Minutes of the expert groups

Brussels, 6 June 2017

Minutes of the 40th meeting of the EQF Advisory Group
29-30 March 2017, Brussels (BE)

1) APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The agenda was accepted. Further to the inclusion of the amendments proposed by EQF AG members, the minutes and the main conclusions and action points from the 39th meeting were accepted.

COM informed that documents related to the EQF AG meeting would be updated on Sinapse.

2) NATURE OF THE MEETING

The meetings of the EQF AG are restricted to EQF AG members. The EQF AG is composed of representatives from the 39 countries that currently participate and have committed to the EQF process. In addition, representatives of education, labour market, youth and civil society stakeholders at European level are part of the group. COM opens and chairs the meeting, and the Council of Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Training Foundation (ETF) take part in the meeting to support COM and the members of the EQF Advisory Group.

In total 64 persons participated in the EQF Advisory Group meeting of 29-30 March 2017.
3) LIST OF POINTS DISCUSSED

1. RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

1.1 Information on the latest developments as a follow-up to the last meeting (8-9 February 2017) (cf. Note AG40-1)

COM presented note AG40-1 on relevant developments in the European cooperation on education, training and employment. COM briefly presented the headlines of the note, including ‘The new skills agenda for Europe, European inventory of NQFs, VNFIL, Copenhagen Process, ESCO, ET 2020 and The white paper on the future of Europe’.

Concerning ESCO, the note mentioned that a webinar would be organised on 30 March 2017 to inform and discuss with the Member States working group on ESCO the results of the Occupations Consultation and the follow up. Because the selected date overlaps with the EQF AG meeting, the webinar was postponed and the new date will be communicated.

Comments (BE (FL))

The participants requested information on Europass mobility in the new proposal for the Europass Decision. COM explained that information will be given when discussing the agenda item on the status of the Council negotiations for the revision of both the EQF Recommendation and the Europass Decision.

1.2. Information on the Bologna Process

The Council of Europe (CoE) informed about the latest development in the Bologna Process. The reports from the different working groups are in the finalisation phases. They should be ready for publication by the end of 2017.

CoE also informed about the work on the Diploma Supplement revision. An advisory group meeting was held in Brussels on 27 March 2017 focusing on the revision of the diploma supplements’ template and the guidelines. The work on revising the template and guidelines is almost finished. A final report on the work will be discussed at a meeting in Tirana in September. The revision of the diploma supplement will not come into force before 2019 also because the tool needs to be discussed with the 3 owners: Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO.

Furthermore, CoE informed the participants about the on-going work on digital competences and digital literacy.

Finally, CoE informed the participants about an on-going project in Norway focusing on how to assess and recognise refugees’ skills and qualifications at a very early stage, namely when refugees arrive in the first refugee camp. The outcome of the assessment is a passport called the ‘European Qualification Passport for Refugees’, which is a document providing an assessment of their higher education qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview.
Later this year, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee will adopt a text concerning recognition of the qualifications for refugees and people in a refugee-like situation, where documentation of qualifications and access to the rewarding institutions are limited. The purpose of this text is to limit the barriers for recognition.

Comments (Cedefop, ETF, ETUC, FI, FR, TR)

Several participants informed the meeting about additional initiatives on how to validate and recognise refugees’ qualifications. In this connection, questions were raised if initiatives at EU level are being coordinated and harmonised. Furthermore, some participants expressed concern that validation and recognition of qualifications is not only about further education, but also about employability. On this point, participants drew attention on the possible added value of the outcome of the PLA on validation and refugees, organised in Haag in 2016.

Finally, questions were raised about the link between the right to asylum and recognition of qualifications.

Answers and conclusions

Concerning the coordination and harmonisation of the various initiatives concerning assessment, validation and recognition of qualifications, CoE is considering re-inviting a coordination working group to get an overview of all the current initiatives. Finally, COM suggested inviting representatives from DG HOME for the June meeting of the EQF AG to give an overview of the existing acquis and initiatives at EU level on the assessment of skills and recognition of qualifications for third-country nationals.

