



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Europe 2020: Employment Policies  
**Skills and qualifications**

ESCO 2016 (MSWG) 002 Final

Brussels, April 2016

**MEMBER STATES WORKING GROUP ON ESCO (MSWG)  
MEETING 26 APRIL 2016, BRUSSELS**

**Point 2 b): Review of ESCO by the MSWG**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the main missions of the MSWG is to support the Commission in the preparation of the implementing acts which will be required by the new EURES Regulation. These implementation acts are aimed at regularly update and adapt ESCO, to which the mapping of national classifications will be done.

Before we launch ESCO version 1, by end 2016, the Commission would like to consult you on its fit for purpose. This will enable a smooth implementation and use of ESCO in the future. This consultation will provide the members of the group with a first-hand insight of the new European classification, and will help to anticipate any potential implementation issues.

The purpose of this document is to explain how ESCO is being developed and to inform on the involvement and support of the MSWG during the latest stages of this development.

**1.1 ESCO's three pillars**

As presented to you at our first meeting, the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) identifies and categorises skills<sup>1</sup>, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, in 24 European languages. ESCO is structured on the basis of three pillars: occupations, skills and qualifications. The system will provide details on all occupations within all the economic areas of activity showing their relationships with skills and qualifications. Its structure will make it possible for occupational profiles to show whether skills and competences are essential or optional and what qualifications are relevant for each ESCO occupation. In addition, ESCO aims to show which skills are relevant in the learning outcomes of specific qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document the term "skills" includes competences and knowledge.

The nature of the information on the three pillars differs. The occupations pillar and skills pillar are developed on a shared understanding of concepts by the ESCO contributors<sup>2</sup>. The latter provide the appropriate terms for the occupations and skills and describe these concepts. ESCO is expected to include around 3 000 occupations and 10 000 to 15 000 skills and competences. Point 1.2 below describes the development process in detail.

In contrast to the development of the other two pillars, in the qualifications pillar ESCO aims to collect and republish existing information on qualifications. The aim is to provide a comprehensive listing of those qualifications that are relevant for the European labour market. These include those that are coming from the national qualifications database of the Member States as well as international and sectoral qualifications.

This will be done in two ways:

- Indirect inclusion – qualifications which Member States include in their national qualification frameworks and databases;
- Direct inclusion – international and sectoral qualifications that are not part of the national qualification databases.

The development of the qualifications pillar therefore depends largely on external sources. The qualifications pillar is still in its initial development phase. To this purpose, the Commission is simultaneously supporting Member States and other countries to create or upgrade their national qualifications frameworks and databases, while testing through a pilot project how these national databases will be linked to European portals like ESCO. After the publication of ESCO version 1 the relationships between this pillar and the other two pillars will be developed.

*Information included in the qualifications pillar will come directly from national authorities or private sources. Data on qualifications therefore does not need to be manually "mapped" back to the national source, as the origin of the information is automatically recorded in ESCO. The EURES Regulation does therefore not include the mapping of national qualification databases or classifications to a European classification, and the Commission will not include the qualifications pillar in the current consultation.*

## **1.2 Developing the occupations and skills pillars**

The Commission is developing the occupations and skills pillars together with the ESCO Maintenance Committee<sup>3</sup> and the support of stakeholders and experts from all over Europe.

