

**Position paper of Department of Education and Training
(Flemish Ministry of Education and Training), Flemish Community of Belgium**

General remarks

1. This position paper has been formulated by an internal working group of experts that are acquainted with the EU transparency and recognition tools and the EU education policy.
2. The consultation document and the questionnaire were rather confusing for the Flemish experts and stakeholders, particularly so because they are not making a clear distinction between EU policy, objectives and tools for the learners on the one side, and for the workers on the other side. The consultation is organized by DG Education and Culture, which developed a set of transparency and recognition tools for enhancing the learners' mobility, yet the EU policy, legislation and tools for the enhancement of the workers' mobility are situated in other DGs like DG Internal Market and Services and DG Employment and Social Affairs. Consequently, the questionnaire is not suited for giving a sound opinion on the issue of workers' mobility since important tools like the Directive on professional qualifications and the EURES network are not part of the questionnaire, although they are mentioned in the background document and play an important role for mobile workers in the EU labour market.
3. The consultation is focusing on EU tools and not on the EU objectives that should be supported by these tools. This approach leads to a lot of technical questions that cannot be answered in an appropriate way by people who do not have the technical expertise. It also creates too high expectations about the tools, while the realising of the EU objectives (promoting international mobility, enhancing LLL and recognition of qualifications and skills) are dependent of other arrangements like EU and national regulations, political decisions and agreements between stakeholders. The DG EaC transparency tools make these other arrangements more visible but cannot overrule them.
4. Although the transparency tools of DG Education and Culture (EQF, Europass, EQAVET and ECVET) focus on qualifications and parts of qualifications that are assessed, the focus in the background document and the questionnaire is shifting towards separate skills and competences that are no longer part of qualifications or being assessed. Is this a new agenda within DG EaC or is this an agenda of DG Employment and Social Affairs interfering with the EU Education and Training policy?
5. The coherent linking and synergy between tools like EQF, EQAVET, ECVET and Europass (Certificate Supplement, Europass Mobility) are far from realised, while the synergy between tools for Higher Education like EQF/QF-EHEA, ESG, ECTS and Diploma Supplement is much more advanced. This should be taken into account when discussing the possible synergy between EQAVET-ESG, ECVET-ECTS, and CS-DS.

Section 1. How to place a stronger focus on higher and more relevant skills

1. *Should curricula and assessment practices be more focused on boosting transversal skills such as digital, language and entrepreneurial competences?*

We strongly agree, but we would like the Commission to clearly position the new term “transversal skills” vis-à-vis the terms used so far in the EU documents: “key competences” and “basic skills”. In 2006 the European Key Competences Framework was published and this framework contains 8 key competences. Question 1 gives the impression that future work on EU level will concentrate on a limited set of transversal skills / key competences (like digital, language and entrepreneurial competences) and that the other important competences (like mathematical competences, basic competences in science and technology, learning to learn, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression) will be disregarded. We do not agree with this approach. The other key competences are also important, even if they cannot easily be assessed separately from other competences. Amongst others, numeracy, STEM competences and civic competences are crucial competences for the European citizen today and tomorrow.

2. *Would it be useful to develop reference frameworks describing learning outcomes per level and competence, following the example of the language competence framework?*

We partially disagree. As formulated in the background document, curriculum design and assessment of educational attainments fall strictly under the competence of the Member States. European reference frameworks indicating levels for each of the 8 Key Competences could be helpful for teachers and trainers for indicating individual progress within a learning context, but there are some limitations: for some key competences such as civic competences, it is very difficult to formulate separate levels. The example of the European Language Competence Framework is not easy to copy for other competences. For language competences we have a clear benchmark: the native speaker (level C2 of the European language framework), while for other competences a good benchmark is difficult to find: what is the highest level of entrepreneurship competence and on what sources is the definition of this level based? Before launching a European reference framework for competences a lot of work must be done: developing the framework, screening by national experts, testing in practice (is the number of levels relevant for that specific competence – the 6 levels of the language framework are not by definition the ideal number of levels; are the levels well differentiated ...). The crucial question here is: what is the added value of this long-term work on EU level? Are teachers and trainers in need of this kind of instruments? Is it not easier to organise peer learning activities between countries that already have experiences with this kind of tools?

If this type of competence reference frameworks is used in other than learning contexts – for example to formulate vacancies – there is a great risk that this complex levelling of specific competences will lead to additional assessment tests and consequently will hinder the EU mobility of workers.

