

# Minutes of the expert groups

Brussels, 21 February 2018

Sixth Meeting of the Member States Working Group on ESCO<sup>1</sup>  
Brussels, 21 February 2018

## 1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The agenda was adopted with no further changes.

## 2. Nature of the meeting

The sixth meeting of the Member States Working Group on ESCO (MSWG) was attended by:

- representatives of 21 Member States' (MS) authorities on labour market and education and training (EE, IE, LT, FI, ES, SE, CZ, SL, DE, DK, BE, MT, CY, NL, AT, IT, LV, FR, LU, HR, HU, RO),
- representatives of three observer countries (IS, NO, CH),
- representatives of European social partners (ETUC),
- Commission services.

The Commission (COM) chaired and opened the meeting.

Representatives from ES, RO, IE, DK and ETUC were attending the meeting for the first time or replacing another member.

The main goals of the meeting were: a) to provide an update on skills related policies, b) to report on the use of ESCO by different operators, tools and systems, c) to inform about the next ESCO Maintenance Committee, d) to update on the technical assistance for mapping to ESCO and e) to inform on the state of play of the implementing acts under article 19 of the Eures Regulation.

The meeting was [web streamed](#). All the presentations from the meeting are available in the [ESCO Portal](#).

## 3. List of points discussed

### 3.1 Update on skills policy points

COM updated the MSWG on the latest policy developments, in particular:

- Update on the Europass Decision process:

The final text of the Decision is expected to be adopted by the Council in April 2018. A business analysis to prepare the new Europass platform is currently ongoing. In accordance with the new Decision, a Europass Advisory Group will be created. A call for expression of interest for the group will be launched after the adoption of the Decision. According to current planning, the platform should be launched in December 2019, following a period of development and testing.

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities, code number E03344

- Public consultation on the next Multiannual Financial Framework:

A consultation is currently ongoing regarding the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), and proposes budgetary priorities beyond 2020 in six different policy areas. The consultation is open until the 6<sup>th</sup> of March and the members of the MSWG are invited to contribute notably to those areas related to employment and education (in particular, public consultation on EU funds in the area of cohesion<sup>2</sup> and public consultation on EU funds in the area of values and mobility<sup>3</sup>).

- The role of ESCO on the New Skills Agenda action "Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills":

A first group of five Sector Skills Alliances have been selected for Erasmus+ cofunding to implement the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills: maritime technology, space geo-observation, tourism, textile/clothing/leather/footwear and automotive. These Sector Skills Alliances shall use ESCO concepts as a starting point of their work on, for example, occupational profile development. The project results will then feed into ESCO, contributing to its continuous improvement.

- Study on the further development of the ESCO Qualifications pillar:

A study will shortly be launched to address two important issues regarding the development of the qualifications pillar: the quality assurance of private sector qualifications and the possibilities to link the skills and the qualifications pillars. The study will start in May 2018 and will probably be concluded by December 2018. It will provide recommendations and proposals to feed further discussion with stakeholders of a methodology on these topics. Two expert workshops to discuss these issues will be organised in the framework of the study.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS asked for clarifications on Europass, in particular on the role of the Europass Advisory Group and the progress of the ongoing business analysis.
- MS asked on the timeline for the budget and on the status of the discussions on a possible future Human Capital Development Fund.
- On the Sector Skills Alliances and the Blueprints, MS asked for more information on the consortiums and the stakeholders involved, on the results expected, on the process of building core profiles and requested to be updated on a regular basis on the progress of the projects.
- MS requested more information regarding the mechanisms to “automate” the link between the qualifications and the skills pillars and on the link of the study on qualifications with the Ploteus portal. They asked for a more detailed document regarding the objectives of the study.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-eu-funds-area-cohesion\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-eu-funds-area-cohesion_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-eu-funds-area-values-and-mobility\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-eu-funds-area-values-and-mobility_en)

COM clarified the role of the future Europass Advisory Group, which will be set up after the formal adoption of the Europass Decision. The business analysis is currently being carried out by external contractors, with the support of Cedefop. First results of this analysis can be shared with the MSWG in its October 2018 meeting.

Regarding a possible Human Capital Development Fund, discussions have evolved. The inclusion in the budget of a heading “investing in people”, covering the ESF and Erasmus+ is now under discussion.. The ESF and Erasmus+ will however have their own respective legal bases. In principle, the timeframe for the Multiannual Financial Framework is likely to remain seven years.

Sectoral Skills Alliances are typically composed of 10-12 partners which include professional associations (national or European), certification and awarding bodies, companies, chambers of commerce, etc. The ambition of each project in the definition of core profiles depends on the project partners and the sectoral context. The final results of the Blueprint will be available at the end of the project (in four years). However, an interim report will be provided in two years, and flash progress reports will be produced every two months for monitoring and communication purposes. The group will be regularly updated on progress.

