EQF Advisory Group, 29-30 March 2017, Brussels

Note AG40-1
Note on relevant developments
Follow-up to the thirty-ninth meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, 8-9 February 2017 in Brussels (cf. action points and the draft meeting minutes):

This note provides an overview on relevant developments in the European cooperation in education, training and employment. Updates on the referencing process are given in a separate note (Cf. note 40-2).

The New Skills Agenda for Europe

VET

Commissioner Thyssen announced the dates of the second European Vocational Skills Week: 20-24 November 2017. Still under the headline "Discover your talent", the general message of quality and excellence in VET will be complemented by three focus themes: mobility of VET learners, quality apprentices and sectoral approaches to skill mismatches, with clear references to the initiatives ErasmusPro, the Quality framework for Apprenticeships and the Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills.

Revisions of the EQF Recommendation and the Europass Decision

From January 2017 the Maltese presidency has taken over the discussion on the revision of both the Europass Decision and the EQF Recommendation. Education Committee meetings on EQF took place on 6 February, 1, 15 and 20 March. The Maltese Presidency will prepare new texts that will be discussed on 6 of April. Further meetings are planned on 19 and 25 April. Overall, the discussion on the EQF proposal is advancing well and the adoption of the EQF Recommendation is likely foreseen for the 22 May Ministerial Meeting. On the Europass proposal the Maltese presidency will prepare a revised text as well to be discussed on 6 April. Moreover the European Parliament has stated its work on the proposal in the CULT and EMPL committees.
Key Competence Framework for Lifelong Learning

Since 2006, the Key Competences Framework has contributed to the development of quality education and training tailored to the needs of European societies. The framework is being reviewed to ensure it reflects political, social and technological developments since 2006. The review was announced in the Commission’s New Skills Agenda for Europe adopted in June 2016.

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Contributions to bring the expertise and perspective of organisations or personal views are welcomed. The consultation will run until 19 May 2017. To take part, click here. The results of the public consultation will be published here.

European inventory of NQFs:


Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The country reports for the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning as well as the synthesis report are now published in Cedefop’s webpage. The printed version of the synthesis report will be available for distribution before the summer. The database linking the 2016 data of the inventory to the European guidelines will be finalised by the end of the year. The Commission will soon launch the preparations for the 2018 Inventory.

Copenhagen process

The ECVET users' group held its 18th meeting on 15 February 2017, addressing in particular the issue of principles that underline flexible vocational learning pathways. The purpose was to identify which basic conditions need to be put in practice for learners to be able to engage in individualised pathways to develop vocational skills and obtain a corresponding qualification. A restricted working group followed up immediately, producing a paper which will be the basis of a note by the Commission for further discussion in the ECVET Network meeting of 7-8 June 2017. This will feed into the preparation of a wide consultation on a proposal for a EU VET policy framework beyond 2020.

On 9-10 March 2017 a peer learning activity gathered ECVET coordinators/Erasmus+ national agencies, Europass centres and VET providers in Cyprus to explore
opportunities for an integrated service to support all phases of mobility, taking over the functions currently provided through the ECVET Learning Agreement and the Europass Mobility. It was concluded that such a service should also address the monitoring and the assessment phases and should retain the opportunity for the learners to have a record of their achievements as a short self-standing document. The main open issue was to clearly define what common features are better addressed through the European service and tools, while ensuring a good level of flexibility – this will be discussed in a small ECVET-Europass follow-up meeting.

ESCO

As agreed with the Member States working group on ESCO (MSWG) the Commission launched an on-line consultation on the linguistic versions of the ESCO Occupations pillar. The consultation took place between 3 February and 10 March 2017. Its aim was to allow Member States to assess the adequacy of the different Occupation linguistic versions (terms) to map national classifications to ESCO according to the requirements of the new EURES Regulation. This was the second round of consultations to Member States on the ESCO classification. As indicated to the EQF AG on the note AG 37-1 for the EQF AG meeting of 4-5 October 2016 the first consultation focused on ESCO English version final draft and took place between 1 July and 9 September 2016. A third round of consultations on the linguistic versions of the ESCO Skills pillar is planned for May 2017.

A total of 20 countries participated in the Occupations consultation: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

The feedback on the linguistic versions of the ESCO Occupations was overall positive. Mostly Member States sent specific feedback on concrete linguistic terms (for instance adding new non-preferred terms to an occupation, suggesting a new preferred term or suggesting to delete a non-preferred term). Some Member States raised concerns on the technical implementation of the mapping process and possible solutions for this. These contributions will now be evaluated by the Commission and implemented accordingly in the current work to develop ESCO version 1. The Commission will organised a webinar on 30 March to inform on and discuss with the MSWG the results of the Occupations consultation and its follow up.

ET2020

What factors make for successful policies in promoting the learning of basic skills by adults in the workplace?
This question was addressed by 20 participants from 12 countries in a Peer Learning Activity organised in February in Manchester (UK) by the ET2020 working group on adult learning. It was part of the working group’s current work on adult learning in the workplace. Policies from UK, NL and NO were scrutinised, compared and contrasted.

Some headline findings include:

- Policies have a higher chance of success when there is a stable political commitment to upskilling low-skilled adults, a high level of 'buy-in' from all stakeholders, and where the roles and responsibilities of each are clearly defined.
- Equally, medium-term stability of funding makes policy success - and sustainability of impact - more likely.
- The valuable mediating role of trade union representatives, both in persuading employees to return to learning, and in showing management how upskilling could also benefit the company (return on investment), was noted.
- Successful policies allow for high degrees of flexibility in implementation, so that training provision is tailored to the specific needs of each company and its workforce.
- Both employers and employees are more amenable to workplace learning if it is repackage as, for example, 'developing workplace communication skills', rather than ‘improving workers' literacy’.
- Different approaches to funding workplace learning (employers' levy, direct state subventions) were examined; the right choice depends on the national context.

To help participating countries take forward the lessons learned, the pairs of participants from each country undertook a brief 'SWOT' analysis of their current national situation in the light of what they had learned at the PLA.

**National Coordinators for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL)**

The network of National Coordinators met on 13-14 March and, amongst other things, discussed the implementation by Member States of the Recommendation on ‘Upskilling Pathways: new opportunities for adults’. They also identified topics for peer learning, which will become a core activity of the network from 2018.

An updated brochure of good practice in the implementation of the EAAL is now available on EPALE:  [https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/brochure_updated_march_2017.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/brochure_updated_march_2017.pdf)

**White paper on the future of Europe**

**European Semester**

In the context of the 2017 European Semester the Commission published the country reports in which a section on education and skills is included.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester-archive_en