3. *Would it be useful to have more hands-on experts from the employers' side involved in the design of the curricula?*

Partially agree. In countries like Belgium we prefer to involve the social partners (employers and trade unions) in the design of the curricula. Next to that, we should make a distinction between VET curricula and curricula for general education (primary education and general secondary education). For the VET curricula, the labour market has a crucial role in defining the content of professional qualifications. For general education it is the Parliament - representatives of the society - that decides on the content of the attainment targets in the curricula.

4. *What has been the effectiveness and value of the European Key Competences Framework so far in promoting the competences that it refers to?*

In the case of Flanders Belgium the influence has been mutual. The European Framework has been developed with the support of Flemish experts who relied on work already done in the context of OECD (DeSeCo project) and on experiences with Key Competences in Flanders and the Netherlands. Afterwards, the European Framework has been used in Flanders for further curriculum development. The Eurydice study on Key Competences clearly shows that Flanders is one of the advanced countries in assessing Key Competences. Another added value is that this instrument supports communication between Member States on generic key competences in secondary education.

5. *Could any European initiatives, other than the European Key Competences Framework, be more effective? If yes, which one(s)?*

At the moment we do not see any alternative for the European Key Competences Framework. Together with the Flemish stakeholders, we prefer to continue working with these Key Competences. This has the advantage of consistency: as it takes time to promote a European instrument in the Member States, it is better to continue with existing ones. Launching a new instrument needs a clear explanation on how it is positioned towards the former one, otherwise it creates confusion in the wider public.

Section 2. Further strengthening links between education/training, mobility and the labour market

6. *To help individuals take advantage of available opportunities in a wider and more open context, career guidance policies and practices are crucial. Are you aware of the European policies on career guidance?*

The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training is not aware of the European policies on career guidance in the sense of “career guidance for workers / adults”. We know that DG Education and Culture and the Education Council promote lifelong guidance (see Council Resolution of 21 November 2008), but we do not know if other DGs or Councils of Ministers are supporting that idea.

7. *Is it useful to be able to use a common multilingual European terminology (such as ESCO) to support describing learning outcomes of education and training programmes in terms of knowledge, skills competences relevant to the labour market?*

As ESCO version 1 is not yet available, it is not possible to answer this question. Flanders uses already, since 2011, its own instruments and a terminology that is largely based on the French ROME version 3 terminology, translated into Dutch. The other Regions of Belgium also use this source so that a common basic terminology is used in the whole Belgian labour market. The sectoral social partners that describe the content of Flemish professional qualifications are also free to introduce relevant new terms on knowledge, skills and competences and to refer to International, European, Belgian and Flemish regulations.

8. *Should forecasts on skills supply and needs be better integrated into education and training strategies in order to reduce skills mismatches?*

Partially agree. These forecasts should be reliable and have a long-term perspective enabling education programmes to adapt to the new needs. National forecasts are more relevant than generic European forecasts. When, like in Flanders, sectoral social partners are involved in defining the content of professional qualifications, in setting up traineeships and apprenticeship, and participate in examination juries they are very well positioned to communicate about future needs. Next to that we can rely on the periodical labour market monitoring done by the Flemish PES (VDAB).

9. *Several sectoral skills and qualification passports have been developed that promote the recognition of skills, experiences and qualifications, facilitating transnational mobility within the same sector. They can play a role in the phase of identification and documentation of skills. Do sectoral skills and qualifications passports or cards have added value compared to more general European documentation tools such as Europass, e.g. for cross border mobility of learners and workers? On a scale from 3 to 0, meaning 3= high added value; 0= no added value*

The score 1 (minor added value) is given because the sectoral skills passports have only value within the same sector and are of no value in other sectors. These passports have another value than qualifications and certificates awarded after an education or training programme. They are useful for documentation of skills within a sector but are not referring to an assessment of these skills, while the Diploma Supplement, the Certificate Supplement and even the Europass Mobility are listing knowledge, skills or competences that have been successfully assessed. The fact that the skills are assessed is crucial and reliable information for the employers and the education institutes that welcome mobile workers or mobile learners of other Member States and want to recognize their qualifications and skills.