1.3. Information from the Presidency

The Maltese Presidency briefly informed the meeting about some of the planned events. In April, an international conference will be launched on raising the achievement for all learners. Later in April, the Presidency will host a meeting of director generals for schools. A meeting for the Bologna Follow-up Group is scheduled for 24 May 2017, and a meeting for director generals for VET will be hosted on 29 May 2017.

2. NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE

2.1. Updates on the revision of the Europass Decision and the EQF Recommendation

COM updated the EQF AG on the status of Council negotiations with regard to the revision of the EQF recommendation and the revision of the Europass decision.

EQF Recommendation

Meetings are planned on 6, 19 and 25 April, which should lead to adoption at the 22 May Ministerial Meeting. The recommendations targets the Member States (MS) and include review and update of the referencing of NQFs to the EQF, recommendations and annexes on quality assurance principles and on promotion of links with credit system.

Europass decision
The Europass decision proposal is still under discussion in the Council, and the European Parliament has started its work on the proposal in the CULT and EMPL committees. The Presidency plans the presentation of a progress report on the negotiations to the 22 May ministerial meeting and the European Parliament’s report by the CULT and EMPL committees is expected late June 2017. Negotiations will then continue under the EE Presidency and if things go well, a Trilogue between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission may still start in autumn 2017.

Comments (BE, DE, FR, LU)

DE asked clarification on Annex V on credit system and some participants requested more information on Euroguidance. Participants asked about the relationship of Annex VI on the elements for data fields for the electronic publication of information on qualifications and the format for the description of the learning outcome presented by Cedefop.

Answers and conclusions

Concerning Annex V in the EQF Recommendation, COM explained that the principles are high-level principles and the aim of the annex is to provide clarity on the use of credit systems in relation to NQFs related to the EQF. On Euroguidance, the reason why this cannot be found in the text is that in the COM’s view it is up to MS to organise themselves in the most optimal way.

COM explained that Annex VI contains the description of the qualification as an obligatory field in which MS may decide to describe the learning outcome of qualifications taking into account the format proposed by Cedefop.

2.2. Presentation on the review of the Key Competence Framework for Lifelong learning

COM (DG EAC), updated the EQF AG on the on-going review of the European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. The recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council describes eight key competences to be acquired by young people at the end of compulsory education and training. Moreover, these eight key competences should be developed and updated throughout life. COM is working on updating the the descriptions of the eight key competences as well as the national implementation of the framework.

As part of the review, COM has launched a public consultation from 22 February – 19 May 2017. Furthermore, a series of expert meetings and consultations will be conducted and a conference is scheduled for 7 June 2017. The aim of the review process is to provide an up-to-date reference tool for policy makers, education and training providers and support implementation through dissemination of good practice and detailed tools.

COM plans to have a revised proposal for a new key competence framework ready in the autumn of 2017.
Comments (AT, BE (FL), Council of Europe, Cedefop, FI)

The participants acknowledged the close link between the key competence framework and the work of the EQF group in articulation with the learning outcome approach. It is important that the review also focuses on the purpose of continuation.

Further information was requested on the composition of the various expert groups that are consulted during the review process. The participants also emphasised that if new tools are developed as an outcome of a renewed key competence framework, it is very important not to create an overlap between existing tools and be clear as to how these new tools are interlinked with existing tools. If the new tools target employers, the participants advised that employers’ organisations be consulted as part of the development process.

Concerning the re-definition or further development of the eight key competences, some participants argued that there needs to be a user-friendly perspective. Participants suggested keeping the revised key competence framework simple to make it easy to understand for politicians and keep detailed assessment tools separate. In this regards the EntreComp was mentioned.

Finally, the participants requested more information about the eight levels of the DigComp and the eight levels of the EQF.

Answers and conclusions

COM clarified that the eight levels of DigComp are not comparable with the eight levels of the EQF. DigComp is based on the key competence framework from 2006 and the self-assessment tool has been developed on the request of MS. The end-users of the tool are individuals. It further explained that The EntreComp Framework was launched in summer 2016 following two years of research and consultation with experts and stakeholders. EntreComp seeks to support shared understanding of sense of initiative and entrepreneurship competence. There has already been positive uptake of the framework by a range of users. COM stressed that consistency of the tools is a high priority and acknowledged that there needs to be a balance between drafting a generic framework and a more detailed framework for national implementation.

