Brussels, 1 December 2016

EQF Advisory Group, 4 – 5 October 2016, Brussels

Note AG38-3

Planning of Peer Learning Activities in 2017-18 for the EQF and VNFIL

Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) are not to be seen as isolated one-off meetings but as part of the strategy of implementation of the Council Recommendations on EQF and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). This note is a first contribution towards a work-plan (themes, calendar and hosting countries/organisations) of PLAs for the period 2017-18. The objective is to agree on the work-plan by end of 2016.

PLAs in the context of EQF implementation

Late 2016 a total of 29 countries will have referenced to the EQF (23 EU Member States and 6 non Member States). 5 countries are expected to reference by late 2017. The advanced stage of implementation of the EQF is reflected by

(1) a shift from initial referencing to updating the referencing - a number of countries have already updated their initial referencing and presented a revised referencing report to the EQF AG (Malta, Estonia). During the next few years, more countries are likely to present updates of their NQFs and of their referencing to the EQF. PLAs could be organised to exchange experiences and to learn from other countries in updating the referencing. In this context Ireland has already underlined interest in a PLA addressing the measurement of impact of NQFs.

(2) an increasing number of operational NQFs - Cedefop surveys have shown that the number of operational national frameworks has been rapidly increasing over the past 2 years, reaching 17 operational frameworks late 2015, compared to 8 the year before. In the advanced stage of implementation qualifications have been included in frameworks and certificates/supplements contain NQF and EQF levels.

This advanced stage poses several challenges such as:

– communication about the EQF and about NQFs; awareness of the EQF and promotion of its use by stakeholders;
– exchanging information about qualifications that are included in qualifications databases: according to which format and through which tools could such information be exchanged?
– consistency of referencing across countries and occupational sectors. A lack of consistency of referencing is a risk factor that may affect the credibility of both NQFs and the EQF for individuals, educational establishments and employers.

**PLAs in the context of VNFIL**

In the context of VNFIL the work in 2017-18 will focus on the implementation of the Council Recommendation of 2012, which contains the year 2018 as a key. PLAs should support this objective, by addressing both broad issues (validation on the system level), and more specific ones related to the implementation of the Council Recommendation. Examples of the latter are funding of validation (originally planned for December 2016, but postponed to 2017), skills audits or quality assurance of validation. The concrete themes should be chosen depending on the needs/priorities of countries.

**Practical aspects of organising PLAs**

PLAs haven proven to be most interesting if organised outside Brussels, as there can then be an exchange with local experiences. Occasionally PLAs can be organised back-to-back with EQF AG meetings (but preferably not more than once a year). Without a volunteering host country, PLAs can exceptionally be organised by the Commission.

Past experience has shown that a duration of 1.5 days is effective for most PLAs. In order to make PLAs fruitful, active participation by attendants is nonetheless required before, during and after the PLA.

The hosting country is responsible for the overall coordination of the event, including its design, identification and invitation to speakers. Commission services and Cedefop may provide support to the hosting country in these tasks. Commission services can also provide methodological support by external contractors for report writing and for facilitation during PLAs (the support needed will be agreed between the host country and the Commission services on a case by case).

Participants to PLAs will be reimbursed by the Commission services in accordance with Commission expert rules. No further financial support by the Commission is possible. The minimum requirement for being a host country is to provide meeting facilities. The hosting country can, for courtesy reasons offer lunches and/or a dinner, but this is by no means an obligation.

The EQF AG is invited to:
- discuss the overall line and suggestions proposed by the Commission services for PLAs in the areas of referencing and validation
- propose concrete topics for PLAs in both areas
- volunteer for hosting PLAs in 2017-18