10. *Is better integration between these passports and the Europass framework needed?*

Partially agree. Adding a sectoral skills passport to the Europass CV is already possible and can be done by the job seekers, when relevant. Formally integrating sectoral skills passports is going a step further on the EU level, and should be done in a well-considered way. There are several risks: the content of the sectoral skills passports could (partially) overlap with other Europass elements (like the existing Certificate Supplement or the new planned Europass experience) and too much annexes to the CV could demotivate employers to select the candidate. If several sectors and sub-sectors start to develop their own skills passports, without any co-ordination, this will lead to an inflation of Europass documents and could hamper the EU mobility of workers who in many cases cross the boundaries of narrow defined professional sectors.

11. *How can guidance services be organised to best support learners and workers in their educational, training and occupational choices and facilitate their participation in the labour market?²*

In an **integrated** manner from a lifelong learning perspective, see the Council Resolution of 2008 and the ELPGN Guide. For the client of the guidance services there should be a one-stop shop,

while in the back office the different guidance services (for education and adult workers) can work together in a network.

12. What new features should initiatives such as EQF, ESCO, European Skills Panorama and the sector skills alliances include in order to raise the understanding of skills needs and on the communication between education and the labour market?

The initiatives mentioned above are relatively new (EQF is publicly launched in 2008, EUSP in 2012 and ESCO in 2013), yet the question above is already inquiring about new features? The recent evaluation reports on EQF do not propose any new. The EQF, or better the Flemish NQF that is referenced to the EQF, is a supporting tool on national level for assigning a qualification level to the professional qualifications defined by the sectoral social partners. This assigning is done by mixed groups of representatives from the labour market and from Education and Training providers.

For the other tools mentioned above (EUSP and ESCO), it will be crucial to become reliable instruments for long-term forecasting and at the same time user-friendly and regularly updated. Otherwise they will not be used for the communication between education and labour market on national level. In other words, these EU instruments should have an added value vis-à-vis the national tools.

The position of the sector skills alliances with regard to other initiatives like the European Sector Skills Councils and the ESCO Reference groups that define European occupational profiles is not clear. In the context of limited European and national resources, the European Commission should coordinate these initiatives in order to avoid overlapping work.

13. If you think that better integration between sectoral passports and the Europass framework is needed, please give your suggestions on how it could be achieved. -

Section 3. Adapting to internationalisation trends

14. A number of qualifications awarded at international level (e.g. by international sectoral organisations and multinational companies) are often valued in the labour market. Is European level coordination needed to facilitate the recognition of such qualifications throughout Europe?

Strongly agree. Coordination is needed between Member States with the aim of having a common vision on the alignment of this kind of qualifications to National Qualifications Frameworks (and to the EQF) so that the recognition of these qualifications in the Member States can be done in a comparable and consistent manner. The EQF Advisory Group, installed by the EQF Recommendation 2008, is the best situated European group for shaping this common vision and approach.

15. Should criteria and procedures be developed for the inclusion of international qualifications in National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF)?

Priority should be given to criteria and procedures for supporting inclusion of international qualifications through the NQFs. The actual criteria and procedures for inclusion of national qualifications to NQFs can easily be used as a basis for the definition of criteria and procedures for

international qualifications. The main criteria are the learning outcomes approach and quality assurance arrangements.

16. *An increasing number of study programmes, such as Masters or PhDs are being jointly developed by two or more higher education institutions in different countries offering joint degrees. Are existing recognition arrangements suitable for the recognition of these degrees?*

Fully suitable, although the Lisbon Recognition Convention could be updated on the Quality Assurance aspects of joint programmes leading to joint degrees.

17. *What further steps could be taken at EU level to promote mutual recognition of qualifications, credits or learning outcomes between the EU and third countries? Could the EQF be useful in this context? If yes, how?*

The EQF could be useful in this context, but third countries should be aware that ‘using EQF’ means that the whole EQF Recommendation should be adopted as reference tool: the 8 level descriptors, the learning outcomes approach and the common principles for Quality Assurance (Annex III of the Recommendation). For the moment, the formal application range of the EQF Recommendation is limited to EU Member States and EEA countries and not open towards third countries. If an opening is created, then the question is which group of third countries should by preference use EQF for recognition of qualifications. The countries participating in the Bologna Process, that are not a Member State or EEA country? The countries that recently showed interest by writing a letter to the Commission (DG EaC): Australia, New-Zealand and Hong Kong? The countries from which an increasing number of migrants are coming to the EU, like countries from Africa and Asia? The ETF partner countries? This kind of decisions should be taken on a high political level.