Turning to the review process, COM (DG EAC) explained that the experts consulted during the process represented various stakeholders and some academic experts. Furthermore, COM has received valuable inputs from citizens and invited the EQG AG members to participate in the public consultation.

3. REFERENCING

3.1. Overview of national developments related to the implementation of the EQF (cf. Note AG40-2)

COM presented Note 40-2 providing information on status of the 39 countries that participate in the implementation of the EQF. In total, 31 countries have referenced to the EQF (BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, KY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE). COM gave updates on the current situation.
A new table has been added to Note 40-2 providing an overview of the EQF implementation on just one page. COM pointed out some inconsistencies in the information provided by MS and urged countries to correct their information and send the missing information. COM informed that a section on where countries stand on linking their national databases to the LOQ portal will from the next EQF AG meeting onwards also be included in Note AG 41-2 on national developments related to the implementation of the EQF.

Comments and answers (BE, ES, FR, IS, NL)

Participants welcomed the new table synthesising information provided by countries. With regard to the interactive comparison table in the LOQ portal, some participants pointed out that information was not provided because of some stringent requirements. Furthermore, the participants requested more information about the EQF logo as this is closely linked to entering EQF levels in database or registers.

IS informed the meeting that the Icelandic update will be postponed until the October meeting. ES is working on its referencing to the EQF, explaining that an NQF in line with the EQF is already in place with regard to post-level 5.

Conclusion

COM will look into the requirements to be fulfilled in order to include a country in the interactive comparison table in the portal.

3.2 Presentation and discussion on the role of the Handbook on Learning Outcomes (cf. Note AG40-3)

Cedefop presented the Handbook on Learning Outcomes. Following the comments from the EQF AG members, the handbook is ready for publishing. The last chapter of the handbook outlines the main principles and the technical structure of a common format for presenting learning outcomes. Cedefop briefly presented the basic structure of this format.

The added value of such a common format is that it allows the end-users to better understand and compare the content and profiles of a qualification. Furthermore, it allows for a systematic exchange of information on the learning outcomes of specific qualifications throughout Europe. International qualifications can also use this format. Finally, the common format further promotes the shift to learning outcomes to support transparency of qualifications. Cedefop stressed that the purpose of the common format is not harmonisation of qualifications.

The EQF AG was invited to comment on the relevance of the proposed common format, in particular regarding the basic purposes of the common format, the underlying principles of the common format, and the suggested structure of the common format.

Comments (BE (FL), DE, FR, LU, NO)

The participants requested more clarity on the purpose of the common format. Some participants expressed concern about the administrative burden if the common format is applied to all qualifications with a Europass supplement.
Some participants stressed that the common format is not applicable for qualifications in the national databases, as these descriptions have been negotiated with stakeholders. Concern was also raised on giving EQF levels to learning outcomes. However, for the descriptions used for certificate supplements, this common format could be useful.

BE (FL) requested to correct in Note AG40-3 that the "relationship to occupation" is not a obligatory field but an optional field.

Answers and conclusion

COM emphasized that the purpose of the common format for learning outcomes is to enhance the transparency of the exchange of information at a European level. It will not replace the descriptions at national level. The purpose is to improve the quality of the certificate supplements.

Cedefop acknowledged that, nevertheless, there is an issue about administrative burden. This is the reason why this common format has been presented to the EQF AG.

COM announced that it will corrected footnote 2 of Note AG40-3, with regard to the optional nature of the link between qualification and occupation.

3.3. Referencing report of Turkey

TR presented its referencing report to the EQF AG. The development of the Turkish Qualification Framework (TQF) was initiated in 2010 and since 2016, the referencing process has taken on speed.

In Turkey, the education system and qualifications are planned and operated by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA). A large number of public, private and non-governmental stakeholders are also involved. In the education system, there are three different learning paths, namely formal education, non-formal and informal learning. The country has a strong tradition for non-formal and informal learning. VET qualifications are based on learning outcomes and are based on modules.