### **1.2.1 Past and current development of the occupations and skills pillars**

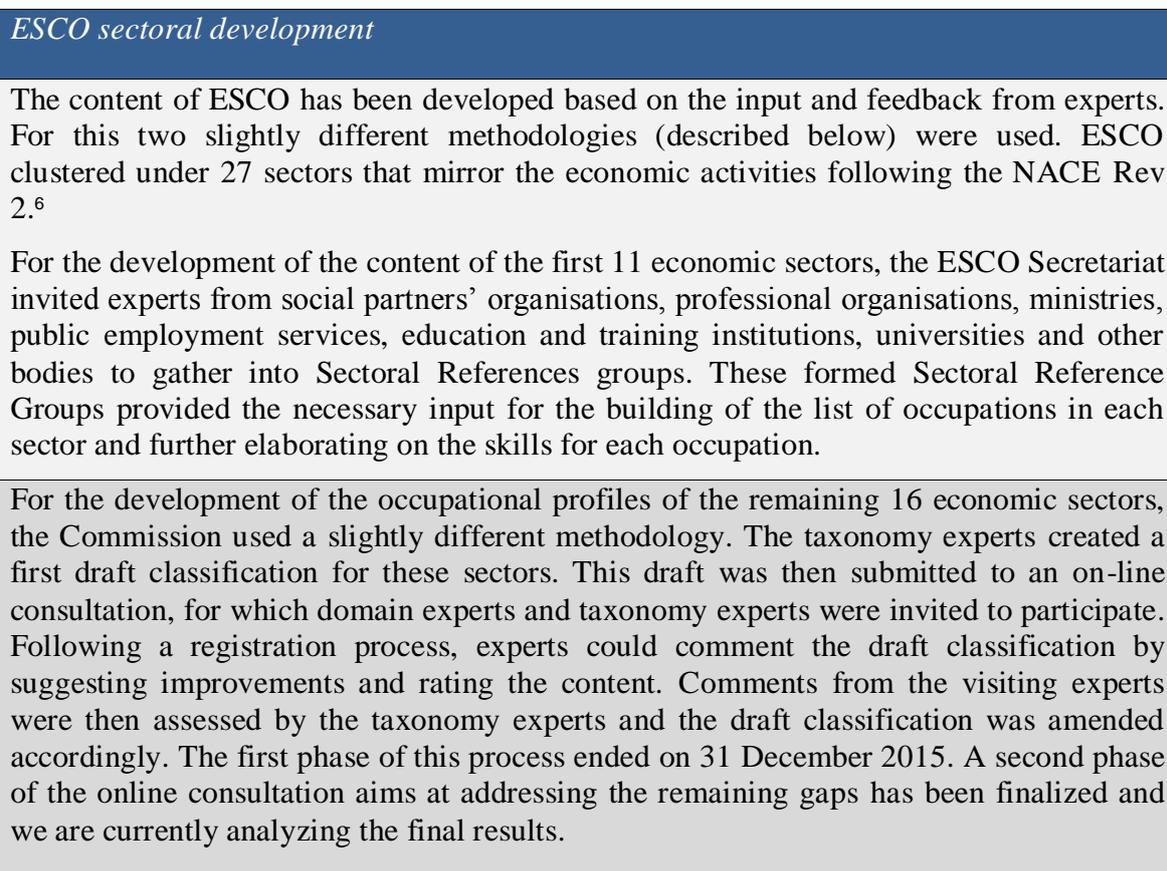
The main steps in current and past development of these pillars can be summarised as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Several groups contribute to the development of ESCO: domain experts, taxonomy experts, ESCO Secretariat, ESCO Maintenance Committee, translators and terminologists.

<sup>3</sup> The ESCO Maintenance Committee is an advisory body to the Commission, gathering experts in classification systems from labour market and education and training and providing quality assessment and technical and methodological guidance.

1. Under the supervision of the ESCO Secretariat<sup>4</sup> a group of taxonomy experts analysed existing sources, namely national occupational and skills classifications, and developed a draft classification (this process started in 2011 and ended in 2015).
2. The ESCO Secretariat, with the support of the ESCO Maintenance Committee, verified that the development of the draft classification complied with the ESCO guidelines which describe the methodology for development and data model<sup>5</sup> (from 2013 to 2015).
3. A panel of labour market and education and training experts reviewed the draft classification for each sector of economic activity. For more information on this step see **Figure 1** below.
4. Following the advice from the Maintenance Committee, the taxonomy experts and the ESCO Secretariat amended the data accordingly (from 2013 to 2015).
5. The ESCO Secretariat is currently carrying out a gap analysis with ISCO-08 and with a selection of national occupational classifications, to ensure the completeness of the classification, i.e. that it covers the entire labour market. (April to May 2016).



*Figure 1.*

<sup>4</sup> The ESCO Secretariat groups European Commission officials and external consultants.

<sup>5</sup> Both ESCO methodology and data model were developed by the ESCO Secretariat and endorsed by the ESCO Maintenance Committee.

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nomenclatures/index.cfm?TargetUrl=LST\\_NOM\\_DTL&StrNom=NA\\_CE\\_REV2](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nomenclatures/index.cfm?TargetUrl=LST_NOM_DTL&StrNom=NA_CE_REV2)

## 1.2.2 Future development of the occupations and skills pillars <sup>7</sup>

The next steps in the development of these ESCO pillars are:

6. The ESCO Secretariat, together with the taxonomy experts, will do a final check on the quality of the skills to ensure consistency and level of granularity across the classification and remove any duplication (Q2 2016).
7. The Member States through the MSWG will be informally consulted on ESCO's adequacy to map to national classifications (Q2 2016). *(Please see point 3 below)*
8. The Commission's Directorate General for Translation will translate the ESCO data from English (reference language of ESCO) to the remaining 23 EU official languages (Q3/4 2016).
9. The Member States through the MSWG will be informally consulted on ESCO's linguistic adequacy (Q4 2016). *(Please see point 3 below)*
10. The European Commission publishes the first version of ESCO on the ESCO portal<sup>8</sup> and makes it available in Linked Open Data, free for everyone to download and use. The classification will also feature a Local API and a Service API (Q4 2016).

