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POLICY DEPARTMENT
ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY **A**



Economic and Monetary Affairs

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Skills Development and Employability in Europe: The New Skills Agenda

Study for the EMPL Committee

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT A: ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY

WORKSHOP

Skills Development and Employability in Europe: The New Skills Agenda

Brussels, 8 September 2016

PROCEEDINGS

Abstract

This document summarises the presentations and discussions of the workshop on Skills development and Employability: New Skills Agenda for Europe held at the European Parliament in Brussels on Thursday 8 September 2016 as a common workshop for the Employment and Social Affairs and the Culture and Education Committees.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss selected legal acts of the Agenda and other key actions planned which are of particular relevance for the work of both Committees.

During the first part of the workshop, the Commission gave an overview of the Skills Guarantee, the revision of the European Qualifications Framework, the upcoming proposal for a revision of the Europass Framework and elaborated on modernisation of Vocational Education and Training Systems with a view to make it more attractive.

In a second part, experts presented their assessment based upon lessons from research in these four areas to support ongoing European Parliament work on resolutions and upcoming work on the revision of the Europass Framework.

This workshop and the respective document were prepared by the Policy Department A in cooperation with Policy Department B at the request of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

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1. SUMMARY REPORT

1.1. Opening

In her opening, the Vice-Chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, **Marita Ulvskog**, underlined the increasing engagement of the European Parliament in the field of life-long learning. This engagement will continue with the New Skills Agenda which is for the Employment Committee the most forward-looking policy area and initiative. European and national skills agendas should have the objective "to empower the coming generations to deal with the many changes they have to face". For this, education should be more than preparation for the labour market, but provide also skills needed on critical thinking. Further, it would be desirable to see more young people involved in expert workshops and policymaking.

The Vice-Chair of the Culture and Education Committee, **Michaela Šojdrová**, welcomed the organisation of a common workshop for both committees involved. She expressed her appreciation of the agenda focusing on concrete and new tools.

1.2. Setting the scene: the European Commission's New Skills Agenda

Michel Servoz, the Commission's Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, acknowledged the important role of the European Parliament in contributing to the New Skills Agenda for Europe and mentioned three relevant recent European Parliament resolutions:

1. resolution of 10 September 2015 on creating a competitive labour market for the 21st century: matching skills and qualifications with demand and job opportunities,
2. resolution of 19 January 2016 on skills policies fighting youth unemployment, and
3. resolution of 12 April 2016 on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in vocational education and training.

The European Commission considers skills development as crucial for a competitive European economy as this cannot build upon cheap labour as a competitive factor. The quality of skills will determine social fairness in the long run. The New Skills Agenda consisting of 10 key actions therefore aims to reduce existing skills gaps and skills mismatches: Almost 70 million Europeans lack sufficient reading, writing and numeracy skills, 40% of employers report that they cannot find people with the right skills while about 29% of European employees think that they are either over- or under-qualified, with over-qualification increasing during the economic crisis.

At the same time, analysis has detected a discrepancy in perceptions: While 74% of education providers believe their graduates are prepared for the job market, only 35 % of employers find that they are directly employable.

All 10 actions of the New Skills Agenda for Europe have the objective to

1. improve basic skills
2. make skills more visible and comparable
3. improve intelligence and information about available jobs.

As regards the four key actions selected for the workshop, Michel Servoz set out a number of **challenges the New Skills Agenda will tackle** and how:

- **Gaps in basic skills - Skills Guarantee:**

The Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishment of a Skills Guarantee for lower-skilled adults is a complex system. However, as previous initiatives (Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, Council Recommendation on integration of long-term unemployed) have shown, this kind of schemes work at the longer term by triggering structural reforms. A discussion will be needed on how [public employment](#)

[services](#) and education systems implement the Skills Guarantee. Key elements are (1) a thorough skills assessment encompassing skills acquired on the spot, (2) a tailor-made learning offer and (3) validation of what individuals have learnt. Michel Servoz also pointed out that implementation will be a challenge as many low-skilled adults (in terms of basic skills) have made a bad experience with the education system.

- **Attractiveness of vocational education and training:**

There exists a paradox: Even if a number of VET systems are very successful, parents and children as well as stakeholders are reluctant to take this as best option. The Commission is therefore preparing a concept for modernising VET including work on changing perceptions. As a first step, the Commission will launch a European Vocational Skills Week in December 2016.

- **European Qualifications Framework:**

In its proposal for the revision of the European Qualifications Framework, the Commission wants in particular to promote an update of national qualification systems, as these are neither complete nor up-to-date in all Member States. Second, the Commission wants to build up common principles for quality assurance and credit systems. The Commission intends to increase comparability by introducing standard elements that can be used by employers as mutual recognition is supposed to go too far. Further, it is envisaged to promote the use of the EQF by education providers and public employment services.

- **Europass:**

The Commission will issue as flanking measure a proposal for the revision of the Europass Framework for the provision of better services for skills, planned for adoption on 28 September 2016. Michel Servoz stressed that the CV is a successful European tool. Moreover, the proposal for a revision shall promote systems to document skills and additional supporting services. These tools and services are also important for the skills assessment of third-country nationals, migrants and refugees. Currently, there exist good practices in a number of Member States.

Michel Servoz turned the attention to two further specific actions of the New Skills Agenda: the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills and the launch of a Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition to better anticipate skills developments at sectoral and at regional level.

In a more general perspective, he underlined the key role of Member States to develop and implement adequate skills strategies.

Key points from discussion:

- **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills:** Are STEM skills sufficiently addressed in the New Skills Agenda as requested by a broad coalition of stakeholders in November 2014?

Michel Servoz informed that a **number of actions within the New Skills Agenda** include the STEM agenda, for example, it will be taken into account for the planned review of the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (foreseen for the 4th quarter 2017). It may also make part of the planned Commission initiative on Graduate tracking, another action of the Skills agenda. Finally, skills assessment as part of the Skills Guarantee contains elements of STEM.

- **Skills mismatch:** What can be done to tackle the problem that despite considerable improvements in education outcomes in many EU Member States high unemployment persists?

There is a need to intensify the **connection between higher education and the world of work and social partners, at policy and at institutional level**, including governance. Higher education could learn from the success of work-based learning in VET in a number of

European countries. However, there exists still considerable resistance in higher education institutions.

The planned **action on tracking of graduates** as a relevant tool to get better evidence and knowledge of this phenomenon.

On the other hand, it was argued that education is sometimes considered a miracle tool which is not necessarily true. It is equally necessary to think about creating jobs.

1.3. Skills guarantee for low-skilled adults

In her contribution on basic skills and a skills guarantee, from an **OECD perspective**, **Deborah Rosevear** welcomed the proposal on establishing a Skills Guarantee and underlined a **high degree of consensus** with the Commission on its key policy elements. She stressed that implementation poses a daunting challenge as it will not be easy to motivate adults if training does not translate into concrete (labour market) outcomes.

In order to achieve this, **OECD supports a joined-up approach** encompassing good identification and assessment of skills gaps, getting adults ready to upgrade skills, offer appropriate training taking into account their learning behaviour, ensure a real improvement of skills and that this translates into better social and economic outcomes. According to Deborah Rosevear, the **Commission proposal contains all these elements**, even if not in the same order.

As regards an effective implementation of a Skills guarantee, she listed a number of **policy issues**:

- 40 % of those low-skilled (in terms of basic skills) have completed an upper secondary education
- many low-skilled people are rather young and do not have any migrant background even if the risk is higher among older people and those having a migrant background
- policymakers should listen to those "in the middle of implementation", i.e. to the user's voice as stressed by the Chair Marita Ulvskog during her opening
- need to tailor such a skills guarantee to the concrete situation of a country.

Key points from discussion:

- **Performance of education system:** Why do so many people lack basic skills despite ten years of compulsory schooling?

The OECD **survey** for adults aged 25 and older reflects the **performance of education systems in the past**. While some countries indeed showed challenges in their education systems, this might have changed. Therefore, it is key to carefully identify existing problems in each country.

- **Low-skilled:** How does the OECD define low-skilled?

OECD has developed a definition and **methodology which is published online**. This includes **testing**, for example, by having people read pill labels and find key information. Further, Deborah Rosevear stressed that the "low-skilled" according to the OECD definition are a heterogeneous group distributed across different education levels.

- **Non-formal and informal learning:** How can skills be made better visible?

It is important to **strengthen systems for validation** of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning including volunteering and learning at the workplace. This would be very relevant for low-skilled (in terms of basic skills) who may have acquired considerable skills on the job.

All European tools needed for quality skills validation are available at the **Cedefop web-portal**. So, **it is about implementing** the related Council Recommendation of 2013 in the Member States.

1.4. Modernisation of vocational education and training: how to make vet and apprenticeships more attractive?

In his contribution, James Calleja concluded with three key messages taking a broader perspective:

- **Rethink education**

Modernisation of VET is not sufficient. Rethinking of education implies a new paradigm bringing together the world of education and the world of work and **integrating the concepts of skills for life and skills for jobs**.

Moreover, in times of changing technologies and working environments, schools and VET institutions no longer have exclusivity in equipping people with the skills they need. Neither can employers expect job-ready graduates from the education system, but workplaces have to become places for learning. Social partners and employers therefore have a pivotal role to play with **employers as educators** in order to remain competitive.

- **Pump more funding and attraction into the ERASMUS+ programme** for small and medium enterprises, employers to give learners the opportunity to experience the real world of work.
- **Intensify cross-industrial private-public cooperation** as called for in the World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs Report 2016](#).

With a view to **making VET more attractive**, James Calleja **called upon the Member States to put words into action as a good knowledge base exists** and many initiatives have been taken as documented in the Copenhagen, Bruges and Riga reports.

From a Cedefop perspective and building upon experience in Malta, he focused on a number of **key ingredients** to achieve a better image for VET as low take up is a problem in many countries:

- **Change in governance and formal VET degree:**

Malta has achieved a cultural change during the last decade by **merging two relevant ministries**, the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Labour, and introducing VET at the level of a **Bachelor degree**.

- **Work-based learning makes a difference**

There is evidence that work-based learning increases employability and thus attractiveness.

- **Involvement of social partners**

James Calleja pleaded not to put barriers to the Alliance for Apprenticeships. Further, he pointed to the [European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships](#) having been issued by ETUC which provides a good basis to be applied.

Member States should have a structured dialogue with a governing role of social partners in place.

Key points from discussion:

- **Dual education:** Should dual education have a stronger role at all levels of education?

It was argued that **dual education should be mainstreamed at all levels of education** starting with primary education. Progressive education should combine critical thinking with learning in the workplace and formal schooling should be limited.

A new skills culture is needed, as there are still too many institutional barriers between schools and workplaces. **Clichés and images of education** put barriers when parents and young people make choices. Therefore, the "packaging" of **VET** has to be changed to make it more attractive, for example, by introducing **Bachelor degrees**.

- **Transversal skills:** Should teaching of transversal skills be strengthened?

Further contributions stressed the **increasing role of transversal skills for employability** in times of rapidly changing demand and shorter obsolescence cycles for technical competences and skills:

- **learning skills**, i.e. learning how to learn should be an element of teachers' curricula in all countries whilst the workplace should become a learning environment
- **career management skills**, i.e. a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals (and groups) to gather and analyse and educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions. An application-oriented concept has been developed by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy network ([ELGPN](#)).
- **STEM** providing systemic and analytical meta-skills.

1.5. Revision of the European qualifications framework: lessons from research

In her contribution on the revision of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Agnieszka Chlon-Dominczak stressed that the tool, which dates from 2008, focuses on learning outcomes, its main function being to enhance the comparability and visibility of qualifications in Europe. In many countries, sectoral dialogues between employers and educational institutions were introduced to discuss learning outcomes, and this system helps to provide a clear reference for skills demand and supply. Hence, the inclusion of the social partners at national level is crucial for the success of the tool.

The EQF is an important catalyst for the development of national qualification frameworks (NQFs). So far, there are 18 countries that have reached the operational stage, out of a total of 39 countries developing 43 NQFs.

With a view to the proposal for a revision of EQF, Agnieszka Chlon-Dominczak stressed that simple "policy borrowing" does not always guarantee good outcomes: specific national circumstances have to be taken into account in order to arrive at solutions tailor-made for the national context.

In that regard, the EQF policy context could also learn from the open method of coordination that is applied for example in the area of social security: here, common goals are agreed at European level, while it is entirely up to each Member State how to reach them. The EQF as such should not simply be "downloaded" to the national level – the NQFs should be based on the institutional logic in each country.

For the EQF policy to reach full maturity, the NQFs need to become more comprehensive and also include non-formal, private and international qualifications. An investigation into the description of specific qualifications across different NQFs shows that similar qualifications

are often described very differently. Hence, renewing the Council recommendation is an important next step. Agnieszka Chlon-Dominczak concluded that the NQFs and the EQF should be “dynamic quality oriented policy tools with vision” that feed into the New Skills Agenda for Europe.

Key points from discussion:

- **Link between NQFs and the EQF:** How will this link between national qualifications and EQF evolve in the future, is this a process that needs more time or is it a matter of principle?

Approaches to NQF vary greatly at national level. They do have in common, though, that usually stakeholders are involved in the decisions on which qualifications are included in the national (SK?) framework and what levels they are given. The value of the NQFs comes through the national referencing processes. This is an important part of the entire concept of the NQFs, and it helps to build trust as part of the European discussion. However, we need to understand differences and similarities better. There are no shortcuts here, and further learning and implementation practice is needed. This also goes for international sectoral qualifications which will have to be recognised in national contexts as well.

- **Content of qualifications:** Could it be better to limit the EQF to a definition of core elements of the content as skills and competences change, but some core elements remain?

Building the EQF needs time. There are differences in ways learning outcomes are spelt out in different countries, and those differences are rooted in the different education and training systems. We indeed do **need to find the core of qualifications that is comparable across countries**. The qualifications do not need to be described in detail; we only need to find **common elements** that are general enough to be comparable across countries and render the qualifications understandable and trustworthy in other countries.

Trust is a very important element of the education qualification system on which also the link between education systems and labour markets build: employers need to trust the certificates issued by educational institutions.

1.6. Revision of the europass framework: lessons from research

In his contribution, Rimantas Dumcius briefly described the Europass initiative. There are two documents that can be filled in by European citizens, namely the Europass CV and the Europass language passport. There are three other documents that are standardised and based on learning outcomes. They are issued by educational institutions, namely the diploma supplement issued by higher education institutions, the certificate supplement that accompanies VET qualifications and the Mobility Document that can be completed by relevant home and host organisations. The Europass initiative is governed by DG EMPL of the European Commission, Cedefop, which is responsible for the website and provides expertise for development and implementation, and finally the EACEA which coordinates and manages the operating subsidies and monitors the National Europass Centres.