The TQF is based on eight levels. The understanding of ‘competence’ is broader in TR. Level descriptors define minimum common learning outcomes, and are the mechanism for identifying the relevant level of the qualifications types.

Comments (BE (FL), Cedefop, Council of Europe, ETUC, FR, HR, IE)

The participants congratulated TR with a concise, well-structured report and a comprehensive presentation. Most questions related to criterion 4 on the inclusion of qualifications and criterion 5 quality assurance. Some participants requested more information on the involvement of different stakeholder in the process so far and in the future. More information on was requested on the national credit system for VET and whether this system is compatible with ECVET, as well as on the 6-year bachelor degree, and its comparability with EQF level 7. Finally some participants recommended clarity to be provided on the working groups that have been involved in the process.
Some participants expressed concern about the current political situation in TR and how this affects democratic citizenship and academic freedom, which should be basic principles in the educational system. Especially, there could be concern in relation to the independence of the QA agency.

**Answers**

TR acknowledged that there are no qualifications in the TQF yet. However, the perception of TR was that by explaining the intention of how the qualifications will be included in the TQF would be sufficient to meet Criterion 4 and that the inclusion procedures are clear. Furthermore, TR assured the participants that the national quality assurance system is consistent with European principles and guidelines. TR confirmed that the national credit system for VET is compatible with the ECVET. The 6-year bachelor degree is placed on level 6, but gives the right to enter into a Ph.D qualification.

TR assured the EQF AG, that stakeholders have been involved in the process all the way. They have been involved in drafting the TQF regulation and in the preparation of the TQF development. Stakeholders have also been involved in a capacity building process to keep their involvement during the implementation process. One of the international experts involved in the process confirmed the broad and strong involvement of stakeholders during the process of drafting the referencing report.

Finally, TR acknowledged the comments on academic freedom and that it is an important issue to discuss – also in this forum. TR expressed hope that things will normalise over time.

**Conclusions**

COM congratulated TR for its clear report. Together with the satisfactory explanations given during the presentation, the TR referencing report shows sufficient clarity and TR is therefore considered to have referenced to the EQF. Before uploading the report, some points need to be refined and further clarified according to the explanations given during the meeting. Cedefop will provide Turkey with a finalised set of comments including advice on how to adapt the report before publication. TR is also invited to provide in one-year time an update for the EQF AG to share experiences on how the procedures to include qualifications work in practice.

**3.4 Updates on the final version of the horizontal comparison report; presentation of the comparison fiche and presentation of the PLA programme**

The chair of the Horizontal Comparison Group (HC) summarised the progress made since the HC team meeting in Warsaw in January 2017 and the EQF AG meeting of February. The work has included editorial work on the report structure and language and data on SE, NO and Scotland have been corrected and included. The fiche has also been accepted.

The agenda for the upcoming work includes a continuation of the editorial work and planning of the PLA on the horizontal comparison in Warsaw on 18-19 May 2017. The plan is to submit the final report of the HC to the EQF AG after the PLA in Warsaw. In this way, comments and inputs from the PLA can be taken into account.
The chair of the HC continued by presenting the preliminary agenda of the upcoming PLA. The main purpose of this PLA is dissemination of the results of the HC pilot project and testing the tools for comparison will be workshop-based, focussing on the hotel receptionist qualification. The PLA participants are expected to arrive well prepared at the PLA.

4. VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

4.1 Continuation of the discussion on the approach to take by the EQF AG in discussing the national one-off reports on validation (cf. Note AG 40-5)

COM presented Note AG 40-5 on the approach to be taken by the EQF AG when discussing the national one-off reports on validation. Main changes in the revised note compared to note AG 39-3 are a broadening of the aims of the exercise and its voluntary nature. COM emphasised that the process is one of peer learning and not peer review. Countries are asked to send their one-off reports one month before presentation.

Comments (AT, BE (FL) DE, FR, HU, IE, LU, NO, PT)

Overall, the revised note was welcomed and the indicative structure accepted, while stressing that MS are at very different stages of implementation. The participants requested more information about the peer learning process e.g. on the amount of time scheduled for each report. Finally, the participants requested more information on the link to upskilling pathways and whether there is a plan to combine this with VNFIL as there is a considerable overlap.

