portability. Non-state systems may attempt to solve continuity and coherence where legal or administrative frameworks are absent, fragmented, or inaccessible.

### 2.3. Why Existing Systems Are Often Insufficient

A key conclusion emerging from comparative literature is that existing systems often work well only under relatively stable institutional conditions. Europass is effective as a structured tool for presenting qualifications and experiences, especially within European educational and employment contexts. The European Digital Credentials framework further strengthens this model by enabling sealed, verifiable, machine-readable learning credentials. However, these tools remain most effective when there are functioning issuers, recognized institutions, and interoperable administrative environments.

OECD findings suggest that even where recognition frameworks formally exist, practical bottlenecks remain substantial. The organization notes that faster recognition procedures are beneficial for migrants and employers alike, especially in regulated occupations and in countries using skill-based migration systems. This implies that formal recognition architecture alone does not eliminate underemployment or delayed labor-market entry; procedural speed and administrative accessibility matter just as much.

UNESCO’s work on the World Reference Levels tool points in a similar direction. The initiative aims to support recognition of skills across borders by standardizing how learning outcomes, qualifications, and credentials are described. The need for such a global reference instrument suggests that national and even regional systems remain insufficiently interoperable at the global level.

For example, a journalist, engineer, or independent researcher may possess a recognizable body of work, documented projects, publications, professional references, and cross-border experience, yet still face difficulty presenting this trajectory in a single coherent evidentiary format. A diploma may confirm education; a CV may summarize experience; a platform profile may show visibility; recommendation letters may support reputation. But these components are often dispersed across unrelated environments and are not always interpreted consistently by institutions, employers, or migration authorities. This fragmentation is one of the central structural problems to which emerging systems such as Amerpass claim to respond. The cited Zenodo study presents this very issue as one of structural fragmentation in contemporary mechanisms of professional recognition.

## 2.4. Illustrative Analytical Examples

To clarify the comparative problem, it is useful to consider several analytical examples.

### **Example 1: A nurse trained in one country seeks to work in another.**

In this case, formal state and supranational mechanisms are crucial. The person's diploma, national licensing record, and qualification level must be translated into terms understandable to the receiving country. Europass, EQF, and sector-specific recognition procedures are directly relevant here. Europass itself notes that the European Professional Card supports online recognition procedures for five regulated professions, including nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, real estate agents, and mountain guides.

### **Example 2: A researcher or journalist with a transnational career path.**

This person may have publications, editorial work, conference participation, project leadership, peer reviews, interviews, and professional recommendations spread across multiple countries and institutions. A simple diploma evaluation may not capture current competence or professional standing. In such a case, the challenge is not only to verify education, but to assemble a coherent evidentiary portfolio of professional identity. Europass can partially assist by storing records and documents, but the non-state logic described in the Amerpass article is aimed more directly at such fragmented professional trajectories.

### **Example 3: A displaced professional under conditions of institutional rupture.**

Where institutions in the country of origin become inaccessible, politically compromised, or practically unusable, recognition cannot depend entirely on official reissuance or state confirmation. UNESCO and OECD both frame recognition as a mobility and inclusion issue, but the Amerpass article extends this discussion by asking what happens when sovereign or administrative continuity itself is weakened. In that sense, Amerpass is not merely another credential format; it is proposed as a response to institutional rupture.

These examples help show why a comparative study must evaluate not only technical features, but also the **institutional ecology** within which each system operates.

## 2.5. Working Research Position of This Study

Based on the reviewed literature and institutional materials, this study proceeds from the following working position: no single existing system fully resolves the problem of qualification verification in transnational and unstable contexts.

State-centered systems retain the highest degree of legal authority, but they are territorially bounded. Supranational systems such as Europass and the EQF improve comparability and portability, but they still depend on recognized issuers and relatively stable administrative cooperation. Non-state systems such as Amerpass may lack formal sovereign authority, yet they

can potentially address gaps in continuity, evidentiary coherence, and reputational structuring for professionals whose trajectories do not fit neatly within conventional frameworks.

