The handbook on learning outcomes and the common format for presenting learning outcomes

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The European Learning outcomes handbook

Following comments from EQF AG members, the Handbook is ready for publishing (on paper and electronically):

- Builds on and takes forward the 2011 EQF Guidance note on learning outcomes
- Presents a set of ‘rules of thumb’ for the definition, writing and application of learning outcomes
- Contains an extensive overview of existing guidance material and research in this area
- Outlines the main principles and the technical structure of a common format for presenting learning outcomes
The added value of a common format

A common European presentation format could serve the following purposes:

- Make it possible for individual citizens, employers and other end-users to be able to better understand and compare the content and profiles of a qualification;
- Allow for a systematic exchange of information on content and profile of single, specific qualifications throughout Europe;
- Further promote the shift to learning outcomes to support transparency of qualifications;

The purpose of the common format is not harmonization of qualifications.
The main principles of a common format

• It should not replace existing learning outcomes descriptions as used at national or institutional level for qualifications, curricula or other purposes;
• It should be used as a voluntary supplement;
• It should allow national authorities to present the content and profile of qualifications in their national databases in a concise and comparable way;
• It should allow national authorities to present the content and profile of qualifications in qualifications and certificate supplements;
• It should, potentially, allow private and international providers to present their certificates and qualifications in a concise and comparable way.
The main principles of a common format

- It must be short (+/- 1000 characters) and understandable.
- It must use a pre-defined structure and syntax. This is critical for ensuring comparability of presentations.
- It must refer to agreed but flexible learning domains. While some countries may choose to use the EQF domains (knowledge, skills and autonomy/responsibility) as basis for their descriptions, countries and institutions should choose the distinctions they find most appropriate.
- It must be supported by a standardised terminology, including lists of action verbs. Cedefop has published, supporting Europass, a basic list of action verbs to be applied. This is further strengthened by the 2017 European Handbook.
The basic structure of a common format

The learning outcomes description should be limited to +/- 1000 characters and be written talking the following elements into consideration:

| It should present the qualification from the perspective of the learner and what he/she is expected to know, be able to do and understand | It should use action verbs to signal the level of learning expected, normally with an (explicit or implicit) reference to the levels of the national qualifications framework and/or the EQF | It should indicate the object and scope of the expected learning outcomes. This description should capture the main orientation of the qualification and the depth/breadth of the expected accomplishment. It can, if deemed appropriate, use pre-defined domains as defined by NQFs/EQF | It should clarify the occupational and/or social context in which the qualification operates |
The way forward

The EQF AG is invited to comment on the relevance of the proposed common format, in particular regarding

- the basic purposes of the common format;
- the underpinning principles of the common format; and
- the suggested structure of the common format.

The EQF AG is invited to advice on how to best progress as regards the common format.