17th ESCO Board meeting

Minutes

8 November 2016

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Tuesday, 8 November 2016

Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
Meeting room: Alexander von Humboldt 3 - 2.10.100
Kapelle-Ufer 1
10117 Berlin
GERMANY

Item 1   Opening of the meeting

Mr Peter Thiele welcomed the ESCO Board at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Mr Jeremy Groombridge chaired the ESCO Board meeting.

The minutes of the 16th ESCO Board meeting have been endorsed via written procedure and published on ESCOpedia[1]. The board unanimously adopted the agenda of the 17th ESCO Board meeting.

Item 2   Update on the New Skills Agenda for Europe [for information]

Mr Detlef Eckert presented the board with an update on the New Skills Agenda for Europe. During the update, he touched on various topics:

- the "Skills Guarantee", which will change names into "Upskilling Pathways",

- the European Vocational Skills week, taking place from 5 to 9 December, focussing on how to improve mobility in VET,

- the Key competences Recommendation, for which DG EAC is responsible, but where DG EMPL is involved as well,

- the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, following up on the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs 2013-2016, has its launch event on 1 December,

- the Skills Profile Tool for third country nationals, where, amongst other instruments, ESCO will be used to help capture the skills profiles of refugees to facilitate their employability,

- the EURES-regulation and it's three Implementing Acts expected in 2017,

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/16th_ESCO_Board_meeting

- the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills, is a cross-DG cooperation addressing the mismatch between skills people are taught and the skills needed by the service sector and manufacturing industry,

- the proposal for a revision of the Europass-framework, encompassing a proposal to integrate different European tools and initiatives in one user-friendly instrument. The revision includes a proposal to use ESCO as a common terminology to describe skills, competences qualifications and occupations in the new Europass.

General Comments:

In the frame of the proposal for a revision of the Europass framework, members of the board believe that the current Europass-framework has a good reputation and is widely used. Some are concerned though that merging the current Europass with several other EU instruments may have a negative impact on Europass. While ESCO is a promising project, some board members deem it too early to formally include it in the revised Europass. In addition, some members observed that the objectives for the revised Europass are not sufficiently clear from the proposal and seem rather IT-steered than addressing the needs of its users. Furthermore, some members asked a clarification on the costs and on data protection (e.g. where and how would the data be stored). To conclude, some board members questioned the proposal for a single coordination point at national level to coordinate the activities currently associated with the National Europass Centres, EQF National Coordination Points and Euroguidance Centres.

Mr Eckert responded to these concerns by explaining that the Commission services believe that digital transformation will change the way employment transactions work. The proposal is a response to this change. As such, the new Europass will aim to improve services at a European level. The estimation of the cost of the operation of interoperability is estimated between 1,5 million euros and 2 millions. The scope of the new Europass will still offer the option to store a CV offline and continue using it as today. With regard to the CVs storage, a board member raised that it is not clear how privacy will be protected and how the database will be managed. The Commission services scheduled extensive business analysis, including user testing, to build a sound understanding of the user-requirements of the services-layer of the new Europass-platform.

Item 3   ESCO use cases: three practical examples [for information]

Mr Jens Bjornavold presented the board with the results of the Cedefop study comparing 10 VET qualifications using a preliminary version of ESCO v1 in English and the Cedefop pilot using ESCO v0 for big data analysis of job vacancies. For both exercises, Cedefop combined the use of ESCO with human research and the support of IT-tools. Mr Bjornavold explained that ESCO showed its added value for the comparison of qualifications and big data analysis of job vacancies. In the pilot for big data analysis, Cedefop used the transversal thesaurus next to ESCO v0, as the transversal skills were not yet part of ESCO v0. Mr Bjornavold expressed that transversal skills and their link to occupational profiles are crucial for the comparison of VET qualifications. Therefore, Cedefop is therefore looking forward to continue both exercises with the final version of ESCO v1.