Thus, the comparative value of Amerpass should be assessed not against an unrealistic criterion of replacing state recognition, but against a narrower and more analytically defensible question: **whether it offers institutional advantages in documenting and organizing professional legitimacy where existing systems are fragmented, inaccessible, or insufficiently adaptive.** This formulation allows the study to remain academically balanced and avoids turning the article into advocacy text.

### 3. Comparative Review of Existing Qualification Verification Systems

#### 3.1 Europass: Standardized Documentation of Professional Competence

One of the most widely implemented supranational frameworks for presenting and organizing professional qualifications is the **Europass system**, developed by the European Union to increase transparency and comparability of qualifications across member states and partner countries.

Europass was initially launched in 2004 and later modernized through the **Europass Decision (EU) 2018/646**, which transformed the system into a digital platform designed to support lifelong learning, career mobility, and skill documentation within the European labor market.

The Europass platform currently provides several integrated tools:

- **Europass Profile**, a digital portfolio where individuals can record education, professional experience, language skills, and projects.
- **Europass CV**, a standardized curriculum vitae format widely recognized by employers and educational institutions in Europe.
- **Europass Diploma Supplement**, a document describing higher education qualifications in a standardized format.
- **Europass Certificate Supplement**, which provides detailed information about vocational qualifications.
- **European Digital Credentials for Learning**, a system allowing institutions to issue digitally signed and verifiable credentials.

Together these tools attempt to solve one of the core problems of cross-border professional mobility: the difficulty of interpreting qualifications issued in different national systems.

The strength of Europass lies in its **institutional backing and interoperability**. Because the system is supported by the European Commission and integrated into European educational policy, it benefits from a high degree of legitimacy within European labor markets.

However, several limitations are frequently noted in academic and policy discussions.

First, Europass functions primarily as a **documentation and presentation system**, rather than as an independent verification authority. The authenticity of information still depends on the issuing institutions whose credentials are stored in the system.

Second, Europass remains strongly connected to **formal educational pathways**. Professionals with non-traditional careers, independent projects, or informal learning trajectories may find that their achievements are not easily represented within standardized credential frameworks.

Third, the system's institutional logic presumes **stable administrative environments** where educational institutions, licensing authorities, and employers can interact through interoperable procedures. In contexts where institutional continuity is disrupted—such as migration crises or geopolitical conflicts—these assumptions may not always hold.

Despite these limitations, Europass remains one of the most important attempts to standardize professional documentation at a supranational level and provides a useful benchmark for comparative analysis.

### 3.2 The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Closely related to Europass is the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**, which functions as a translation system allowing qualifications from different national systems to be compared using a common reference scale.

The EQF organizes qualifications into **eight levels**, each defined by learning outcomes in three categories:

- knowledge
- skills
- responsibility and autonomy

Rather than focusing on the duration of education or institutional prestige, the EQF emphasizes **what individuals actually know and are able to do**.

This outcomes-based approach reflects a broader shift in international education policy toward competency-based frameworks.

For example:

## EQF Level Typical Qualification

Level 4     Secondary education

Level 6     Bachelor's degree

Level 7     Master's degree

Level 8     Doctorate

By aligning national qualification systems with these levels, the EQF allows employers, universities, and licensing authorities to interpret foreign credentials more easily.

The framework is particularly important for professions that require **regulated licensing**, such as:

- healthcare professionals
- engineers
- architects
- pharmacists

In such sectors, qualification comparability is essential for ensuring both labor mobility and professional standards.

Nevertheless, the EQF does not itself issue credentials or verify qualifications. Instead, it operates as a **meta-framework**, translating qualifications issued by national systems.

Consequently, the EQF improves **comparability**, but it does not address several broader issues related to professional identity:

- fragmented professional trajectories
- independent or project-based work
- reputational evidence outside formal education systems

These limitations illustrate why additional mechanisms may be required to complement existing frameworks.