According to the presentation, the Europass initiative is one of the most successful and cost-effective European initiatives of the last ten years. By 2015, over 18 million Europass documents had been downloaded, and the tool helps to address the information asymmetry between employers and job seekers as it provides a structure to properly record skills and competences. For the European tax payer, the download of a Europass CV costs a fraction of a Euro cent, while the benefits can be thousands of Euros of additional annual income.

Several weaknesses that were identified in a recent evaluation have been addressed, e.g. by introducing a new online editor, self-assessment grids for ICT skills and languages and by redesigning the Europass website. The documents should be reviewed continuously in order to keep them relevant and up to date.

The Europass tool is currently mainly used by young people with high levels of education, the "low-hanging fruit". However, more disadvantaged groups with lower levels of educational attainment, older people, those long-term unemployed and recently arrived migrants often do not know the Europass and consequently cannot benefit from the tool to record their skills. In order to improve this situation, Europass should be promoted at national and local level through public employment services, career guidance centres and similar structures. There is a need to convince those actors to use Europass.

At European level, a one-stop-shop that integrates a wider set of European tools and services in the area of skills and qualifications (e.g. a tool for self-assessment of entrepreneurship) may also help to further promote and facilitate the use of Europass, similarly to an increased collaboration between the different contact points for those initiatives at national level.

Key points from discussion:

- **Coverage:** Is Europass an instrument for the happy few? Europass is currently catering to the **highly educated mainly**.

It is also a tool accessible for those with internet and literacy skills. Its effect can be very positive when people use it, and it is a very good investment for Europe because it is so cost-effective. Support to **jobseekers** needs to be provided at local level in a coordinated manner and the **relevant providers** of this support **should recommend the Europass** as a standard.

For **long-term unemployed a CV** may be a **last step of an integration pathway** when it comes to placement into a job, while good profiling, guidance and effective active labour market programmes are more relevant. Europass is one of the tools that can help them.

- **Evaluation of efficiency of Europass:** Could it be more adequate to check whether people find a job faster when they use a Europass CV instead of looking at CV download numbers?

Indeed, documents are not an end in themselves. Europass should help individuals to translate life and work experience into skills that are relevant to the labour market and employers. **Europass** offers help for this translation process in an **online tutorial**.

- **Governance:** Can operational networks even if better coordinated at national level trigger the necessary policy developments?

According to information available on the planned revision of the Europass governance, coordination points in MS will have the task to coordinate a number of members of European operational networks at national level bringing together specialists or practitioners (e.g. Euroguidance). In addition, **support and structured cooperation for policy development at European level is needed** to further develop the related services and tools in the Member States.

1.7. Closing

Vice Chair of the CULT committee **Michaela Šojdrová** welcomed the organisation of a common workshop for both committees involved. She pointed out that the EP's work on a report on the New Skills Agenda is just starting and thanked the speakers and audience of the workshop for their valuable input.

2. WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

THE NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE IN A NUTSHELL (Source: European Commission)

The European Commission has adopted a new Skills Agenda for Europe which aims to make sure that people develop the skills necessary for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

10 **concrete key actions** support the implementation of the Skills Agenda for Europe. These will be launched in 2016 and 2017:

1. A Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishment of a **Skills Guarantee** to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification (issued in June 2016).
2. A Commission proposal for the **revision of the European Qualifications Framework** for a better understanding of qualifications and to make better use of all available skills in the European labour market (issued in June 2016)
3. A "**Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals**" to support early identification and profiling of skills and qualifications of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants (planned for June 2016)
4. A Commission proposal for **revision of the Europass Framework**, offering people better and easier-to-use tools to assess and present their skills and get useful real-time information on skills needs and trends which can help with career and learning choices (planned for end of September 2016)
5. Launch of the "**Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition**" bringing together Member States and education, employment and industry stakeholders to develop a large digital talent pool and ensure that individuals and the labour force in Europe are equipped with adequate digital skills (planned for end 2016)
6. Launch of a '**Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills**' to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages in specific economic sectors (planned for June 2016).
7. Commission proposals **supporting VET modernisation to make Vocational Education and Training (VET) a first choice** by enhancing opportunities for VET learners to undertake a work based learning experience and promoting greater visibility of good labour market outcomes of VET (2nd quarter of 2017)
8. Commission proposal to **review of the Recommendation on Key Competences** with a special focus on promoting entrepreneurial and innovation-oriented mind-sets and skills (planned for the 4th quarter of 2017)
9. Commission proposals **on graduate tracking** to improve information on how graduates progress in the labour market (planned for the 2nd quarter of 2017).
10. A proposal to further analyse and exchange best practices on effective ways to address **brain drain** (planned for end of 2016).

(Sources: [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A new Skills Agenda for Europe](#); [Ten actions to help equip people in Europe with better skills](#))

2.1. Contribution by Deborah Roseveare: Skills Guarantee: Basic skills for adults - gaps and implications for policy makers - An OECD perspective

Abstract

- Skills matter for individuals and societies. Skills are a vital driver of economic prosperity and social wellbeing through productivity, innovation and inclusion and need to be placed at the centre of national policy agendas.
- Large numbers of European adults have low basic skills and improving the skills of these adults is a crucial challenge facing European countries.
- Understanding the diverse characteristics of low-skilled adults is an essential step in designing more effective education and training programmes to meet their needs.
- Policy actions to improve basic skills require a concerted, joined-up policy approach to provide an effective pipeline for improving basic skills to ensure that each stage of the policy pipeline is contributing effectively towards achieving better outcomes for people.
- Achieving real improvements in basic skills requires identifying and overcoming the obstacles to effective implementation of policy actions; careful monitoring of progress towards established objectives; and responsiveness and adaptability in light of experience and changing circumstances.

Why skills matter

OECD evidence and analysis shows that skills are vitally important for individuals and societies. For individuals, skills lead to greater employability and also better social outcomes such as health and social inclusion. For societies, skills are critical to achieving economic prosperity and social wellbeing by boosting productivity, fostering innovation and promoting greater trust and more civic engagement.

Yet most countries fail to fully leverage their considerable investments in skills to boost productivity, innovation and inclusion. Countries can boost productivity and innovation by ensuring that a sizeable share of the population has the advanced, specialised skills needed to develop and implement innovative workplace practices and transformative technologies that increase efficiency and result in new and improved products and services. But they also need to ensure that all people have the strong basic skills that enable them to adopt and adapt to these new practices and technologies.

Greater equality of opportunity to develop and use skills is critical for forging inclusive growth. Low-skilled adults are especially vulnerable to economic marginalisation and as the skills requirements of jobs continue to rise and evolve, many of them will face particularly difficulty in upskilling or reskilling to retain their jobs or to prepare for new ones. Many more will have limited prospects of earnings growth and educational and skills disparities are important contributors to rising income inequality in many countries.

However, the implications of skills for inclusion go well beyond disparities in employment and earnings. Adults with lower levels of skills are also less likely than their more highly skilled peers to enjoy good health, trust others, and to participate in community life and the democratic process. Skills and effective education systems are also key to the successful integration of migrants.

For countries, having good educational and skills outcomes on average is not “good enough” if some members of society are left behind. All people need to have opportunities to develop

relevant skills, activate them in the labour market and effectively use them in workplaces and society.

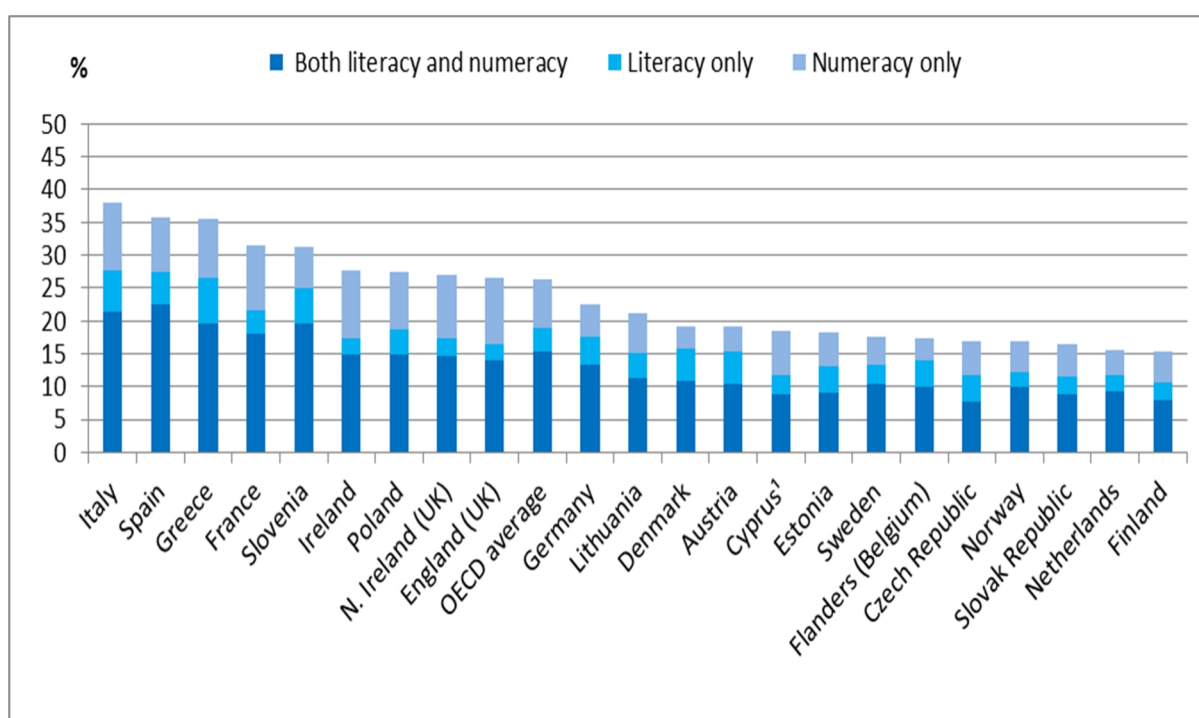
Basic skills – the size of the challenge

There is wide agreement that well-functioning economies and societies need a wide range of skills, encompassing strong basic skills and advanced generic cognitive skills; professional, technical, occupation-specific or sector-specific skills; and socio-emotional skills. And while each individual in society will have a different breadth and depth of skills, having some bundle of relevant skills is crucial for good labour market outcomes. Furthermore, different types of skills can be mutually reinforcing. Strong basic skills are a crucial foundation for acquiring advanced professional and technical skills while socio-emotional skills such as communication, teamwork and perseverance can facilitate the learning of new skills.

Solid basic skills -- literacy and numeracy in particular -- are crucial for further skill development, employability and good social outcomes. The PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills shows a wide distribution of these skills within each country, while on average across participating OECD countries, one in four working age adults scored at or below Level 1 in literacy and/or numeracy (on a scale up to Level 5). However, there is significant variation among European countries, ranging from 15% of adults in Finland to 38% of adults in Italy (see Figure 1). These differences across countries point to the need for actions tailored to each country's situation, as provided for with the Skills Guarantee.

Figure 1 The proportion of adults who are low performers

Percentage of adults who score at or below Level 1 in literacy and/or numeracy



- Note by Turkey:** The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue". Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

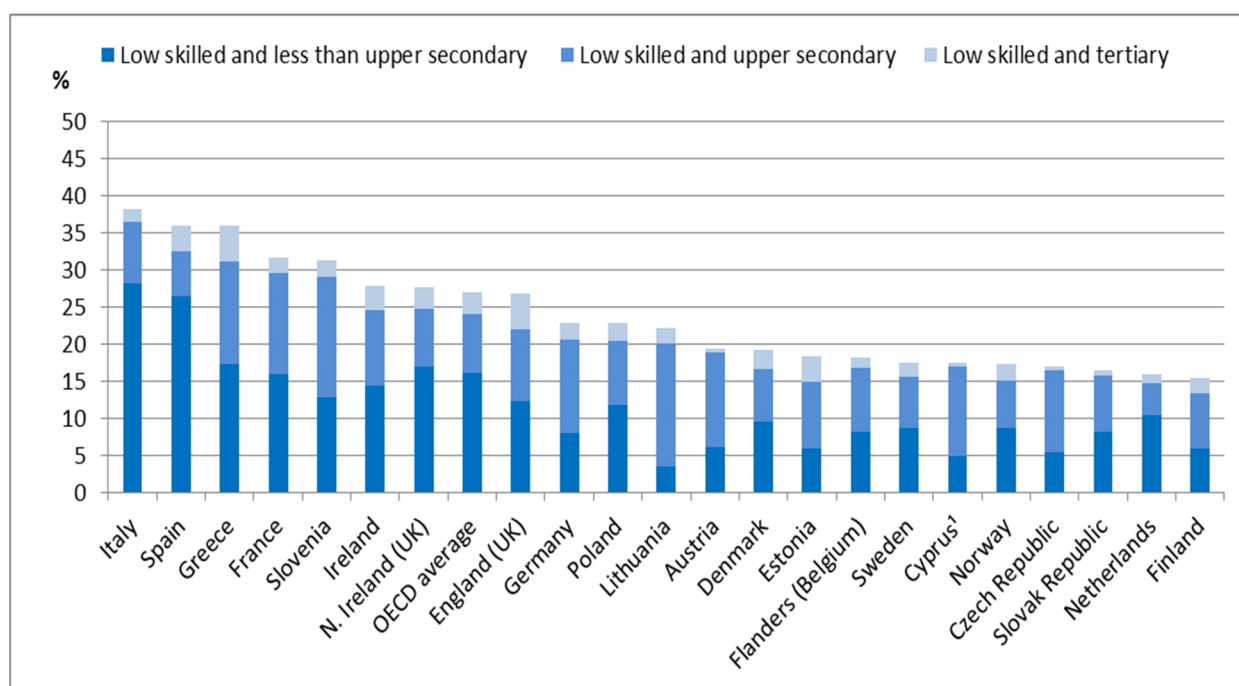
Source: *Skills Matter*, OECD Publishing, 2016.

The diverse characteristics of low-skilled adults

Analysis of the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills highlights the diversity of low-skilled adults. Adults with low proficiency in literacy or numeracy are more likely than the rest of the adult population to have not completed upper secondary level education, to have been born in a country other than the country in which they took the test, to be of older age and to be unemployed. But a greater likelihood does not mean that the majority of low-skilled adults share these characteristics.

