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WORKING METHODS OF THE EQF ADVISORY GROUP

Given the extension of the mandate of the EQF AG as referred to in the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning¹ of 12 December 2012 as well as the evolved composition and working methods of EQF AG since it started in 2008, the EQF Advisory Group adopted its revised working methods in its 21st meeting on 26-27 September 2013.

1. LEGAL BASE AND PURPOSE

The EQF Advisory Group has been set up by the Commission to support the implementation of the recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning of 23 April 2008. More specifically, the EQF Advisory Group is "*responsible for providing overall coherence and promote transparency of the process of relating qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework*"².

The Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning of 20 December 2012 delegates the follow-up of the implementation of the Council recommendation to the EQF Advisory Group.

2. COMPOSITION

2.1. Participating countries

According to the EQF Recommendation and the Recommendation on validation, the EQF Advisory group is composed of representatives of Member States and involves the European social partners, representatives of the voluntary sector, youth organisations and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=oj:c:2008:111:0001:0007:en:pdf>

Beyond Member States, members of the EQF Advisory Group may be countries participating in Education and Training 2020, based on existing agreements and practices, and explicitly committed to implementing the EQF recommendation and the recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Participating countries are represented by two appointed members for the EQF Advisory Group, one with expertise in qualifications frameworks and one with expertise in the area of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Each national delegation is invited to nominate an alternate member who may replace one of the core members if necessary

European social partners and other stakeholders

European social partners and stakeholders participating in the EQF Advisory Group are involved in the award of qualifications and/or the validation of non-formal and informal learning and have representation at European level. These are BusinessEurope, the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EUAPME), the European Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Eurochambres), the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public services (CEEP), the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC), the Heads of Public Employment Services (PES), the European University Association (EUA), the European Students Union (ESU), the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL). Further to the Council Recommendation on validation, the European Youth Forum and the European Volunteer Centre have been invited to participate in EQF AG.

Social partners and other stakeholders are represented by one delegate member and by an alternate member.

The Council of Europe, which is mandated in the Bologna Process to represent the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area in the EQF AG is represented by one member.

Cedefop and the European Training Foundation support the Commission in preparing and following-up the work of the EQF Advisory Group.

The current list of the EQF AG members is attached in annex I.

3. SUB-GROUPS

It is possible to set up sub-groups under the EQF-AG to deal with specific issues. Each sub-group will work according to a clear mandate. The AG decides on the need of sub-groups and defines their mandate, composition and duration.

4. TASKS

1 For the implementation of the EQF Recommendation, the EQF Advisory Group will aim at ensuring that:

- the methodologies applied by countries to refer national qualifications levels to the European Qualifications Framework are coherent and produce consistent results;
- clear procedures and criteria are followed to make information available on how – applying those methodologies – national systems are related to the EQF, in line

with the criteria and procedures adopted for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF (annex II to this mandate);

- procedures for referencing and self-certification, quality assurance arrangements, and principles to deal with international qualifications are coherent (“*promote transparency*”);
- close coordination is maintained between the EQF and the QF-EHEA, as well as with other European initiatives tools relevant to transparency, quality and portability of qualifications; in this respect two representatives of the EQF AG are members of the ESCO Board in order to ensure coherence between the development and implementation of ESCO and the EQF and its portal;
- common principles are developed to promote cooperation on the transparency and portability of qualifications with other countries and organisations beyond Europe;
- any issues related to the further development and improvement of the EQF as a common reference for qualifications may be discussed.

2 For the follow up to the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning the EQF Advisory Group shall:

- monitor national developments in the implementation of the Council Recommendation;
- contribute to the review the European Guidelines on validating non-formal and informal learning;
- contribute to the regular review the European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, including by taking an active role in the quality assurance process of draft country reports and their final endorsement;
- contribute to peer learning activities on the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- serve as a discussion forum for common issues regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning.

5. MANAGEMENT, SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Meetings

The Commission organises and chairs the plenary meetings of the AG, in principle using its conference facilities in Brussels. Exceptionally meetings can be held outside Brussels.

The Commission prepares draft minutes of the meetings.

EQF Implementation Virtual community

The EQF AG makes use of the Sinapse EQF Implementation virtual community³ as a communication tool to support its work. Access is given to all AG members, representatives of social partners and of other stakeholders involved, and experts, as appropriate⁴.

Normally, for all meetings the Commission sends the invitation to AG members, while all documents and communications are made available through Sinapse.

Besides documents directly related to the activity of the AG, Sinapse will also contain background files and relevant literature that might be useful to the purposes of the AG.

³ http://europa.eu/sinapse/directaccess/qualification_framework

⁴When a member is replaced for a specific meeting, it will be in principle the member's responsibility to provide the substitute with access to the relevant documentation.