Brussels, 1 December 2017

EQF Advisory Group, 12-13 December 2017, Brussels

Note AG 43-1
Note on relevant developments
Follow-up to the 42nd meeting of the EQF Advisory Group, 4-5 October 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 43-2).

**The New Skills Agenda for Europe**

**Revision of the Europass Decision**

Two Trilogue meetings between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission took place on 10 October and on 9 November. A Third Trilogue meeting will take place on 7 December. Should an agreement be found then both the Council and the European Parliament will have to agree formally on the compromise text.

**EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals**

A new release of the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals, took place on 6 November. All the interested organisations at national, regional or local level can use the Tool free of charge. They can use the Tool directly online [here](#).

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

The Council Recommendation on tracking higher education and VET graduates was agreed by Education Ministers on 20 November. The Recommendation for graduate tracking intends to support Member States in improving the quality and availability of information on what graduates go on to do after leaving university or vocational education and training. The Recommendation calls on Member States to develop national tracking systems, using administrative data and graduate surveys, and to cooperate to make data from different EU countries easier to compare. In addition, the Commission will fund a pilot European graduate survey, which will look at comparability of data.
Education Ministers further adopted Council Conclusions responding to the renewed EU agenda for higher education further to the Commission Communication on a renewed EU agenda for higher education, published on 30 May 2017. The text analyses challenges and outlines Member State commitments in four areas: excellence in skills; addressing the needs of a diverse student body and supporting academic staff; contributing to innovation; and promoting efficiency and developing quality assurance. The Conclusions welcomed the Commission commitment, in particular with regard to Erasmus+ and the future programme, STE(A)M, digital skills and strengthening links between higher education, research and innovation.

**Copenhagen process/European VET policy**

The Commission adopted on 5 October 2018 its proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. Building among other upon the opinion of the tripartite Advisory committee on Vocational Training, and based on the consultation with social partners, the Framework sets out 14 criteria to define quality and effective apprenticeships, ensuring both the development of job-related skills and the personal development of apprentices. It takes into account the diversity of vocational education and training (VET) systems across the EU and respects the Member States’ competence in the area of VET. The Bulgarian Presidency will lead the legislative debate within the Social Questions Working Party, closely involving the education committee.

More than 1 500 activities at national and local level, with about 900 000 participants, have been held so far with the label of **second European Vocational Skills Week**. European events between 20-24 November 2017 gathered 1 800 participants. Until now more than 200 media articles have been published and video views exceed 130 000.

The **ECVET Forum 2017** has taken place in Malta on 19-20 October 2017 (more information on the website of the ECVET Secretariat).

The **EQAVET Forum 2017** has taken place in Lille (France) on 21 November 2017 within the context of the 2nd Vocational Skills Week (more information on the website of the EQAVET Secretariat). It focused on the quality assurance of CVET, with particular emphasis to the continuing professional development (CPD) of CVET teachers and trainers.

The special Erasmus+ call on 'Joint Qualifications in VET' was published on 14 October 2017 and will be open until **31 January 2018**.

The **Erasmus+ general call** (October 2017), including the new activity ErasmusPro and the Sector Skills Alliances, was published on 25 October 2017 and will be open until 28 February 2018.

**Learning outcomes**

Cedefop has published a European handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes, addressed to individuals (policy-makers, social partners and practitioners) and education and training institutions involved in the process. It aims to act as a reference point for cooperation in this area.
The handbook outlines the purposes for which learning outcomes are used and illustrates this by concrete examples. In addition the handbook sets out several basic steps – ‘rules of thumb’ – to be taken into account when defining and writing learning outcomes and concludes with an extensive overview of guidance material already available across Europe in different languages.


Global inventory of national and regional qualifications frameworks 2017

Global inventory of national and regional qualifications frameworks 2017 has been published. It is the result of collaborative work between Cedefop, ETF, UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

This two-volume publication captures records and analyses national qualifications frameworks in 100 countries in all continents and covers also 7 regional qualifications frameworks. Country-by-country chapters are supported by transversal analysis of the most important issues in qualifications frameworks such as lifelong learning, validation of non-formal learning, building qualification systems, quality assurance and impact. Aim of the inventory is to share knowledge with experts and officials and inform decision makers and bodies implementing national and regional frameworks.

Volume I: Thematic chapters are available here:


Volume II: national and regional cases is forthcoming.

Bologna Process

Preparations have started for the next Ministerial conference, to take place in Paris, on 24-25 May 2018. In the last Bologna Follow Up Group meeting the draft reports of the different Working Groups and Advisory Groups were presented. These reports will be finalised currently. In the meeting the first draft of the Paris Communiqué was presented and there was constructive discussion on the elements and messages to be included. The documents of the meeting can be found here: https://www.ehea.info/cid115326/bfug-meeting-56.html

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Commission has signed the tender for services on the 2018 Update of the European Inventory of validation of informal and non-formal learning. The kick off meeting will take place in Early December. Discussion on how improve the quality assurance mechanisms with the EQF AG will be discussed in a future meeting.

