



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 03.03.2017

C(2017) 1375 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the Commission proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC {COM (2016) 625 final}.

The main objective of Europass since it was adopted in 2004 has been to support the communication and understanding of skills and qualifications of individuals to enable their mobility. The proposal for the revision of the Europass Decision reiterates the importance of that objective, adapting the instrument to the evolving needs of citizens. The proposal forms part of a broader package of measures outlined in the Communication on the New Skills Agenda for Europe {COM (2016) 381 final}.

In that regard the proposal seeks to promote individuals' mobility by offering simple and modern tools in tune with the context of today's education and training systems and labour markets. The proposal acknowledges the achievements of Europass, including the work done by Member States to promote and implement Europass, and seeks to build on these by ensuring the continuity, relevance and flexibility of Europass in the future.

In response to the more technical comments in the Opinion the Commission would like to refer to the attached annex.

The points made in this reply are based on the initial proposal presented by the Commission which is currently in the legislative process involving both the European Parliament and the Council.

*Mr Pietro GRASSO
President of the Senato della Repubblica
Piazza Madama, 1
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The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Marianne Thyssen
Member of the Commission*

ANNEX

The Commission has carefully considered each of the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica in its Opinion and is pleased to offer the following clarifications.

The Commission acknowledges that the processes taking place in the area of education and training are voluntary. In that regard the Commission would like to stress that the proposal ensures (1) the development of an online EU-wide Europass platform and (2) continued promotion and implementation by the relevant national centres.

The new Europass platform would be an EU-wide online platform developed through a phased process by the Commission, in close consultation with Member States and stakeholders. The Commission will shortly invite interested representatives from relevant national centres to form a discussion group to give advice on the development of the platform. The development of the new platform would not impinge on any national processes. The proposal seeks only to give greater visibility and impact to ongoing processes such as the provision of information on learning opportunities and qualifications by the Member States.

The references to linked services such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO) do not in any way make their use by the participating countries mandatory. In that regard, the Commission would like to confirm that it is possible to make reference to a non-binding instrument in a legal act. Such linked services would therefore be used to support the technical implementation of the EU-level platform and enhance the information it provides.

To date there has been no flexibility in the way Europass and the Europass documents have operated, and the templates for the Europass documents have remained unchanged for over 10 years. The proposals seek to create flexibility to respond to the requests for changes and innovation by the Member States and users. A working group of National Europass Centres has recently submitted a paper to the Commission proposing areas for change and modernisation which could be achieved for the first time using the approach laid down in the proposal.

The Commission has presented the timeline for the development of the new Europass platform. The development of the proposed e-portfolio tool and the consolidation of existing services and information (included in the current Europass portal; the EU Skills Panorama; the ESCO portal and the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe portal) is scheduled for Spring 2018. A second phase of development including new elements such as real-time labour market information and self-assessment tools is scheduled for 2019. Again, Member States, including the relevant national centres will be consulted on an on-going basis on this work. Any timeframes or deadlines for ongoing processes at national level remain in place and will not be affected by this work.

Finally, as regards the operation of the national centres, the Commission notes that the proposal does not seek to rationalise these centres as suggested in the Senato della Repubblica's Opinion. The proposal seeks to establish a National Skills Coordination Point to act as a single point with responsibility for coordinating the activities associated with the Decision, thereby giving greater potential for a more strategic approach to the coordination of these activities at national level. However, all decisions concerning the operation of the activities at national level, including how this cooperation is achieved, would be left to the participating countries.