**Figure 2** below summarizes the most recent and future steps of ESCO's development.



*Figure 2: Recent and near future ESCO development*

## 2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN ESCO

In order to facilitate the mapping of national classification to ESCO, ESCO should have the right level of conceptual coverage, the appropriate level of terminological richness and the right knowledge structures.

As indicated in our last meeting the ESCO Secretariat has been undertaking several actions to ensure the appropriate high level of quality of the new classification:

<sup>7</sup> This future calendar is provisional

<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

- Advice from the Maintenance Committee – The Maintenance Committee has been involved in the development of ESCO ever since its inception. Its opinions are taken into account in developing the different parts of ESCO, and notably to ensure the classification has the desired level of quality for the implementation for EURES purposes.
- Pilots to ensure ESCO's fit for purpose - The Commission manages several pilot projects with public employment services (PESs) that have explored the creation of correspondence tables for ESCO, and with organisations that have expressed the wish to develop pilot implementations with ESCO. Based on the discussions within these pilots, the Commission is receiving feedback on the fit-for-purpose on some of the quality dimensions of ESCO. To the extent possible, the feedback is taken into account and is used to improve the quality of ESCO prior to publication. As presented during the last MSWG meeting, two of these pilots include Academy Cube and the EURES portal.
- Verification with job vacancies ensuring that the occupations and skills and competencies mentioned in ESCO are relevant.
- After publication, evaluation of its features in the context of its actual use (e.g. in EURES, Europass, job matching applications, career guidance applications, etc.).

A further step in this process is the current consultation proposal with MSWG.

### **3. CONSULTING THE MSWG ON ESCO**

As indicated, the Commission would like to invite the members of the MSWG to consult on the general features of the ESCO classification as a whole whilst suggesting any improvements to ensure ESCO is up to date and describes the reality of the market.

The goal of this assessment is not to review ESCO's content but to have informal and general feedback from the members of the group on its terminological richness, how it compares to other similar international classifications such as ISCO 08 and notably on its adequacy to map to national classifications.

#### **3.1 The consultation**

The Commission would like to divide this consultation in two phases:

*1-First phase: Consultation on the general overview of ESCO content*

In **June 2016** the Commission will have ready the final **English** version of the ESCO's occupations and skills pillars. The Commission will launch the consultation on the occupations and skills pillars soon after. The consultation to members (permanent and alternate) of the MSWG will last for a period of **6 weeks**. The members may associate other national experts and interested parties to this consultation.

The participants to the consultation will have the opportunity to access the full content (occupations, skills and competences) of these two pillars and their internal relationships.

*2- Second phase: Consultation on the different language versions of ESCO*

In the **last quarter of 2016**, the Commission expects to have ready the final version of ESCO's occupations and skills/competences pillars in **all official EU languages**. This second phase of the consultation will **focus only** on ESCO's **linguistic accuracy**. MSWG's members would have a **four weeks** period to assess this content.

Following both consultations, the Commission will evaluate all comments and implement pertinent improvements. This process may require further clarifications to ensure their correct interpretation. The Commission will also provide feedback on the entire process at the end of the consultation. Member States will benefit from the Commission's assistance during the whole consultation process

### **3.1.2 Aims and input**

As referred, the main aim of this consultation is to have the informal input of the MSWG on two points:

- |  |
|--|
| a) The adequacy of ESCO's current final draft to map your national classification system(s) to it;   |
| b) The adequacy of ESCO's current final draft to allow for a more precise exchange of information in EURES than the currently used ISCO-08 classification. |

The results of the consultation will allow the Commission to anticipate any potential ESCO implementation issues and facilitate future mappings of national classifications to it. The input from MSWG's members will be integrated in the final stages of the ESCO development.

Participants will be able to send their written comments to the ESCO Secretariat during the two phases of the consultation. Further details on the process, in particular the specific timeframes and where to send your contributions, will be provided at a later stage.