

## ROADMAP

Title of the initiative: Non-legislative (Communication) **Commission Communication on a New Competences Initiative**

Type of initiative (CWP/Catalogue/Comitology): major initiative, CWP 2010

Lead DG: EAC, A.1

Expected date of adoption of the initiative (month/year): December 2010

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### Initial IA screening & planning of further work

#### A. Context and problem definition

(i) What is the political context of the initiative? (ii) How does this initiative relate to past and possible future initiatives, and to other EU policies?

The context for this initiative is defined by the New Skills for New Jobs initiative. It builds thereby on the Key Competences Framework established through a Council Recommendation in 2006. Links to other existing EU initiatives aimed at supporting citizen's competence development, notably the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Europass are also of significant importance, as well as the general policy framework for European cooperation in education and training, encompassing the various sectors such as schools, vocational education and training, higher and adult education.

The initiative follows up on main challenges identified in the 2010 Joint report of the Council and of the Commission "Key competences for a changing world". Also the Commission Communication "Europe 2020" called '*to ensure that the competences required to engage in further learning and the labour market are acquired and recognised throughout general, vocational, higher and adult education and to develop a common language and operational tool for education/training and work: a European Skills, Competences and Occupations Framework (ESCO)*'

What are the main problems identified?

In the context of EU2020, the aim for Europe to develop an economy based on knowledge and innovation and to foster a high-employment economy has been underlined. This can only be successfully achieved if citizens get the opportunity to acquire competences that are relevant for society and the labour market from a very early age and to develop them further throughout their life.

Many countries are reforming curricula based on the key competences framework, particularly in the school sector. Progress remains however unsatisfactory in the vocational education and training sector and in relation to adult learning

Moreover, in higher education the acquisition and further development of key competences (in particular transversal key competences such as learning to learn, social and civic competences, initiative-taking and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression) is becoming increasingly important. The intentions are to equip students with the competences required by the labour market as well as to engage them in further learning or research.

Who is affected?

Students/trainees, citizens engaged in further learning, learning providers, enterprises.

(i) Is EU action justified on grounds of subsidiarity? (ii) Why can the objectives of the proposed action not be achieved sufficiently by Member States (necessity test)? (iii) As a result of this, can objectives be better achieved by action by the Community (test of EU Value Added)?

- The initiative aims at consolidating and further developing existing initiatives that the Member States implement and actively use in promoting reforms of their national systems. These initiatives include the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the Recommendation on Key Competences, and the Europass initiative. Such initiatives do not exist at national level. They allow Member States to situate themselves in the European context and play a key role in building a a European labour market and a European lifelong learning area. Promoting comparability and transparency of qualifications and competences across Europe facilitates the mobility of workers and learners. The development of a common language covering skills, competences and occupations will help develop education and training provision that is more open and relevant to the outside world and better adapted to the changing needs of work as well as enable more precise and efficient matching of supply and demand, more realistic and accurate skills analysis and forecasting and better targeted and informed guidance services;

## **B. Objectives of EU initiative**

What are the main policy objectives?

The main policy objective is to support efforts in Member States to modernise education and training provision and to ensure an integrated implementation of existing European instruments.

Specific objectives are to:

- link the ongoing work on key competences with the implementation of the EQF and thereby further promote the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning;
- develop a common language between the worlds of education and work supporting an approach based on learning outcomes;
- promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- develop EUROPASS in line with the implementation of the EQF with a view to recording more effectively citizens' knowledge skills and competences.

Do the objectives imply developing EU policy in new areas or in areas of strategic importance?

In accordance with "Europe 2020: Agenda for new skills for jobs" education and training considered areas of strategic importance. This initiative consolidates and develops further existing initiatives in this field.

## **C. Options**

(i) What are the policy options? (ii) What legislative or 'soft law' instruments could be considered? (iii) Would any legislative initiatives go beyond routine up-date of existing legislation?

(i) Policy options are:

- a. continue with the implementation of the existing tools without political or legislative action
- b. provide new impetus to the implementation and further development of the competences agenda through non-legislative action (Communication)
- c. update existing soft-law (Recommendations)
- d. propose new tools and instruments replacing the current ones

The preferred option is option b.: A communication further developing the key competences approach in the fields of vocational training, adult learning and higher education. It would build on the 2006 Key Competences Recommendation but go beyond. In line with the specific objectives it would be looking especially at assessment and validation questions and at the development of a common language on competences between the worlds of education/training and of work,

including the proposals for an Education and Training Skills Council and for a European Skills Passport.

(ii) All options are subject to 'soft law' instruments.

(iii) A Communication would first of all set out certain initiatives. Depending on the approach chosen, a separate Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning would go beyond the existing provisions on this topic that are part of the EQF Recommendation. The development of a European Skills Passport would build on the existing Europass, but develop a more ambitious approach.

Does the action proposed in the options cut across several policy areas or impact on action taken/planned by other Commission departments?

The development of a common language of education/training and work requires joint action of both education/training and labour market actors. DG EAC and DG EMPL are already cooperating closely in this area, in particular in the context of ESCO.

Explain how the options respect the proportionality principle

All options would be subject to soft law instruments. They are fully in line with the policy objective and their efficiency depends on the use made by individual Member States.

#### **D. Initial assessment of impacts**

What are the significant impacts likely to result from each policy option (cf. list of impacts in the Impact Assessment Guidelines pages 32-37), even if these impacts would materialise only after subsequent Commission initiatives?

Economic and social impacts are possible depending on the different options but only in a very long-term perspective as the societal and individual effects of education are visible only after decades. Environmental impacts are very unlikely.

Could the options have impacts on the EU-Budget (above 5 Mio €) and/or should the IA also serve as the ex-ante evaluation, required by the Financial Regulation?

No.

Could the options have significant impacts on (i) simplification, (ii) administrative burden or on (iii) relations with third countries?

No.

#### **E. Planning of further impact assessment work**

When will the impact assessment work start?

An impact assessment is currently not foreseen since the initiatives promoted by the Communication represent developments of existing instruments and would be introduced on a small-scale pilot basis. If after the feasibility, testing phase it is decided to increase the scale of action (e.g. for the European Skills Passport) an impact assessment would be done at that stage.

(i) What information and data are already available? (ii) Will this impact assessment build on already existing impact assessment work or evaluations carried out? (iii) What further information needs to be gathered? (iv) How will this be done (e.g. internally or by an external contractor) and by when? (v) What type and level of analysis will be carried out (cf. principle of proportionate analysis)?

Work on the Communication will build on the findings of the 2010 Joint report of the Council and of the Commission "Key competences for a changing world" (see COM(2009)640 and

accompanying SWD), the impact assessment prepared in 2006 for the creation of the EQF, the recent findings of the expert group on New Skills for New Jobs, and experiences made in the implementation of existing instruments (EQF, Europass).

Which stakeholders & experts have been/will be consulted, how and at what stage?

Existing bodies and stakeholder groups: EQF advisory group, Europass centres, adult learning working group.