18. *What further steps could be taken at EU level to promote the recognition of joint degrees offered by European higher education institutions in cooperation with institutions from other parts of the world?*

Further steps can be taken, amongst others, in the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and UNESCO CEPES activities.

Section 4. Ensuring overall coherence of tools and policies and further implementing the learning outcomes approach

19. *In your opinion, are the current tools seen altogether clear and understandable?*

Strongly disagree.

20. *The learning outcomes approach (what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process) is a key common principle in European transparency and recognition tools. Its transparent use and full implementation can significantly improve the understanding of and trust in qualifications within and across borders, eventually making the recognition of qualifications smoother.*

Important remark. Today, we see that the learning outcomes approach is indeed a common principle in most European transparency and recognition tools developed by DG Education and

Culture. In other European recognition tools, however, like the EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (2005/36/EG, amended by 2013/55/EU), this is not the case. More coherence is urgently needed between recognition tools developed by different DGs within the European Commission.

20.a. Should qualifications and study programmes be systematically described in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge skills and competences to be acquired)?

Strongly agree. The description of common qualification standards takes time, but once this work is done this information can easily be used for describing specific study programmes.

20.b. Would a common definition of "unit of learning outcomes" and "credit" between higher education and vocational education and training be desirable?

Partially agree. This question is leading to technical discussions about the usefulness of “credit points”. ECTS has been used for a long time and from the start the ECTS-credits are expressed in points referring to learning activities (and ‘workload’ of the students). Since 2007 the ECTS Guide is promoting the learning outcomes approach and this will be strengthened by the 2015 revision. From the moment that the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences) are systematically added to the ECTS points, then ECTS is approaching the ECVET model. Since the technical information about the ECVET tool is still unclear for potential users and contains 4 different ways for calculating ECVET points, a straightforward conclusion could be to finish with ECVET and to use a learning outcome oriented ECTS for all levels of EQF. This approach has the advantage of using one common credit system for all qualification levels. ECTS could be the ideal tool for combining information on learning activities with information on learning outcomes in a matrix model. For an example of such a matrix model, see the matrix used in the European BE-TWIN project.

However, it is only for Higher Education in Europe that we reached a common European agreement on the global range of ECTS points for the different cycles; for example 180-240 ECTS for the Bachelor cycle. For VET we do not have comparable agreements. The current common ECTS and ECVET basic approach, namely that one nominal learning year is 60 points, is an interesting starting point towards future European agreements for indicating the ‘weight’ of qualifications.

20.c. Could the use of the learning outcomes approach support the validation of non-formal and informal learning?

Strongly agree. However we should be aware of the different interpretations given to the term “learning outcomes” within the group of education providers and within the group of social partners. We should strive for a common European definition and interpretation.

20.d. Do you consider the current European tools for the documentation of learning experiences satisfactory or unsatisfactory?

Somewhat unsatisfactory. Within the European tools for documentation developed by DG EaC, like Europass, the focus is clearly on documenting qualifications (Diploma Supplement, Certificate Supplement) or skills/competences (Europass Mobility, Language Passport). The planned new tools for documentation of learning experiences are opening up the documentation facilities to a large variety of experiences in formal, non-formal and informal learning. When going in that

direction, the European Commission should take care not to lose the focus on qualifications and formally assessed skills and competences. Documents making assessed learning outcomes more transparent are very appreciated by employers and education or training providers. The opening towards other learning experiences may not blur the difference between assessed and not assessed learning outcomes, and between learning outcomes acquired within the country and abroad. Therefore the formats for documentation should foresee room for indicating the 'sending' and 'hosting' organisation and / or the name of the assessing body.

21. Do you consider the possible integration of Europass tools and self-assessment tools to document non-formal and informal learning outcomes (such as the Youthpass) in a common framework useful?

Not very useful. There are many arguments against integrating self-assessment tools into Europass. A) The number of tools connected to Europass should be limited, otherwise this tool will no longer be user-friendly. B) The added value of these tools for the employers is not clear at the moment. Who will develop this kind of tools? Will these tools be tested on validity? And regularly updated? C) How will the coherence between these self-assessment tools and other tools within Europass be guaranteed and overlap avoided? D) How will the competence levels be defined? See our reaction on question 2.

22. Would you support a development towards a single supplement documenting learning outcomes acquired in formal education bringing closer together the Diploma Supplement (for higher education) and the Certificate Supplement (for Vocational Education and Training)?

It is not possible to answer this question with yes or no. The Diploma Supplement (DS) was developed and used in higher education long before the launch of Europass. It has its own approach (individual document with indication of learning activities and ECTS points), target group (students in HE) and governance structure (decisions are not in hands of the European Commission). The Certificate Supplement (CS) is developed with a different approach (it is a group document: every learner that followed the same VET pathway or the comparable RPL-procedure gets the same CS), different target groups (VET learners, but also people that were successful in the RPL procedures) and different governance. Every proposal for changing DS or CS within Europass should take into account these facts.

What should be the added value of merging the DS and CS? Why should the DS move towards the CS approach? The DS must become more learning outcome oriented, but this is amongst others already promoted by the new ECTS Guide. The Higher Education Institutes need a document that is focused on individual pathways, the CS is not suitable for that. On the contrary, the VET providers will not like the DS approach, because of the additional administrative work (creating individual documents will be needed, while now group documents can be downloaded from the VET Qualifications Agency).

The Certificate Supplement could also be used in the area of general education.

The argument of having lesser documents within the Europass is not coherent with the different plans within the Commission to launch new documents and tools, like the Europass Experience, the Sectoral Skills Passports and the self-assessment tools (mentioned in the questions above).

23. *What are, in your opinion, the obstacles of basing both curricula design and assessment practices on a learning outcomes approach?*

The basis obstacles are the following:

- **The huge investment needed to re-define the curricula and assessment standards in learning outcomes;**
- **The resistance of the stakeholders against innovation;**
- **The crucial role of the teacher and trainer: are they well trained to use this learning approach in their teaching practice, assessment tests and final examinations?**

It is possible and necessary to overcome these obstacles, but it takes time and needs a lot of targeted communication actions towards the stakeholders.

24. *What actions are needed at EU level to enhance the synergies between the European Qualification Framework and the Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area and to build a common reference for all qualifications levels for all participating countries? Should the adoption by all countries of a single referencing process combining EQF referencing and QF-EHEA self-certification be promoted?*

A single referencing process is indeed an important way to promote the permeability between VET, general education, adult learning and higher education. An obstacle could be the different geographic coverage of the EQF (36 countries) and the Bologna Process (48 countries). Therefore the formal application range of the EQF Recommendation could be opened for these 12 other countries. See the answer on question 17.

25. *Do you have any further suggestions for simplifying and for improving the coherence of the European transparency and recognition tools?*

Again, we make a difference between the European transparency and recognition tools developed by DG EaC and European recognition tools developed by other DGs within the Commission, like the EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (2005/36/EG, amended by 2013/55/EU). More coherence is urgently needed between tools developed by different DGs within the European Commission by using, amongst others, the same learning outcomes approach and the 8 EQF levels for recognition of qualifications.

Section 5. Ensuring clarity of rules and procedures for the recognition of skills and qualifications for further learning

26. *In order to enable individuals to move more freely between the different sub-systems of education and training, within and across countries, the recognition of skills and competences needs to be improved.*

26.a. *While respecting national competences, should European criteria and procedures for the recognition of qualifications for further learning be developed in the areas of adult learning and general education?*

Partially agree. In the long term we should indeed arrive at common European criteria and procedures for recognition of qualifications in adult learning and general education, and this from a lifelong learning perspective. But the development of these criteria and procedures should be done step by step, starting with adult learning. In general education (primary and secondary level) the learning outcomes approach is far from being generalized, while in adult learning this approach is already more developed.

26.b. For the purposes of further learning (and in the context of the autonomy of higher education institutions), are the criteria used by higher education institutions for recognising qualifications acquired in another Member State sufficiently clear, transparent and accommodating of learners' needs?

Partially agree. In answering this question we should distinguish between the recognition work done by ENIC/NARIC and the decisions made by (autonomous) higher education institutes on admission of learners. The criteria used by ENIC/NARIC for recognition of foreign qualifications are relatively clear and transparent, giving clear information on access to higher education. But the criteria used by the HE institutions in the EU for concrete admission of learners are not clear and transparent for the moment.

26.c. Should European criteria and procedures for the recognition of vocational qualifications for further learning within and across Member States be developed?