### 3.3 UNESCO Global Recognition Framework

While Europass and EQF operate primarily within the European policy environment, the **UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education** represents an attempt to address qualification recognition at a worldwide level.

Adopted in 2019, the convention establishes a set of principles designed to facilitate fair and transparent recognition of higher education qualifications across borders.

The key principles of the convention include:

- non-discriminatory recognition procedures
- transparency of evaluation criteria
- reasonable processing times
- access to appeals procedures

The convention encourages countries to recognize foreign qualifications **unless substantial differences can be demonstrated** between the foreign qualification and the national equivalent.

This principle represents a shift away from traditional recognition systems that required applicants to prove equivalence in detail.

The UNESCO framework is particularly important for migrants and refugees, as it recognizes that individuals may not always possess complete documentation of their qualifications. In such cases, recognition authorities are encouraged to use alternative methods of assessment, including interviews, competency evaluations, or portfolio analysis.

However, the UNESCO system faces several structural limitations.

First, the convention operates primarily through **intergovernmental cooperation**, meaning its effectiveness depends on national implementation.

Second, recognition procedures often remain **slow and bureaucratically complex**, particularly in regulated professions.

Third, the system focuses primarily on **educational qualifications**, rather than broader professional identity or career achievements.

These limitations highlight a recurring theme in the literature: while international frameworks have significantly improved the comparability of educational credentials, they do not fully resolve the broader challenge of documenting professional competence across fragmented career paths.

### **3.4 Platform-Based Professional Identity Systems**

In addition to state and supranational mechanisms, the digital transformation of professional life has led to the emergence of **platform-based systems for documenting professional identity**.

These systems are typically operated by private or non-governmental organizations and focus on aggregating professional information in digital environments.

Unlike traditional credential systems, platform-based models often emphasize **visibility, networking, and portfolio presentation** rather than formal recognition. Among the most influential examples are **LinkedIn, ORCID, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate**.

Although these systems differ significantly in structure and purpose, they share a common feature: they attempt to organize professional identity through **digital profiles that aggregate various forms of evidence**, including publications, employment history, projects, recommendations, and professional connections.

### **LinkedIn: Professional Networking as Informal Credentialing**

LinkedIn is the largest global professional networking platform, with hundreds of millions of users worldwide. Its primary purpose is not credential verification but **professional networking and career visibility**.

Users can create profiles documenting:

- education
- work experience
- skills
- publications
- professional achievements
- recommendations from colleagues

In practice, LinkedIn has evolved into an **informal professional identity system**, where reputation is constructed through visibility, connections, and endorsements.

However, LinkedIn has several structural limitations as a qualification verification system.

First, the platform relies primarily on **self-reported information**, which may not always be independently verified.

Second, while endorsements and recommendations provide reputational signals, they do not constitute formal verification mechanisms.

Third, LinkedIn profiles are embedded within a **commercial social media environment**, which prioritizes engagement and networking rather than institutional verification of credentials.

As a result, LinkedIn functions effectively as a **professional visibility platform**, but not as a structured credential verification system.

## **ORCID: Persistent Researcher Identification**

In contrast to LinkedIn, **ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID)** was created specifically to solve a structural problem within academic publishing: the difficulty of reliably identifying researchers across different institutions, publications, and databases.

ORCID provides each researcher with a **persistent digital identifier**, which can be used to link:

- publications
- datasets
- peer review activities
- funding records
- institutional affiliations

Because ORCID identifiers are widely integrated into academic publishing systems, they provide a relatively reliable mechanism for associating scholarly outputs with specific individuals.

However, ORCID is intentionally limited in scope. The system does not attempt to verify professional competence beyond scholarly contributions, nor does it function as a general credential framework.

Instead, ORCID acts primarily as an **identity infrastructure for research outputs**, ensuring that publications and academic activities are accurately attributed to their authors.

## **Google Scholar and ResearchGate**

Two additional platforms widely used in the academic community are **Google Scholar** and **ResearchGate**.

