Brussels, 19 June 2017

**Draft Main Conclusions and Action Points**

**of the 41st Meeting of the EQF Advisory Group**

**Brussels, 14-15 June 2017**

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### The EQF Referencing Process & Information

#### State of Play in the EQF Referencing Process

- COM updated the group on the state of play in the EQF referencing process (note 41-2):
  - 32 countries have now referenced to the EQF. For the meeting no presentations of referencing reports were scheduled.
  - SK postponed its presentation on outstanding issues to EQF AG meeting of 3-5 October 2017.
  - HU has sent the data to be included in the interactive table in the LOQ portal and PT will do that by the end of 2017. When these two countries are included, comparisons of national qualifications from 15 countries will be available.
- COM presented to the group the new section of note 41-2 indicating that currently 5 countries have their national databases linked to the LOQ portal.
- COM showed to the group improvements made to the LOQ portal, in particular the links to other sources of information has been improved (Cedefop, European Higher Education Area, Register of Commission Expert Groups).

#### Action Points:

- COM to revise information on the LOQ portal in view of the recently adopted EQF recommendation.
- COM to include the reports of the three pilot projects comparing EQF with the qualifications frameworks of Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong.

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### The EQF Referencing Process: Work Programme of the EQF AG

- COM and Cedefop presented note 41-3 for discussing the future implementation of the EQF Recommendation.
- A tour de table took place during which each EQF member, as an initial contribution to the discussion, was invited to indicate the main priorities it sees for the EQF AG's work. Levelling and learning outcomes, as well as communication and international qualifications emerged as the most relevant topics to be addressed. Small working groups, targeted PLAs, activities involving practitioners and other groups and country visits emerged as preferred working methods.
Action points:

- EQF AG to comment on note 41-3 on discussing the future implementation of the recently adopted EQF Recommendation by 30 June.
- COM to present a revised note in order to continue the discussion on the future work programme for the EQF AG for the EQF AG meeting of 3-5 October; the note should strengthen the focus on remaining tasks from the 2008 Recommendation and include clearer guidance for the updating of the report.
- COM to put forward a roadmap with priorities and possible PLAs for the next 2 years to be discussed at the EQF AG meeting of 3-5 October.
- COM to include VNFIL in the work programme.

Working group on horizontal comparisons of levelled qualifications:

- The chair of the HC group presented the outcome of the PLA that took place in Warsaw on 18-19 May. The importance of carrying on with horizontal comparisons was stressed and agreed in the group. Among the recommendations for further work the possibility of having two PLAs, one aimed at further developing the comparison fiche and the other at elaborating guidelines for its use was suggested.

Action points:

- COM will circulate the final HC report.
- The two suggested PLAs will be included in the PLA work programme for discussion in the AG.

Information point on the Bologna process

The Council of Europe informed about the ministerial Conference that will take place in Paris on 24-25 May 2018 where the different working groups in the context of the Bologna process will present their results.

CoE informed on the meeting with national correspondents on the QF-EHEA that will take place on 5 September in Strasburg. Among the topics on the agenda are: the impact of the new EQF recommendation on the QF-EHEA; validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education and how transversal competences such as competences for democratic citizens are reflected in the qualification frameworks at national level.

On 29-30 June both the meeting on the Global Convention on Higher Education and the expert group meeting on the World Reference Levels of Learning Outcomes in which regional QFs from around the globe participate will take place at UNESCO. The preparatory work on the Global Convention seeks to address the triangle of quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and recognition. Time planning for the adoption of the Convention is 2019.

CoE finally informed on the Passport for Refugees developed by the ENIC-NARIC centre in Norway to describe the qualifications of migrants without documentations.

Action point:

- COM will participate in the expert group meeting on the World Reference Levels
of Learning Outcomes and in the joint session addressing the Global Convention on Higher Education.

**New Skills Agenda for Europe and other relevant initiatives**

**Adoption of the revision of the EQF Recommendation:**
- On 22 May the Education, Youth Culture and Sports Council adopted the revised EQF Recommendation. The text will soon be published in all official languages in the EU's Official Journal.
- COM presented the revised EQF recommendation, addressing both elements of continuity and new elements.

**Action points**
- COM to fine-tune the PPT presentation on the EQF revision and to share it with EQF AG members for their use.

**Revision of the Europass Decision**
A Progress Report was presented to the EYCS Ministerial Meeting (22-23 May). 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 21 June. Negotiations on the Council will continue under the Estonian Presidency, the next meeting of the Education discussing Europass will take place on 4 July. The start of the Trilogue between Council, Parliament and Commission is expected to start in the autumn.

**EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals**
COM informed on the launch of the Skills Profile Tool on 20 June.

**European VET Policy**
COM informed the group on the Commission proposal for a Council recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeship.

**Actions point:**
- COM to report on the articles activated for the above mentioned Commission proposal.

**ESCO**
COM presented the general purpose ESCO as well as the latest development of the project. The different nature of the occupations and skills pillar against the qualifications pillar was put forward. Within this last pillar, the difference between direct and indirect inclusion of qualifications as well as the functioning of annotating learning outcome was explained. Several EQF AG members emphasised the risks related to direct inclusion as long as no proper quality assurance and validation mechanism is in place. The functioning of the qualifications dataset register as a technical instrument to voluntarily display qualifications in both ESCO and LOQ portal was clarified.

**Actions points:**
- COM to continue updating the group on ESCO developments.
- COM to liaise with FR that proposed to point to existing national strategies to ensure quality assurance.
- COM to address how the issue of quality assurance for international qualifications
for direct inclusion in ESCO can be tackled and to report on the outcomes of the ongoing pilots.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

- COM informed that the call for tender for the 2018 update of the European Inventory on VNFIL will soon be launched.
- COM communicated that note 41-5 on the presentation of one-off reports on validation is now considered the final version.
- As a contractor selected for the study on skills audit, ICF presented the scope and methodologies of the study that will be conducted in the following 8 months.
- COM presented possible synergies between VNFIL and Upskilling pathways (UP) asking the group to share possible ideas and describe the situation at national level. In most Member States work on the EQF and on the Upskilling Pathways initiatives takes place in different organisational settings.
- COM proposed to follow up on the issue and suggested the possibility for a joint PLA on validation and Upskilling Pathways.

Action points:
- COM to include DE for 2018 in the timetable of presentations one-off report.
- LU to possibly present its one off report at the EQF AG meeting of 3-6 October 2017, depending on updated information on national legal developments.
- COM to follow up the discussion on synergies between validation and Upskilling pathways in future EQF AG meetings.

Recognition of qualifications of third-country qualifications

An informative panel composed by DG EMPL, DG EAC and DG HOME took place on existing acquis and initiatives at EU level on the assessment of skills and recognition of qualifications for third-country nationals. A presentation on empirical evidence on the importance of recognition of qualifications for labour market integration of migrants was followed by presentations focused on the Blue Card Directive, the Skills Profile Tool and the ENIC-NARIC Toolkit.

Peer Learning Activities

- COM presented note 41-4 on the PLAs work-plan for 2017-2018 in the context of the EQF AG.
- In the note a new section with conclusions from PLAs that took already place has been included. Moreover, the publication of the PLA final report on the LOQ portal has been added in the table of the distribution of tasks.
- Invitations for the PLA on the role of non-governmental stakeholders in implementing VNFIL have been sent out and registrations will close on 10 September. European social partner organisations and civil society organisations participating in the EQF AG have the possibility to nominate two representatives.
- The PLA hosted by Cedefop in collaboration with IE on assessing the impact of NQFs will take place on Thessaloniki on 9-10 November.
- AT expressed its willingness to change the topic of the PLA from EQF & credit systems to a topic seen as more relevant in the context of the future work
programme of the EQF AG.

- SK proposed to have the PLA on Assessed & intended learning outcomes in April 2018.
- IE suggested to have a PLA work plan linked to the EQF AG work programme, including the topic of international qualifications.
- COM emphasised that the PLA programme will be subject to permanent discussion with adjustments according to the needs of the EQF AG's work.

**Action points:**

- COM to include in the proposed PLA plan the themes emerged during the meeting as well as possible other themes linked to the work programme of the EQF AG. The proposals will then be discussed during the EQF AG of 3-5 October 2017.
- BE to present at the EQF AG of October 2017 the programme of the PLA on "Funding validation" that will take place in December 2017.
- COM and Cedefop to circulate before the EQF AG meeting of October 2017 the programme of the PLA on "Impacts of NQFs" that will take place in November 2017.
- AG members to express interest to host the PLAs proposed by COM on "Skills audit", "Quality assurance of validation" and "Communication and databases".
- COM to consider including information on PLAs in the revised version of the note on future implementation of the EQF.

The information further to the actions points should be sent to zelda.azzara@ec.europa.eu and koen.nomden@ec.europa.eu.

**Planned EQF AG Meetings in 2017:**

- October 3-5
- December 11-13