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MSWG 9 -7

State of play of the community fora

1. Introduction

The purpose of the document is to report to the Member States Working Group (MSWG) on the current state of the community fora, including the status of the technical implementation, the selection of stakeholders and moderation of the fora. As presented in previous documentation, the community fora will serve as the main gateway to collect feedback from experts in the employment and the education field, on how ESCO could be maintained and further improved.

2. Technical implementation of the fora

Currently, the Commission is preparing the technical installation of the forum on the ESCO portal. The forum is expected to be functional by early February. The Commission foresees roughly a month whereby invited stakeholders will register in the fora. After this period, the Commission suggests to run a webinar for all registered users in order to explain the features of the fora, the role of experts, their expected input and some community guidelines.

The forum will consist of four different sections corresponding to the various groups of experts involved such as:

- the Member States Working Group forum
- the Maintenance Committee forum
- the Domain experts group forum
- the Implementers' forum

The domain experts group will be divided in 27 sub-sections, following the categorisation of economic sectors in the Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE) based on which ESCO v1 was built¹.

3. Selection and registration of stakeholders

There are two main processes through which stakeholders can participate in the fora:

a. by invitation only (applicable to 3 fora)

The above-mentioned first three fora will be available upon invitation and registration only. For the domain experts group, the Commission is compiling a list of around 1000 stakeholders, all pertinent experts in the various sectors of economic activity, ranging from existing experts who got involved with ESCO in the past to new stakeholders whose area of expertise and input is beneficial for the revision of ESCO.

In order to ensure a wide coverage of the labour market, the highest level of expertise and representativeness in the different European economic sectors, the Commission is selecting the experts taking into account the following types of organisations:

- Professional umbrella organizations at EU level
- PES and other public or governmental bodies (at national and regional level)
- Social partners
- Universities, higher education institutions, VET providers, research centres

The Commission is seeking to establish, in each economic domain, a good balance of geographical coverage of the stakeholders and the types of expertise they represent in the field of employment and education, as shown below:

¹

https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/List_of_sectors_of_economic_activities_for_the_development_of_ESCO_v1

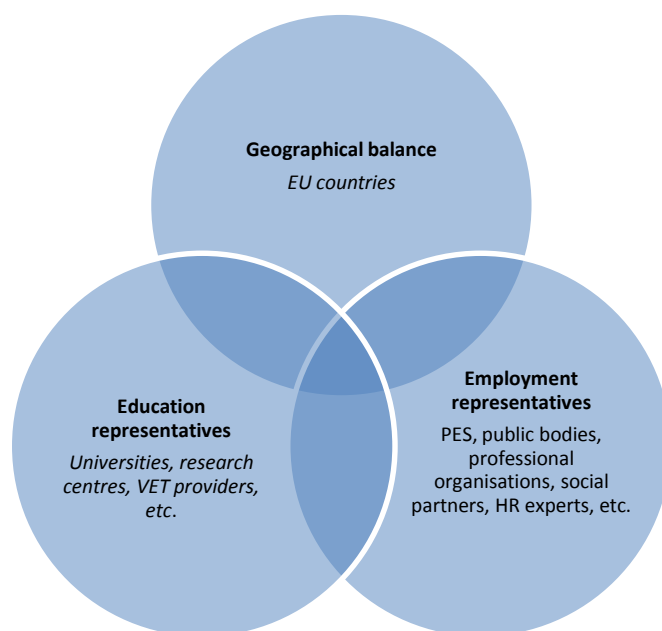


Figure 1. Representativeness of expertise in the domain experts' fora

Keeping in mind that participation in the forum is voluntary, the Commission expects to have at least one expert from each type of stakeholders identified above in each of the 27 economic groups.

b. free open access (only 1 forum)

On the other hand, the implementers' forum will be open to all in order to facilitate as much as possible the access to technical guidance or feedback. As this forum is targeted at technical professionals who are using ESCO or are in the process of using it, the Commission will try to facilitate the access of getting the information about how to install ESCO, how to deal with technical issues or specific documentation in a much faster way. Ensuring there are no registration barriers to the forum, the implementers can more easily obtain the information or support they require.

4. Moderation of feedback in the fora

The effort of the moderation will depend on each forum and the active participation of experts. The biggest volume of comments is expected in the 27 domain groups, where constant moderation is needed. For example, in this forum, the moderation could include the following elements:

- asking revision of each sub-sector from the specific economic group (e.g. occupations in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors)
- posting related articles/research around emerging skills and occupations to stir discussions
- asking general questions related to new trends in the industry, new emerging technologies etc. to stir discussions
- asking feedback on results obtained from the ESCO KPIs, mappings, stakeholder's projects, etc.

In the implementer's forum there will be a "moderation queue", whereby the ESCO team will first have to approve comments added by the implementers before they are public in the forum. This precaution is necessary in order to avoid inappropriate comments or spamming.

For a more detailed view on how experts can contribute to the forum and the expected results, Annex I presents the FAQ of the community forum.

