



Minutes of the expert groups

Brussels, 15 April 2019

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the Europass Advisory Group 14 March 2019, Brussels

1. OPENING (cf. notes and EPASS 3-1)

The meeting agenda (note EPASS 3-0) was approved without any comments.

The minutes of the 2nd Europass AG meeting were adopted with no further comments (cf. EPASS 3-1).

The participants asked if it would be possible to have a list of participants. COM replied that when consent (in accordance with GDPR) has been obtained from all participants, a list with contact details will be sent out.

COM introduced the Project Update note (cf. EPASS 3-2) with the intention to create a better overview of the relevant progress on all strands of work including user testing, information provision, the digitally signed credentials framework, interoperability, stakeholder outreach and consultation and progress on development of the e-portfolio. The note also includes a summary state-of-play on each of the existing Europass documents and plans for Phase 1. COM has launched the Europass Project Website¹ which will serve as a hub to inform stakeholders about progress in development and consultations until the launch of the new Europass.

The following points were noted:

- A number of participants commented that the focus in the Project Update Note appears to be more on technical developments rather than on added value of developing a European service compared with services provided by Member States (MS). COM responded that policy goals and ambitions drive the development of the new Europass and are captured in the 'Vision into Action' note. The technical focus of the Project

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass>

Update reflects the wishes expressed by the group to gain more insight into how the ambitions of the new Europass will be fulfilled in practice.

- Some participants sought clarification on the possibility to make applications for a job or education programme through the portal and how this might overlap with other existing services. COM explained that there are around 40 existing interoperability agreements, including with EURES which facilitated such applications.
- Other participants raised concerns about privacy and data protection in the e-Portfolio. COM reassured that data protection and privacy are key principles. Individual users own their own data and can decide who can access it. COM will carry out a data protection impact assessment that goes beyond legal compliance with the recently adopted regulation. Work to make data privacy statements in the portal as user friendly as possible is ongoing.
- Several participants expressed appreciation that consultations with external stakeholders are listed in the Project Update Note, but they would like more information about the outcomes of meetings. COM replied that the main purpose of most of these meetings (e.g. LinkedIn and Google) had been to inform the companies about the new Europass. COM took part in an early workshop on a Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)² funded project of blockchain in education, involving 7 Member States and Norway, to ensure a coherent approach and a minimum of common standards across Europe. COM is currently exploring how ENIC-NARIC and Europass can engage in better cooperation on questions around digitally signed credentials (DSC) and COM will participate in a workshop about digital credentials (as part of the ENIC-NARIC plenary meeting in June) with the aim of streamlining processes.
- The participants felt that the term ‘credentials’ still needs to be adequately defined. There was also still a lack of clarity on how the DSCs would be validated. COM replied that DSCs would be authenticated/verified to establish that the credential is not fake, whether it is indeed a qualification, whether the person holding the DSC is the person whose name is on it, and whether the issuer is in the national database of providers. It was also emphasised that digital signatures do not replace quality assurance (QA) processes around the processes of learning.

2. POINTS DISCUSSED

2.1. The new Europass: Vision into Action (cf. note EPASS 3-3)

COM presented the vision document, stressing that this document is meant for internal use in the Europass AG only, and has not been drafted as a communication product for the general public. It outlines the main goals of the new Europass and suggests a division of responsibilities between COM, stakeholders and MS concerning implementation.

The following points were noted:

- Participants welcomed the document, which they consider necessary to underpin the discussions in the AG.
- Some participants questioned the clarity of purpose. For example, the document does not sufficiently outline the ‘why’s’ of the new mission, which extends far beyond the mobility of students, and it does not provide a long-term vision for the impact of

² <https://ec.europa.eu/cedigital/wiki/display/CEFDIGITAL/2019/02/15/CEF+Telecom+Work+Programme+2019%3A+Grant+Funding+and+New+Blockchain+Building+Block>

Europass and the wide range of users the portal aims to target. COM replied that the Europass Decision text addressed these points and the wider policy context.