There are significant differences between countries on the share of low skilled adults by educational attainment (see Figure 2). For example, in Italy and Spain the majority of low-skilled adults have not completed upper secondary education. In contrast, the majority of low skilled adults in Poland and Germany have already completed upper secondary (or equivalent). In any case, in all European countries, there are low skilled adults who have completed upper secondary education and in some cases tertiary education, which underscores that qualifications and educational attainment do not always guarantee that people will have strong foundation skills.¹ This means that the Skills Guarantee targeted on those who have not completed upper secondary education (or equivalent) will reach many low-skilled adults but by no means all of them.

Figure 2: Educational attainment of low performers
Percentage of adults who score at or below Level 1 in literacy and/or numeracy



1. See note 1 of Figure 1.

Source: Skills Matter, OECD Publishing, 2016

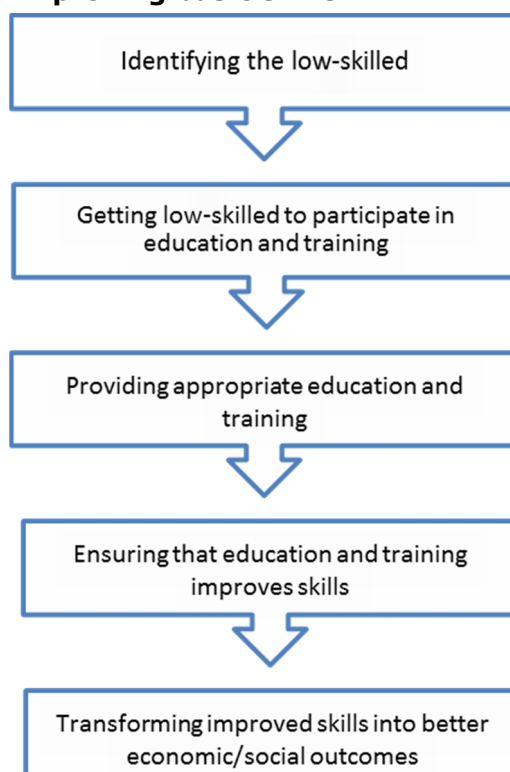
Designing an effective pipeline for low-skilled adults

Many countries already have considerable experience with policies, programmes and initiatives to address basic skills gaps and assist low-skilled adults, with varying combinations of national, regional and local governments and non-government organisations and volunteer/community-based involvement. However, while some adult literacy and numeracy

¹ Conversely, it is worth remarking that among 25-65 year olds across OECD countries without upper secondary education, more than 39% have literacy skills at level 2 and another 18% are at levels 3-5 while for numeracy, 35% have level 2 and around 16% have levels 3-5.

programmes have delivered promising improvements in skills, these are difficult to scale, while the outcomes of efforts to improve adult literacy and numeracy are often disappointing. Designing effective programmes to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of low-skilled adults is therefore challenging. Lessons from country experience and reflection on the elements that need to come together suggests that it requires a connected pipeline approach as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Pipeline for improving basic skills



The pipeline requires first identifying and reaching out to the low-skilled adults, which as noted above are a diverse group with varying characteristics. A second challenge often encountered with low-skilled adults is persuading them to participate in upgrading their skills and for a range of reasons low-skilled adults may not be willing to do so. The next step is ensuring that there are education and training programmes that are well-adapted to the practical constraints and learning styles of low-skilled adults. And participation in these programmes is not enough; the programmes also need to deliver real improvements in skills. Lastly, it is important to ensure that it actually pays off – economically and socially – for people to improve their basic skills through opportunities to access better jobs and enhance their wellbeing.

However, if any section of this skills pipeline is weak, then the whole pipeline will function poorly and actions that target only one or two sections of the pipeline will struggle to deliver significant skills improvements. Yet different ministries and agencies or even different levels of government will be responsible for different parts of the pipeline, so ensuring that the pipeline works well requires a joined-up approach across all parties involved. Recent OECD work with countries on building national skills strategies has demonstrated how to bring together several ministries, different levels of government and a wide range of stakeholders to identify skills challenges and together develop actions to address them.

Challenges for implementation

OECD's experience in working with countries across a wide range of issues has highlighted the importance of coupling good policy design with effective implementation in order to actually achieve better outcomes. This will also be the case with the Skills Guarantee.

In drawing up actions under this initiative, OECD would encourage countries to carefully examine where the obstacles for effective implementation might lie and how to overcome them. In OECD experience, three elements can be particularly useful here: close engagement with all relevant stakeholders; peer-learning – sharing and comparing experience between countries; and pilot-testing initiatives to iron out wrinkles before wider roll-out.

Results matter: whatever policy actions to tackle basic skills countries decide to implement, it will be important to carefully monitor progress towards the objectives that countries establish. This monitoring could be done in a number of ways and on intermediate outcomes and/or end results. Whichever approach is adopted, such monitoring is generally most effective when designed into the policy actions themselves from the start. Monitoring and evaluation also allows for fine-tuning the actions to provide responsiveness and adaptability in light of experience and changing circumstances. In doing so, it is important to give policy actions a realistic amount of time to get beyond any initial implementation glitches and show whether or not they are delivering results.

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2.2. Contribution by James J. Calleja: Modernisation of VET: How can we make VET and apprenticeships more attractive? - A Cedefop perspective

Abstract

- Attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) is assessed by – the level of participation in VET and VET’s image compared to general education. **Factors influencing the indicators** are labour market conditions, policy priorities and how people see VET benefitting them in terms of their potential earnings and job prospects in their national contexts.
- Many measures have been taken to raise VET’s attractiveness, including expanding work-based learning. Evidence indicates that **VET combining school and work-based learning** improves employment prospects, but it **remains underdeveloped**, varying considerably across countries, fields of study and sectors. Only around 1 in 7 of all upper-secondary VET students are in a course combining school and work-based learning, including apprenticeships.
- But extending work-based learning to make VET more attractive **requires employer engagement**. Many countries use financial incentives for learners and employers to encourage work-based learning opportunities, but initiatives are underway to encourage attitudinal change.
- The **New Skills Agenda** for Europe aims to make VET a first choice by improving work based learning for all. Making VET more attractive requires employers to see it as part of a competitive strategy to meet their changing skill needs; around 53% of adult employees in the EU need to learn new things continuously. Good jobs develop good skills and **employers are educators**. Employer engagement is key to increasing the attractiveness of VET and apprenticeship.

Attractiveness of VET: Factors and policies

As the labour market constantly changes, modernisation of vocational education and training (VET) is a vital and ongoing process; it is essential if VET is to continue to transform learners into workers. VET evolves in response to the creation of new jobs, innovation, employers’ and citizens’ aspirations. Its modernisation and attractiveness largely depends on long-standing principles of quality, relevancy, recognition and employability.

The attractiveness of VET is often assessed by two indicators – the level of participation in VET and VET’s esteem – or image – notably in comparison to general education. These indicators are influenced by a complex interplay of different factors concerning VET’s quality, recognition, relevance and employability which affect earnings, employment advantages over lower and higher qualifications, labour market conditions and policy priorities. These factors help shape the views of family members and role models who can be particularly influential when individuals choose their educational pathways.

The extent of influence of each of these factors varies across countries. This emphasises the importance of understanding the national context in which VET is placed to explain why, for example, enrolment in upper-secondary VET ranges from 77% of all upper-secondary students in Austria to just 24% in Hungary.

For example, differences in earnings between VET graduates and graduates of general and higher education can depend on the overall wage distribution in a country. Wage differentials are higher in the UK than in Sweden. National labour market conditions also affect the supply and demand for VET and apprenticeships, which for historical reasons tend to be prevalent

in crafts and trades and manufacturing. Germany, Slovakia and Austria have relatively strong manufacturing bases and a demand for the skills VET traditionally produces. Other countries, for example Greece, with more service-orientated economies rely more on sectors such as tourism, where VET and apprenticeship are less developed. Indications are that expenditure on vocational and prevocational education is positively related to both participation in and esteem of VET. Consequently, national priorities for education and training expenditure will also influence the attractiveness of VET.

At European and national level various measures have been taken to raise the attractiveness of VET. Many countries, including Belgium, Germany, Cyprus, Poland and Italy, have made changes to smooth access to higher education through the VET route. More than half of EU member states already organise campaigns to attract young people to VET, including TV campaigns in countries such as Denmark and Greece. Skill competitions are also held, for example in Estonia, Spain, Hungary, Portugal and Finland to raise the status of VET.

Improvements to guidance and counselling services have been made by countries including Bulgaria, France, the Netherlands and the UK to bring more people into VET. Some countries have taken steps to acquaint young people with VET at an early stage. For example, Belgium, Bulgaria and Denmark include VET elements in compulsory lower-secondary education.

The above measures can be seen as seeking to raise the attractiveness of VET by improving its quality and recognition. However, at both European and national levels work has been done to increase the attractiveness of VET by increasing its labour market relevance and in turn the employability and job opportunities of VET students.

Further efforts to modernise and increase the attractiveness of VET include developing and expanding work-based learning. The European Commission, Member States and social partners recommitted themselves to this goal at Riga in July of last year, with good reason. Evidence indicates that VET that combines school and work-based learning, either as part of a dual system or through other arrangements – internships, traineeships, or as placements in school-based VET systems can help to improve employment prospects.

For young people in transition to the labour market many studies show the benefits of work-based learning. In 2014, Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey looked at skill mismatch among adult employees (aged 24 to 65) across the EU. The survey found that people whose studies involved work-based learning are not only more likely to find a job, but to find a better, more skill-intensive job. In countries that combine school and work-based learning, youth unemployment tends to be below the EU average.

And the numbers talk. In 2014 in the EU, the average employment rate of upper-secondary level VET graduates aged 20 to 34 was 76.9%, compared to 70.6% for those who had studied general education.

Challenges: work-based learning still underdeveloped

Attractiveness increases when VET qualifications have currency on the labour market. However, enrolment in initial vocational education and training does not mean enrolment in a course that combines school and work based learning. Almost all initial VET in Denmark combines school and work-based learning, with the work-based content counting for at least 25% of the curriculum, compared to only 4% in Belgium and 3% in Spain.

In effect, while around half of all upper-secondary students are in vocational education and training, only around 1 in 7 is in a vocational course that combines school and work-based learning, including apprenticeships.

Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey found that only around 40% of adult employees have completed education or training involving some work-based learning. As well as

countries, provision of work-based learning varies considerably across fields of study. Only 25% of younger (24-34 year-old) graduates in humanities, languages and arts, economics, business and law have participated in work-based learning. Sectors also vary. Some 62% of adult employees in professional, scientific or technical services completed studies only in an educational institution.

Over the next decade, labour market developments indicate that work-based learning will become more important. Future jobs will combine technical and behavioural skills. Technology is taking over routine tasks and employers increasingly require workers to think, organise, communicate and decide to deal with non-routine tasks.

Already many employers are concerned that applicants, particularly young people, lack 'soft skills', such communication and problem-solving abilities and that they lack experience and the right work attitude. Such a combination of technical skills and behavioural skills is more likely to be developed through work-based learning; but, currently, only around 25% of enterprises in the EU offer apprenticeships.

Strategies: the role of employer engagement

It is not possible to develop and extend work-based learning and so make VET and apprenticeships more attractive without the engagement of the social partners and, in particular employers. Their engagement has never been more important; how to encourage it is the challenge for us all.

Many countries use financial incentives for learners and employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises to increase demand for and supply of apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities. The UK has introduced a levy to finance apprenticeships. While in the Czech Republic some regional authorities provide scholarships in training fields where there are shortages of people. However, in addition to financial incentives we need to encourage an attitudinal change among employers and initiatives are already underway.

The EU is playing an important role. The European alliance for apprenticeships is about creating partnerships and Member States learning from each other. Cedefop has carried out reviews of apprenticeship arrangements in several Member States at their request, including Lithuania, Malta, Italy, Slovenia and Greece.

Importantly, these reviews have helped identify new forms of cooperation between governments, employers and unions in managing education and training systems; the status of apprentices and vocational education and training in countries without strong traditions in these areas is being changed. Apprenticeships legislation is changing, for example in Belgium France, Malta and the UK. Other countries such as Denmark and Germany have developed new strategies to strengthen their apprenticeship systems.

In terms of support for employers to develop work-based learning and apprenticeships, earlier this year the ETUC published a Quality Framework for Apprenticeships and work-based learning, which listed 20 quality standards and criteria to meet them.

The New Skills Agenda and way forward: employers as educators

In June, Commissioner Thyssen launched the new Skills Agenda for Europe a major initiative that will raise the profile of VET, not least in its proposal for skills guarantee for adults as well as young people. Cedefop provides and brokers the knowledge it generates through research and analysis to support VET reform and a role is foreseen for Cedefop in helping to implement the skills guarantee.

The Skills Agenda aims to help the 70 million Europeans - more than the population of France - who lack adequate reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills progress towards an upper-secondary qualification. Vice-President Katainen sees the new Skills Agenda for Europe as a

way to ensure “no-one is left behind”. In addition, it aims to make VET a first choice by improving opportunities for work based learning, not only to train young people, but also existing employees.

Cedefop’s European skills and jobs survey illustrates the importance of developing and skills in the workplace. It found that, to avoid skill mismatch, 53% of adult employees in the EU had to learn new things continuously, as their job tasks change. Further, around 83% of adult workers in the EU, whose skills matched their jobs when they were recruited, have seen their jobs become more difficult and some that 26% of EU adult employees lack the skills they need for their job.

To increase the attractiveness of VET, along with financial and technical support, campaigns are needed to persuade employers that VET – through work-based learning and good jobs that develop skills in learning-conducive work environments – is part of a competitive strategy to ensure that employers can meet their changing skill needs.

But we are some way from that point. According to Cedefop’s skills and jobs survey, around 41% of adult employees need only basic literacy skills to do their job and 33% need only basic or no ICT skills at all. Some 25% of adult employees say that they underuse their skills, despite their qualifications matching their job. More worryingly, around 27% say that they are in ‘dead-end jobs’, with higher skills than they need to do their job and only limited potential to develop.

In the EU, around 29% of highly-qualified workers are in for which they are overqualified.

Good jobs develop good skills and employers are educators. Employer engagement is key to modernising and increasing the attractiveness of VET and apprenticeship. In many places the worlds of education and employment have been kept apart; VET and apprenticeship marginalised. Skills for life and skills for jobs are seen as separate; one is a task for schools, the other for the workplace. But good VET systems and good apprenticeship programmes supply lifelong learners and social partner and employer engagement is essential.

We spend more time learning by doing than learning by knowing. Many more can be engaged in this experience if teachers/trainers and employers join their respective environments for young learners, time-share the learning processes and evaluate the learners’ capacity to know and be able to do a job that produces goods and services that are competitive for employers and a sustainable quality of life for workers.