General Comments:

The Commission services highlighted that transversal skills will be published as part of ESCO v1, but are not directly included into occupational profiles. The occupational

profiles will contain contextualised skills, which are related to the transversal thesaurus. The Commission services will publish the transversal thesaurus as a separate package.

Some board members advised Cedefop to focus for future studies comparing qualifications with ESCO as reference point on the European labour market only, in order to convince the national ministries of the added value of ESCO.

In addition, they regretted that these studies could only be done with the English version and are not yet possible using other language versions and qualifications covering all Member States.

A member of the board asked for precisions on the data used for the comparison of 10 VET studies, especially on the sources and on the scope of the data.

Ms Angeliki Dedopoulou showed the board how the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is using an ESCO pre-release version for developing competence profiles for the media-sector.

Item 4   Follow up from previous ESCO Board meeting [for information]

Mr Tony Bird, chair of the ESCO Maintenance Committee, updated the board on the outcomes of the 21th ESCO Maintenance Committee meeting.

As the board raised no further questions on the ESCO Communication plan, it now considers the document as final.

The board had no further questions on the follow-up actions from the 16th ESCO Board meeting and the joint meeting of the board and ESCO Maintenance Committee.

Item 5   Overview of the quality assurance actions for ESCO v1 [for information]

Mr Bird presented the board a detailed overview of the formal and informal quality assurance actions by the Commission services and ESCO Maintenance Committee in the development of ESCO v1. The board had no further questions. Some members of the board pointed out that even if this has not been exactly planned or written in procedures, the work of the maintenance committee constituted the most important part of the quality assurance of the system.

Item 6   Feedback of the Member States Working Group on the English version of ESCO [for information]

Mr Pedro Chaves informed the board on the result of the first part of the Member States Working Group (MSWG) consultation and provided an overview of the additional feedback of several Member States on the English version of ESCO.

General Comments:

The board welcomed the overall positive replies on the two general questions raised during the consultation.

Some board members noted that while the replies of Member States reflect that they perceive ESCO as fit for the purpose of mapping their National Classification to ESCO and improve the exchange of information in EURES, this perception is not yet evidence

based. They believe the Member States will need more time and the translations of ESCO in their national languages to make a proper assessment.

Some board members requested more clarity on the role of the MSWG, since it does not represent the formal opinion of the Member States.

The Commission services explained that the MSWG consists of experts nominated by the governments of the Member States and representing these governments. It envisages that the MSWG will be able to provide the Commission services with advice on strategic questions after the board ceases to exist.

The board asked the Commission services to take the feedback given by the Member States through the MSWG during the consultation into account and develop a more user-friendly structure for the skills pillar and focus on the further development of the qualifications pillar.

The Commission services explained that indeed for now the skills pillar itself does not contain an elaborated hierarchical structure. It highlighted that the skills are organised and accessible through the occupational profiles. While for efficient and effective use of the skills pillar in search mechanisms (e.g. semantic search, type ahead) in IT tools the skills pillar does not need more structure than we already have, the Commission services see the added value to have a more structured skills pillar and is assessing several options with the ESCO Maintenance Committee. The further developing of the Qualifications pillar is also being thoroughly followed by the Commission services.

Item 7 Next steps for the publication of ESCO [for information]

Mr Martin Le Vrang updated the board on the next steps until the publication of ESCO v1:

- completion of the translation work by DG Translation,

- part two of the MSWG consultation on the translated occupations of ESCO v1,

- part three of the MSWG consultation on the skills and competences in all the language variants,

- the time line for the publication of ESCO v1,

- the use of ESCO in EURES as will be defined in the EURES implementing act,

- the further development of the ESCO qualifications pillar.

General Comments:

The board advised the Commission services to follow up on the feedback of the MSWG and improve the process for the second part of the MSWG consultation.

The Commission services welcomed the proposal and will include it to the agenda of the next MSWG-meeting on 12 December 2016.

Item 8 Approach for the continuous updating of ESCO [for consultation]

Mr Martin Le Vrang and Ms Angeliki Dedopoulou presented the board with an update on the approach for the continuous updating of ESCO.