- Some participants raised that the possibility for individual end-users to receive relevant suggestions of opportunities for further learning or work based on their individual skills profile could overlap with the functionality of EURES and guidance practitioners. COM clarified that the functions offered by Europass including interoperability with learning and employment opportunities is carefully developed to avoid duplication of services, while fully respecting subsidiarity and seeking to ensure effective implementation of the Europass Decision.
- Some participants commented that the role of MS in providing information for the new Europass is not clearly explained in the document. COM replied that a concrete division of responsibilities for each of the information types mentioned in the Europass Decision will be developed as part of each content plan.
- Participants advised that close structural cooperation with national Public Employment Services (PES) and Euroguidance is required, if Europass is to reach the targeted uptake. COM informed the participants that a meeting had been planned with the PES network on 15 March.

2.2. Europass Communication Strategy (cf. note EPASS 3-4)

COM presented the Communication Strategy and stressed that Europass should be communicated as a European framework and a unique tool for lifelong learning and career management. The strategy aims at strengthening awareness and visibility with targeted key messages to each of the three identified target groups.

COM called for input and feedback from the participants on the Communication Strategy by 29 March 2019, particularly on support for outreach and engagement of facilitators.

- The following points were noted: Some participants advised COM to focus more on key messages and to clearly outline the changes between the existing and the new Europass and the added value of the revised portal. COM agreed that there are specific communication challenges, including to communicate the transition from the current to the new Europass and to reach new users.
- The participants were concerned about communicating about the beta version, since this will not be fully functional. It was stressed that the process and the launch itself need to be communicated differently. COM responded that the beta version will not be launched publicly and will only serve for testing purposes. Communication to end users will only start once the platform goes live. COM will clarify this in the document to avoid misunderstandings.
- Participants questioned whether the Europass centres have the competences to promote the use of the new e-portfolio, suggested to develop training for staff of the Europass centres and to actively involve career guidance professionals and Euroguidance in the development of the new Europass. COM welcomed the idea of training the trainers and will continue close cooperation with the Euroguidance network.
- Participants advised that communication of the new Europass would require substantial resources for mass media campaigns. Several participants raised the question of available funding for the communication strategy. COM replied that press kits will be prepared, but also the high web traffic to the existing site will be exploited to the full. Social media, which is already used by Europass centres, will be used as well.

- Some participants asked COM to consider the need for a new logo seeing that the scope of Europass is changing, placing more emphasis on lifelong learning. COM advised that the issue of the logo and visual identity will be considered as part of the Communications Strategy.

2.3. Europass Information Provision (cf. notes EPASS 3-5 and 3-6)

COM introduced the **updated content plans**. Targeted consultations will take place between April-May with stakeholder organisations, participating countries, COM services and Cedefop to identify relevant information and links to information at national and Union level and to reflect on existing information and ongoing processes and tasks of MS.

The following points were noted:

- Participants asked whether there had been any investigation of possible overlaps between the provision of labour market opportunities in Europass and those provided at national level by PES, guidance centres, and education providers.
- Some participants suggested that instead of sticking to the three types of stakeholders, it would be more relevant to look at information needs of concrete target groups such as employers, guidance counsellors, etc.
- Several participants noted that in some countries comprehensive qualification databases or portals do not exist. Participants were concerned that if MS were to provide information, it would need to comply with ESCO standards. COM replied that from the outset qualifications will be those that are already in the LOQ portal, and that these qualifications will be integrated into Europass. COM underlined the added value in referring qualifications to ESCO standards, but stressed that using ESCO terminology to describe qualifications is voluntary for MS. COM also informed about the PLA addressing qualification databases and their connection to EU level in HU on 21-22 March.
- Some participants questioned the added value of skills intelligence, noting that policy-makers are the main target group for the Skills Panorama, while the information as currently presented is not directly useful for individuals. COM responded that skills intelligence is also of value to guidance counsellors, who have been provided with targeted information on the Skills Panorama since last year.
- Participants requested more information about the upcoming consultations. COM replied that consultations will be set up with organisational members of the AG, national Europass Centres, Commission Services, Cedefop, and relevant participating countries that delivered significant feedback. The feedback will be shared with the AG in due time before the next meeting on 12/13 June.