2.3. Contribution by Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak: Revision of the European Qualifications Framework: Lessons from research and national experiences

Abstract

- The **European Qualifications Framework** (EQF) is an important **catalyst for** the development of **national qualifications frameworks** in Europe: currently 39 countries developed or are in the process of developing their qualifications frameworks.
- The EQF is a tool that increases the **understanding, visibility and comparability of qualifications** in Europe.
- Development and implementation of national frameworks is effective if it builds on **national developments and common policy learning** at the European level.
- Implementing solutions that force **policy borrowing and the hasty adoption of European-driven policies**, which change frequently and lack continuity, may lead to their reduced impact on the quality, transparency and effectiveness of national qualifications systems
- National qualifications systems should be embedded in the national context and developed with the participation of national stakeholders.
- The revision of the Council recommendation should strengthen the role of the EQF and NQFs as **"dynamic oriented policy tools with vision"** and limit the risk of policy borrowing. This could be done by **commonly agreeing on principles in the area of quality assurance, credit systems and levelling method that would drive national policies**, rather than recommending compliance with these principles.

Introduction

The aim of this note is to provide some insight into the development of the European Qualifications Framework in the past years, taking into account country experiences and findings from research. Since 2008, much progress has been achieved in the development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe under the common umbrella of the European Qualifications Framework.

European societies face many challenges in the area of skills as a result of quickly changing demands in the context of technological and global changes and population ageing, as well as increased population ageing leading to shrinking working age cohort. This means that improving the quality of human capital is essential to maintain the competitive advantage of Europe and to reduce quantity losses due to demographic change.

The New Skills Agenda for Europe (European Commission 2016b) underlines the need for enhancing skills development in Europe, starting from the development of the basic skills, through to more developed and advanced competencies, along three main strands:

1. Improving the quality and relevance of skills formation,
2. Making skills and qualifications more visible and comparable,
3. Improving skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a tool that helps communication and comparison between qualifications systems in Europe. It has eight common European reference levels described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences.

The primary role of the EQF links to the second strand of the New Skills Agenda for Europe as it enhances the comparability and visibility of qualifications in Europe. The development of the EQF and NQFs, as indicated below, also feeds into the other strands of the New Skills Agenda for Europe.

State of the EQF in the European Union

The European Qualifications Framework has been a significant catalyst for the development of national qualifications frameworks (Cedefop 2013, 2014). The Cedefop monitoring of EQF development (Cedefop 2015, 2016) indicates that a total of 39 European countries had developed/are developing 43 NQFs (including three frameworks for Belgium: the Flemish community, the French speaking community and the German speaking community; and three for the United Kingdom: England/Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). Most of these countries (34) are working towards comprehensive NQFs, covering all types and levels of qualifications (compared to 30 in 2013), the remaining four countries have introduced partial NQFs, covering a limited range of qualification types and levels or consisting of distinct frameworks operating separately from each other. Examples are the Czech Republic and Switzerland where separate frameworks for vocational and higher education qualifications have been developed; France where vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications are included in the framework; and Italy, where the framework is restricted to qualifications from higher education.

By early 2016, 22 Member States and 5 non-Member States had finalised the process of referencing their national qualifications levels to the EQF. Six more countries are planning to finalise the referencing process by the end of 2016. Progress has also been made in operationalising NQFs: frameworks in 23 countries have reached the operational stage (compared to 18 countries in 2014 and 16 in 2013). These can be divided into two main categories (Cedefop 2016):

- 17 countries have fully operational frameworks: Belgium, the Czech Republic (partial QF for VET), Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.
- National qualifications frameworks have reached an early operational stage in six countries (Croatia, Greece, Latvia, Montenegro, Slovakia and Turkey). These countries have completed the initial design and adoption of their frameworks. As the frameworks' practical implementation is continuing, their benefits and visibility to end-users are still limited.

Furthermore, six countries are in the process of formal legal adoption of their frameworks (Spain, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Finland). These countries have completed initial technical and conceptual design; they will embark on implementing their frameworks as soon as the legal and political mandate is in place. Austria Poland and Slovenia adopted the necessary legal provisions in December 2015 and January 2016; Hungary and Spain expect legal adoption soon. By early 2016, 15 countries were putting EQF levels on certificates and diplomas, with a rapid increase expected by the end of 2016.

A Cedefop study (Cedefop 2015, p. 9) underlines that most countries see NQFs as important for strengthening the learning outcomes-based approach throughout education and training. Learning outcomes-based levels provide a reference point for formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences and allow countries to put in place comprehensive national approaches for validation. NQFs support learner-centred teaching and training practices, notably by changing the way standards, curricula and assessment are defined and used. Last but not least, the context of lifelong learning in NQFs is important for enhancing better labour

market match between skills supply and demand, so they provide added value for mobility in the labour market. Most countries also consider NQFs as

- relevant for strengthening lifelong and life-wide learning policies and practices;
- tools for increasing the permeability of education and training systems, potentially reducing barriers to access and progression in education, training and learning;
- a reference point for quality assurance;
- a tool for strengthening cooperation between stakeholders and establishing closer link to the labour market;
- improving the esteem of vocational education and training;
- enabling the better monitoring of the supply and demand of qualifications.

Overall, Member States achieved significant progress in implementing national qualifications frameworks referenced to the European Qualifications Frameworks in the 8 years since the adoption of the EQF Recommendation. Nevertheless, implementation lags behind the milestones set in the EQF recommendation.

Challenges in EQF implementation

The proposed revision of the EQF (European Commission 2016a, 2016c) follows the assessment of the experience from the past eight years since the adoption of the Recommendation on the EQF and evaluations of EQF implementation conducted in recent years (European Commission 2013; ICF GHK and Technopolis Group 2013).

In particular, the following challenges related to EQF implementation are identified by the Commission:

- Not all countries have referenced their entire qualifications system to the EQF, despite its overarching character;
- There are substantial variations from country to country in the description of the content of similar qualifications (such as differences in the level of details when describing learning outcomes, different content of contextual information);
- The term 'competences' is used in a way that has two meanings: a broader one including knowledge, skills and competences related to autonomy and responsibility (all three columns of the EQF) as well as the narrower that only refers to the third column (covering autonomy and responsibility);
- Trust in the quality and level of qualifications is underdeveloped;
- There are no common arrangements for credit transfer and accumulation qualifications;
- There is an increasing number of international (sectoral) qualifications based on standards developed by international companies or sectoral organisations;
- There is a need to enhance the development of common training frameworks based on EQF levels;²
- There is no defined relationship between the EQF and national qualification frameworks in third countries;
- Governance of the EQF in the context of other European tools such as Europass and ESCO is somewhat fragmented.

² According to the Art.49 of the Directive 2005/36/EC.

The assessment of the role of the EQF and its further development should take into account both the achievements of the implementation of the European and national frameworks, that have been recognised by Member States, the EQF Advisory Group, the Commission and other stakeholders as well as the challenges emerging from the learning from implementation and the developments of skills strategies in Europe.

There are also challenges to EQF and NQFs implementation that researcher are identifying. In some countries, NQF implementation is an important stimulus for reforming of the national education and lifelong learning policies, gearing towards the common use of learning outcomes that shifts the orientation of the systems from the process of learning towards its outcomes, strengthens the quality assurance and the reliability of the national qualifications. Such frameworks are also called "the reforming frameworks". Raffe (2009) suggests that NQFs are more likely to be successful if, while attempting to implement the intrinsic logic of the new reforms, they recognize the institutional logics that exist in the countries.

There are many examples of less successful frameworks that were developed based on the latter process (Chakroun 2010). In particular (Allais 2010; Chakroun 2010; Young 2008) note that in designing their national frameworks some countries rely heavily on the EQF itself, which is an example of policy borrowing. In some cases, national representatives see the development of an NQFs as an "EU-driven change". Allais (2010) warns that policy borrowing can be dangerous, especially if it does not take into account the specific context of the country. While official policy documents from all countries use the language of learning outcomes, they do not all mean the same thing and they do not reflect the different views held about outcomes within the country. Learning from other policies requires careful consideration of the differences in the context and conditions in which selected policy will be applied.

[The Commission proposal of the EQF revision in the light of identified achievements and challenges³](#)

After eight years of functioning, developments related to the EQF recommendation have significantly progressed. As noted before, many countries' NQFs have reached the implementation stage. This poses new challenges related to NQF development and EU policy co-ordination in this area. Given also the New Skills Agenda for Europe, a new impetus is needed for the further development of national qualifications frameworks and systems. From this perspective, the revision of the recommendation is a welcomed process. This process should take into account that there are many differences in the national frameworks and national qualifications systems, some of them being communication (or enabling) frameworks based on the agreement of relevant stakeholders and assisting learners and others involved in career choices. The regulatory frameworks have stronger reliance on legal prescription and regulatory solutions (Young 2008). To that end, the Recommendation should stimulate implementation of national qualifications frameworks well-embedded in the national and EU context.

The Commission proposal was initially discussed on the EQF Advisory Group meeting in June 2016. Many members of the group raised concerns regarding the changes in the scope of the Recommendation, including broadening the recommended coverage of the NQFs, issues related to quality assurance, credit systems and the governance of the process. Given the early stage of development of NQFs, the Recommendation poses new challenges, in particular induces further legislative changes. The discussion was not concluded and further discussion on the subject is envisaged.

³ The note takes into account discussions conducted between EQF Advisory Group members representing more than 10 Member States.

The proposed revision of the EQF recommendation reflects the list of challenges identified in the Commission assessment. The first points of the recommendation refer to the **scope of the national frameworks** in relation to the EQF calling for the development of comprehensive frameworks that would cover all types and levels of qualifications. The proposal of the EQF revision broadens the understanding of comprehensive frameworks – in the current recommendation it referred to covering all types and levels of 'formal qualifications' – the proposal of the EQF revisions also includes private and international (sectoral qualifications). This increases the scope of national frameworks, which poses further implementation challenges for countries that reference their NQFs to the EQF. The referencing criteria, developed by the EQF Advisory Group are maintained and included in the recommendation annex as part of a process that will be more comprehensive. Many of the recommendations included in the proposal build on the achievements up-to-date and address the identified challenges. Furthermore, it streamlines the co-ordination of several strands of policies in this area, including level descriptors and learning outcomes, levels of qualifications, quality assurance and credit systems.

However, there are several issues that should be subject to further discussion, so that the Recommendation works well together with national policies, stimulating policy learning that would feed into reaching the goals of the Skills Agenda, which are discussed below.

As far as the **structure of the EQF** is concerned the proposal of the Recommendation addresses the challenge of the ambiguous title of the third column ('competence'). The Commission proposes to replace the term 'competence' with only 'autonomy and responsibility'. This change narrows down the scope of the third column of the EQF. In the 2008 Recommendation: "*competence' means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.*" Furthermore, the third column has a different scope of understanding in the national frameworks. For example in the Polish framework, the term 'social competence' in the third column is understood within the context of identity, cooperation and responsibility, which is wider (Sławiński et al. 2015).

The proposal also includes a recommendation to **update referencing of the national frameworks to the EQF** at intervals of no more than 5 years. Given that many of the national frameworks are relatively young, such an update can provide the latest information on the situation of national frameworks. To that end, it should be noted that the successful implementation of national frameworks requires them to be developed according to the needs and specificity of national qualifications systems.

The proposal **broadens the scope of the Recommendation** by including the reference to the common principles of **quality assurance and the credit schemes** (annexes IV and V). Quality assurance and credit accumulation are an important component of national systems and credibility of national qualifications that are developed on the basis of the national context, with the participation of national stakeholders. Adopting common criteria in the Recommendation may not fit well into the overall diversity of national qualifications frameworks, which vary in the scope and design and thus may lead to imposing less effective solutions.

Furthermore, the **proposed principles on quality assurance** that are included in the annexes of the draft (new) Recommendation were not subject to a discussion within the EQF governance structure, in particular the EQF Advisory Group. In addition, the question arises on the relationship between the Recommendation and national quality assurance principles, in particular, whether these principles should comply with the standards in the draft Recommendation. The scope of these criteria should be clearly defined. As many NQFs are comprehensive these principles should cover all types of qualifications, including qualifications from the formal education system as well as non-formal (private) ones.

Furthermore, research points out that conducting meaningful institutional quality assurance is **very costly and time-consuming**, and demands high levels of professional capacity amongst staff. In the context of VET systems, that are underfunded, countries need to make serious choices about the contribution which quality assurance can make to improving quality, and the extent to which their focus should be on improving institutional capacity (Allais 2010).

Similar considerations also apply to the proposed annex to the EQF on the **principles of credit systems**. In particular, clarification is needed on the relationship between common principles in the Recommendation and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET). The focus on estimated workload in the definition of the term *Credit* has a direct impact on the planned revision of the ECVET recommendation. Issues of quality assurance, credit systems and levelling are crucial for the efficiency and reliability of national qualifications systems. Development in these areas could be based on the practices used in the open method of co-ordination. This would require developing **commonly agreed principles** that are subject to monitoring and peer assessment in the referencing process, instead of recommending compliance with the principles.

The proposed recommendation suggests that all new certificates and diplomas of a Member State should clearly indicate their EQF level. It is important to underline that **currently all qualifications are referenced to the relevant NQFs**. Only **national qualifications frameworks are referenced to the EQF**. This point should not be seen as a door to include specific qualifications (for example international sectoral qualifications) directly in the EQF. The current practice of indicating qualifications' levels on certificates also shows that in the majority of cases, only the NQF level is indicated, while the EQF level can be attributed based on the outcome of the referencing process. In that way, the proposal would affect current national practices. The case of international sectoral qualifications (ISQs) and their level in NQFs should also be the subject of further consideration. An investigation of the link between the international qualifications, NQFs and the EQF was initiated by the EQF Advisory Group and conducted by a sub-group on international sectoral qualifications, with a peer-learning activity organised on this topic. Based on the results achieved to date, the final solutions in this area should be developed under the commonly agreed governance structure.

These considerations are also important when considering the recommendation calling for **strengthening national implementation of the new Recommendation**. It would be important to explain this recommendation in the context of the subsidiarity principle and the diversity of national solutions and progress in NQF development. The proposed **governance of the Recommendation**, yet to be communicated by the Commission to Member States, in co-operation with Member States and stakeholders, is vaguely outlined in proposed recommendations numbers 10-16. The scope of these activities should again be viewed in the context of national developments.