On the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe portal (LOQ, ex-Ploteus portal), COM reminded that the quality of the information displayed relies on national authorities. The aim is to create more transparency of qualifications described in learning outcomes. The upcoming study will set up a possible methodology for annotation of learning outcomes of qualifications with ESCO skills concepts. The goal is more transparency and a better understanding of the link between skills, occupations and qualifications. Regarding automation, COM clarified that this is about investigating technical solutions which make to easier to link the content of the pillars, but that human judgement will still be necessary to ensure quality of results.

→ Operational follow up:

- A summary of the Terms of Reference of the study on how to further develop the qualifications pillar will be sent to the MSWG.

### **3.2 Implementing ESCO**

- Most recent ESCO use cases:

COM provided an overview of projects, tools and services implementing ESCO since the release of version 1 in July 2017, focusing on Cedefop’s work on Real Time Labour Market Information, the Skills Tool Profile for Third Country Nationals, Openskimr, eSkills match and Milch&Zucker.

- ESCO in the Irish Job Board (PES):

The Irish representative of the MSWG presented their experience with the adoption of ESCO: Ireland decided to directly implement ESCO into their system when renewing the Jobs Ireland website. The feedback from the perspective of user experience has been good: employers and candidates acknowledge that job matching has been improved. A previous version of ESCO was used, but Ireland foresees to update the system with ESCO v1 in March 2018. They received technical support from the ESCO teamside, which was very useful for implementation.

- The German working group on ESCO:

The German representative informed the audience on the existing German working group on ESCO, its mission and objectives: the group was set up following the acknowledgement of a gap of understanding and information about ESCO by several actors involved in education and labour. Around 40 stakeholders are part of the group, (chambers of commerce, chambers of crafts, unions, education institutions, federal and regional ministries, etc.) which meets at least once per year (with the ambition now to organise 2 or 3 meetings per year). COM participation in some of these meetings has been very welcome, providing clarifications and explanations on ESCO. The two main concerns of this group are currently the financial costs of mapping to ESCO and the further development of the qualifications pillar, in particular regarding quality assurance. Social partners have requested a national study on possible different scenarios and impacts following the use of ESCO.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS welcomed the presentation on the German working group on ESCO. Many share the same concerns regarding costs of mapping and the qualifications pillar. However, not all MS have the resources – or intention - to set up this kind of group at national level. They asked the COM if this kind of initiative is explicitly encouraged.
- ETUC requested MS to involve social partners in the national developments on ESCO, and suggested to do impact assessment studies on the possible impacts of ESCO on national qualification settings.
- MS asked COM to provide them with some guidance on how to better communicate ESCO to national stakeholders.
- MS flagged some issues related to the quality of ESCO, translations and the fact that some regional languages are not available. It is important from now to focus on continuous quality improvement.
- MS underlined the need to ensure coherence in the work of the different expert groups involved in employment and education.
- MS requested an updated list of the members of the MSWG, including contact details.
- IS informed the group that they have decided to implement ESCO directly into their system.
- ETUC asked if there would be the possibility to fund via Erasmus+ capacity building initiatives and impact assessments on ESCO at national level, notably to take forward the qualifications pillar.

COM welcomed the example presented by Germany and considered that it is important to have a space for dialogue on ESCO at national level. COM encouraged other countries, within their own specific contexts, to open suitable channels for dialogue and knowledge building.

COM will continue updating the list of use cases of ESCO.

Regarding communication, a new communication plan on ESCO will be proposed for discussion with the new Maintenance Committee and the MSWG. The new Maintenance Committee will also tackle the issue of continuous improvement.

COM acknowledged the need for coherence between the work of the various working groups with an interest in ESCO. Putting this into practice through agenda setting, consulting and reporting is a shared responsibility between COM and group members.

On funding for capacity building, COM did not see a short-term need but suggested that Member States reconsider if needed when discussing future Erasmus+ and EaSI programming.

➔ Operational follow up:

- An updated list of the MSWG members will be sent, including contact details.

### **3.3 The next ESCO Maintenance Committee (MAI)**

The selection process of the members of the new MAI is currently congoing. 68 applications were received, 65 of them were eligible for evaluation. Overall, the quality of the applications was very good. COM has chosen 22 candidates, to be confirmed by the Director General in the coming days. The first meeting of the MAI will take place mid-April.

COM presented the proposed MSWG work programme for 2018, including 6 different work packages:

- Follow up on adoption of ESCO and evaluation;
- Implementation of ESCO in Eures;
- Further structure of the skills pillar;
- Continuous improvement process: towards ESCO v1.1;
- Qualifications pillar;
- Communication about ESCO.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS suggested a joint meeting of the ESCO MSWG and the EQF AG.
- MS asked COM to clarify which will be the connections between the MAI and the MSWG, and underlined the need to have a balance between different actors in the new MAI.
- MS highlighted the need for transparency in the functioning of the MAI. The MAI should also avoid to deal with Europass issues before the Europass Advisory Group is set up.

COM confirmed that the composition of the new MAI will be balanced in terms of knowledge and expertise, as defined in the call. Selection has been done in full accordance with Expert Group rules. COM will also make sure that information between the MAI and the MSWG is fluid; the two groups' proposed work plans for 2018 are intended to help delineate topics and identify where mutual information and cooperation is needed.