COM presented the results of an **analysis of the Learning Opportunities Survey**. The aim of the survey was to get input on the current practices regarding learning opportunities in the various participating countries. COM underlined that the document only presents the respondents' views and suggestions and that COM has not added any interpretation or

evaluation. COM proposed to set up a temporary sub-group of the AG to propose a way forward on this strand of work. COM suggested two meetings for this group (early April and May). The group will report back to the AG at the June meeting and COM called for the AG members to nominate members for this group before 25 March.

The following points were noted:

- Participants highlighted the variety of practices at national level including that databases not only have qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks, but also opportunities for non-formal learning. The added-value of an EU level approach to learning opportunities, including the language policy and quality of the opportunities, must be clearly established. COM advised that the primary aim of the working group is to find a shared, strategic approach to learning opportunities with a focus on content rather than IT solutions. The working group should also include countries that do not have databases yet.
- Participants asked about technical requirements for uploading data from national databases. Concerning technical requirements, COM confirmed that MS will not be required to change the format of their databases to open standards such as Triplestore and RDF. There will be a separate consultation on technical issues and a second technical WS on interoperability with education and training registers.
- Some participants recommended that the working group be larger, at least 20 participants. COM stated that the advantage of a smaller group size is to ensure an effective working environment as the group is scheduled to start its work before Easter. COM promised to get back with clarifications and confirmed dates.

2.4. Implementing the new Europass (cf. note EPASS 3-7)

COM introduced the Europass Project Management Plan (PMP) which sets out the milestones and timeline for Phase 1 implementation of the new Europass Decision. The AG welcomed the PMP, which had been an express wish at the last AG meeting and in particular, the risk analysis was appreciated.

- Participants asked which key stakeholders would be consulted on the early release in June 2019 and called for testing in other languages in English. COM replied that transparency about the stakeholder consultations will be ensured, and that the outcome of these contacts will feed into all documents brought before the AG.
- Several participants again queried if users would be allowed to apply to educational institutions or to jobs through the Europass portal and argued that this is neither feasible nor desirable. COM acknowledged that in Annex 1.5 - Test release v0.4, the “Apply”-button in the mock-up screenshot is misleading and it is not foreseen at this stage that users can apply directly. They can rather prepare applications using information and documents stored in their Europass e-profile. The screenshot will be revised accordingly.
- Some participants observed that the Skills Profiler appears to be a matching tool. COM underlined that the Skills Profiler is designed to make it transparent to users how online platforms ‘see’ an overview of their profile and skills and give users the opportunity to finetune their profile.

- Some participants considered the timeline very ambitious and remarked that it may not allow for sufficient MS involvement. COM agreed that the plan is ambitious but confirmed that comprehensive testing would be ensured and that any elements launched as part of Phase 1 will be fit-for-purpose.
- Participants requested more information about the Project Website mentioned in the PMP. COM explained that the website has been set up for a limited period to inform stakeholders on the development of EP, with the main target group being facilitators. It will inform about progress on each of the work strands and technical specifications, and it will share documents that are open for consultation with groups of stakeholders. COM underlined that the Project Website will not be an interactive forum and that it will not replace AGM which is used for AG meeting organisation.
- Cedefop commented that difficulties related to updating existing CVs should be added to the risks. It would be essential to make it easy and attractive for existing users to continue using Europass.
- COM clarified that the digital credential framework can be used for both NQF qualifications and other types of credentials. It entails moving from an already existing paper format to a digital format or from already existing digital formats to European standards, ensuring compliance with national systems and the EU system.
- Some participants asked whether financial support will be available for the implementation of the DSC Framework. COM replied that only technical support rather than grant funding is envisaged.

3. NEXT STEPS AND CLOSE OF MEETING

COM reminded participants about the next steps:

- The work on Content plans has commenced and will proceed in the coming months.
- Development of the e-portfolio will commence shortly and will continue with the objective of a first user testing early June 2019.

Upcoming Deadlines and Meetings

COM will send an invitation for nominations for the temporary working group on Learning Opportunities (Deadline 25 March 2019).

29 March 2019: Deadline for written comments on all meeting documents

10 April 2019: First meeting of the Temporary Working Group on Learning Opportunities

12-13 June: Europass AG, possibly including a joint meeting with EQF AG on 12 June