From the **perspective of a Member of the EQF Advisory Group**, the methodology of levelling, as well as describing learning outcomes particularly are designed in each country in relation to the national systems and developments, frequently with the participation of stakeholders. Rather than developing one methodology, **a policy learning process through actions such as peer-learning activities should be stimulated** and enhanced. The proposal also includes a common format for the electronic publication of qualifications. Identifying common elements of qualifications definitely increases transparency. But again, these developments should encompass the variety of national solutions that are applied. To this end, the **work on the horizontal comparisons of selected qualifications** by the EQF Advisory Group, initiated by the European Commission, is a good way to identify similarities and differences in describing qualifications, as well as levelling procedures. Similarly, the outcomes of peer-learning activities are important to develop further steps in EQF/NQF

developments (for example in the area of crafts qualifications). Recommendations in these areas should take into account the outcomes of such exercises based on an agreed methodology and sound results.

Finally, the **governance of the EQF** could build on the most current good practices, developed through the activities of the EQF Advisory Group. The referencing process and the experience of the past eight years shows a substantial amount of learning in relation to EQF governance. The quality of the presented referencing reports has substantially improved, showing the policy learning that has occurred through discussions and peer-learning activities relating to important policy elements of qualifications systems. The achievements of this governance process could be the starting point for implementing the proposed numbers 10 to 16 recommendations.

Developing commonly agreed principles in these areas, in the agreed governance framework, would enhance national development of NQFs based on policy learning. In order for EQF implementation to be successful, it is important to clearly establish the goal of policy learning and the use of national frameworks as "dynamic-oriented policy tools with vision"⁴.

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2.4. Contribution by Rimantas Dumčius: Revision of the Europass: Lessons from research

Abstract

- **Europass** can be considered as one of the most strikingly **successful** and cost-effective EU initiatives in policy areas relating to skills and qualifications reaching more than 18 million citizens in 2015.
- **Reaching disadvantaged groups** such as low-skilled persons, youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET), people in long-term unemployment, recent immigrants with limited host country language skills, and those who lack transversal skills relevant for different jobs and occupations remains one of the main **challenges** for the Europass initiative. This might be due to gaps in skills service coordination at national and at European level, and lack of active collaboration between the national coordination points and national level stakeholders, such as national employment and guidance services.
- Despite the popularity and increased user-friendliness of the Europass online platform, the existing 5 Europass documents still have a fixed structure and some of them overlap in purpose.
- **The New Skills Agenda** for Europe foresees a comprehensive revision of the current Europass framework to set up a more comprehensive online tool with an intuitive and seamless online service platform. The European Commission foresees a more coordinated operation of the EU initiatives dealing with skills and qualifications by promoting synergies between Europass and other European tools, and optimising national support networks by strengthening coordination at the national level.

What is europass?

Europass is a personal, coordinated **portfolio of documents** that citizens can use to better present their qualifications and competences throughout Europe.¹ It is designed to help citizens communicate their skills **when looking for a job or training opportunity**, to help employers **understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce**, and to help education and training authorities **define and communicate the content of their curricula**.²

The overall objective of the initiative is to facilitate mobility between countries and sectors for lifelong learning and occupational purposes, and to contribute to the development of quality education and training.³

Two of the Europass documents are **freely accessible and to be completed by citizens**:

- **Europass CV (Curriculum Vitae)**⁴ helps to present information on qualifications, competences and professional experience in a clear and comprehensive manner;
- **Europass Language Passport**⁵ is a self-assessment tool helping to present language skills and qualifications.

The Europass website gives an opportunity for users to fill in or edit the above-mentioned documents online through an interactive editor. Alternatively, the users can download a template with instructions and fill in a CV or a Language Passport on their computers.

Three Europass documents are **issued by education and training authorities**:

- **Europass Certificate Supplement** is issued by *vocational education and training authorities* to describe the knowledge and skills of their certificate holders, and to

make the certificates easier to understand, especially for employers or institutions outside the issuing country;

- **Europass Diploma Supplement** is issued by *higher education institutions* together with a diploma to describe the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees, and to make their educational qualifications easier to understand, especially outside the awarding country;
- **Europass Mobility Document** records any organised learning or training period spent in another European country and is issued by home and host organisations.

The current Europass Decision⁶ has been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2004, following the proposal from the European Commission.

The Europass implementation structure comprises of a set of national level and European organisations. **National Europass Centres** coordinate all the activities related to the Europass documents and are responsible for the management and promotion of the Europass documents, and cooperation with the relevant national information and guidance centres. They also provide information and guidance on learning opportunities throughout Europe, on the structure of education and training systems, and on other issues related to mobility.⁷ The **European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion** (DG EMPL) is responsible for the overall management and co-ordination of the Europass initiative, the **Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency** (EACEA) coordinates management of the operating subsidies and monitoring of the National Europass Centres, and **Cedefop** is responsible for the Europass website and overall provision of expertise for the conceptual development and implementation of the Europass.⁸

Key policy challenges for the Europass

a) Recording and sharing skills information

A recent **Eurobarometer survey** found that the Europass CV along with other Europass documents have been the **most recognised tools for documenting skills and qualifications** among European citizens.⁹ The Eurobarometer survey respondents also pointed out that the Europass documents have been useful in presenting knowledge, skills and competences in a clear way, increasing the comparability of individual competences across countries and making it easier for employers and education institutions to select candidates.¹⁰ The Europass monitoring data shows that the number of Europass CVs and Language Passports completed online has been rapidly growing since the launch of the initiative in 2005, reaching more than 18 million in 2015.¹¹ This understates the actual number of people in Europe using Europass CV, because many use and adapt the CV examples given by their colleagues, friends or family to prepare their own CV rather than completing it online. Europass users and stakeholders surveyed for the Europass evaluation identified convenience, recognition and reliability of the documents as the main factors encouraging the use of this platform.¹² Overall Europass can be considered as one of the most strikingly successful and cost-effective EU initiatives in policy areas relating to skills and qualifications.

As one of the most recognised tools for recording and sharing skills information, Europass has to further evolve in order to meet the needs of its stakeholders and the realities of today's labour market. The **content, design, and layout of the Europass documents received some criticism** in the second Europass evaluation carried out in 2013. For instance, the evaluation reported **lack of criteria for self-evaluation** in the **Europass Language Passport**, limited possibilities to record **skills acquired in non-formal and informal settings**, or absence of a document for describing **ICT skills**.¹³

Following the evaluation's recommendations, a **more user-centred, intuitive and responsive online editor** was introduced in **2014**, followed by additional self-assessment tools for languages and ICT in 2015 and a redesign of the Europass website in 2016.¹⁴

Despite the popularity and increased user-friendliness of the Europass online platform, the Commission Roadmap for Better EU Tools and Services for Skills and Qualifications¹⁵ indicated that the **existing five Europass documents** have a fixed structure and some of them **overlap** in purpose. This corresponds with the findings of the second Europass Evaluation that reported a certain overlap between the Europass documents and the Youth Pass. The evaluation also pointed out that Europass falls logically into the system of European initiatives on transparency of skills and qualifications.¹⁶

The **New Skills Agenda for Europe**¹⁷ foresees a comprehensive revision of the current Europass framework to set up a **more comprehensive online tool with 'an intuitive and seamless online service platform' and 'web-based tools for documenting and sharing information on skills and qualifications, and free self-assessment tools'**.¹⁸ In the consultation paper on the New Skills Agenda the Commission explained that reducing overlaps between the existing documents and introducing greater interoperability of the Europass IT tools with other EU tools (e.g. tools for job matching) in combination with a simpler, more targeted and user-friendly interface would help users to better record and reflect on their skills and competences.¹⁹ A good example of interoperability and increased clarity for recording skills has been giving users the possibility to carry out a self-assessment of digital competences through the Europass CV online editor²⁰, using levels and descriptors based on DIGCOMP²¹, The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens developed and governed by a wide range of different stakeholders.²²

b) Access to Europass for disadvantaged groups in the labour market

While the popularity of the Europass documents has been steadily increasing, there are considerable variations with regard to its accessibility by different socio-demographic groups. The Eurobarometer survey revealed that the Europass documents have been significantly more popular among younger people with higher levels of education in comparison to those belonging to more disadvantaged groups.²³ Low-skilled persons, youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET), people in long term unemployment, recent immigrants, and those who lack transversal skills relevant for different jobs and occupations (i.e. digital, language, and entrepreneurship skills) have been the main disadvantaged groups in the context of the competitive labour market and a fast changing economy. The research shows that the **disadvantaged groups could benefit from using the Europass tools to enhance their own career management skills, identify their personal strengths and weaknesses, and further learning or training opportunities**.²⁴ For these groups filling in a Europass CV could be a significant first step in finding a (better) job or training opportunity. However, the main issue is that the most disadvantaged groups are the hardest to reach. The Europass evaluation found that the common reasons for not using the Europass documents were related to lack of skills required for filling in the documents, together with lack of awareness, information or guidance.²⁵ Only 7% of surveyed people with lower qualifications were aware of the Europass initiative.²⁶

In this context we see the **role of supporting institutions** is essential. Without better access to information and support tens of millions of Europeans are unable to use Europass CV. In combination with further guidance and support using the Europass outputs for employment or acquiring further training, the supporting institutions can strongly enhance the labour market opportunities for the disadvantaged groups.²⁷ Public employment services, career guidance centres, and other similar institutions are important mediators that can help reach disadvantaged groups. This is particularly relevant for **persons with low digital or**

language skills, since they might need assistance in filling in the documents. However, **Europass documents and templates are not necessarily used as a standard in all support institutions** in all Europass countries.

Regarding the context described above, the Roadmap for Better EU Tools and Services for Skills and Qualifications pointed out that **lack of collaboration between the existing points of contact for different European skills initiatives** and their uneven distribution throughout the Member States might be leading to limited access of coherent support services for individuals. Moreover, the Roadmap also identified limited awareness of the existing skills services due to ineffective communication at EU and national levels.

To increase access to Europass, the **New Skills Agenda for Europe foresees more coordination between contact centres** for different European initiatives on skills (Europass, EQF and Euroguidance) in cooperation with national level stakeholders.²⁸ The Agenda suggests that integrated operation of the European skills services would help promote the available tools and reinforce the efficiency of services provided at national level. The **suggested developments follow the Europass Evaluation's recommendations** that the close relation of Europass and the other European initiatives should be further mobilised and the National Europass Centres should develop or strengthen partnerships with the national stakeholders,²⁹ Regarding Europass specifically, the main focus of New Skills Agenda for Europe is on improving web-based tools for documenting and sharing information on skills and qualifications, and free self-assessment tools. As discussed above, advanced web services benefit younger people with higher levels of education the most, leaving more disadvantaged groups behind. The document lacks practical measures on how to better reach individuals who would benefit from the skills services offered through the Europass platform, but are currently unable to access them. To follow the Evaluation's recommendations, the Europass Decision revision should consider **strengthening co-operation with relevant national stakeholders** (e.g. public employment services or education and training institutions) for developing alternative ways **of reaching disadvantaged individuals**.³⁰

c) Coordination with other skills services

The current Europass framework focuses on synergies among the Europass documents and does not foresee exchanges of information between Europass and a wider range of online tools.³¹ The previous Europass evaluation stressed the **need for more coherence and interoperability between the Europass and other European initiatives**, particularly those focused on services for skills and qualifications.³²

In the **New Skills Agenda** for Europe the Commission foresees a more coordinated implementation of the EU initiatives dealing with skills and qualifications. It points out that integration of a wider set of tools and services would offer a possibility of **creating a one-stop-shop service** and enable the simplification of information offered to end-users.³³ The Commission suggests that the potential revision of Europass could improve the integration of support services linked to the functions associated with Europass and other skills services, such as the **EQF, Euroguidance, or EURES**. Skills intelligence information provided by the **EU Skills Panorama and Learning Opportunities and Qualifications Portal** could also be integrated within Europass in addition to the skills documentation tools.³⁴ Additionally, integrating the ESCO classification would introduce a common terminology to describe skills, competences, qualifications and occupations. It would aid promotion and help increase awareness and encourage the use of the European tools and services for transparency of skills and qualifications. The Commission's proposal goes **in line with the recommendations of the second Europass Evaluation** that specifically suggested stronger convergence between Europass, EURES, EQF, ESCO and other relevant portals, and a one stop shop access for users.

The promotion of synergies between Europass and other European tools for recording and sharing skills information has a strong potential for increasing their usefulness to individual users and other stakeholders. However, the Commission sees that this might also raise some **governance and implementation issues**. For example, the Language Passport is part of the initiative developed by the Council of Europe, and the Diploma Supplement has been developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.³⁵ The extended integration of different **skills services, especially those developed by separate institutions**, would not only require the revision of the Europass decision, but also a review of other related legal instruments.

A number of tools and services for skills and qualifications are promoted and supported at the **national level** through **centres or contact points** (National Europass Centres, EQF – National Contact Points, Euroguidance Centres) that are **partially funded by the EU** through the Erasmus+ programme. **Each is subject to separate administration** and reporting processes. Additionally, each centre manages a separate **communications and branding** programme. Our experience shows that this often results in no sense of coherent service offered with regard to skills and qualifications services at the national level and little incentives for different centres to cooperate and communicate systematically for more coherent services. It means that the different centres are not fully reaching their target groups and thus EU tools and services are not reaching their intended beneficiaries.

In this regard the Commission has also considered better coordination of support networks. This could be done by establishing **coordination points** at national level to coordinate activities currently associated with the National Europass Centres, EQF National Coordination Points, and Euroguidance Centers. A single body within each Member State could become the main beneficiary of EU funding and the main interface with the Commission in relation to the activities currently carried out by the national centres. The coordination points could also act as points of convergence for other linked services, such as development of skills intelligence.³⁶

We see that this suggestion might bring some **concerns from the Member States**. Optimising the national contact points would require **additional costs** and might be welcomed as a **top-down initiative** imposed by the Commission where it only has competence to support, coordinate or supplement actions of the member states. Nevertheless, the optimisation of the national support networks would **add value for the main beneficiaries**, and reduce potential for confusion of different initiatives with similar purposes, thus **increasing efficiency**. It would bring greater coherence and simplification to the operation of national centres and support greater cooperation among skills services, for better lifelong learning and career guidance opportunities.

Policy recommendations

Europass has been an extremely successful EU initiative and the Commission's plans to further develop it should be strongly supported. However, taking into account above discussed challenges and Commission's plans in the area, the following improvements to the plans on the new Europass framework could still be recommended:

1. **Regular review and updating** of the Europass documents should be continued for the initiative to remain relevant to its current and future users. A set of concrete measures for better interoperability among the Europass documents and other European tools with similar purpose should be considered to allow for more user-friendly environment helping individuals to record and reflect on their skills and competences.