Google Scholar automatically aggregates scholarly publications, citations, and bibliometric indicators associated with individual researchers. The platform enables the creation of author profiles displaying:

- publication lists
- citation counts
- h-index indicators
- co-author networks

Because the system indexes academic literature from numerous sources, it often provides one of the most accessible ways to track scholarly impact.

ResearchGate, in contrast, combines elements of an academic repository with features of a social network. Researchers can upload publications, share datasets, follow colleagues, and participate in discussions.

Both platforms contribute to **visibility and dissemination of research**, but they also face several limitations as verification systems.

Google Scholar relies largely on automated indexing algorithms and does not always verify authorship with absolute certainty. ResearchGate allows user uploads, which can sometimes create ambiguity regarding the version or provenance of documents.

Consequently, while these platforms are valuable for documenting academic output, they do not provide a comprehensive framework for **professional qualification verification across different sectors and professions**.

### **Structural Characteristics of Platform-Based Systems**

Taken together, LinkedIn, ORCID, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate illustrate a distinct institutional model.

Their defining characteristics include:

- digital aggregation of professional data
- user-controlled profiles
- emphasis on visibility and networking
- partial verification mechanisms depending on context

These platforms have significantly improved the **discoverability of professional information**. However, they also demonstrate an important limitation: professional identity remains **fragmented across multiple digital environments**.

For example, a researcher may have:

- an ORCID identifier linking publications
- a Google Scholar profile displaying citation metrics
- a ResearchGate account hosting uploaded papers
- a LinkedIn profile describing professional experience

Each of these platforms captures only part of the individual's professional identity.

From an institutional perspective, this fragmentation raises an important question: how can professional identity be presented in a **coherent and verifiable format** when relevant evidence is distributed across multiple systems?

This question provides the conceptual bridge to the next section of the study, which examines **Amerpass as an emerging non-state framework designed to structure professional identity documentation in a unified evidentiary format.**

### **3.5 Amerpass as an Emerging Non-State Professional Identification System**

In recent years, alongside state and platform-based systems, a number of initiatives have emerged that attempt to structure professional identity documentation outside traditional governmental frameworks. These initiatives may be described as **non-state professional identification systems**, designed to complement rather than replace existing institutional mechanisms.

One such initiative is **Amerpass**, which has been proposed as a framework for organizing professional identity documentation through standardized evidentiary formats and cross-platform references. The conceptual foundations of the system are discussed in detail in the study *Amerpass as a Non-State System of Transnational Professional Identification*, which examines the institutional logic of such systems in the context of migration, professional mobility, and administrative fragmentation.

According to Leonov (2026), Amerpass seeks to address a structural problem observed in many contemporary professional environments: the dispersion of professional evidence across multiple institutions and digital platforms. Publications, project records, professional recommendations, conference participation, and media contributions may exist in separate databases and repositories. As a result, presenting a coherent professional trajectory may become difficult, particularly when professionals operate across several jurisdictions or institutional systems.

Amerpass proposes a **document-centered approach** to professional identification. Rather than relying solely on digital profiles or isolated credentials, the system aims to assemble professional evidence into a structured credential format that can include references to external verification sources such as:

- academic publication repositories
- professional associations
- institutional records
- digital identifiers (such as ORCID)
- publicly accessible documentation

The purpose of this approach is not to replace institutional credentialing, but to **organize dispersed evidence of professional activity into a unified documentary structure**.

From an institutional perspective, Amerpass represents an attempt to create a **portable professional identity document**, which may serve as a structured evidentiary portfolio rather than a licensing instrument.

This distinction is important. Licensing authority remains the domain of states and professional regulatory bodies. However, documentation and presentation of professional identity may occur within broader institutional ecosystems that include academic repositories, professional associations, and independent credential frameworks.

The concept of Amerpass therefore occupies an intermediate position between several existing models:

- the **formal authority** of state-issued qualifications
- the **comparability frameworks** of supranational systems such as Europass
- the **visibility platforms** of digital professional networks

In this sense, Amerpass can be understood as a **documentation architecture**, rather than a regulatory institution.