Answers

COM assured it is fully aware that there are national reasons for different approaches and that the provided structure's purpose is to present guidance. Presenting the report is a voluntary exercise and each MS is free to choose its preferred structure. COM suggested scheduling two hours in total for presentation and discussion, including approx. 45 min. for the presentation.

Concerning the upskilling pathways, this has not been taken into account explicitly in the note, and it is governed through the Advisory Committee on VET.

Conclusions

The note will be revised and circulated to the EQF AG. An indicative timetable will be included in the revised note based on the following indications from participants on when they plan to present the one-off report:

- LU: October 2017
- PT: First meeting of 2018
- NO: June 2018
- AT: Mid- or end-2018
- DE: July or October 2018
- FR: October 2018
- CY: December 2018
Finally, COM announced that an event on validation is planned for 2018. It could be a Commission event or an event hosted by a MS, e.g., the upcoming Presidency.

5. DISCUSSION ON THE DEFINITIONS OF INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SECTORAL QUALIFICATIONS IN ANNEX 1 OF THE PROPOSAL FOR A REVISION OF THE EQF RECOMMENDATION

COM briefly introduced the discussion on the definitions of international qualifications (IQ) and international sectoral qualifications (ISQ) in Annex 1 of the proposal for a revision of the EQF Recommendation and informed the EQF AG about the most recent discussions in the Education Committee. The Education Committee of 15 March agreed that the EQF Advisory group should discuss the definition(s) on international qualifications. The need for such definition resulted from the inclusion of a recommendation to the Commission, in cooperation with Member States and Stakeholders, in the context of the EQF Advisory Group, clarifying the position of international qualifications in the EQF context. The wording of this recommendation is (Presidency text of 29 March): "Support, on a voluntary basis, the setting up of procedures for information exchange and consultation between Member States on the levelling of international and international sectoral qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems to ensure consistency".

The two definitions relating to international qualifications, in the Presidency text of 29 March:

- *international qualification* means a qualification awarded by an international body (or a national body accredited by an international body) and used in more than one country, which includes learning outcomes based on standards developed by an international body

- *international sectoral qualification* means an international qualification relevant to a sector of economic activity developed by an international sectoral organisation or an international company

With this background information, the EQF AG was asked for opinion on 1) the need to have two separate definitions (one on international qualifications and another one on international sectoral qualifications); 2) the wording of the definition(s)

Comments (AT, BE (FL), Council of Europe, DE, ETF, FR, HU, IE, LU, NO, PT, NL, FI)

The results of the discussion can be summarised as follows:

1. One or two definitions:

There was consensus on the fact that only one definition is needed on international qualifications, that shall be broad enough to cover different types of international qualifications.

2. Wording of the definition:
There was consensus on the fact that the definition should use the term qualification (rather than certificate, diploma or degree), include learning outcomes based on standards and be general enough to have a large coverage.

There was no consensus whether to refer to "economic sectors", or "sectors of economic activity" in the definition.

The majority of the EQF AG members spoke out against inserting the term “competent body” in the definition, as this could lead to different interpretations between countries because the international meaning of "competent body" is not clear and difficult to define.

The idea of limiting the definition to international bodies within the EU was rejected.

Several AG members supported the suggestion made to take the definition of the Presidency text of 7 March as inspiration:

- "international qualification means a certificate, diploma, degree or title awarded by an international body (or a national body accredited by an international body) and used in more than one country, which includes learning outcomes based on standards developed by an international body, organisation or company".

Conclusions

Further to the discussion, COM will adapt the definition to adapt the definition of the 7 March text. The minutes summarising the discussion in the EQF AG and the definition on international qualifications to be sent to the Maltese Presidency will circulate. Members of the EQF AG will have the possibility to make observations on the minutes and on the proposed definition. Members not present in the discussion will have the opportunity to transmit their expert opinions and observations on the definition.


COM presented Note 40-4 on the PLA work plan for 2017-2018 in the context of EQF AG. The proposed topics and the division of tasks among the COM, hosting country and EQF AG in connection with organising a PLA were outlined.

