

Position paper of The Netherlands

The Netherlands welcomes the public consultation on the adequacy of the European policies and instruments in the European Area of Skills and Qualifications.

However we regret that questions in the consultation are rather technical. Because of this, responses will be given by experts who work on the tools and responses from the general public cannot be collected.

There are many European instruments relevant for skills and qualifications: EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET, Europass, ESCO, RPL, etc. These instruments are, according to our information, not well implemented in the European member states yet. The implementation obviously takes much more time than expected. After 2008 when the recommendations of several instruments were approved by the member states, Europe faced the economic crises. We saw and still see that implementation of the instruments is not priority number one in Member States.

We hope this consultation will give the inducement for coherence and synergies between the several European instruments and the related policies in the area of employment and education. The Netherlands considers it a right moment to acknowledge the need for this instead of developing new European instruments. Also, the Commission should identify the potential for simplification and a reduction of the administrative burden of all instruments.

As a contribution to this objective, The Netherlands is working on pilots in technical and health sectors to combine ECVET, RPL en EQF and examine if a combination of these instruments will improve efficiency in educating adult learners and ensuring an efficient route from work to work. We hope to have the first results in the fall of 2014.

Implementation of the existing instruments is still work in progress in Europe. We want to mention a number of specific challenges:

- The *knowledge about the instruments* should not be restricted to the technical experts but should be widespread under employers, employees and students. Better communication efforts seem to be necessary to reach this objective. For example, the citizens could make use of tools like Europass. But Europass for instance is not well known by the general public or employers.
- The *use of learning outcomes* (the basis of all instruments) is not widespread and consistently integrated in all relevant policy and quality assurance instruments.
- The *second milestone of the EQF* needs attention; with EQF levels on diploma's and supplements the EQF will be more familiar to workers, employers and students. Afterwards mobility of workers and students could be more successfully.
- *Regarding the synergy of ECTS and ECVET*, we strongly believe that a synthesis of credits and points, preferably based on learning outcomes, is important to foster students mobility in general.
- The existing situation that in some cases the same national qualifications are referenced to different EQF levels is a matter that should be solved. This practice could undermine the original intention of the EQF: transparency of different education systems and the mobility of workers and students.
- Quality in education is of major importance, EQAVET is a good instrument to improve quality in VET and needs further development, especially on the quality assurance of the certificationproces to facilitate the focus on learning outcomes.
- The support of the Commission should focus more on a close cooperation and exchange between clusters of member states with more or less the same stage of development, challenges and needs for improvement.

We are looking forward to hear from the Commission the concrete proposals following this consultation.