2. EU skills services including National Europass Centres should work out **concrete action plans** together with EU Member States' institutions and organizations for the improvement of access to information about Europass to all the disadvantaged groups of Europeans and to offer them personalized support in accessing and completing Europass documents. The development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such plans could be foreseen in the new Europass framework.

Regarding the integrated operation of the European tools for skills and qualifications, the new Europass framework should consider and **address the limitations of the legal instruments and different governance structures** of the initiatives with joint ownership (e.g. the Diploma Supplement developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO).

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME

WORKSHOP

Skills Development and Employability in Europe: The New Skills Agenda

8 September 2016 from 10.00 to 13.00
European Parliament, Altiero Spinelli A5E-2, Brussels

Organised at the request of the EMPL Committee together with the CULT Committee in connection with the planned work on the New Skills Agenda

AGENDA

10.00 - 10.15

Welcome by the Chairs, opening remarks

MEPs Ms Marita ULVSKOG, member of the EMPL committee and Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ, member of the CULT committee.

10:15 -10:45

Key actions of the New Skills Agenda

Mr Michel SERVOZ, General Director, European Commission, DG EMPL
Q+A

10:45 – 11:00

Skills Guarantee: Basic skills for adults - gaps and implications for policymakers

Ms Deborah ROSEVEARE, Head of Skills Beyond School Division, OECD

11:00 – 11:15

Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training: How to make VET and apprenticeships more attractive?

Mr James J.CALLEJA, Director, CEDEFOP

11:15 – 11:45

Q + A

11:45 – 12:00

Revision of the European Qualifications Framework: Lessons from research

Ms Agnieszka CHŁOŃ-DOMIŃCZAK, Assistant Professor, Warsaw School of Economics/Institute for Education Research

12:00 – 12:15

Revision of the Europass Framework: Lessons from research

Ms Rimantas DUMČIUS, Director, Public Policy and Management Institute

12:15 – 12:45

Q + A

12:45 – 13:00

Closing remarks by the Chairs

ANNEX 2: SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF EXPERTS

Mr Michel Servoz

Mr Servoz is Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission. He was previously Deputy Secretary General of the Commission, involved in the coordination of the EU semester, including the Annual Growth Survey and of the proposals for the next multi-annual financial framework. From 2005–2010 he was the director of policy coordination for the Secretariat General where he worked on the elaboration of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs and on the preparation of the European Economic recovery plan

Ms Deborah Roseveare

Ms Roseveare is responsible for the Skills beyond School Division. Her responsibilities span the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills, the OECD Skills Outlook, policy analysis and advice on more effective vocational education and training and higher education systems and working with countries to design and implement national skills strategies. Between 2007 and 2011 she was Head of the Education and Training Policy Division which provided policy analysis and advice to help governments develop and implement more effective policies across all levels of education and training from early childhood to lifelong learning.

Prof. James Calleja

Prof. Calleja has been involved in vocational training since 2001. Before his appointment as Director of Cedefop in October 2013, he served as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Employment (2011-2013) in his native Malta. In 2005 he was entrusted with the setting up of the Malta Qualifications Council where he served as Chief Executive up to December 2010. Mr Calleja is a graduate of the Universities of Malta (1981), Padua (Italy, 1986) and Bradford (UK, 1991). In the UK he obtained his PhD defending a thesis on education and international relations in the context of Kant's political philosophy. A prolific writer, Mr Calleja has published several books and articles and has edited various publications. He is the co-author of the Malta Referencing Report of the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA.

Ms Agnieszka Chlon-Dominczak


Ms Chlon-Dominczak is an Assistant Professor in the Educational Research Institute (IBE) in Warsaw as well as at Institute for Statistics and Demography in Warsaw School of Economics. Previously she was a Deputy Minister and Head of Department of Economic Analyses and Forecasting in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. At the IBE she is the leader of the National Qualifications Systems team. She is a member of the EQF Advisory Group and leader of the Twinning Project supporting NQF implementation in Macedonia. Her research interest include: demography, pension systems, labour markets, social policy, health, education and qualifications systems. is an Assistant Professor in the Educational Research Institute (IBE) in Warsaw as well as at Institute for Statistics and Demography in Warsaw School of Economics. Previously she was a Deputy Minister and Head of Department of Economic Analyses and Forecasting in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. At the IBE she is the leader of the National Qualifications Systems team. She is a member of the EQF Advisory Group and leader of the Twinning Project supporting NQF implementation in Macedonia. Her research interest include: demography, pension systems, labour markets, social policy, health, education and qualifications systems.

Mr Rimantas Dumčius

Mr Rimantas Dumčius is a director and one of the partners in the Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI) since 2001. Over 15 years of his career as policy researcher and evaluator Rimantas has led multinational project teams. His assignments focused on education, skills and employment policies and governance at the EU and national level. HE has considerable experience in analysing the governance and performance of EU agencies (including Cedefop, European Training Foundation and European Institute of Gender Equality). He holds a MA degree in Political Science (European Studies) from Vilnius.

ANNEX 3: PRESENTATIONS


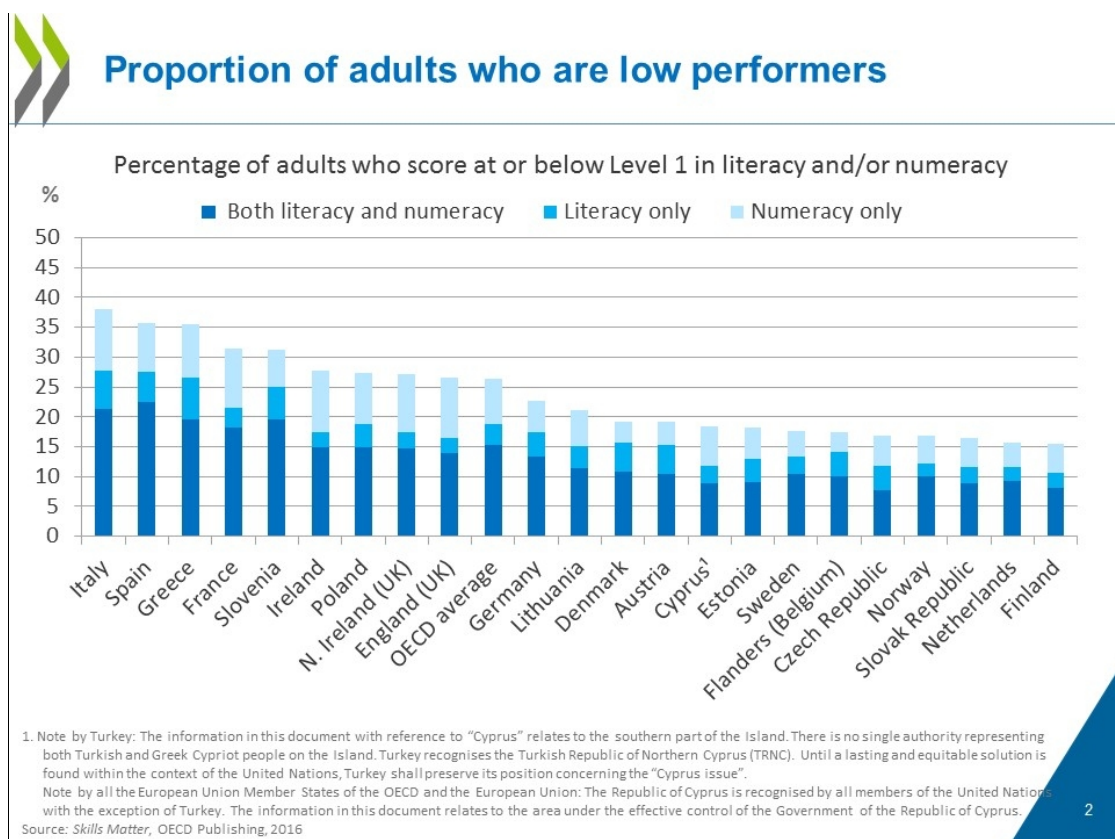
Presentation by Ms Deborah Roseveare: Skills Guarantee

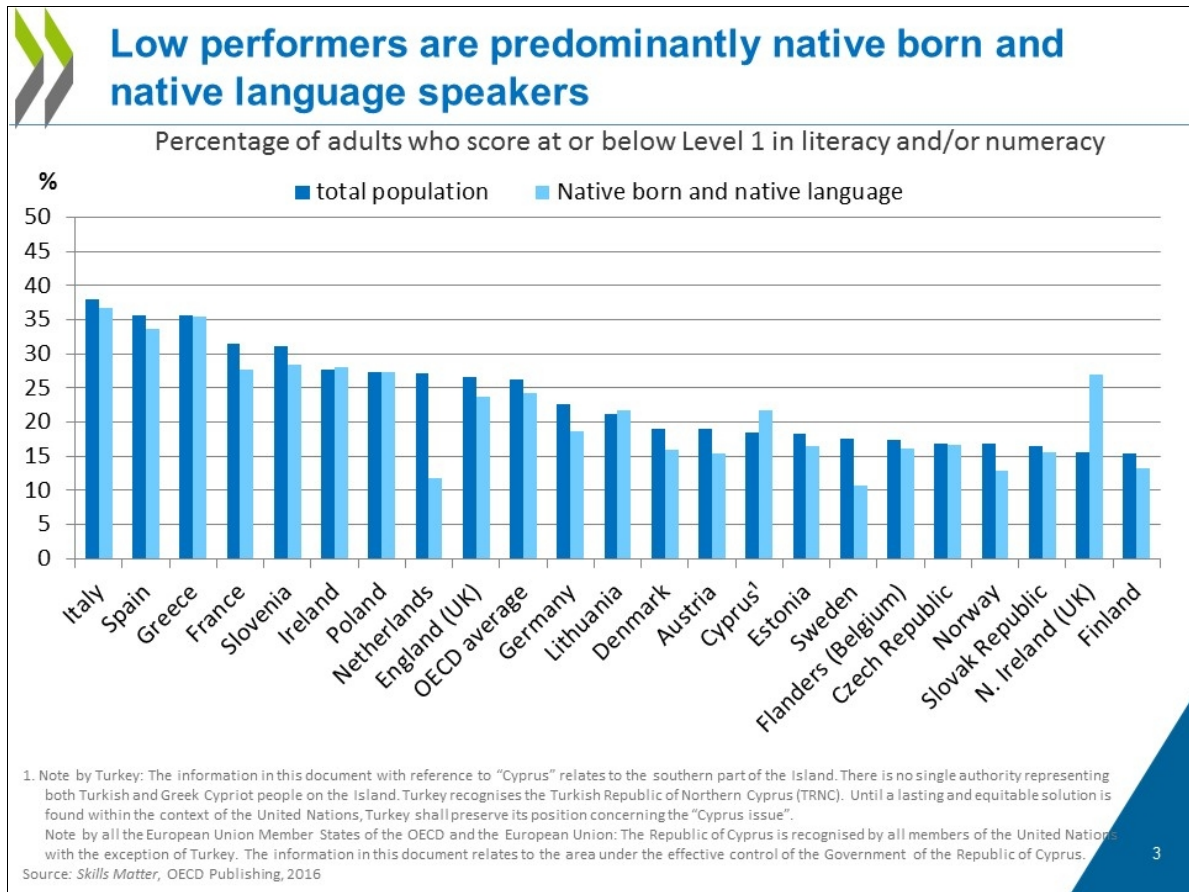


Skills Guarantee: Basic skills for adults – gaps and implications for policy makers

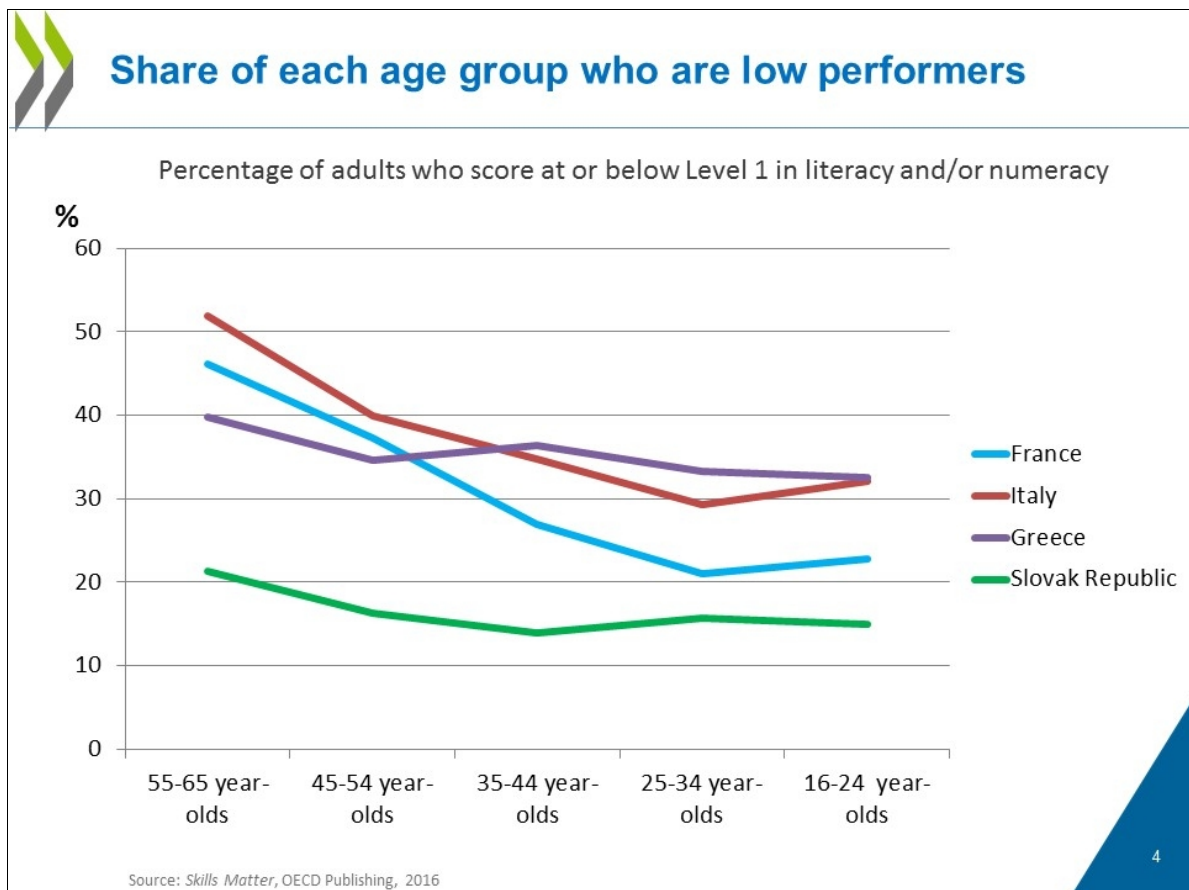
Deborah Roseveare
Head, Skills Beyond School Division
Directorate for Education and Skills

