Brussels, 5 April 2018

EQF Advisory Group, 17-18 April 2018, Bratislava

Note AG 45-5.

Mandate for the Project Group on International qualifications in the context of the EQF AG Work programme 2018-19

1. Introduction

During the EQF AG meeting of 12-13 December 2017 the Note on International qualifications in the context of the EQF AG Work programme 2018-19 (AG 43-5) was discussed. The EQF AG overall supported the note, including the setting up of a group. During the discussion, there was overall agreement on the proposed working method for setting up a project group, representing several national frameworks, to develop procedures for information exchange and consultation on international qualifications. The EQF AG suggested considering the issue of levelling international qualifications in the wider context of levelling non-formal qualifications. Also the voluntary nature of the process and the freedom of the national authorities in dealing with international qualifications were stressed.

The EQF AG is invited to:
- agree on the mandate for the project group;
- Indicate interest to actively take part in the project group.

2. Mandate for the project group on international qualifications and their inclusion in NQFs

In accordance with the EQF Recommendation (recommendation nr 11) the main task of the group will be to develop “voluntary procedures on the levelling of international qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems and information exchange and consultation between Member States on those procedures to ensure consistency”. The main focus of the group is on information exchange and consultation on national procedures. The national procedures themselves are not the main focus of the group. Their mapping is however needed. In countries where national procedures for including international qualifications exist, these are the same as for the inclusion of other non-formal qualifications.
Regarding the latter there is no specific requirement for consultation, as these national “non-formal” qualifications are different between countries.

It is therefore proposed not to address non-formal qualifications in general, but to concentrate on international qualifications, namely “qualifications awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body”.

**Proposed composition of the group:**

In December 2017 the idea of setting up a group representing several national frameworks (with the most appropriate national experts, whether EQF AG member or other) was endorsed. The group should include both representatives from countries that do have procedures in place and representatives from countries that do not (yet). Furthermore stakeholder representatives in the EQF AG should be invited to the group. The EQF AG also endorsed the fact that providers of international qualifications could be consulted during the group’s work.

**The following mandate for the group is proposed:**

- Map existing procedures of (all) countries participating in the EQF (and possibly non-EU countries) that have procedures for including international qualifications in their NQF.
- Discuss ways of exchanging information on the substance of the individual decisions made at national level for the levelling of international qualifications in NQFs and explore whether there is potential to use these in order to obtain a common position on such decisions.
- Agree on which (learning outcomes based) categories of international qualifications to address.
- Agree on procedures for notification (how and when to notify) to other countries, as well as to the EQF AG, of international qualifications emerging as candidates for inclusion in the national framework.
- Discuss the possibility of minimum common quality requirements for international qualifications to be included in the NQF and agree on these if possible. These should comply with the principles of annex IV of the EQF Recommendation.
- Assess the costs and benefits of different procedures for information and consultation.

**In its proceedings, the group is invited to consider the results of relevant studies, projects and other relevant information, such as:**

- An upcoming study for the Commission on the ESCO Qualifications Pillar (May-December 2018). This study will address Quality assurance of private, sectoral and international qualifications and how ESCO skills terminology can be linked with learning outcomes of qualifications. The Commission will ensure that the group is kept updated on progress made by the study.
- The results of an ongoing ENIC-NARIC study on International Qualifications, the results of which will be presented at the Network’s annual meeting in Prague (June 2018).
- The findings of the conference on NQFs in Warsaw, June 2018, on how to include non-formal sector qualifications in NQFs and proposals on a European terminology on international and related qualifications.

**Stakeholders of international qualifications:**

In agreement with the group, a limited number of owners of international qualifications could be invited to the discussions at EQF AG meetings, in order to take into account their experiences with NQF procedures so far.

**Expected workload:**

The group is expected to meet in Brussels every 2 months (back-to-back with EQF AG meetings). The workload will consist of attending and preparing the meetings. The Commission and Cedefop will draft the meeting documents.

**Reporting to the EQF AG:**

The group will report to the EQF AG on the progress achieved.

**Proposed timetable:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>30 April 2018</td>
<td>Information to the Commission on interest in joining the group (ideally the size of the group should not exceed 8-10 experts)</td>
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<td>May 2018 – January 2019</td>
<td>3-4 meetings of the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2018</td>
<td>Contribution to the PLA organised by Austria on non-formal qualifications</td>
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<td>April 2019</td>
<td>Presentation of agreed procedures for endorsement by the EQF AG</td>
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**Commission and Cedefop support:**

The Commission will fully support the group by:

- Chairing it, hosting its meetings and ensuring its secretariat.
- Reimbursing travel costs for participation in meetings in accordance with the Commission rules for experts (as far as possible meetings will take place back-to-back with EQF AG meetings).
- Providing technical support by external contractors if considered relevant and necessary by the group.

Cedefop will, as part of its mission, fully support the work on international qualifications carried out in the context of the EQF AG work programme.