Note AG41-1
Note on relevant developments
Follow-up to the thirty-ninth meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, 29-30 March 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 41-2).

The New Skills Agenda for Europe

Adoption of the EQF Recommendation
On 22 May the Education, Youth Culture and Sport Council adopted the revised EQF Recommendation under the Maltese Presidency. The text will be soon published in all official languages in the Official Journal.

Text of the EQF Recommendation:
News item and further information here:
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2808&furtherNews=yes

Revision of the Europass Decision
In the Education Committee substantial progress has been made during the Maltese Presidency on Europass. A Progress Report was presented to the EYCS Ministerial Meeting (22-23 May). It remarked that discussions were 'ongoing in a good spirit of cooperation and there is already a certain level of agreement on many issues'. Both Commissioner Thyssen and the Maltese Education & Employment minister also remarked on the significant progress made at the Ministerial Meeting and potential for securing agreement. The Parliament has also begun discussions under the joint responsibility of both the EMPL and CULT Committees. Both committees are expected to adopt their joint report on 22 June. Negotiations will continue under the Estonian Presidency, a first meeting discussing Europass will take place on 4 July. Progress report: http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8867-2017-IN1T/en/pdf

EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals
On 20th June the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals will be launched. The EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals has been developed by the European Commission
to support early identification of the skills of refugees, migrants and other third country nationals in order to facilitate their integration into the labour market and wider society. It is intended for use by any organisation or service that may be offering assistance to third country nationals and aims to get to know individuals, their skills and experiences and provide recommendations on next steps.

The event will take place at the EGG conference centre (Brussels) and it will offer the possibility for experts, politicians and other stakeholders in the fields of education, employment and migration to find out about the EU Skills Profile Tool. The main event will be preceded by networking cocktails 19th June at Thon Hotel City Centre, Brussels.

EQF AG members have been invited to attend the launch event. Registrations are open until 9 June (https://destree.eventsair.com/launch-event/regform2/Site/Register).

The conference website: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1210&furtherEvents=yes

**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.

A recent public consultation undertaken as part of the review the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning concluded on 19 May 2017. The Commission is now analysing the findings and progressing with the review. The results of the public consultation will be published here. A conference to discuss the review of the Framework will be held on 14 June 2017 in Brussels.

**Digital and Entrepreneurship competence frameworks**

The DigComp and EntreComp Stakeholders Event took place on 12 May 2017 in Brussels. The event was very successful. It was attended by over 150 stakeholders who use DigComp and/or EntreComp in their work whether in employment, skills development, education and training, or policy development. During a networking lunch 26 stakeholders set up exhibits of their work. Examples of use presented during the event included teacher training, development of online training platforms and MOOCs, development of education and training programmes and policy and strategy development.

More information and presentations are available here: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1209&furtherEvents=yes

**Proposal for a Council Recommendation on tracking graduates**

A proposal for a Council Recommendation on tracking graduate, was adopted on 30 May 2017 as part of the new Skills Agenda for Europe. It aims at encouraging and supporting
Member State authorities to improve the quality and availability of information on how graduates from higher education and vocational education and training programmes progress in their careers or further education after finishing their studies. This would help higher education and vocational education and training institutions better tailor curricula to current and anticipated needs of the economy and society, and provide prospective students with up-to-date, solid information to help them decide what courses to choose.

The proposal was part of a broader package which also adopted new initiatives on school and higher education,

In the Communication "School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life", the Commission identifies areas where action is needed and where EU support can help address important challenges:

- Raising the quality and inclusiveness of schools;
- Supporting excellent teachers and school leaders;
- Improving the governance of school education systems.

The Commission is proposing to complement actions taken by Member States in these three areas by supporting mutual learning, strengthening the evidence for what works in education and assisting national reforms for Member States that so wish. Examples of such support include boosting competence development and intercultural learning through school partnerships, mobility and e-Twinning projects under Erasmus+; strengthening peer learning on the careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders; and setting up a new support mechanism to help Member States seeking assistance in designing and implementing education reforms.

