Brussels, 27 September 2017

EQF Advisory Group, 4-5 October 2017, Brussels

Note AG 42-1

Note on relevant developments

Follow-up to the 41st meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, 14-15 June 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 42-2).

The New Skills Agenda for Europe

Revision of the Europass Decision
The Parliament (under the joint responsibility of both the EMPL and CULT Committees) adopted a report on the Europass proposal on 28 June 2017. The Parliament report can be found here. On the Council side, on 27 September COREPER reached agreement to start the Trilogue between the European parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Trilogue discussions will start on 10 October.

EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals
The EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals, announced in the New Skills Agenda for Europe in 2016, aims to facilitate the integration of third country nationals (such as asylum seekers, refugees or migrants) in the labour market by supporting the identification and documentation of their skills and work experience. It is an online web form to be filled in by an advisor, or a social worker, in the appropriate service of the receiving country (e.g. PES, Refugee Reception Centre, education/training authority or an NGO) in dialogue with the third country national. The Tool is available in all EU and 7 non-EU languages (Turkish, Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Sorani, Somali, and Tigrinya). The questions and answers can be displayed on screen in two languages simultaneously (e.g. in Arabic, the language of the third country national, and in German, the language of the advisor), helping to overcome the possible communication barrier. Having mapped the skills and experience, the advisor gives recommendations as to further steps the third country national should take (e.g. language training, recognition of diplomas, validation of skills, employment support measures, etc.).

All the interested organisations at national, regional or local level can use the Tool free of charge. They can use the Tool directly online or integrate it into their own systems.

You can find the tool here.
The Tool was introduced to key stakeholders in June 2017 and is now being fine-tuned in line with the feedback received. There will be a new release in October.

**Review of the 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 public consultation undertaken as part of the review concluded on 19 May 2017 and the results of the consultation are published here. The Commission is now considering the outcomes of the consultation.

**Proposal for a Council Recommendation on tracking graduates and Council Conclusions on the renewed EU agenda on higher education**

A proposal for a Council Recommendation on tracking graduate, was adopted on 30 May 2017 as part of the new 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.

Currently the proposal is under discussion in the Education Committee, and should be adopted by the Council on 20 November 2017.

On graduate tracking, an open call for tender has been published to carry out a pilot European graduate survey. The overall objective of the pilot is to develop, test and evaluate common methods of data collection, data handling and data dissemination for a European longitudinal study of tertiary education graduate outcomes in a small number of countries. Should this pilot phase prove successful, the Commission will consult Member States about whether to proceed to a full roll-out of a European graduate survey. The funds earmarked for this one-off pilot amount to 800,000 EUR from the Erasmus+ 2017 budget. The survey will be developed and implemented in consultation with an Advisory Board made up of a limited number of representatives of Member States. The role of the Advisory Board will be to oversee the study and act as a point of contact between the contractor, Commission and countries participating in the pilot. The tender for the pilot European graduate survey is published here with a deadline of 22 September 2017: [https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=2644](https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=2644)

**Knowledge Hub for Higher Education**

DG EAC and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) will collaborate to establish and develop the 'Knowledge Hub for Higher Education'. The Knowledge Hub aims to ensure optimal synergies between knowledge tools (such as the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER), U-Multirank (UMR) - a global, multidimensional ranking of higher education institutions and a Pilot Graduate Tracking Survey (PGTS)) and other higher education research projects piloted by
DG EAC. DG EAC will be responsible for the Commission's overall policy frameworks for higher education and will provide strategic direction to the work undertaken within the Knowledge Hub and identify and facilitate interactions with relevant stakeholder groups. The JRC will build on its own research and on the synthesis of the work done by external organisations in Europe and around the world. Research and analyses activities are intended to generate evidence to support policies in the field of higher education. In a first instance, three research themes are planned: 1) characteristics of higher education institutions/systems in Europe that affect the labour market outcomes of graduates, 2) factors that influence the potential of European higher education institutions to contribute to innovation and regional development and 3) factors/practices that have proven successful in increasing the access, participation and completion rates of under-represented and disadvantaged groups in higher education.

Pilot Graduate Tracking Survey (PGTS) and other higher education research projects piloted by DG EAC.

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Erasmus+ call for NARICs

The invitation to submit an application for National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) co-funding proposals 2018-2020 will be released by the Commission in September. The objective of the Invitation is to support the NARIC designated bodies to promote cooperation and mobility in the field of education and employment, especially by striving for better recognition of diplomas and study periods. The overall available budget is EUR 1.200.000 coming from the Erasmus+ programme and the projects will start in February/March 2018

Copenhagen process/European VET policy

The Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships is in the procedural pipeline for adoption by the Commission.