The cited Zenodo study describes this architecture as a response to what it calls **fragmented professional legitimacy**. In many contemporary career trajectories, especially those involving migration, independent research, or transnational project work, professional reputation and competence may be distributed across multiple institutional contexts that are not easily integrated.

Under such conditions, the task of professional identification becomes less about verifying a single qualification and more about **assembling an evidentiary narrative supported by verifiable references**.

Amerpass attempts to address this challenge by structuring professional information into a format designed to be readable across different institutional contexts. The framework may therefore be interpreted as part of a broader trend toward **non-state institutional experimentation in professional identity governance**.

Nevertheless, as with any emerging institutional model, Amerpass also raises several analytical questions.

First, the degree of institutional acceptance of such systems remains uncertain, particularly in highly regulated professions where licensing authority is strictly controlled by state bodies.

Second, the credibility of non-state credential systems depends heavily on **transparency of procedures, verifiability of references, and trust within professional communities**.

Third, long-term sustainability of such initiatives depends on their ability to integrate with existing professional infrastructures rather than competing directly with them.

These considerations suggest that Amerpass should not be evaluated as an alternative to existing recognition systems, but rather as a **potential complementary mechanism** designed to organize professional evidence in contexts where existing systems do not fully capture the complexity of contemporary professional trajectories.

#### 4. Comparative Matrix of Qualification Verification Systems

Comparative analysis of professional qualification verification systems reveals that different models address distinct institutional challenges. Rather than functioning as direct substitutes for one another, these systems operate within different governance logics and institutional contexts.

Some systems focus on **legal authority and licensing**, others on **comparability of educational credentials**, while digital platforms emphasize **visibility and networking**. Emerging non-state frameworks seek to address another dimension: the **organization of dispersed professional evidence into coherent documentary structures**.

To illustrate these distinctions, the following matrix compares several widely used systems across key analytical parameters.

**Table 1**

**Comparative Characteristics of Professional Qualification Verification Systems**

System	Institutional Type	Verification Basis	Cross-Border Use	Primary Function
State Diplomas and Professional Licenses	State regulatory institutions (universities, ministries, licensing boards)	Official certification issued by recognized institutions	Limited; often requires formal recognition procedures	Legal confirmation of education and professional eligibility
Europass	Supranational EU documentation framework	Standardized documentation of qualifications and professional experience	High within the European labor market	Transparency and comparability of professional qualifications

System	Institutional Type	Verification Basis	Cross-Border Use	Primary Function
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	Supranational reference framework	Classification of qualifications by learning outcomes	High within participating countries	Interpretation and comparability of qualification levels
LinkedIn	Commercial digital platform	Self-reported professional profiles and peer endorsements	Global	Professional networking and career visibility
ORCID	Non-profit researcher identifier system	Persistent digital identifier linked to publications and research outputs	High in academic publishing	Author identification and attribution of scholarly work
Google Scholar	Academic indexing platform	Algorithmic aggregation of publications and citation metrics	Global within academic communities	Visibility of scholarly impact
ResearchGate	Academic networking platform	User-uploaded publications and collaboration records	Moderate to high in academic networks	Dissemination of research and academic networking
Amerpass	Non-state professional documentation framework	Structured evidentiary documentation referencing external verification sources	Potentially high	Integration of dispersed professional evidence into a unified format

#### 4.1 Analytical Interpretation of the Comparison

The comparison highlights several important structural distinctions between the examined systems.

First, systems differ significantly in terms of **institutional authority**. State-issued diplomas and licenses possess the strongest legal status because they are backed by governmental regulatory

frameworks. However, their recognition often remains territorially bounded, requiring formal evaluation procedures when professionals move across borders.

Second, supranational frameworks such as Europass and the EQF attempt to address this limitation by introducing **standardization and comparability mechanisms**. These systems facilitate interpretation of foreign qualifications but still depend on the existence of recognized issuing institutions.