General Comments:

The board advised the Commission services to develop the release process in more detail, including the different steps the content goes through before being published and the actors involved. The board advised the Commission services to ensure that the release process covers both minor and major releases. In this context, the board questioned the feasibility of only an annual release cycle. The board noted a lack of clarity on the future governance structures for ESCO and their role in the approach for its continuous updating. The board advised the Commission services to include the political level of the Members States in the discussion on the release process.

The board asked the Commission services to clarify which national classifications should be mapped to ESCO (classifications on occupations and/or skills/competences ?) and also the impact of the continuous updating of ESCO on the mappings established in the frame of the EURES-Regulation. It asked the Commission services to consider freezing the ESCO v1 data for the period where Public Employment Services map their National Classifications to ESCO v1.

The board advised the Commission services to invest in further improving the communication about ESCO with stakeholders, e.g. on the relationship between ESCO and the Directive on Regulated Professions, and this not only after but also before the release of ESCO v1.

Some board members believe that it is premature to discuss the release management cycle before the release of ESCO v1, for it will take a few years for the stakeholders to understand the new instrument.

The Commission services take the advice of the board into account in the further development of the approach for the continuous updating of ESCO. It will investigate the feasibility of the annual release cycle. The Commission services would need the support of an expert group for both technical advice and market feedback.

The Commission services explained that collecting and analysing feedback is a continuous process. It will put a permanent contact point in place where content- and technical experts can provide their feedback. The Commission services will listen to the users of ESCO and set priorities for the continuous updating on the basis of their feedback and needs. Some board members welcomed this feedback opportunity but asked for a more active method for gathering feedback from stakeholders.

The Commission services identified three types of changes to update ESCO with: 1) terminological changes, addressing e.g. misspelling or typos, 2) changes to ESCO concepts, e.g. adding or removing occupations or skills, 3) modifying the data model of ESCO, e.g. adding a new pillar. It can release terminological changes at any time without impact on the process of mapping or the mapping tables. The Commission services would address changes to ESCO concepts through the annual release. It acknowledges that a period of relative stability while the mapping process is ongoing would be beneficial. However, the Commission services identified several improvement actions which would not impact on the mapping process, e.g. adding work context or developing a structure for the skills-pillar.

Item 9   ESCO Launch conference [for consultation]

Ms Laura Visan presented the board with a first proposal for the ESCO Launch conference.

General Comments:

The board advised the Commission services to define concrete messages on what ESCO v1 can offer as services and to stop presenting at length what it should be in the future. The board wondered if the current agenda is appealing enough to attract the right stakeholders from the field of education and training. With the qualification pillar still under development, some members of the board believe it will be challenging to convince stakeholders from the field of education and training of the added value of ESCO while the qualifications pillar is still under development. When showcasing the added value of ESCO, the board advised, to make sure the audience understands the difference between ESCO and the tools that use ESCO to deliver services to their users.

The board advised to invite all stakeholders that were involved in the development of ESCO. The board advised the Commission services to focus not on all types of enterprises to participate and contribute to the conference, but mostly on the larger ones.

Some board members noted that many researchers make use of O*NET for their research. Raising the visibility of and awareness about ESCO, may point them to using ESCO too. Therefore, some board members advised to attract researchers as additional target audience.

The board sees a live stream of the conference as a solution to reach stakeholders interested in only part of the conference.

Following the feedback of the board, the Commission services proposed to move away from the traditional structure of conferences. It proposed to first present ESCO as a tool with the focus on its use cases and close with the policy related topics on the agenda. The board welcomed this new proposal.

Item 10   Final recommendations or remarks by the ESCO Board

Mr Groombridge invited the board members to formulate their final recommendations or remarks.

The board believes that ESCO has very positive and ambitious objectives. To ensure ESCO can achieve these objectives, the board advised the Commission services to follow a step by step approach, to consciously manage the stakeholders' expectations of ESCO's potential and to avoid overselling of the tool.