COM will evaluate the possibility to have a joint meeting of the ESCO MSWG and the EQF AG when relevant for the agenda.

COM confirmed that any discussion on the possible use of ESCO in Europass would first take place with the Europass Advisory Group.

➔ Operational follow up

- MS are invited to send written comments and suggestions on the draft working programme by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2018.

### **3.4 Update on the technical assistance for mapping ESCO**

COM updated the MSWG on the current status of the skills mapping pilot. A webinar took place on 19 of January to kick off the project. AT and SE attended as participants and RO and BG as observers. Webinars are open to all interested parties.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS asked for clarifications regarding the practical set up of the mapping platform and asked to be informed more in advance on the organisation of the webinars. They also asked for the publication of the results.
- MS reminded of the possible need for financial support to carry out the mappings.

COM clarified that the mapping platform will be provided at no cost to MS that wish to use it.

The date for the next webinar is already set (28/02). The third webinar will take place end of March/beginning of April. The results of the pilot will be presented in the next meeting of the MSWG.

#### ➔ Operational follow up

- A summary of the concept of the pilot will be distributed to the MSWG.

### **3.5 ESCO and EURES**

COM informed MS on the content of two draft implementing acts referring to ESCO under article 19 of the Eures Regulation<sup>4</sup>:

- 19(2): adoption of the list of skills, competences and occupations (i.e. ESCO as published on the 28 of July 2017)
- 19 (6): technical standards.

The implementing acts are currently being drafted by DG EMPL. The MSWG and the Eures Coordination Group (EGC) are informally consulted on the drafts. The final draft is expected to be ready for consultation with other COM services in April. A qualified majority in the Eures Committee is needed for adoption (meeting of 14 of June). If the opinion of the Committee is positive, final adoption is expected for July 2018.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS requested clarifications on the Eures common IT platform
- MS welcomed the chance to be consulted. They raised some comments regarding the wording of article 3.1 of the implementing act 19(2) (change “may” to “shall”) and asked for more clarifications on the consultation procedure. They also asked to specify in the implementing acts which kind of technical and financial support will be provided.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a311abfd-0857-11e6-b713-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

- MS asked for clarifications on the updates of ESCO and the implications for the mapping exercise.
- MS asked for clarifications on the distinction between ESCO and the “European Classification” as stated in the Eures Regulation, on the role of the European Coordination Office and on who will publish the list of occupations.
- MS indicated that there are still some issues with translations.
- MS asked for clarification on data protection of the data published in the Eures portal.
- MS pointed out that there are still issues with the next steps on the qualifications pillar.

Regarding financial support, COM has asked the Eures national coordination offices to estimate any need for financial support that would be necessary. The offices have one month to present the requests, then they will be analysed. Any financial support will be allocated from the budget of next year and its form is still to be determined (e.g. calls for proposals, etc). Financial support cannot be specified in an implementing decision, this is out of the scope of the document.

COM clarified that ESCO, through the implementing decision, becomes the “European classification” mentioned in the Eures regulation. Any amendment of the implementing decision will need to follow the same procedure (consultation, vote by the Eures Committee, adoption, etc).

COM reminded that there can in principle be three types of ESCO updates:

- Minor updates, which are not relevant for compatibility between systems. They refer to all those updates that don’t change the concepts in the classification, that don’t add, remove concepts, etc. There were already two minor updates since July 2017 and a new one is expected for March 2018.
- Major updates, which have an impact on the compatibility and the mapping tables – so are relevant to EURES
- Data model updates: this kind of update is currently not considered relevant.

The IT platform is the interface where job vacancies and CVs are stored. The legal base for the IT platform is the Eures Regulation itself.

COM recalled that one main objective of ESCO is to improve job matching at European level. Regarding specifically the qualifications pillar, in discussions since 2008 on ESCO design education stakeholders expressed a clear desire to see what could be done through ESCO to bring transparency. This pillar is about transparency, better understanding and the links between qualifications and labour market needs.

Regarding data protection, COM clarified that all content is subject to strict data protection standards.

➔ Operational follow up:

- MS are invited to provide comments on the draft implementing acts by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2018.

### **3.7 Any other businesses**

- MS asked for more communication actions on ESCO such as a yearly conference or presence in other thematic conferences, such as the VET week.

COM informed MS on different events that are being organised where ESCO can have a role: a validation festival in June and an event on sectoral skills needs in November. In any case COM is alert to windows of opportunity where ESCO can be presented, and invites MS and other stakeholders to do the same. Communicating ESCO is one of the work plan items proposed for the MSWG in 2018; COM would like to deepen the discussion and share experience of national practices.

AT, as future Presidency of the Council of the EU, co-organiser and host of the VET week this year, recalled that the agenda of the events to be hosted in AT 5-9 November is already set.

#### **4. Conclusions and next steps**

COM closed the meeting and thanked the participants for their active participation. Power point presentations will be circulated and will be also published on ESCOPEDIA. For the next meeting, the presentations will be distributed in advance to facilitate consultation and preparation.

The next MSWG is tentatively scheduled for 19 June.

#### **5. List of participants**

The list of participants will be provided with the minutes.