The study on mapping Skills audits in and across EU Member States has finalised the interim phase. The study will be finalised in February 2018 and a presentation to the EQF-AG is foreseen.
The evaluation of the service contract launched by Cedefop for a study of 20 months looking into the synergies of validation and guidance was finalised. The study will investigate the necessary conditions, synergies and efficiency gains of linking validation and career guidance and counselling services.

Cedefop is organising a PLF together with the EESC on the upskilling pathways on 7-8 February 2018 in Thessaloniki. The event is for invitation only and will be attended mainly by the ACVT members, that are responsible for the Recommendation on upskilling. One of the working sessions will focus on the aspect of validation.

ESCO

The Conference “ESCO: connecting people and jobs” took place last 9 and 10 October. More than 220 people representing organisations from employment, education and training joined the conference. On the first day, participants took part in interactive workshops and showcases. The second day was opened with a video message from Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, followed by a keynote speech, high-level panel discussions about the digitization of the labour market and the future of work and closing remarks by Director-General Michel Servoz. The presentations from the conference are available under this link.

On 13 November the 5th Member States Working Group (MSWG) on ESCO took place. The main goals of the meeting were to provide an update on skills related policies; to provide feedback on the ESCO conference; to inform about the state of play of the qualifications pillar; to present and discuss the mandate of the new Maintenance Committee; to inform on the continuous improvement process on ESCO; and to update on the state of play of the EURES implementing acts. All the presentations from the meeting are available in the ESCO Portal.

Early December the Commission will launch a call for applications for members of the new ESCO Maintenance Committee (deadline for applying is 12 January 2018). The Committee will advise the Commission on the continuous technical and conceptual improvement of ESCO, by formulating opinions on the approach for technical implementation, on quality control principles and on the revision of ESCO data. The Committee will also advise the Commission on the implementation of ESCO in processes and software applications (e.g. use of ESCO by the Public Employment Services, within EURES, by private job boards, for career guidance, for big data analysis and for a better linking of employment with education and training). The mandate of the new ESCO Maintenance Committee will run from 2018 until 2022.

Grants for request for databases and registers for qualifications

On 3 November 2017 the invitation to submit a grant request for databases and registers for qualifications was launched. The EQF-NCPs can request an action grant to co-finance activities related to the setting up or further development of national qualifications databases or registers for qualifications that will be interconnected with the Qualifications Data Register (QDR) in order to have national qualifications with an EQF level published on the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe Portal and, on a voluntary basis, on the ESCO Portal.

The deadline for submission is 18 December 2017. For 2018, 2019 & and 2020 no specific invitation for grants for databases and registers of qualifications is planned. The total budget and
the maximum grant amount were increased. On 1 December a webinar open to EQF NCPs was organized in order to clarify possible technical and financial questions in relation to the invitation.

**Invitation to submit a grant request for the policy networks**

On 21 November 2017 was launched the multi-annual grants for the period 2018-2020 for financing activities of the EQF-NCPs, the Euroguidance and Europass Centers. The centers can decide to apply jointly or individually to the invitation to submit grant requests "2018-20 Financial Support to Policy Networks". The deadline for submitting the application is 15 January 2018.

**Proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and launch of the European Semester Autumn Package**

On 17 November European Union leaders have solemnly proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Social Summit for fair jobs and growth in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The Pillar was first announced by European Commission President Juncker in his 2015 State of the Union Address and presented by the Commission in April 2017. On 17 November it was signed by President Juncker for the European Commission, President Tajani for the European Parliament and Prime Minister Ratas for the Council of the European Union.

As contribution to the summit in the area of education and training the Commission submitted a Communication on A European Education area by 2025: fostering a European Identity through Education and Culture. The Communication sets out a roadmap by taking away barriers to mobility, boosting language and digital learning and working towards truly European universities. The aim is to create a European Education Area where learning mobility is the norm and where Europe remains the continent of excellence in education and research. At the same time, the Commission wants to recognise the pivotal role of culture in promoting active citizenship and common values, in strengthening the sense of belonging together and being part of a cultural community.

On 22 November the Commission launched its new European Semester Package - the autumn package - presenting the priorities and guidelines for the following year. The autumn package kicks off the economic, fiscal and social policy coordination within the EU.

The package is based based on the Commission's Autumn Economic Forecast and builds on the priorities of President Juncker's 2017 State of the Union address. It also reflects the recent proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Gothenburg Social Summit.

In the autumn package is included a draft of the Joint Employment Report which analyses the employment and social situation in Europe and the policy responses of national governments as well as a proposal for the amendment of Employment Guidelines.

For the first time the Joint Employment Report 2018 monitors Member States' performance in relation to the European Pillar of Social Rights. The current draft version, presented by the
Commission, will be discussed with the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee, with a view to final adoption by the EPSCO Council in March 2018.

The proposed Employment Guidelines have been amended to fully align with the principles of the Pillar. This is also important as it provides the legal basis for the adoption by the Council of country-specific recommendations in the employment and social field.

This year's proposal aligns the text with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, with a view to improving Europe's competitiveness and making it a better place to invest, create quality jobs and foster social cohesion.