5. Implementation of comments and the continuous improvement of ESCO

The ESCO team will moderate the discussions aiming at building consensus by the community of experts on the changes required in ESCO in one particular field, especially on important ones. As such, in cases where the comments refer to the creation of new occupations or skills, the ESCO team will:

- ask proof of evidence from the European labour market supporting this action,
- work to reach a consensus on the topic with the other experts in the domain,
- do further research if needed,
- consult the Maintenance Committee, if needed, and
- comply with ESCO guidelines

All the actions resulting from the feedback received in the forum will follow the continuous improvement process² described in previous MSWG meetings and shortly demonstrated below:

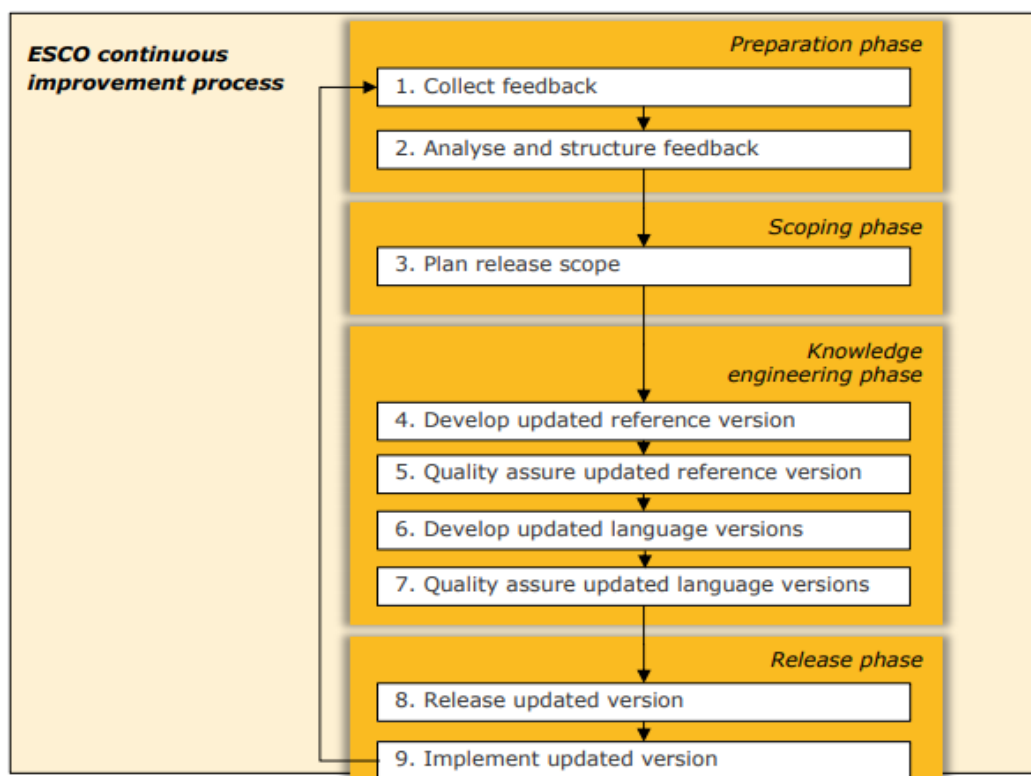


Figure 2. ESCO continuous improvement process

² <https://ec.europa.eu/escso/portal/document/en/f834e202-0ebf-461a-9249-a00e91d86e94>

In the first preparation phase, the Commission will collect all the feedback from the forum and record them in a ticketing system. Secondly, each suggestion or comment will be analysed and given priority according to the changes required to the classification and the version affected. The ESCO team will then perform a value analysis in order to determine which potential updates would have the highest added value in relation to the effort and costs for these updates (scoping phase).

For example, minor changes such as spelling mistakes or changing relations between concepts can be easily planned and implemented. On the other hand, more serious changes such as creating new occupations and skills, correcting translations, rationalising the attribution of skills throughout the classification, etc. need to be properly assessed, planned for and quality-assured. In cases where the feedback received is more general and involves structural changes to the classification (e.g. change the structure of occupations in a specific sector), the implementation process will be more lengthy and will require evidence from the labour market to support the change required.

Once this assessment is done, the result is a list describing candidate groups of issues (bundles) that can be treated in one ESCO update cycle. Once the scope of a new ESCO version is decided, the team will determine the quality requirements and how quality will be managed during the improvement process.

Annex I

Frequently Asked Questions for the ESCO community fora

1. Categories of fora

1.1 What are the ESCO community fora?

The ESCO community fora are collaborative spaces designed to facilitate the interaction, communication and exchange of information between the European Commission (EC) and different stakeholders interested in ESCO. The fora offer a single place where to share comments and feedback on the content of the classification, exchange best practices and experiences on how to use ESCO and propose new ideas to further improve ESCO.

1.2 What does the European Commission want to achieve with the community fora?

The community fora are an important element of the workflow for the continuous improvement of ESCO. By setting up dedicated community fora for different target groups, the EC aims at channelling and collecting proposals and feedback on the content of the classification, on the practical use of ESCO, on the further conceptual improvement of the project and on the relation with national classifications. Information collected via the fora will be a key input for the revision of the classification and will feed into the process for scoping ESCO v.1.1.