In the context of the EQF, PL had previously presented the provisional programme for the PLA on Horizontal Comparisons that will take place on 18-19 May in Warsaw. A PLA on NQF reviews is planned for the end of 2017, and Cedefop has accepted to host it in Thessaloniki. A first draft of the agenda will be prepared for the next EQF AG meeting of June.
AT presented the relationship between EQF and credit systems as a theme for a PLA that could be hosted in Vienna in 2018. AT stressed that the suggested PLA on synergies between EQF and credit systems is independent from the on-going discussion of the recommendation. More information on the PLA will be provided at the EQF AG meeting in June.

A PLA on assessed and intended learning outcomes is tentatively planned for the beginning of 2018 in Bratislava. Finally, COM mentioned that a PLA on communication and databases is still on the agenda and invited interested AG members to host it. In this regard, COM informed the meeting that the Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA) in cooperation with DG EMPL plans to organize a coordination meeting on national databases projects that will involve EQF and EUROGUIDANCE National Coordination Points.

In the context of VNFIL, BE will host the PLA on funding validation that is planned for December 2017.

LLP presented the draft programme for the PLA on the role of social partners in implementing VNFIL scheduled for 21-22 September in Lisbon. The agenda is still open for countries or stakeholders that would like to make presentations. Invitations for this PLA will be sent out in June.

COM has proposed themes concerning skills audits and QA of validation and are still open for hosting. These themes will be addressed later in this year.

Conclusions

COM noted that there is a general agreement on the suggested PLA programme. Its implementation will be on the agenda of the next EQF meeting.

7. BRAINSTORMING ON THE EQF CONFERENCE

COM invited the EQF AG members to participate in a brainstorm on the up-coming EQF conference. The brainstorm addressed three questions:

1. What should be the purpose of the conference?
2. What should be the thematic focus?
3. Who should be the target groups?

What should be the purpose of the conference?

Participants proposed to focus on how the context has evolved, how the ability to work together in the cultural diversity has improved and how EQF support or contribute to broader socio-economic policies. The main purpose could be to formulate a mandate for the next 10 years and to show the advantages of the EQF, especially for end-users. The participants argued that the conference should be interactive and include colleagues from other departments and representatives for young people. Some participants also argued that it should not be a political event, but rather have a practical focus.

What should be the thematic focus? Or should there be a thematic focus?
The participants proposed several thematic suggestions. The issue of learning outcomes and the pedagogical shift that learning outcomes have caused, including from the academic community's perspective, was proposed.

Some participants suggested not to get too technical and to keep the thematic focus on the work done in these years. Showing the added value of the EQF would be a way to communicate to the rest of the world on the tool itself.

Mobility was suggested as a thematic theme. A concrete suggestions was to include testimonials from end-users on how the EQF has helped increasing mobility.

What should be the target group?

COM anticipates that approx. 250-300 people will attend the conference. Some participants argued that the target group should be end-users but also journalists to increase the knowledge on the EQF. However, journalists will only attend if high-level politicians are present as well such as the Commissioner. Consequently, the target group should be a mix of practitioners and politicians.

Some participant argued that a very narrow focus on the end-users is not very productive for the further work of this group. Nevertheless, bringing in testimonials is a good idea.

Conclusions

COM thanked all the participants for their initial inputs and BE that had provided written inputs. The discussions will continue. NCPs may be invited to a webinar to share their viewpoints. This will be announced.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/OPINIONS

The EQF referencing process

Referencing reports:

- TR presented its referencing report at the meeting. EQF AG endorsed the Turkish referencing report. TR is invited to adapt and finalise its report according to the comments received prior to and during the meeting.

Referencing process: information & working method

- COM presented a new table on where countries stand with regard to:
  - presentation of their referencing reports and updates;
  - publication of their reports on the LOQ portal;
  - communication to the COM of information to fill in the interactive comparison table on the LOQ portal;
  - inclusion of EQF levels on certificates, diplomas or supplements;
  - EQF levels on national registers.

The new table aims at giving a quick overview of where we are in the EQF implementation. It has been included in Note 40-2 on the overview of national developments in the implementation of EQF.
COM pointed out some inconsistencies in the information provided by members of the EQF AG.