8 September 2016

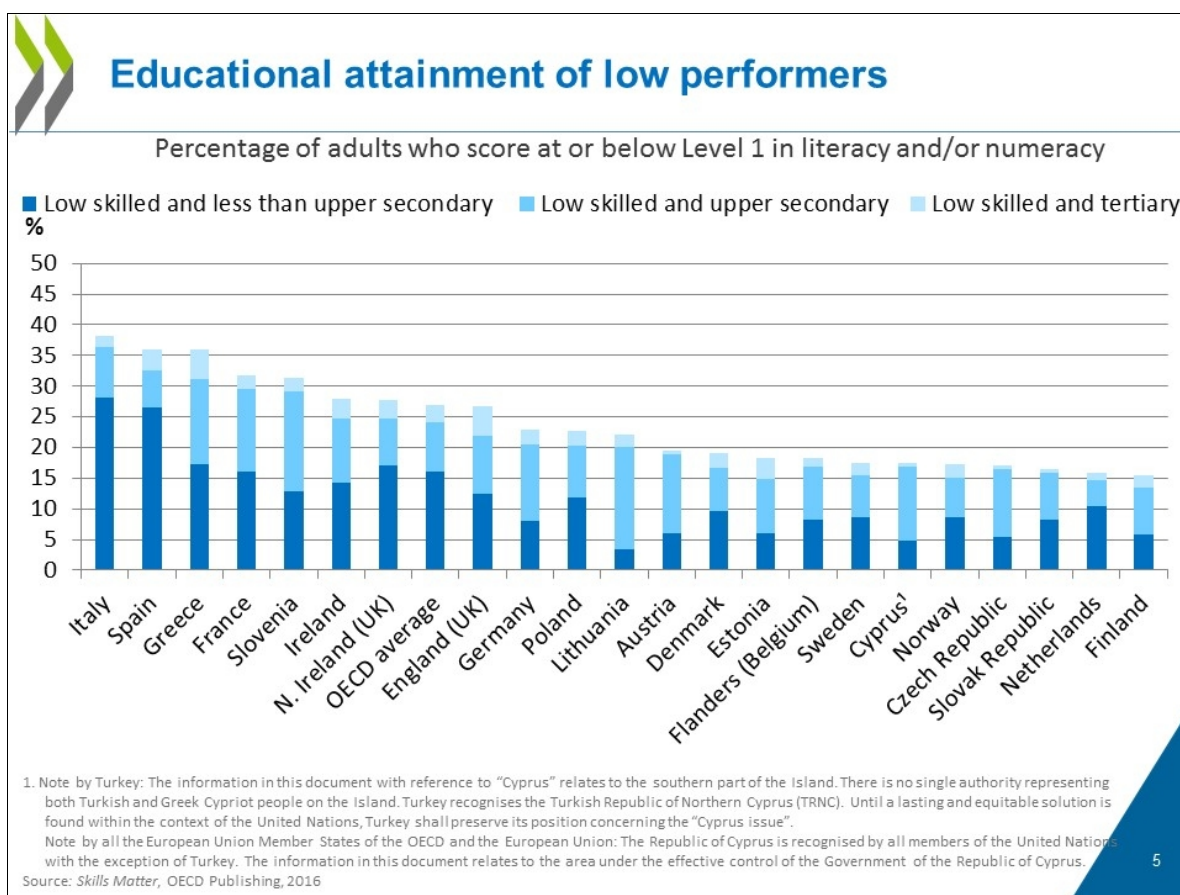





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5

Some implications for the Skills Guarantee

Low literacy and/or numeracy skills affect a large number of adults in every country

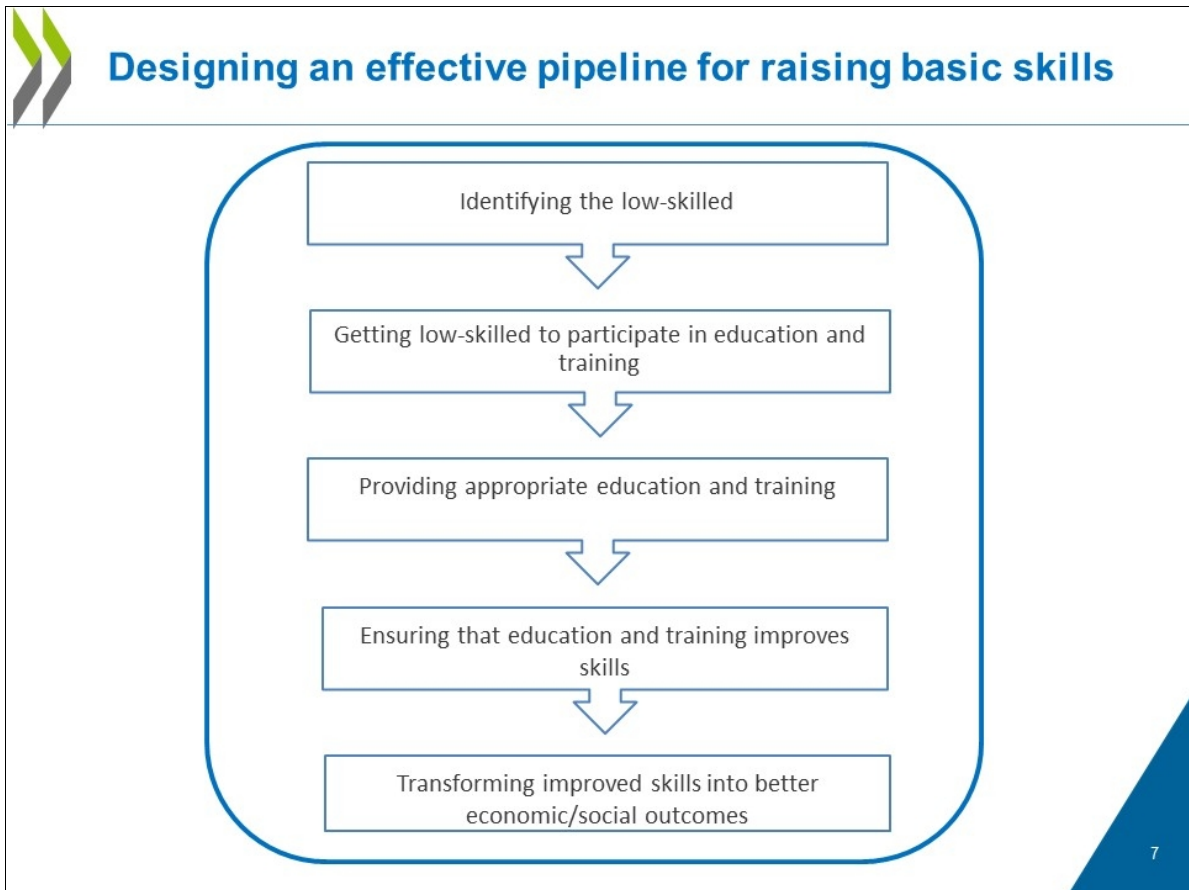
although the share of low skilled adults varies considerably across countries

Low skilled adults are more likely to be older, migrant background, and less educated

but most low skilled adults are native born, many are younger and many have completed upper secondary education

Need actions tailored to each country's situation

6



-
- Some issues for policymakers on the Skills Guarantee**
1. What about the low-skilled adults with upper secondary education (or equivalent) and who are not covered by the Guarantee?
 2. How ambitious should countries be in developing their action plans, given their share of low-skilled adults?
 3. Should countries try to raise the skills of all low performers or prioritise low-skilled adults with certain characteristics?
 4. How can countries take a joined-up approach to building an effective skills pipeline in developing their action plans?
 5. How will actions to raise basic skills be financed and delivered?
- 8



Thank you!

Deborah.Roseveare@oecd.org

www.oecd.org/edu

www.oecd.org/skills



Presentation by Mr James J. Calleja: Modernisation of VET



European Parliament Workshop

on

Skills development and employability in Europe: The New Skills Agenda

Modernisation of VET:

How can we make VET and apprenticeships more attractive ?

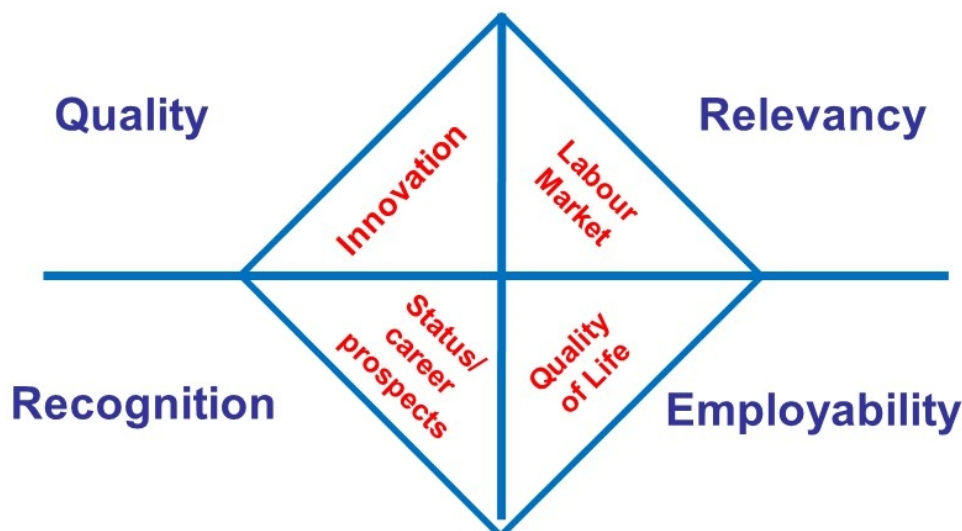
Joachim James Calleja, Cedefop Director

8th September 2016

E-mail: Joachim.James.Calleja@cedefop.europa.eu



Attractiveness of VET: influencing factors



National contexts affect the extent of influence of each factor and help explain why enrolment in upper-secondary VET ranges from 77% of all upper-secondary students in Austria to 24% in Hungary.

2

Source: Cedefop 2013; Eurostat, 2014



Measures to raise attractiveness of VET

Easier access to higher education through the VET route
(e.g. Belgium, Germany, Cyprus, Poland and Italy)

Campaigns to attract young people to VET,
(most Member States)

Skill competitions
(e.g. Estonia, Spain, Hungary, Portugal and Finland)

Improvements to guidance and counselling services
(e.g. Bulgaria, France, the Netherlands and the UK).

Including VET elements into lower-secondary education
(e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark)

Source: Cedefop, 2013



Benefits of work-based learning

People whose studies involved work-based learning are more likely to find a job and to find a more skill-intensive job

Talking numbers

In 2014 in the EU, the average employment rate of upper-secondary level **VET graduates aged 20 to 34 was 76.9%**, compared to **70.6%** for general education graduates

Attractiveness increases when VET qualifications have currency on the labour market.



Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014; Eurostat



Scope for increasing attractiveness of VET through work-based learning

Talking numbers

Only around **1 in 7 upper-secondary students** is in a vocational course that combines school and work-based learning

Around **40% of adult employees*** have completed education or training involving some work-based **learning**.

Only **25% of 24 to 34 year-old graduates** in humanities, languages and arts, economics, business and law completed education or training involving some work-based learning



*aged 24 to 65

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014; Eurostat, 2014



Scope for increasing the attractiveness of VET through work-based learning

Talking numbers

62% of adult employees* in professional, scientific or technical services completed studies *only* in an educational institution

Future jobs will combine technical and behavioural skills
Employers want 'soft skills' but **only 25% of enterprises** in the EU offer apprenticeships.



*aged 24 to 65

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014; Eurostat, 2014



Supporting social partner and employer engagement

Financial incentives
for learners and employers

European alliance for apprenticeships
creating partnerships and new forms of cooperation between

ETUC's *Quality Framework for Apprenticeships and work-based learning*

20 quality standards and criteria to meet them

The *Skills Agenda for Europe*: skills guarantee
70 million Europeans lack adequate reading and writing skills;
and even more have poor numeracy and digital skills





Attractiveness of VET: work-based learning as a competitive strategy

Talking numbers

- 53% of adult employees* had to learn new things continuously as their job tasks change
- For 83% of adult employees* their jobs have become more difficult
- 26% of adult employees* lack the skills they need for their job

*aged 24 to 65

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014



Attractiveness of VET: Employers as educators

Talking numbers

- 41% of adult employees* need only basic literacy skills to do their job and 33% need only basic or no ICT skills at all
- 25% of adult employees* underuse their skills, despite their qualifications matching their job
- 27% of adult employees* are in 'dead-end jobs' with only limited potential to develop
- 29% of highly-qualified workers are overqualified for their jobs

*aged 24 to 65

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014; Eurostat, 2014

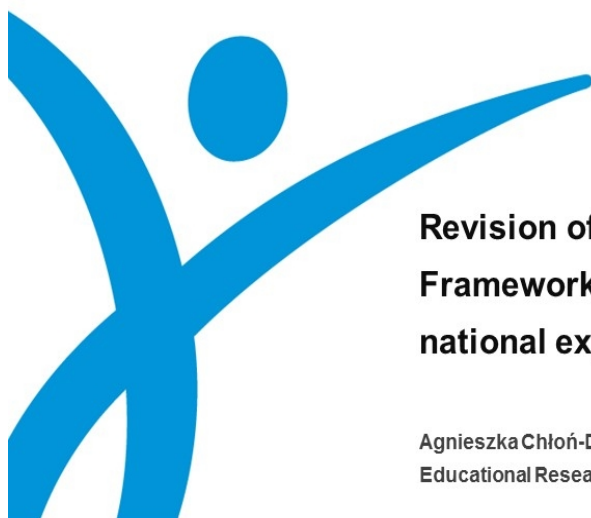


Thank you

**For more information see:
www.cedefop.europa.eu**



Presentation by Ms Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak: Revision of EQF



kwalifikacje dla każdego

Revision of the European Qualifications Framework: Lessons from research and national experiences

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Workshop on
Skills development and employability in Europe:
The New Skills Agenda

Brussels, September 8, 2016



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European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

- translation tool that helps **communication and comparison** between qualifications systems in Europe
- eight common European reference levels are described in terms of **learning outcomes**: knowledge, skills and competences
- allows **national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in Europe to relate to the EQF**, and through the NQFs, relate qualifications to EQF levels
- learners, graduates, providers and employers can use these levels to **understand and compare qualifications** awarded in different countries and by different education and training systems



