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Quality Assurance for ESCO

1. Purpose of the document

The ESCO Secretariat (SEC) is presenting this document to the ESCO Maintenance Committee (MAI) in order to facilitate the discussion about the quality assurance process for building ESCO v1. The document refers to the previous publication "Overview of quality management in the ESCO project" presented on the 6th Maintenance Committee meeting.

The SEC believes that spending time on quality produces value. For this reason the SEC suggests to put in place policies and procedures to ensure the ESCO taxonomy meets the product requirements.

This document focuses on the quality assurance aspects related to the revision of the ESCO taxonomy.

2. Quality assurance revision process

Reference Groups (REF) do not create content for ESCO from the scratch. They identify existing sources and consult their professional network. This ensures an early validation of new contents that are introduced in ESCO.

Since REF mainly consist of labour market, education and training experts, they are supported by taxonomy experts in order to develop a complex classification such as ESCO. This ensures, that they constantly receive the appropriate guidance and support needed.



Anticipating potential issues and making sure the REFs have all the information and support they need to deliver an adequate level of quality, represent core activities in the quality assurance process. For this reason the SEC and the Taxonomy Expert Group (TEG) assist the REF on their work. The main goal is to remedy non-compliance at an early stage. Contracts between the European Commission and the TEG can also stipulate quality criteria. The Commission services verify compliance of products and services delivered. This ensures that the MAI can receive a product showing an adequate level of quality before the final review is carried out. This reduces the costs of quality control and the risk of rework and delays.

In the quality assurance process envisaged in this document, the SEC and the TEG will monitor the quality of the ongoing work, based on the principles set out by the MAI and described in the ESCO Guidelines (cf. ch. 3.1). The SEC will make sure that the data fulfils a set of basic requirements (completeness of the data, compliance with the data model, etc.) before the outcome of each step is reviewed by the MAI. After any review of the MAI, the SEC will abstract general principles and include them in the guidelines. The SEC will inform the REF and TEG about any amendments of the guidelines.

The MAI will have the possibility to review the content under development continuously. Moreover the MAI will review the final outcome produced by each REF. This appraisal will be performed at the end of all five steps of the methodology that the REFs use to develop the content. The opinions of the MAI upon the quality of the delivered content will be taken into consideration when deciding upon the publication of this content.

A further quality assessment is foreseen for the translation of all ESCO content. The latter includes quality checks quoted in the contract between the European Commission and the translators, and a validation by a network of labour market policy experts.

The Board (BOA) will propose new releases after receiving positive opinions upon the content by the MAI.

3. Tools and techniques for the revision

In the ESCO quality assurance process several tools and techniques will be used. These tools and techniques will use standards, metrics and techniques set out by the SEC and the MAI. Learning from experience will lead to constantly improving such tools. Additionally, they will be refined to take into account upcoming decisions upon the revision of the methodology.



3.1. The ESCO Guidelines

The ESCO Guidelines are the main body of knowledge about ESCO. They describe in detail the 5 steps approach methodology designed for the Sectoral Reference Groups to develop the content of ESCO. The document also includes do's and don'ts examples to make it easier for the SREF to understand the principles set out in the methodology. For these reasons the Guidelines represent a valid tool to be used on both prevention and inspection aspects.

3.2. Collaborative Taxonomy Creator

The Collaborative Taxonomy Creator (CTC) is a collaborative platform that the SREF members will use to develop content for the ESCO taxonomy.

This tool is specifically designed to guide the REF members along the 5 steps methodology and ensures all data is in a format that is compliant with the data model. Additionally, the tool requires the REF members to fill all required data fields before a draft can be finalised. The data developed in this way can be automatically exported to the Taxonomy management software.

The CTC also allows managing the workflow: the MAI and REFs can communicate directly. REFs can submit drafts and MAI can provide comments, thus reducing potential communication delays.

In this tool the members of the SEC and the MAI will have the possibility to inspect the outcome of all REF, comment directly on them and approve or reject the drafts. The tool will partly automate checks and allow to create reports for quality control purposes.

3.3. Quality check list

The third tool the SEC has started to implement is a comprehensive quality check list. This list will describe all checks that have to be done to ensure the final product fulfils the requirements to a certain degree. From this list we will extract specific lists for any actor involved in the quality assurance process. The checks for the specific concepts/terms and the ones for the entire sectors will be categorized in different lists.

In the list each line corresponds to a check to be done at some point in the quality assurance process of the 5 steps methodology. The description of the check, the responsible/owner and the timing will be part of the information included in the list. The checklist in annex 1 illustrates this with the checks identified for step 1.

The SEC invites the MAI to comment on this checklist and the further development of the quality assurance process.



Annex 1: Draft checklist for step 1

Step	SREF	SEC	MAI	BOA	IT	Subject	Task	At submission/request for feedbacks	At the end of the step	At the end of any step	final review	Task Description
1A			x			List of Sources	Geographical Balance	x	x	x	x	Verify that the list of sources is representative of different geographical regions.
1A			x			List of Sources	Number of Sources	x	x	x	x	Verify that the number of sources is appropriate
1A					x	List of Sources	Missing information in template					Verify that compulsory fields are not left empty



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1A		x				List of Sources	Availability for consultation	x				Verify that for all sources a web link or a digital copy of the source is uploaded.
1A		x	x			List of Sources	Sector coverage		x	x		
1B			x			Sectorial Breakdown	Level of detail	x	x			Verify that the chosen level of detail of the hierarchy of the sectorial breakdown is accessible to the average user.
1B		x	x			Sectorial Breakdown	Sector coverage			x		Verify that the scope of the sectorial breakdown matches the area of economy activities assigned by mandate to the SREF.
1B			x			Sectorial Breakdown	Sectoral Overlaps			x		Verify that all sectoral overlaps have been resolved in compliance with the MAI decisions.
1B					x	Sectorial Breakdown	Number of levels					Verify that the chosen level of detail for the sectorial breakdown does not allow more than seven levels.
1B					x	Sectorial Breakdown	Misspelling					Verify that there are not typo or misspelling errors in the labels, definitions and scope notes.