COM showed which countries have linked their databases to the LOQ portal.

COM informed the meeting that documents related to the EQF AG meeting will be uploaded on Sinapse.

**Handbook on Learning Outcomes**

- Cedefop presented Note 40-3 on a Common European format for presenting LO as a follow-up to the final draft of the Handbook on Learning Outcomes.
- AG members asked for clarifications of the purpose and use of the format.

**Working group on horizontal comparisons of levelled qualifications**

- The chair of the HC group proposed submitting to the EQF AG the final report after the PLA on horizontal comparison that will be held on 18-19 May in Warsaw (PL). In this way interesting inputs resulting from testing the fiche during the PLA can be taken into account in the final report.

**Information point on the Bologna process**

Among the recent developments in the Bologna process, CoE brought the EQF AG members to the attention of the work done for the recognition of qualifications and the assessment of skills of refugees who travel without formal documentation of their skills.

**Revision EQF Recommendation and Europass Decision**

In January 2017, the Maltese Presidency took 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 and 1, 15 and 20 March 2017. The Maltese Presidency will prepare new texts that will be discussed on 6 of April. Further meetings are planned for 19 and 25 April 2017. Overall, the discussion on the EQF proposal is advancing well, and the adoption of the EQF Recommendation is foreseen for the 22 May Ministerial Meeting. As regards 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. Adoption by the European Parliament and the Council is expected late 2017 or early 2018.

**Discussion on definition on international qualifications and international sectoral qualifications**

The Education Committee of 15 March agreed that the EQF advisory group should discuss the definition(s) on international qualifications. The need for such a definition resulted from the inclusion of a recommendation on international qualifications in the Presidency text. The discussion took place in the EQF AG on 29-30 March 2017.
Revision of the Key Competence Framework

DG EAC gave a presentation on the review of the Key Competence Framework (KCF). AG members noted the importance of the KCF when developing NQFs, especially with regard to the description of learning outcomes. AG members pointed out that a revision of the KCF risks creating confusion among citizens and politicians. The importance of coordination among existing tools to avoid overlaps was also noted.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

- COM presented the revised Note 40-5 on the approach to be taken by EQF AG in discussing the national one-off reports on validation. The note, prepared in cooperation with Cedefop, took on board the comments received at the EQF AG meeting on 8-9 February.
- The majority of the AG members favoured keeping a structure for presenting the report in the Note.
- COM informed the meeting that it is currently preparing the specifications for the 2018 Update of the European Inventory on VNFIL.

Peer Learning Activities

In the context of EQF

- COM presented Note 40-4 on the PLAs work-plan for 2017-2018 in the context of the EQF AG.
- The chair of the HC group presented the draft agenda of the PLA that will take place on 18-19 May 2017 in Warsaw (PL). Further to a discussion in EQF AG, the qualification selected for comparison in all workshops will be that of ‘Hotel Receptionist’ (or the closest qualification in the national context). Preparatory work for taking part in the workshops of the PLA is required.
- Cedefop confirmed its willingness to host the PLA proposed by IE on Impacts of NQFs at the national level that will probably take place in November/December 2017.
- The PLA on EQF and credit systems in Vienna (AT) was endorsed by EQF AG and will take place in mid-2018.
- In order to receive possible feedback, COM informed the participants about the Coordination Meeting on National Databases Projects foreseen for June 2017, organized by EACEA in collaboration with DG EMPL.
- PLA on intended and assessed LO hosted by SK should take place in 2018.

In the context of VNFIL:

- EQF AG endorsed the draft agenda presented at the PLA on the role of non-governmental stakeholders in developing and implementing processes for the validation of non-formal and informal learning that will take place in Lisbon on 21-22 September 2017 and coordinated by the Lifelong Learning Platform.
- PLA on funding validation will take place in Belgium in December 2017.
EQF Conference

- COM invited the EQF AG to brainstorm on possible purposes, thematic focuses and target groups for the EQF Conference that is planned for late 2017 (date to be fixed). AG members suggested having an interactive conference, communicating the added value of the EQF to end-users, taking the opportunity to bring together communities that deal with different but related topics. Involvement of the political level was suggested in order to give sufficient publicity to the conference.