Building on the 2011 Modernisation agenda, the renewed EU agenda for higher education identifies four main goals for higher education in the EU:

- Ensuring graduates leave higher education with the skill sets they and the modern economy need;
- Building inclusive higher education systems;
- Making sure higher education institutions contribute to innovation in the rest of the economy;
- Supporting higher education institutions and governments in making the best use of the human and financial resources available.

**EU Skills Panorama**

The Skills Panorama has recently published new analytical highlights which describe skills anticipations activities in a number of countries. Each analytical highlight contains in-depth analysis of activities, including target groups, stakeholders, methods and tools in each country.

Copenhagen process/European VET policy

The Commission is preparing a proposal for Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The proposal will build on the substantial work of the European Social Partners on the issues of quality (by trade unions) and cost-effectiveness (by employers) over the last years, their joint statement and, in particular, the tripartite Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training from December 2016.

The Commission, in cooperation with the Maltese Presidency, held a conference to take stock of results and show the way forward on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (Eafa) on 30-31 May, in Malta. With 34 newcomers, there are now 208 pledges by companies, social partners, chambers, education and training providers, youth organisations and others. Through these pledges, the stakeholders show their commitment to improve the supply, quality, and image of apprenticeships. Over 200,000 apprenticeships, training and first-job offers were pledged in Malta bringing the total number of offers. Also, Portugal, Iceland and Serbia signed national commitments, bringing the Eafa to 35 member countries, including 27 EU Member States, 3 EFTA and 5 Candidate countries.

The second European Vocational Skills Week (20-24 November 2017, cf. note AG40.1), an action envisaged in the Skills Agenda, will comprise 3 days of meetings and events in Brussels (22 to 24 November), preceded by 2 days of opening and employer-led events in Member States. The Commission will launch a campaign as last year to reach as many citizens as possible, encouraging organisers of local events to associate themselves with the Week.

An ECVET PLA was held on 17-18 May 2017 in Bilbao and San Sebastián, partially hosted by TKNIKA teachers training and innovation centre, focusing on flexible apprenticeship pathways based on experiences in Spain, and the Basque Country in particular, Austria, Italy and Estonia. It appeared that the degree of flexibility of apprenticeship or strongly work-based pathways substantially depends on the orientation of the whole VET system, but that elements of flexibility were compatible with any orientation. This confirms that identifying basic principles of or conditions for flexibility – such as allowing long term accumulation and envisaging validation elements – is a more productive approach than opposing 'modular' to 'holistic' system orientations.

The EQAVET Annual Network Meeting took place on 8-9 June 2017 in Malta, discussing among other the first findings of the study on VET graduate tracking, the work of the working groups on quality assurance in general education and on teachers and trainers, and the role of EQAVET and quality assurance in the Skills Agenda and the ET2020 developments.

Bologna Process

PLA on the academic recognition of qualifications held by people seeking international protection of beneficiaries of international protection

On 10 May 2017, DG EAC held a PLA for representatives of 9 selected NARIC centres and 1 ENIC centre to share good practice concerning the recognition of qualifications held by people
seeking international protection and beneficiaries of international protection. The ENIC-NARIC centres brought representatives from stakeholders including higher education institutions, labour market stakeholders, student organisations and migration organisations to the event to share information on national activities and discuss opportunities at European level. The PLA showed that many good individual initiatives have been developed in Europe and that some countries have developed documents to support the recognition of undocumented qualifications and addressed the issue in a systematic way at national level. It was also found that networks between higher education authorities and migration organisations were still needed in many countries, that information was crucial in the arrival phase to the destination country/during longer transition periods and that the Toolkit for refugees in that is currently being developed by a group of NARIC centres with Erasmus+ funding will be helpful in establishing and improving practice in European countries.

**Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level**

The study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level will be published over the course of the summer. The study is to be seen as a contribution to the work done in the Bologna advisory group on the Diploma Supplement. This custom-format study includes elements of status-quo mapping of digital solutions of higher education diplomas/study results throughout selected European and third countries, an evaluation of the usefulness of the Diploma Supplement, and feasibility analysis (including a cost-benefit analysis) of future options for the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement at the European level.

**Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

The country reports for the 2016 update of 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 is now available. Work on the database to introduce the 2016 data will start after the summer.