The New Skills Agenda for Europe – the benefits of the EQF

The main strands of the New Skills Agenda

1. Improving the quality and relevance of skills formation
 - EQF helps to improve link between the labour market needs and skills development,
 - Focus on learning outcomes which provide a reference for skills demand and supply
 - Improving quality: quality assurance in qualifications system
 - Support of learner-centred teaching and training practices
2. Making skills and qualifications more visible and comparable
 - EQF primary purpose is to enhance comparability and visibility of qualifications in Europe
3. Improving skills intelligence and information for better career choices
 - Information on available qualifications through national registers
 - Additional tools providing information on the potential qualifications that can be acquired



State of the EQF in the EU

- ❑ EQF is a significant catalyst for the NQFs development, by early 2016:
 - 22 Member States and 5 non-Member States finalised referencing process; 6 countries are planning to finalise it by the end of 2016;
 - 15 countries are putting NQF levels on certificates and diplomas
 - 39 European countries develop 43 NQFs, 34 countries have comprehensive frameworks, 4 – covering limited range of qualification types
 - 18 countries reached operational stage

- ❑ In some countries the EQF enhanced significant policy learning, some followed „easy” path of policy borrowing
- ❑ In the past 8 years there is visible improvement in the quality of the policy process related to referencing process and NQFs development
- ❑ In some countries NQFs are an important stimulus of national reforms – the „reforming frameworks”



Benefits from the EQF implementation

- ❑ relevant for strengthening lifelong and life-wide learning policies and practices
- ❑ tools for increasing permeability of education and training systems
- ❑ potentially reducing barriers to access and progression in education, training and learning
- ❑ tool for strengthening cooperation between stakeholders
- ❑ improving esteem of the vocational education and training
- ❑ better monitoring of the supply and demand of qualifications



Challenges in the EQF implementation in the light of the proposed recommendation

- ❑ Not all countries have referenced their entire qualifications system to the EQF
- ❑ There are substantial country variations in the description of similar qualifications
- ❑ The term 'competences' in the EQF third column is limited to mean 'autonomy and responsibility'
- ❑ Need to develop trust in the quality and assigned level of qualifications
- ❑ No common arrangements for credit transfer and accumulation for qualifications
- ❑ Increasing number of international (sectoral) qualifications
- ❑ Need to enhance development common training frameworks based on EQF levels
- ❑ No defined relationship between EQF and NQFs in third countries
- ❑ Governance of the EQF and other European tools such as Europass and ESCO



EQF revision: issues and challenges

- Narrowing the third column to „responsibility and autonomy“ may not cover the scope of the descriptors in some NQFs
 - social competences related to group co-operation
 - identity
- Differences in the national scope and design of the NQFs are significant and explained by divergent national developments
 - Recommending common principles for quality assurance, credit transfer and levelling method may be difficult given these diversities
 - Proposed principles were not agreed in the existing EQF governance structure, including the Advisory Group
 - There is a need to see the impact of the recommendation in the comprehensive frameworks, including formal education
 - Increased need for resources (cost and time) on the national level



EQF revision: issues and challenges

- Qualifications are linked to national frameworks, current practice is to indicate national levels on qualifications
 - Principle of linking qualifications only to the national frameworks should be maintained
 - In the case of international qualifications – important to further seek solutions, based on common agreement: continuation the work done by the EQF AG subgroup on international qualifications
- Strengthening of the national implementation of the recommendation requires explanation and should respect the subsidiarity principle
- EQF governance: important to learn from achievements and challenges
 - EQF AG work is evaluated as efficient and recognised by many stakeholders
 - Peer-learning and other exercises monitored by the AG (international qualifications, horizontal comparisons) add value to the EQF development



Conclusions

EQF should be a tool enhancing policy learning process, following the approach of the open method of coordination

New dynamic in the process of the EQF implementation is welcomed, but risk of policy borrowing should be avoided

NQFs should be based on the institutional logics that exist in the countries

EQF should maintain its role as a tool of open method of co-ordination: national systems should be reviewed in the light of commonly agreed principles rather than comply with them

The NQFs and the EQF should be „dynamic oriented policy tool with vision” that feed into the New Skills Agenda for Europe

Presentation by Mr Rimantas Dumčius: Revision of the Europass




Revision of the europass

Lessons from Research

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8 September 2016
Brussels



What is Europass?

Europass support centre Glossary Interoperability Visually impaired

English - (en)

- Home
- About Europass
- Europass documents
- Europass and you
- Learning and working in Europe
- Resources

Curriculum Vitae

European skills passport

- Language passport
- Europass Mobility
- Diploma Supplement
- Certificate Supplement

A document to present your skills and qualifications effectively and clearly

- Create your CV (+ cover letter) online
- Update your CV (PDF+XML) online
- Download the CV template and instructions
- Examples

LEARN MORE

What is Europass?

- How to complete a Europass CV?
- How to become interoperable with Europass?
- I am not a European citizen. Can I use the Europass CV?
- Which Europass documents do I need?

VISIT EUROPASS SUPPORT CENTRE

Search Europass support centre

SEARCH

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Europass Documents

To be completed by citizens

✓ Helps to present skills and qualifications effectively and clearly

✓ Freely accessible on the Europass website

✓ Can be completed offline

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Europass Documents

To be completed by citizens

Europass CV



PERSONAL INFORMATION Ann Other
 1 The Street, London AB12 3CD United Kingdom
 +44 1234567890 +44 0987654321
 ann.other@address.com

JOB APPLIED FOR Underwriter

WORK EXPERIENCE

July 2009 – Present **Underwriter**
 Brown and Williams Insurers, London (United Kingdom)
 Manager of underwriting team at local branch of leading insurance company, responsibilities:
 - Managing staff in the underwriting team.
 - Analysing application forms to establish credit worthiness of clients.
 - Allocating applications appropriately within the underwriting team and process insurance app in complex cases.
 - Ensuring compliance with relevant company policy, regulations and/or legislation.
 - Providing relevant training to junior underwriters.

March 2007 – June 2009 **Junior Underwriter**
 Clarke and Philips Insurance, London (United Kingdom)

Europass Language Passport

French				
Self-assessment of language skills				
Understanding		Speaking		Writing
Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Spoken production	Writing
C1 Proficient user	A2 Basic User	B2 Independent user	B2 Independent user	C1 Proficient user
Certificates and diplomas				
Title	Awarding body	Date	Level*	
DELF, Unites 1-4	Institut Français, London	1996	-	
GCSE-level, Grade B	Alliance française, Birmingham	1998	-	
Linguistic and intercultural experience				
Description	Duration			
Using languages at work: Temporary work as hotel receptionist in London with frequent French-speaking guests.	1997–2000			
Using languages while living or travelling abroad: Holiday jobs as camp leader in French-speaking Switzerland.	1995–1997			

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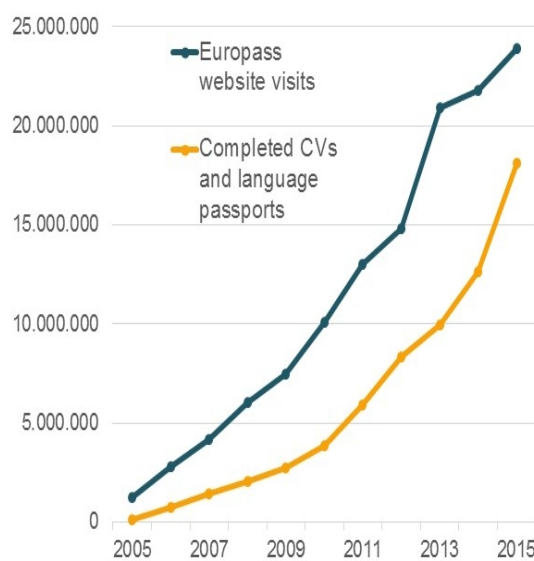


Key Policy Challenges

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Recording and Sharing Skills Information



Europass documents

Best known tools for documenting skills and qualifications



Reasons for using Europass

- Easier than other existing tools
- Well structured
- A lot of suggestions/examples/tutorials
- Broadly used in my country

Source: Europass Statistics, Cedefop

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Recording and Sharing Skills Information



Recent developments (will be presented as timeline):

- Intuitive and responsive online editor in 2014;
- Self-assessment grids for ICT and languages in 2015;
- New Design of the Europass website in 2016.

Further plans in the New Skills Agenda:

- 'Intuitive and seamless online service platform'
 - Resolving overlaps among Europass documents;
 - Integrating more European and national skills services into one website;
 - Introducing more comprehensive self-assessment tools.

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Recording and Sharing Skills Information



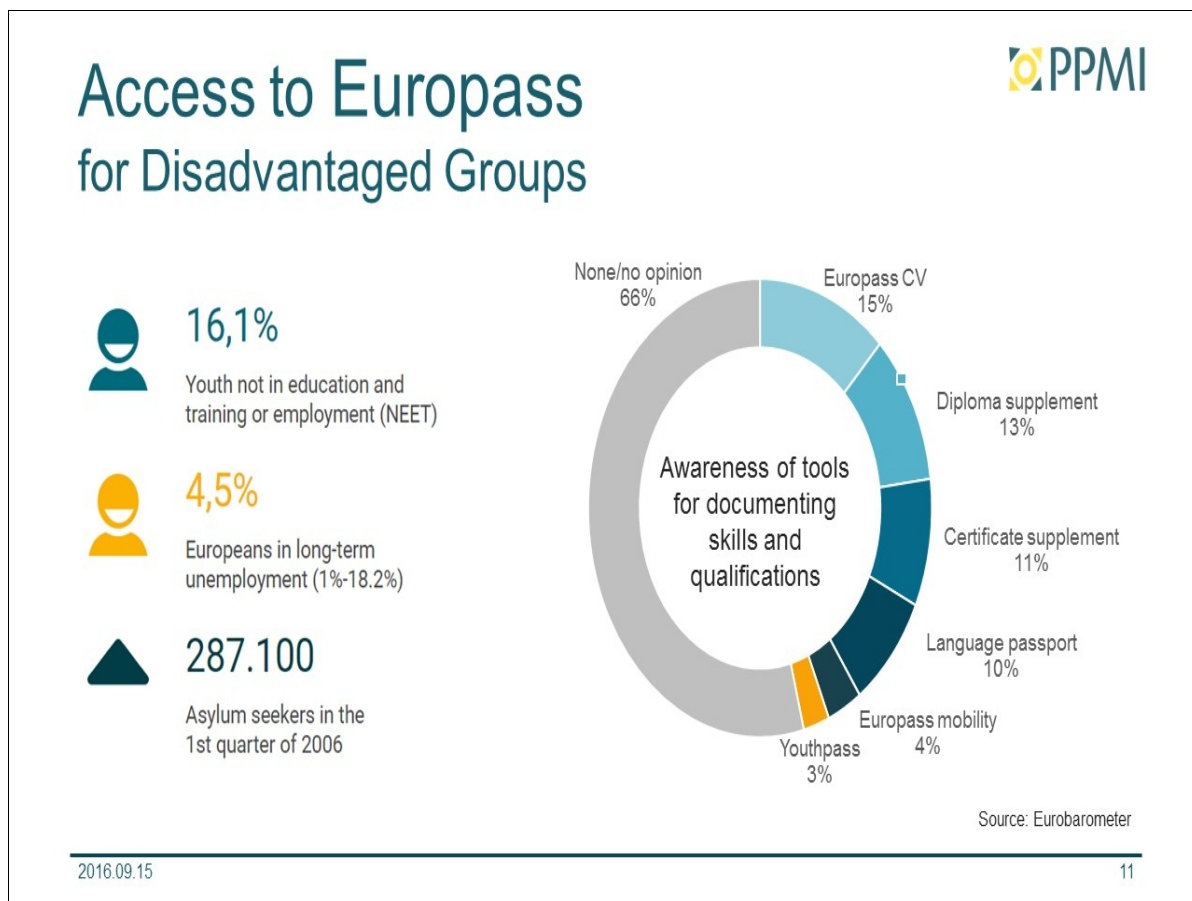
Recommendation

Regular review and updating of the Europass documents should be continued for the initiative to remain relevant to its current and future users.

A set of **concrete measures for better interoperability** among the Europass documents and other European tools with similar purpose should be considered to allow for more user-friendly environment helping individuals to record and reflect on their skills and competences.

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Access to Europass for Disadvantaged Groups

Supporting institutions (e.g. public employment services, career guidance centres) → mediators in facilitating access to disadvantaged groups (e.g. NEETs, people in long term unemployment, recent immigrants).

Issue:

- Europass documents are not necessarily used as as standard in support institutions;
- Lack of coherent collaboration between the existing national points of contact;
- Low awareness of the existing skills services among disadvantaged groups.

→ limited access of support services for individuals.

Further plans in the Commission’s roadmap: integrated operation of the European skills services.

Gap in the Agenda: lack of practical measures of how to better reach the disadvantaged groups through Europass.

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Access to Europass for Disadvantaged Groups



Recommendation

EU skills services including National Europass Centres should work out **concrete action plans** together with EU Member States' institutions and organizations **for the improvement of access to information about Europass** to all the disadvantaged groups of Europeans and to offer them personalized support in accessing and completing Europass documents.

The development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such plans could be foreseen in the new Europass framework.

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Coordination with Other Skills Services



A variety of different European skills services



The collage displays several European skills services websites:

- Learning Opportunities and Qualifications:** Information about courses, work-based learning and qualifications.
- SKILLS PANORAMA:** Inspiring your choices on skills and jobs in Europe.
- ESCO:** European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.
- euro|guidance:** A central hub for guidance services.
- EURES:** The European Job Mobility Portal.

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Coordination with Other Skills Services

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Learning Opportunities and Qualifications
Information about courses, work-based learning and qualifications

euro|guidance

EURES
The European Job Mobility Portal

europass *Opening doors to learning and working in Europe*

One-stop-shop
Integration of a wider set of European tools and services

SKILLS PANORAMA
Inspiring your choices on skills and jobs in Europe

Legal notice | Cookies | Contact | Search on E

ESCO
European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations

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Coordination with Other Skills Services

✓ Commission's Roadmap: Better coordination of national support networks.

National europass Centres

EQF National Coordination points

Single body

euro|guidance Centres

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Coordination with Other Skills Services



Recommendation

The new Europass framework should consider and address **the limitations of the legal instruments and different governance structures** of the initiatives with joint ownership (e.g. the Diploma Supplement developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO).

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Thank you for your attention!

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NOTES

- ¹ 'Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a Single Community Framework for the Transparency of Qualifications and Competences (Europass)', accessed 22 August 2016, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2004:390:0006:0020:EN:PDF>.
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- ⁴ 'Examples of Europass CVs', <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents/curriculum-vitae/examples>.
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