

Consultation on European Area Skills and Qualifications

Position paper from the UK

Note: The devolved administrations of the UK will be responding to the consultation separately.

The UK welcomes the European Commission's public consultation on the potential benefits of developing a "European Area of Skills and Qualifications". This is a timely opportunity to collect different views on the problems faced by Member States, educational bodies, learners, workers and other stakeholders with regard to the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications when moving within and between EU member states and on the adequacy of the related European policies and instruments and the extent of their implementation.

The UK supports efforts to improve mobility of learners between different parts of the education system and across borders and the recognition of qualifications when moving between Member States. The UK also supports the promotion of the implementation of current European transparency instruments in relation to education and skills. However, it is too early in some instances to assess the impact of these instruments and their effect on the education and skills systems of Member States. The UK supports the current focus on reviews of progress.

In this context the UK does not believe that it is feasible or desirable to develop a new and ambitious proposal for a European Area of Skills and Qualifications. In the absence of any detail on what this might entail, it is difficult to provide specific comments on its potential strengths, weaknesses and its impact on improving education and skills across member states. In our view the Commission should focus on promoting and increasing the relevance and awareness of existing instruments, and facilitating the sharing of best practices, before considering widening the scope of such instruments. It is more important that Member States implement the measures already agreed than to try and move further. If the Commission decides after the results of its public consultation to put forward any proposals in this area these should fully take into account:

- the subsidiarity principle for Member States in the domain of education and skills, and the autonomy of national educational institutions. - The UK cannot accept a prescriptive approach in this area.
- the need to avoid new actions at the European level, unless there is convincing evidence that these will add value, have a cost benefit, and will not contravene subsidiarity
- the potential for reduction of administrative burdens and simplification of all instruments and the need to avoid adding to burdens on Member States and their institutions.