The Commission will soon launch a tender for services on the 2018 Update of the European Inventory of validation of informal and non-formal learning

A study on mapping Skills audits in and across EU member States with a duration of 8 months will be carried out by ICF Consulting services. A presentation is foreseen for the 41st EQF-AG meeting.

**ESCO**

As agreed with the Member States working group on ESCO (MSWG), on 3d May the Commission launched a third round of consultation with the Member States on a pre-release version of ESCO containing the EU language versions for the skills pillar.

The consultation will be open until the 16th of June 2017. The goal of this consultation is to give the opportunity to the Member States to assess the adequacy of the different linguistic versions
for mapping (existing) national skills classifications to ESCO according to the requirements of
the new EURES Regulation. This consultation round contains the ESCO pre-release version of
the ESCO skills pillar in the 24 official EU languages and Norwegian. The Icelandic translations
of skills are still pending and they will be presented separately at a later stage.

The publication of ESCO version 1 (v1) in all EU official languages plus Norwegian is expected
for July 2017. A presentation conference on ESCO will take place in Brussels on 9 and 10
October 2017. An invitation will be sent to the members of the EQF AG.

The development of the ESCO qualifications pillar is an ongoing process. This pillar will be
populated with qualifications from national databases linked to the LOQ that have been
developed according to the qualifications metadata schema included in the EU calls for proposals
of 2014, 2015 and 2016, as well as with international qualifications directly included in ESCO.

Since 2015, the Commission has carried out several pilot projects on qualifications with Member
States (Spain, Sweden, Slovakia, Greece and UK-Scotland) and private companies (Microsoft).
The aim of these pilot projects was to test the direct and indirect inclusion of qualifications in
ESCO and the annotation of learning outcomes with ESCO skills. The Commission is currently
carrying out a pilot project with international organisations (The European Welding
Confederation and the European Council of Optometry and Optics) as well as with private
companies (Amazon and Microsoft) in order to test the direct inclusion of qualifications in ESCO
and to identify potential issues regarding quality assurance. Qualifications that are not included in
national qualification frameworks will not be published in ESCO until an approach to ensure
their quality is agreed at European level. For the moment, these qualifications will appear in the
qualifications pillar as “test data”.

The European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Pillar of Social Rights was adopted by the Commission on 26 April. The Pillar sets
out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare
systems. It will serve as a compass for a renewed process of convergence towards better working
and living conditions among participating member states. It is primarily conceived for the euro
area, but is applicable to all member states wishing to participate.

The Pillar of Social Rights is about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens. It
builds upon 20 key principles, structured around three categories:

- Equal opportunities and access to the labour market
- Fair working conditions
- Social protection and inclusion

Endorsing the European Pillar of Social Rights

The Commission proposes the European Pillar of Social Rights to be proclaimed jointly by the
European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Social Summit, which will take
place in Sweden on 17 November of this year, will be a key moment to steer the work forward, in
line with the broader discussion on the social dimension of Europe.
Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights

Delivering on the principles and rights defined under the European Pillar of Social Rights is a joint responsibility of the European Union institutions, member states, social partners and other stakeholders. The European institutions will help set the framework and give direction on the way forward for implementation of the Pillar through legislation where needed, in full respect of member states competences and taking into account the diversity of their situations.

Monitoring progress

The implementation of the Pillar will be supported by an online social scoreboard to track trend and performances across EU countries.

Future of social Europe

The discussion on the social dimension of Europe is part of the broader debate around Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe. In this context, the Commission published a reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe. It zooms in on the upcoming transformation of the European societies and their world of work, while setting out a number of options for our collective response. The Pillar will inspire the work done in the context of the European Semester and on the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union, in line with the Five Presidents' Report.

For more information:


Reflection paper on harnessing globalisation

Following the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe presented on 1 March, the Commission published its Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation. The reflection paper opens up a vital debate on how the EU can best harness globalisation and respond to its opportunities and challenges. On the external front, the paper focuses on the need to shape a truly sustainable global order, based on shared rules and a common agenda. On the domestic front, the paper suggests tools to protect and empower citizens through robust social policies and providing the necessary education and training support throughout their lives.

For more information: