



ESCO (2011) BOA 002 FINAL

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MINUTES

ESCO Board meeting

11thFebruary 2011

Crown Plaza Hotel - rue Gineste 3, B-1210 Brussels

Belgium

Item 1 Opening of the meeting

Ms Wallis Goelen opened the meeting with a welcome speech. The members of the ESCO Board and the ESCO Team introduced themselves.

Ms Goelen thanked each member of the ESCO Board for being there to support the ESCO project and for the work on its development and expressed her gratitude towards the ESCO team for the preparation of the meeting.

Ms Goelen gave an introductory presentation on ESCO.

In these minutes are not recorded elements of the presentations made during the meeting. The full PowerPoint Presentations can be found in Annex of this document or on CIRCA (http://circa.europa.eu/Members/irc/empl/escp/library?l=/esco_board_meeting&vm=detailed&sb=Title).

Mr Michael Teutsch stressed the importance of the ESCO project in the field of education, where it among other things will help to describe learning outcomes in terms of skills and competences.

Item 1.1 Adoption of draft agenda of the meeting

The agenda of the meeting has been adopted unanimously.

Item 1.2 Role of the ESCO Board and stakeholder involvement

Mr Lambert Kleinmann gave a presentation of the role of the ESCO Board and its interaction with the other ESCO Management bodies.

Item 1.3 Appointment of the Chair and the Vice chair

On behalf of the European Commission Ms Goelen proposed Mr Jeremy Groombridge as a Chairman of the ESCO Board and Mr Teutsch proposed Mr Peter Thiele as Vice chairman. The



Board appointed both the Chairman and the Vice chairman by consensus. The Chair of the Board was appointed for a two years period.

Mr Groombridge thanked for the election and thanked all who worked for the ESCO project until now. He noted that the Board needs to be disciplined, should actively involve itself in the project's work and needs to take decisions swiftly to enable delivery.

Mr Thiele expressed his gratitude for his election and suggested the Board to move with the Agenda to the order of the day.

Item 2 The deliverables on ESCO

Item 2.1 ESCO Vision

Ms Katrien Vander Kuylen presented the ESCO Vision paper, she focused on the aims of ESCO, its horizontal structure, the current state of ESCO and its added value. (Annex)

The following questions were raised by the Board members after the presentation:

- 1) Is ESCO available on the WWW?
- 2) How many sectors are covered by these 5000 occupation terms?
- 3) What needs to be done to become a final product?
- 4) How can the European Commission influence the ESCO Boards work? In the provided documents, it is mentioned that the European Commission reserves the right not to follow Board decisions if they run counter of the financial or political interests of the Commission. How should the Board interpret that?

ESCO is currently not available on the WWW. These 5000 occupation terms are not yet grouped by sectors – after the upgrade to ISCO 08, occupations will be grouped according to NACE's economic activities. Depending on the amount of grouped occupations per economic activity, subdivisions will be made. Reference groups will be organised based on their knowledge/experience in specific economic sectors/activities.

As an answer on the 4th question, Ms Goelen clarified that both DG EAC and DG EMPL are bound to respect the European Commission's financial rules. In this view the written clause has to be interpreted as a protection of the European Commission's budget interests, and not as an intervention related to the Boards political actions.

The following comments were added:

The main discussion concentrated on ESCO's added value; on the importance of the tree pillars of ESCO; the need to establish a timetable/roadmap, the frames and steps of the ESCO Board's work; the relation between ESCO and the national level; the fact that ESCO might help to identify hidden skills and strengthen employability.



Item 2.2 Results of the stakeholder survey

Mr Martin Le Vrang presented the main results of the stakeholder survey. (Annex)

The following questions were raised by the Board members after the presentation:

- 1) There were around 1 000 invitations sent to respondents. Why did only 20% reply to the survey?
- 2) Is there a plan to make a follow-up survey?

A lot of organisations received the survey several times – the survey was sent to multiple recipients or even to the same persons within one organisation. However, the European Commission in most cases received only one answer per organisation. Currently no concrete plans for a follow-up survey have been made. The next stakeholder's conference is planned for the 4th quarter of this year. A new survey could be conducted after the conference, in the beginning of 2012, based on the decisions of the ESCO Board.

Item 2.3 ESCO occupations pillar

Following the suggestion to first listen to all three ESCO pillar's presentations and hold the main discussion at the end, clarifying questions have been raised after each pillar presentation and the actual discussion on the content took place after the presentation of the qualifications pillar.

Mr Le Vrang gave a presentation of the ESCO occupations pillar and its link to the skills/competences pillar. (Annex)

Questions raised by the Board members:

- 1) How comprehensive can/should ESCO be?
- 2) Why we can't still use ISCO?

ESCO will concentrate on concept of wider relevance in the European Union and will not cover occupations or skills/competences that are significant only for a smaller region. National classifications are in many cases more specific than ESCO. Organisations in need of a more detailed classification could also extend ESCO for their purposes.

ISCO is not sufficiently detailed. It covers only occupation groups based on the ISCED levels (learning income), but not specific occupations and the related skills/competences. ESCO aims at an up-to-date representation of the European labour market and educational system. The European Commission's strategy: "Europe 2020" is related to new jobs and new skills. ESCO is a European instrument; it has no ambition to replace the existing national or sectoral classifications.



ESCO must be as simple as possible; it is important to remember that s/c varies and are specific in each region, country. By this pragmatic approach, ESCO becomes attractive and easy to use. The common structure for all networks can become the formula of success.

Item 2.4 ESCO skills/competences pillar

Ms Jennifer Wannan presented the skills / competences pillar. (Annex)

In the discussion following her presentation, the importance of s/c pillar was emphasised: links to this pillar must be made with particular care as this is one of the most important requirements for the ESCO project to become successful.

Questions:

1. Are key competences included in the definition of transversal s/c?
2. Why is 'knowledge' absent in the s/c pillar?
3. What exactly is meant with 'soft skills'?
4. What is the relation between the s/c pillar and ISCED?
5. What level of detail is required to achieve optimal usability?

The options to qualify the relation between occupations and s/c (two levels such as "main" and "secondary" or three levels such as "required", "recommended" and "optional") should be addresses in the Maintenance Committee and tested by the Reference groups. The Board noted that this was a too specific task for them at this stage and input from experts was needed in order to be able to come to decisions.

It was pointed out that there must be a common understanding about the term "soft skills". The members of the ESCO Board asked for an in depth comparison of the ESCO proposal with the existing taxonomies in the area e.g. O*Net in order to avoid duplications and to use existing experience and models as far as possible. O*Net should be presented at the next ESCO board meeting.

Item 2.5 ESCO qualifications pillar

Mr Jens Bjornavold, Cedefop, presented the ESCO qualifications pillar.

The following questions were raised by the Board members after the presentation:

- 1) How can we make sure that ESCO-developments take into account and builds on the principles and accomplishments of EQF?
- 2) What is the difference between sector qualifications and national qualifications?
- 3) What is the added value of ESCO if we already have the EQF?
- 4) Why is there a need to go beyond the EQF?



EQF and NQFs (including the EQF portal and the national registers of qualifications) are the main reference points for the ESCO qualification pillar. NQFs, which are still being developed in the majority of countries, cover in principle all qualifications issued by recognised awarding bodies as well as a number of others developed and issued at sector or company level. However, not all qualifications at sector/enterprise level and for particular tasks/technologies are included in national frameworks and registers (e.g. certificates in the ICT-sector, in welding and in the transport sector). These certificates play an important role by regulating access to jobs and occupations and must thus be covered by ESCO. These certificates and qualifications needs to be identified and presented in such a way that their relationship to occupations and to skills/competences becomes clear.

The qualifications pillar will also need to take into due account the qualifications related to regulated professions, which are in principle included in NQFs but need specific treatment because of their peculiar regulatory role.

The main challenge will be to link ESCO to the EQF web portal, currently under development. While ESCO needs to contain a core set of qualifications terms, the link to individual qualifications at different levels needs to be enabled through the link to EQF/NQFs. A further challenge consists in identifying and structuring qualifications not covered by EQF/NQFs, for example at sector and enterprise level.

During the discussion, there was unanimous support expressed for the three pillar approach and it was noted that the qualifications pillar is necessary for the overall functioning of ESCO.

A key-challenge is thus to decide on the structure and content of qualifications terminology to be included in ESCO. While it will be impossible to cover all qualifications terms used at national level (see link to EQF/NQFs) a possibility is to identify main categories (clusters) of qualifications for inclusion in ESCO.

The chairman noted that the Board for next meeting will need more details in order to endorse any proposal to take the qualifications pillar to the next level. The Board stressed the importance of the need to prepare a document analysing the scope, relevance and consistency of existing qualifications-related terms in pre-ESCO v0 and how this could point towards a future structure of qualifications related terms.

Item 2.6 Pillars section conclusion

Skills and competences pillar: The Chairman thanked Ms Wannan for the comprehensive analysis and presentation and noted that the work is well on track. Final decisions on a number of options would only be possible after advice from the Maintenance Committee and the Reference Groups.



Occupations pillar: The Board suggested that the taxonomy which was developed by the Swedish PES and is used as the basis of ESCO should be referred to as the "EURES taxonomy" in future. The Board also expressed the importance of the work to be done by the Reference groups.

The Board approved the proposal to foresee a possibility for the Reference Groups to create associative relationships ('related to') between two or more occupations of ESCO.

The Board decided that skills/competences should be linked to the occupations pillar on level of occupations, not occupation groups. However, further proof of feasibility and technical durability should be provided to the Board by means of practical examples and pilot projects.

The final decision on the use of either 'main' and 'secondary' or 'required', 'recommended' and 'optional' to qualify the relation between s/c and occupations has been postponed.

Qualifications pillar: The Board agreed that the qualifications pillar forms the third pillar of ESCO, building on the EQF/NQF developments but also going beyond it, though more reflection was needed on the operational framework to put in practice this concept.

