Brussels, 10 October 2017

DRAFT MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION POINTS
OF THE 42ND MEETING OF THE EQF ADVISORY GROUP
BRUSSELS, 4-5 OCTOBER 2017

EQF Referencing process & information

- SK presented outstanding questions to its referencing report at the meeting, which was accepted by the EQF AG. SK is the 33rd country having referenced to the EQF.
- FI, RO, IS, IT, NL informed on their future plans regarding presentations on referencing reports and updated reports.
- COM updated the group on national developments related to the implementation of EQF (note 42-2).
- COM informed that information on the LOQ portal has now been revised on the basis of the 2017 EQF Recommendation.

Action points:
- FI and IS are scheduled to present the referencing and the updated referencing reports respectively at the EQF AG of 12-13 December 2017. Reports need to be submitted one month ahead of the meeting.
- RO will address its pending issues in 2018.
- NL will present its updated report in 2018 and IT plans to do so in 2018 or 2019.

EQF AG work plan 2018-2019

The AG discussed its work plan for 2018-2019 in relation to both the EQF and the VNFIL recommendations. The AG welcomed the use of the fiches and the roadmap to coordinate and guide its work for the next 2 years. Some members found the work programme too ambitious and invited to further reflect on priorities. The 10 individual fiches were discussed. The fiche on updating the referencing (fiche A) was perceived as one of the most important to take forward. Among AG suggestions and remarks, the importance of referring also to the ecosystem around NQF-EQF emerged.

Action points:
- AG to send written comments on note AG 42-3 by 20 October.
- AG to reflect on the next two years’ priorities to be discussed at the AG of 12-13 December. The outcome will then be reflected in the roadmap annexed to the work plan.
- COM to revise the work plan according to the AG oral and written comments and to circulate the revised note for discussion at the AG of 12-13 December.
- COM to further elaborate the fiche on the updating of referencing reports for the December meeting.
Information point on the Bologna process

The Council of Europe informed on the outcome of the meeting with national correspondents of the QF-EHEA that took place on 5 September in Strasbourg. Among the main challenges the discussion on level 5 for EQF and QF-EHEA and the relationship between the two frameworks emerged.

Action point:
- COM will take into account the interest in discussing issues around level 5 for EQF and QF-EHEA as well as the relationship between the two overarching frameworks.

New Skills Agenda for Europe and other relevant initiatives

Revision of the Europass Decision

On 27 September Coreper reached agreement to start Trilogue discussions between the Parliament, Council and Commission which will start on 10 October.

EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals

COM presented the EU Skills Profile Tool announced in the New Skills Agenda for Europe in 2016 and launched in June 2017. The tool is now being fine-tuned and there will be a new release in October 2017.

Action point:
- AG members to disseminate the tool among relevant stakeholders for its use and for sending feedback on possible improvements.

ESCO

- COM presented an update on the ESCO qualifications pillar. ESCO is now live. Greece and Latvia have published their qualifications databases on the qualification pillar. Croatia, UK-Scotland and Turkey will follow soon.
- COM showed a video on the use of the qualifications database register (QDR) to link qualifications to both ESCO and Learning Opportunities and Qualifications portals. COM also informed on the upcoming invitation to submit a grant request for the setting up and further developments of databases.
- The EQF AG discussed some of the issues around annotation of LO in ESCO and the use of the QDR, as well as quality assurance of international qualifications directly included in ESCO.

Actions points:
- COM to take initiative to organize a workshop to further discuss annotation of LO in the qualification pillar of ESCO.
- COM to continue updating the group on ESCO developments.

Presentation on the three pilot projects on international qualifications and quality assurance

The 3 ongoing pilot projects on international qualifications (Rainbow – Relating international qualifications to the EQF; TALQ - Transparency in Arts Levels and Qualifications; SIQAF - Relevance of Sector and International Qualifications and Frameworks to the EQF) were presented and discussed. Among the main issues emerged:

\[1\] Call for proposal EACEA 48/2017 – Key action 3 – Support for policy reform: Quality assurance at EU level for enhanced transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications

EQF AG 42 – Draft Conclusions and action points
1) informal referencing of international qualifications to the EQF is a reality;
2) the same international qualification - when in NQFs – risks to be referenced to different EQF levels;
3) the option of going through all European NQF is not feasible for those organizations with limited capacity.