No opinion; we do not fully understand the term “vocational qualifications for further learning”.

26.d. Would a European system of recognition of skills, competences and qualifications in school education help improving mobility and employability of young people?

Partially agree. First we see two different sub-systems within school education: (a) initial vocational education and (b) general primary and secondary education. For initial vocational education we see a European system for recognition skills, competences and qualifications feasible if (1) it is based on the learning outcomes approach, (2) linked to National Qualification Frameworks (and by this way to EQF) and (3) related to transparent quality assurance arrangements. For the general primary and secondary education the development of a European recognition system is more difficult. Different factors are playing a role next to NQFs and learning outcomes: national regulations on organizing general education including selection and transition mechanisms; competition between schools; and the fact that parts of the general education are sometimes not leading to full qualifications. Important countries like France, Germany, Austria, England – Northern Ireland have not yet aligned their Leaving Certificates of Higher Secondary Education to their National Qualifications Frameworks. This is an obstacle for setting up a comparison of learning outcomes at the end of higher secondary education in the EU.

27. To which extent are validation systems and credit systems suitable to recognise the outcomes of new forms of learning such as digital learning (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses, MOOCs)?

Not very suitable. Validation and credit systems are perhaps suitable for digital learning in the cases where clear accreditation procedures are in place for the education and training providers including the online offer of learning courses. However, when also on-line distant assessments are

organised, the risk of fraud is high. How can it be guaranteed that the person assessed is really the person that gets the qualification?

28. Would it be desirable to develop common criteria and procedures for recognition that could apply to all education and training sub-systems (for vocational education and training, schools, adult education), and all qualifications related to European qualifications frameworks (including those obtained through validation of non-formal and informal learning, open on-line courses, private qualifications, etc.)?

Partially disagree. On the basis of what has been answered to the questions above, we do not believe it to be feasible in a relatively short term. The broad scope of the field where these common criteria and procedures should apply is demanding a very complex and wide approach. We are in favour of a step by step approach starting with VET.

29. Which measures, if any, should be taken at the EU level to improve the recognition of learning outcomes related to new forms of learning such as learning through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)?

The measures taken at EU level should be in line with the measures in place (or planned for the near future) in the different sub-systems of education and training (HE, VET, adult education, general education).

30. In case you agree with question 28, please provide your suggestions here on how such criteria could be developed. -

Section 6. Increasing the focus on quality assurance

31. In order to enable learners to assemble their tailor-made learning pathways by selecting learning opportunities from different sub-systems and forms of delivery, it is necessary to develop a common understanding of quality across countries and different education sub-systems.

31.a. Is it possible to identify some common basic principles and guidelines of quality assurance valid across sectors and applicable to all qualifications?

Partially agree. First of all, the European Quality Assurance tools should enhance the transparency of national quality assurance arrangements and not try to impose European Quality Assurance arrangements. Common basic principles and guidelines of Quality Assurance valid across education sub-systems could be useful next to the specific QA principles and guidelines for each sub-system and not replacing these specific approaches. A first priority is adapting the current QA tools for HE and VET so that they refer more explicitly to the learning outcomes approach and qualification frameworks (see the recent evaluation reports on ESG and EQAVET).

31.b. Should there be a core of common European quality assurance principles for the provision of learning opportunities in all sectors of education and training?

Partially agree. A common core for all sectors / sub-systems of education and training will automatically be more generic and consequently leave more room for different interpretations,

what is not favorable for EU comparison and cooperation (see conclusions of recent ESG evaluation report).

32. *In your opinion, to which extent are existing quality assurance principles and credit systems suitable to support new forms of learning, such as digital learning (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses, MOOCs)?*

Somewhat suitable. The existing quality assurance principles are suitable for digital learning if (a) clear accreditation procedures are in place for this type of learning (separately or imbedded in accreditation procedures for learning programmes of which digital learning is a part) and (b) the digital learning courses fit within the learning outcomes approach.

33. If you agree with question 31.b, please provide here your suggestions on what could be the common basic principles and guidelines for quality assurance applicable to all qualifications.

The best starting point is Annex III of the EQF Recommendation where one can find common basic principles for quality assurance for qualifications in HE and VET. This document could be further elaborated for other qualifications aligned to National Qualifications Frameworks. Anyway, the common basic approach should go beyond the PDCA cycle. The CIPO model mentioned in Annex III is more relevant for education and training than the generic PDCA cycle model.