The board advises the Commission services to invest in further improving the communication about ESCO with its stakeholders. As such, the board advises the Commission services to communicate in more detail on the added value of ESCO for the various concrete use cases and specific groups of stakeholders e.g. the added value of ESCO for universities. Additionally, the board advises the Commission services to emphasise in its communication the long term perspective of ESCO and its approach for continuous updating of the classification. As a final recommendation on the topic of communication, the board invites the Commission services to actively listen to its stakeholders and (future) users, e.g. at the MSWG or the ESCO user fora still to be established.

The board advises the Commission services to clarify the future governance structure for ESCO. It advises to keep the ESCO Maintenance Committee active in order to keep the expertise of that group for further work on the empirical quality assurance of ESCO.

The board advises the Commission services to develop a quality assurance process situated outside the European Commission and the developing IT company. The current principles and method for dialogue between the last 16 SREF and the Commission services and the ESCO Maintenance Committee had some defects (amongst others there was no digital platform available for the sector experts to have a discussion between experts) and should be replaced by a better one. Additionally, it advises the Commission services to develop quality indicators to follow up on ESCO's performance in various service providing tools.

The board advises the Commission services to avoid making ESCO a legal tool. It advises to give ESCO sufficient time to further grow, get adopted and used by stakeholders and prove its added value in the field of education and training and the labour market. The board believes that once ESCO has proven itself, it will become a European standard for the labour market and in the field of education and training. Some members of the board advised to rather develop an ambitious plan for the future implementation and adoption of ESCO v1 throughout Europe as a Commission document, rather than having it included into concrete Decisions of the European Parliament and of the Council, like the Europass Decision.

Finally the board asked the Commission services to be clear about which services for which end-users the ESCO tool will support. The driver for the further development of ESCO should be the labour market and not the technical team. Consequently, ESCO should be an 'open system', flexible enough to follow labour market evolutions.

Item 10   Closing speeches

Mr Jeremy Groombridge and Mr Detlef Eckert concluded this last meeting of the board with a closing speech.

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Participants

ESCO Board Members

-	ÅHMAN Göran	Swedish PES (Arbetsförmedlingen)
-	BOOMGAERT Wilfried	The Ministry of education and training of Flanders, Belgium and the EQF Advisory Group
-	BOUQUET Brigitte	Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle
-	DANEV Bojidar	Bulgarian Industrial Association
-	GROOMBRIDGE Jeremy	Private expert
-	KARPISEK Michal	EURASHE, the European Association of Higher Education Institutions
-	MAES Katrien	LERU Office, the League of European Research Universities
-	MICHEL Isabelle	FGTB
-	RIES Jean	ADEM Luxembourg
-	SKJERVE Tormod	EUROCHAMBERS, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry

- THIELE Peter   Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany

Permanent observers to the ESCO Board

- BIRD Tony   ESCO Maintenance Committee
- BJORNAVOLD Jens   Cefefop
- ECKERT Detlef   Director, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

Observers

- BOZZI COLONNA Sara   Member States Working Group on ESCO

ESCO Secretariat

- CHAVES Pedro   DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- DEDOPOULOU Angeliki   Everis
- LE VRANG Martin   DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- MOYES Nuria   Everis
- SPINELLI Vito   Everis
- VANDER KUYLEN Katrien   Everis
- VISAN Laura   Everis

Excused

- BUSUIOC Bianca   DG Education and Culture
- CALLEJA James   CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)
- FERNANDEZ DIEZ Miguel   Ministry of Employment and Social Security of Spain
- HODGSON Peter   EFVET, the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- PENNEL Denis   EUROCIETT, European Confederation of Private Employment Services
- PEREIRA Ana Carla   Head of Unit, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
- PERISTERAS Vassilios   DIGIT
- WEISSWANGE Sophie   DG Growth
- WILSON Tom   Unionlearn
- ZAGÓROWICZ Klaudia   DG Translation