Lack of information and transparency, lack of cooperation and common criteria as well as low levels of trust were identified as possible causes of the current situation. The projects are exploring possible quality assurance criteria and mechanisms that may support the EQF AG work on international qualifications. One of the projects is also developing a European qualification profile building on the ESCO skills.

**Action points:**
- COM to keep the AG updated on the developments of the projects.
- COM to further develop the fiche of the work plan on international qualifications (fiche F) in view of the EQF AG of 12-13 December.
- EQF AG members to explore mechanisms and criteria to support the inclusion of international qualifications and ensure their consistency.

**World Reference Levels (WRLs)**

COM informed on the 6th meeting of the WRLs expert group held Paris in June 2017 at UNESCO. UNESCO has now launched a limited field-testing of the tool to gather feedback.

**Action point:**
- COM will continue updating the EQF AG

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

- COM presented the timetable of the presentations on the one-off reports on validation (note 42-2).
- COM is now evaluating the offer received for the 2018 Update European Inventory on VNFIL and invited the EQF AG to make proposals for the thematic studies.
- Some delegations complained about the quality of the last country-reports and about the fact that the scope was not always clear to researchers.
- The discussion on possible synergies between VNFIL and Upskilling pathways (UP) continued and the importance of bringing together stakeholders and create capacity building was stressed.

**Action points:**
- LU will present its one-off report on validation at the AG of 12-13 December. AT, DE and IE will be the discussants.
- EQF AG members to send proposals for possible thematic studies for the 2018 Update European Inventor by 20 October.
- COM to inform the EQF AG on the scope of the country-reports at the EQF AG of 12-13 December and to clearly communicate with the contractor in order to avoid repetitions of the problems that occurred under the 2016 Inventory Update.
- COM to follow up the discussion on VNFIL-UP with concrete activities and promoting exchange of information.

**Peer Learning Activities**

- In presenting the main conclusion of the PLA "The role of non-governmental stakeholders in
implementing the 2012 Recommendation on VNFIL” (Lisbon 21-22 September), LLP stressed the importance of putting together stakeholders and involving non-state actors when outing in place validation arrangements. Unequal involvement of stakeholders, different relevance of transversal skills according to the sector, return on investment and the existence of a lack of data on validation emerged as interesting topics to follow up.

- COM presented the PLAs work plan (note AG 42-6) anticipating that it will be further elaborated according to the AG work plan, which already contains some new PLAs' proposals.
- COM sent out the invitations for the peer learning conference "Do national qualifications frameworks (NQF’s) make a difference – how to measure and evaluate NQF impact?” that will take place at Cedefop’s premises in Thessaloniki on 9-10 November. EQF AG and EQF NCP have the possibility to nominate one representative/external expert each. Registrations will close on 20 October. Cedefop presented the draft programme.
- BE (fr) presented the programme of the PLA "Funding validation – costs and benefits”. The PLA will take place on 14-15 December back to the EQF AG of 12-13 December.

**Action Points:**
- EQF AG members to send proposal for PLAs on EQF and VNFIL by 20 October.
- LLP and CEV in cooperation with Cedefop and Commission to draft the report of the PLA on the role of non-governmental stakeholders in VNFIL.
- COM to circulate the report on horizontal comparison and on the related PLA.
- COM to send out the invitations for the PLA "Funding validation – costs and benefits”. The PLA will take place on 14-15 December back to the EQF AG of 12-13 December.
- COM announced that next year it intends to organise an event on VNFIL in the form of a "festival”. AG members suggested feeding the programme with some of the proposed PLAs currently in the PLA work plan.
- COM to replace the PLA on credits with a PLA on EQF level 5 (proposed by FR).
- AT confirmed its interest in hosting a PLA in the second semester of 2018.
- PL expressed interest in hosting one of the two PLAs on horizontal comparisons.
- EQF AG members are invited to share information on interesting events also to avoid overlaps with EQF AG activities.

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:**
- December 12-13