



# European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)

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## **European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)**

Together with stakeholders the European Commission is developing a classification of European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO).

### **How will citizens benefit from a classification system?**

In the first instance, a classification system might not sound like something that will help citizens in their everyday life. While it is true that the ESCO classification will not normally be directly consulted by citizens it will still be of practical use for them.

ESCO will help a great deal to make online tools better. The classification has some unique and innovative features: it will be multilingual, it will focus on skills and it will be published in an open format to be used by third parties' software. This will make it a valuable building block for online job portals, career guidance tools and databases of learning opportunities. These improvements will lead to very tangible benefits for jobseekers, people seeking career changes, learners and employers.

### **How can ESCO help people to find a job abroad?**

Online job portals normally use one classification system and one language. It is difficult to exchange data between them, and in particular with job portals from other countries. This makes it difficult to find the right job abroad. This is where ESCO comes in. It will be multilingual and enable the exchange of CV's and job vacancies stored in different IT systems.

ESCO will enable online job portals such as [EURES – The European Job Mobility Portal](#) to match people with jobs across all EU Member States. They will even be able to match CVs of jobseekers with job vacancies that are written in another language. It will become easier for jobseekers to find jobs in other EU Member States and for employers to recruit talents from abroad.

### **Why use classifications to describe jobs and people? Aren't they all individual?**

Nowadays the boundaries between occupational categories are increasingly blurred and they are less standardised and homogeneous than in the past. The skills needed for a specific job differ tremendously even within one occupation. The same occupation often relates to jobs that differ by work environment, size of the workplace, tools and materials used and end product. That is why ESCO focuses on categorising individual skills and competences. The goal is to understand the individual skill sets of each person and the skills required in each job. Online job portals can then

find the jobs that best match a jobseeker's individual skill set. When a perfect skills match is not reached, ESCO will help jobseekers to understand which skills they are missing, encouraging them to pursue further education and training opportunities.

The education and training systems are also changing to a skills-centred approach. Instead of describing qualifications with input factors (e.g. the time spent on learning), they now focus on the knowledge, skills and competences learners obtain. This is reflected in the [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#).

Education and training institutions will have the possibility to describe the output of their qualifications with the skills terminology provided by ESCO. As a consequence, qualifications will become more transparent and it will be easier for education providers to receive feedback from the labour market and adapt their programmes accordingly.

Thus, in both fields, the labour market and the education and training sector, the focus shifts to individual skill and competence profiles. This common focus reduces the distance between the world of education/training and the world of employment. ESCO will be their common language, improving the communication between them.

## **How will ESCO be structured?**

The ESCO classification will consist of three interrelated pillars covering i) occupations; ii) skills/competences; and iii) qualifications. It will be multilingual and linked to relevant international classifications and frameworks, such as [NACE](#), [ISCO](#) and the [EQF](#). It will be available free of charge to all stakeholders through the [ESCO Portal](#) (currently under development).

## **How is ESCO being developed?**

ESCO is still in an early development phase. A first version of ESCO will be published in winter 2012/13 and will be continuously improved.

The development of ESCO is coordinated by the [Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#) and the [Directorate General for Education and Culture](#) of the European Commission.

For the development of ESCO, the European Commission is supported by stakeholders, external consultants and the [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training \(CEDEFOP\)](#). The ESCO management structure ensures that all groups of stakeholders have a say in ESCO.

## **Background information**

- The vision behind ESCO

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- Short introduction to ESCO
  - Analysis of the ESCO Stakeholder Survey 2010