Third, digital platforms such as LinkedIn, ORCID, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate emphasize **information aggregation and professional visibility**. While these platforms significantly improve the accessibility of professional data, they generally do not function as formal verification authorities.

This leads to an important structural observation: contemporary professional identity is increasingly **distributed across multiple institutional environments**.

For example, a professional's qualifications may be documented through:

- university diplomas
- licensing certificates
- publication repositories
- professional networking platforms
- digital research identifiers

Each of these systems captures only a part of the individual's professional trajectory.

The resulting fragmentation complicates the task of presenting professional identity in a coherent format, particularly in situations involving migration, interdisciplinary careers, or independent professional activity.

Within this institutional landscape, emerging frameworks such as Amerpass attempt to address a different problem than those addressed by traditional recognition systems. Rather than replacing state certification or supranational qualification frameworks, they focus on **organizing dispersed evidence of professional activity into a unified documentary structure**.

This distinction is crucial for evaluating the role of non-state systems within the broader ecosystem of professional credential governance.

## Table 2

### Functional Comparison of Professional Credential Systems

<b>System</b>	<b>Legal Authority</b>	<b>Verification Transparency</b>	<b>Institutional Dependence</b>	<b>Suitability for Migrants</b>	<b>Suitability for Independent Professionals</b>
State Diplomas / Licenses	Very High	High	Very High	Moderate	Low
Europass	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	Moderate	High	High	High	Low
LinkedIn	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	High
ORCID	Low	High (for research outputs)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Google Scholar	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate
ResearchGate	Low	Low–Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate
Amerpass	Emerging	Moderate–High	Moderate	High	High

The functional comparison presented in Table 2 highlights important differences in the institutional logic of credential systems.

State-based credentials retain the strongest legal authority but are often territorially bounded and dependent on national regulatory frameworks. Supranational initiatives such as Europass and the European Qualifications Framework improve comparability and mobility of qualifications, particularly within the European labor market, yet they still rely on underlying institutional credentials.

Digital platforms such as LinkedIn, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate emphasize visibility and professional networking rather than formal credential verification. While these platforms significantly improve the discoverability of professional activity, they do not function as authoritative verification systems.

Emerging non-state frameworks, such as Amerpass, attempt to address a different institutional problem: the organization of dispersed professional evidence into structured documentary formats that may support professional identification across institutional contexts.

The comparison suggests that contemporary professional identity governance operates through **multiple overlapping systems**, each addressing different aspects of credential recognition, documentation, and professional visibility.

## **5. Discussion: Professional Identity in Fragmented Institutional Environments**

The comparative analysis presented in the previous sections demonstrates that professional qualification verification systems have evolved in response to increasingly complex patterns of professional mobility, institutional diversification, and digital transformation. Rather than forming a single coherent architecture, these systems operate within a fragmented institutional landscape where different mechanisms address different aspects of professional identity.

Historically, professional legitimacy was closely tied to relatively stable institutional structures. Universities issued diplomas, professional associations granted licenses, and employers evaluated candidates primarily within national labor markets. Under such conditions, professional identity could be verified through a limited number of authoritative documents.

However, the globalization of labor markets and the digitalization of professional activity have fundamentally altered this institutional environment.

Professionals increasingly pursue careers that span multiple countries, sectors, and organizational forms. Independent research, freelance journalism, consulting, project-based work, and digital entrepreneurship are now common career patterns. These trajectories often generate professional evidence in a wide range of institutional contexts, including academic repositories, professional networks, conference records, project portfolios, and digital platforms.

As a result, professional identity is no longer captured by a single credential or institutional affiliation. Instead, it is frequently distributed across multiple systems that were not originally designed to interact with one another.

This structural fragmentation creates several challenges.

First, **interpretive complexity** arises when different institutions attempt to evaluate qualifications produced in unfamiliar systems. Even when formal equivalence mechanisms exist, such as the European Qualifications Framework, interpreting the full scope of an individual's professional competence may remain difficult.