4) NEXT STEPS

The EQF referencing process

- TR is invited to come back in one year to present the procedure to include qualifications in the framework once in place and being implemented.
- SK informed the participants that it will address pending issues at the EQF AG meeting on 13-15 June 2017. Information on how pending issues are addressed should be sent to the Commission by 13 May 2017.
- IS asked for postponement of the presentation on the update of its referencing report to the EQF AG meeting on 3-5 October 2017. The report should be sent to the Commission by 3 September 2017.

Referencing process: information & working method

- COM to include in the note on the implementation of the EQF the situation concerning the linking of national databases to the LOQ portal.
- COM to look at existing requirements to include a country in the interactive comparison table in the portal.
- AG members are urged to check information provided in the note and resolve possible inconsistencies, send the missing referencing reports and provide information for the interactive comparison of qualifications.
- COM to keep the overview table updated according to information made available by AG members.
- COM to prepare a note on the EQF AG's working method with regard to referencing further to the inputs received during the EQF AG on 8-9 February. COM will circulate the draft note to the EQF AG before discussing it at the EQF AG meeting of 13-15 June 2017.

Handbook on Learning Outcomes

- Cedefop to take into account concerns expressed by AG members and further discuss the common format for presenting LO.

Working group on horizontal comparisons of levelled qualifications
The HC group is invited to present the main conclusions of the PLA at the EQF AG meeting on 13-15 June and disseminate the final report.

Information point on the Bologna process
- Because the topic raised wide interest among AG members, DG HOME will be invited to the meeting on 13-15 June 2017 to explain the EU acquis in relation to recognition of skills and qualifications in the context of migration to the EU.

Discussion on definition on international qualifications and international sectoral qualifications
- AG members agreed on having only one definition on international qualifications that would encompass also international sectoral qualifications.
- COM to elaborate one definition on international qualifications based on the discussion and prepare the minutes of the discussion to be sent to the Maltese Presidency. Minutes and definition will be sent to EQF AG members for revision and members absent from the meeting can take this opportunity to add their expert opinion.
- COM to send the finally agreed definition to the Maltese Presidency of the Education Committee.

Revision of the Key Competence Framework
- AG members are invited to take part in the public consultation on the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, which is open until 19 May 2017 and share information on the revision.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning
- COM will revise the note according to the comments they receive and will disseminate it by the end of April 2017.
- COM to present the state of play of one-off report presentations to the AG on a regular basis.

Peer Learning Activities

In the context of EQF
- COM will send out the invitation to the PLA on 18-19 May in Warsaw early April.
- HC group in collaboration with the COM to prepare instructions on how the workshops will be organised. HC group to prepare a short manual on how to use the fiche during the workshop.
- Cedefop to propose possible perspectives of the PLA on Impacts of NQF at the EQF AG meeting on 13-15 June.
AT is invited to further elaborate the proposed PLA on EQF and Credit Systems and present it at the EQF AG meeting on 13-15 June.

AG members to express interest in hosting the PLA proposed by COM on Communication.

COM to keep updated the PLA work plan that will be discussed by the EQF AG at the meeting on 13-15 June.

In the context of VNFIL

COM to send out invitation for the 18-19 May PLA meeting in Warsaw.

COM to send out the invitation for the PLA on the role of stakeholders in validation in June 2017.

AG members to express interest in hosting the PLAs proposed by COM on ‘Skills audit’ and ‘Quality assurance of validation’.

COM to keep updated the PLA work plan that will be discussed by the EQF AG at the meeting on 13-15 June.

EQF Conference

COM to keep EQF AG updated on the conference and organise a webinar with the EQF NCPs to consult with them on the conference.

5) NEXT MEETING

Planned EQF AG Meetings in 2017

- June 13-15. This meeting will be a two day meeting or 1.5 day meeting
- October 3-5
- December 11-13

Tentative agenda points for the June meeting include the following

- The revised EQF recommendation
- SK will present pending issues
- Colleagues from DG Home will be invited
- Follow up on the HC team.
- A state of play of ESCO

COM invited participants to send suggestions to the agenda in the next week.
### 6) LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#### 1) LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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