Item 2.7 Methodology for the continuous revision and enrichment of ESCO

Mr Henric Stjernquist gave a presentation of the methodology for the continuous revision and enrichment of ESCO. After this presentation there was some discussion on the further work on the ESCO project.

The involvement of translators in the ESCO project is foreseen as of the end of 2nd quarter of 2011. Reference groups will, during the first steps of the revision of a sector, work in English, French and German and any other language known by members of the individual reference group. At the final stage terms will be translated into all ESCO languages. The Commission's Translation Directorate General (DGT) indicated its strong interest to handle all translations related to ESCO. The involvement of external parties for translation or terminology purposes may still arise, but it will be discussed further bilaterally with the ESCO Secretariat.

The members of the ESCO Board asked for a transparent explanation of the operational cooperation for DG EMPL and DG EAC in the ESCO project. The Commission agreed and announced a respective Memorandum of Understanding for the next ESCO board meeting.

It was stated that the ESCO Secretariat is the "executive wing" of the ESCO structure. The Board accepts the strategies, but the Secretariat performs the daily tasks.

The public release of pre-ESCO v0 was discussed. The Board members expressed on the one hand the need to make ESCO available so that interested stakeholders can test it. On the other hand it was stated that ESCO should only be published after that the Board has agreed on its quality/content, in order to not lose credibility. It was stressed that there is no political pressure about this issue from the European Commission apart from pursuing a swift publication. There



was a suggestion expressed to make pre-ESCO v0 publicly available just for a selection of stakeholders. This could help the Board members to take quicker decisions related to the ESCO project. It was decided that the Secretariat will work on this issue and will submit concrete proposals to the Board for a decision.

Item 2.8 ESCO Work programme

It was noted that for the management of the ESCO project a communication plan will need to be developed. There should be seminars, conferences etc. regarding the ESCO project. The Secretariat will prepare the communication plan for next Board meeting.

The members of the ESCO Board asked for a project plan for the next meeting, which should include a short description of the ESCO project, a respective timetable, budget plan, work load, cost-benefit-ratio, procedures (e.g. step by step testing of ESCO in occupations), sub-structures, estimated staff needed on EU and national level, organigramm, milestones to be achieved until 2013.

There should be three board meetings per year in 2011, in following years the meetings should take place twice per year. The next Board meeting would be in London, in the end of May, 2011. A decision for a concrete date will be made as soon as possible.

All presenters agreed with the proposal that the ESCO Secretariat will send out to all members of the Board:

- Main operational conclusions of this meeting (by 1 March 2011);
- Full minutes of the meeting (a.s.a.p.);
- Draft Agenda for the next ESCO Boards meeting (before 24 April 2011).

An unwritten principle was adopted that Board meetings will take place at least one month before Presidency changes.

Item 2.8 Candidates for Maintenance Committee

List with proposed candidates and their professional profiles will be circulated to the Board members by end of February. The Board members will make all comments or additions within two weeks.

Item 3 Concluding Remarks

The chairman concluded the meeting. The challenge of the ESCO project is to create a good product with good reputation. There should be a relation between time, cost and quality. He noted that for all members of the Board the success of ESCO is of utmost importance.



Mr Groombridge thanked for participation and support of everyone and expressed the hope to see everyone on next Boards meeting in London.

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Participants

ESCO Board Members

Calleja, Joachim James	Maltese Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Chief Executive of the Malta Qualifications Council
Danev, Bojidar	Bulgarian Industrial Association, Chairman/Executive President
Goelen, Wallis	DG EMPL, Head of Unit - Employment Services, EURES
Groombridge, Jeremy	Jobcentre Plus, Director - Transformation/Product Management
Johansen, Gorm	Danish Chamber of Commerce/Representing Eurochambres, Senior advisor
Lock, Claes-Göran	Swedish PES (Arbetsförmedlingen), Senior Manager
Pennel, Denis	Eurociett, Managing Director
Teutsch, Michael	DG EAC, Head of Unit - Lifelong learning: 2020 strategy
Thiele, Peter	German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Head of Division- Vocational Training Policy Issues

Permanent observers of the Board

Baut, Michel	DG Translation, Head of Unit - Translation
De Vriendt, Karel	DG Informatics, Head of Unit - IDA Programme
Lettmayr, Christian	Cedefop, Acting director

ESCO Team

Bjornavold Jens	Cedefop
Kleinmann Lambert	DG EMPL
Le Vrang Martin	DG EMPL
Niedra Ginta	TenForce
Scatoli Carlo	DG EAC
Stjernquist Henric	DG EMPL
Vander Kuylen Katrien	TenForce
Wannan Jennifer	DG EAC



Excused

Boomgaert, Wilfried (B)	Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Deputy Director - Departement Onderwijs en Vorming
Bridgford, Jeff (GB)	European Trade Union Confederation, Special Advisor
Wiedenhofer, Harald (A)	European Federation of Food, Agriculture & Tourism Trade Unions, General Secretary
Šteinbuka, Inna (EU)	Eurostat, Director Economic and Regional Statistics