Second, **documentary fragmentation** complicates the presentation of professional trajectories. Evidence of competence may exist in various forms—diplomas, publications, conference

presentations, professional recommendations, digital identifiers, and project documentation—but these materials are rarely organized within a single coherent evidentiary structure.

Third, **institutional discontinuity** may occur in situations where professionals migrate, change sectors, or operate outside traditional institutional environments. In such contexts, individuals may retain substantial expertise and professional experience while facing difficulties demonstrating their qualifications within unfamiliar administrative systems.

These conditions help explain the emergence of multiple complementary mechanisms of professional identification.

State-based systems remain essential for regulated professions and legal recognition of qualifications. Supranational frameworks seek to improve comparability of credentials across national systems. Digital platforms enhance visibility and accessibility of professional information. Non-state documentation initiatives attempt to structure dispersed professional evidence in ways that may be understandable across institutional contexts.

The coexistence of these models reflects the fact that professional identity governance has become **multi-layered**. No single system currently addresses all dimensions of professional legitimacy, including legal authority, comparability of qualifications, reputational evidence, and cross-platform documentation.

From this perspective, the development of hybrid credential architectures may represent an important direction for future institutional experimentation. Systems that integrate standardized documentation, digital verification mechanisms, and references to external sources of professional evidence may provide new tools for navigating increasingly complex professional environments.

At the same time, the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives will depend on their ability to maintain transparency, credibility, and interoperability with existing institutional frameworks.

The challenge for policymakers, professional organizations, and institutional designers is therefore not to replace existing credential systems, but to develop complementary mechanisms capable of addressing the structural fragmentation of professional identity in contemporary labor markets.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study has examined several institutional models used to verify professional qualifications and document professional identity in contemporary labor markets. Through comparative analysis of state-based credential systems, supranational frameworks, digital platforms, and emerging non-state documentation initiatives, the research highlights the increasing complexity of professional identity governance in a globalized and digitally interconnected environment.

Traditional state-centered mechanisms—such as university diplomas and professional licensing systems—continue to provide the strongest form of legal recognition. However, these systems are often territorially bounded and may require complex recognition procedures when professionals seek to work across national borders.

Supranational initiatives, including the Europass framework and the European Qualifications Framework, have significantly improved the transparency and comparability of qualifications, particularly within the European labor market. These systems demonstrate the importance of standardized documentation and common interpretive frameworks in facilitating professional mobility.

At the same time, digital platforms such as LinkedIn, ORCID, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate have introduced new mechanisms for organizing and disseminating professional information. These platforms play an important role in increasing the visibility of professional achievements and enabling global professional networking.

Despite these developments, the analysis demonstrates that professional identity remains **structurally fragmented** across multiple institutional environments. Educational credentials, professional experience, research outputs, and reputational evidence are often distributed across independent systems that were not designed to function as a unified credential architecture.

This fragmentation is particularly evident in cases involving migration, interdisciplinary careers, or independent professional activity, where individuals may possess substantial expertise and professional accomplishments but face challenges in presenting their professional trajectory in a coherent and verifiable format.

Within this institutional landscape, emerging non-state frameworks such as **Amerpass** represent attempts to address the problem of documentary fragmentation by organizing dispersed professional evidence into structured formats that reference existing institutional verification sources. As discussed in the literature (Leonov, 2026), such frameworks do not aim to replace traditional credential systems but rather to complement them by improving the organization and presentation of professional identity documentation.

The comparative analysis conducted in this study suggests that the governance of professional identity in the twenty-first century is likely to remain **multi-layered**, combining elements of legal certification, supranational standardization, digital visibility platforms, and experimental documentation architectures.

Future research may further explore how these systems interact, how institutional trust is established within non-state credential frameworks, and how professional identity documentation can evolve in response to increasingly transnational and digitally mediated career trajectories.

Understanding these dynamics will be essential for policymakers, professional organizations, and researchers seeking to design more adaptive and inclusive systems of professional qualification recognition.

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