Section 7. Providing learners and workers with a single access point to obtain information and services supporting a European area of skills and qualifications

34. *Could learners and workers benefit from a one-stop shop providing integrated services - including their supporting platforms - covering the full range of European services on learning opportunities, career guidance and recognition of qualifications for employment purposes or further learning?*

Strongly disagree. It is important to distinguish between creating a one-stop shop and integrating services. Although a one-stop shop is more user-friendly and client-centred, we do not see why this should require an integration of services that are now delivered with very different aims, approaches and towards other target groups. The information and services that learners need for further learning are different from the information and services that workers require. Some examples: workers are looking for long-term or full-time work, students are interested in short-term student jobs; workers are looking for a home or an apartment while students are interested in student accommodations.

35. *In your opinion, to which extent is it desirable to create integrated service-points for learners and workers covering the full range of European services currently spread over the networks of ENIC/NARIC, Europass, Euroguidance, NQF-NCP?*

Not desirable. In setting up a one-stop shop or dedicated service-points for learners or workers, it would be better to connect existing dedicated networks rather than to integrate or merge them. This way the front-office can be kept user-friendly and rather simple, while in the back-office the networking of services can be complex. As learners and workers have different information needs, we propose that DG EaC focuses on the networks and services for the learners and the youth sector, while DG Employment and Social Affairs (together with DG Internal Market and Services)

focuses on the workers. Clear agreements are also needed between the European Commission and the Member States on who is responsible for what kind of information delivery, update and quality assurance.

36. Do you consider the current landscape of webtools in the area of skills and qualifications (Europass Portal, Your Europe, Study in Europe, We mean Business, Ploteus, EQF Portal, European Skills Panorama, ESCO) to be effective/ineffective?

	Highly effective	Somewhat effective	Somewhat ineffective	Totally ineffective	No opinion
ESCO				X	
Europass Portal			X		
Your Europe					X
Study in Europe					X
We mean Business		X			
Ploteus			X		
EQF Portal		X			
European Skills Panorama				X	

Remark: why are networks / services like EURES, Eurodesk, IMI and SOLVIT not mentioned here?

37. Do you consider it useful/not useful to provide individuals with self-assessment tools for measurement of knowledge skills and competences?

Somewhat useful. As such these could be interesting tools, but a lot of conditions should be fulfilled before they have really added value: these tools should be based on a good development methodology, tested on validity and updated regularly. The crucial question here is: who will develop this kind of tools from a scientific approach?

An important need within EU learner mobility schemes are language assessment tools for assessing the language proficiency before and after a EU learning mobility period. In this case the European Reference Framework for languages could be used.

38. If you are working in the ENIC/NARIC, Europass, Euroguidance, NQF-NCP networks, please answer the following:

Remark. We give the answers from two perspectives to illustrate how the answers are dependent of the specific perspective within Education and Training. We can imagine that the perspective of labour market actors is even more diverging.

38.a. How frequently do you work with the following networks?

From the perspective of Europass NEC:

	Very often	Somewhat often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never	This is my Network
National Agency	X					
ENIC/NARIC				X		
Europass						X
Euroguidance			X			
NQF-NCP				X		
Eurodesk					X	
Eures Advisers	X					
Europe Direct				X		

From the perspective of Euroguidance:

	Very often	Somewhat often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never	This is my Network
National Agency				X		
ENIC/NARIC				X		
Europass			X			
Euroguidance						X
NQF-NCP				X		
Eurodesk	X					
Eures Advisers			X			
Europe Direct				X		

38.b. How would you rate your contacts with other European services in your country in terms of cooperation? On a scale from 3 to 0, meaning 3= high cooperation; 0= no cooperation

From the perspective of Europass NEC:

	3	2	1	0	No opinion	This is my network
National Agency	X					
ENIC/NARIC				X		
Europass						X
Euroguidance		X				
NQF-NCP			X			
Eurodesk					X	
Eures Advisers	X					
Europe Direct			X			

From the perspective of Euroguidance:

	3	2	1	0	No opinion	This is my network
National Agency		X				
ENIC/NARIC				X		
Europass		X				
Euroguidance						X
NQF-NCP				X		
Eurodesk	X					
Eures Advisers			X			
Europe Direct				X		

39. If you agree with question 34, please provide here your suggestions on what could be the features of this one-stop shop. -