More than 150 activities at national and local level have registered so far the label of second European Vocational Skills Week (20-24 November 2017, cf. note AG40.1)
The next Erasmus+ general call (October 2017) will include the new activity ErasmusPro, which will support work placements abroad lasting at least three months (up to 12). A share of the budget (about 80 million euro in 2018) will be assigned in priority to projects within this activity. Resources not used because of limited good quality demand will be automatically available to short duration VET mobility projects.

Mid October an Erasmus+ call under Key Action 3 – support for national policy reform – will be published on 'Joint Qualifications in VET'. Projects supported through the call, which has a budget of € 6 million, will aim at preparing, setting up or improving joint VET qualifications including at higher level and joint programmes leading to them, which should envisage a strong work-based learning dimension and a mobility component. Partnerships will include at least three partners – of which at least one VET provider (at upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary or tertiary level); and one enterprise or a chamber of industry, trade and crafts or a sectoral/professional organisation – from at least two Erasmus+ programme countries. The call will be presented through a virtual info-day Webinar on 24 October 2017 and at the European VET conference plenary on 22 November 2017, and will be open until the end of January.

The ECVET Forum 2017 will take place in Malta on 19-20 October. Bringing forward the reflection started in a working group on principles for flexible learning pathways, the 150 participants of the Forum will discuss how ECVET principles and its practical implementation can support national and European action to facilitate more flexibility in opportunities for skills development.

The EQAVET Forum 2017 will take place in Lille (France) on 21 November 2017 within the context of the 2nd Vocational Skills Week. It will focus on the quality assurance of CVET, with particular emphasis to the continuing professional development (CPD) of CVET teachers and trainers.

**Cedefop's study Comparing Vocational Education and Training Qualifications: towards a European Comparative Methodology**

Cedefop has launched a study Comparing Vocational Education and Training Qualifications: towards a European Comparative Methodology. The purpose of the study is to facilitate the development of methodologies for comparison of national VET qualifications. Building on previous work (Cedefop 2017), the purpose is to scale up and strengthen the comparative methodologies so as to promote mutual learning between countries and facilitate strengthening of relevance and quality of VET qualifications at national level.

**Bologna Process**

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

The final report and its annex to the study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level were published on June 2017. The results of the study are channelled into 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. To insert: link DS-Europass.

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

The Commission has launched a tender for services on the 2018 Update of the European Inventory of validation of informal and non-formal learning. Evaluation of the proposals received will take place beginning of October 2017 to have a contract signed by the end of October 2017. Duration of contract is 18 months.

Work on a database to connect country reports and country fiches for the 2016 inventory will be slightly delayed. A first draft of the database should be available in 2018. Efforts will be made to assure a faster transition to public availability of the data in the next Inventory.

The study on mapping Skills audits in and across EU Member States has finalised the interim phase. A final inception report was approved during the summer and data collection has started. The study will be finalised in January 2018 and a presentation to the EQF-AG is foreseen.

A service contract was launched by Cedefop for a study of 20 months looking into the synergies of validation and guidance. The study will investigate the necessary conditions, synergies and efficiency gains of linking validation and career guidance and counselling services. Evaluation of tender will be carried out during October. Signature of the contract will take place before the end of the year.

**ESCO**

The Commission launched on 28th July last the first full version of the European classification of Skills, Competences, Occupations and Qualifications (ESCO v1). The classification is available in 26 languages (the 24 EU official languages, Icelandic and Norwegian) free of charge through the [ESCO service platform](http://www.esco-conference2017.eu/). It covers 2942 occupations and 13485 knowledge, skills and competences.

The Commission is hosting the conference "ESCO: connecting people and jobs" on 9 and 10 of October 2017 at the Square meeting centre in Brussels. The members of the EQF AG have received an invitation to participate. During the first day, a series of workshops and showcases will demonstrate the functionalities and uses of ESCO. The second day will be dedicated to explore how ESCO fits within the wider landscape of European policies for employment and education, in particular the New Skills Agenda for Europe. Policy makers, business leaders, social partners and academics will share their perspectives. The programme is available via the following link: [http://www.esco-conference2017.eu/](http://www.esco-conference2017.eu/). The conference will also be web streamed.

Updates on the qualification pillar are given in a separate note (Cf. note 42-6).
President Jean-Claude Juncker's State of the Union Address 2017

On 13 September the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his 2017 State of the Union Address, before the Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, presenting his priorities for the year ahead and outlining his vision for how the European Union could evolve by 2025 (see full speech). He presented a Roadmap for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union (see Roadmap Factsheet).

President Juncker's speech in the European Parliament was accompanied by the adoption of concrete initiatives by the European Commission on trade, investment screening, cybersecurity, industry, data and democracy. The creation of an European Labour Authority was announced. A series of published factsheets expand on some of the key elements touched upon in the President's speech.

For more information consult the State of the Union 2017 web page.