1.3 Why are there four different fora? Which are the differences?

The Commission has decided to set up 4 different categories of community fora, namely a forum for the **ESCO domain experts**, a forum for the **ESCO implementers**, a forum for the **ESCO Maintenance Committee members** and one open to representatives from the **Member States Working Group**.

The community forum for ESCO domain experts aims at providing sectoral and cross sectoral experts with a single point for discussion in order to share feedbacks, suggestions and proposals on how to improve the content of the ESCO classification.

The community forum for ESCO implementers will allow organisations implementing ESCO in their own services to provide feedback on the practical use of ESCO as a building block of their system, share eventual issues related to the IT implementation and raise any change in the requirements of IT applications.

The community forum for the ESCO Maintenance Committee will be a collaborative space dedicated to the members of the committee. The goal of this forum is to facilitate the discussion and the exchange of information between members, to allow members to share with the Commission their proposals and comments on the ongoing work of the Maintenance Committee and to be informed about the latest ESCO developments.

Finally, the community forum dedicated to Member States' representatives fulfils the request coming from different Member States to have a forum to discuss and share their experiences in mapping national classifications to ESCO or in integrating ESCO for the purpose of the [EURES regulation](#).

1.4 Where do I find the fora?

The ESCO community fora are accessible from the ESCO portal. A dedicated icon is available in the section "About ESCO".

1.5 Can I have access to multiple fora?

Access to the community fora is granted by the European Commission on a case by case basis. Multi-access to different fora is allowed only when the contribution of a specific expert is considered to benefit different areas of improvement of ESCO.

1.6 What is the ESCO MAI?

The [ESCO Maintenance Committee](#) (MAI) is a Commission expert group providing advice on the continuous technical and conceptual improvement of ESCO. It formulates opinions on the approach for technical implementation, on quality control principles and on the revision of ESCO data. Additionally, the Committee advises the Commission on the implementation of ESCO in software applications. Its members are appointed on the basis of their personal expertise and do not officially represent organisations or Member States. The mandate of the current MAI runs from 2018 to 2022.

1.7 What is the ESCO MSWG?

The [ESCO Member States Working Group](#) (MSWG) is composed by representatives of Member States' authorities on labour market and education and training plus European social partners. Its aim is to support the development and implementation of ESCO, including its links with the updated EURES regulation.

2. Registration process

2.1 How do I access the forum?

Invitations to participate in the community fora are managed directly by the European Commission. Registration to the fora is done via the [EU log in](#). The implementers' forum is an exception, as the forum is open to everybody and is intended for those who are using ESCO or are trying to set it up in their applications or processes.

2.2 What personal information do I need to provide and why?

When creating an EU log in, the user is required to insert the following information before creating a dedicated password: name, surname and email address.

Moreover, when registering to the fora the user also has to indicate the organisation to which he/she belongs and the position held within the organisation. In the case of the forum for domain experts, users are asked to indicate in which of the 27 economic sectors they are interested. This information helps the ESCO team to assess the contribution and the feedback received.

2.3 Whom can I contact in case of problems with the registration?

In case of issues with the registration, you can contact the ESCO Secretariat at the following email address: EMPL-ESCO-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu

2.4 How will my personal data be stored?

Personal data provided by users are processed by the European Commission in full compliance with the Regulation on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions. Your personal information can be accessed only by members of the European Commission staff and by external contractors acting on behalf of the European Commission. The European Commission will not process the collected data for any other purpose than those described above.

2.5 Whom can I contact to delete my account?

In case you want to verify which personal data is stored, or in case you want to have it modified or deleted, please contact the ESCO Secretariat by e-mail to EMPL-ESCO-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu.

3. Community forum for domain experts

3.1 Who is a domain expert?

Domain experts have a deeper insight into the knowledge, skills and competences needed in specific economic sectors or specific occupations or into cross-sectoral knowledge, skills and competences and therefore they can provide valuable information on how an economic sector evolves or what new occupations or skills requirements emerge in the market and point out quality issues.

They include *inter alia* specialised recruiters, education and training professionals, social partners, industry associations, professional associations, sector skills councils and networks.

3.2 Who can participate in the forum?

The European Commission invited around (1000) organisations to participate in the domain expert community forum, building on the expertise and organisations already involved in the development of ESCO v.1.0.

The Commission also ensured the active contribution of organisations and experts active at European level, such as EU agencies active in the domain of employment, education and training, organisations partners in EU funded projects focusing on skills, EU networks and innovation centers.

Domain experts therefore come from sectoral umbrella organisations, universities and higher education institutions, VET providers, large, medium and small sized enterprises, NGO, social partners, public employment services, public bodies and research centers. The list of invited organisations took into account the need to ensure an adequate geographical balance that would make the experts involved representative at European level.

3.3 How is the forum organised?

The forum is organized around 27 economic sectors. To ensure the continuity with the work done for the development of ESCO v.1, the 27 economic sectors reflect the configuration used during the development of ESCO v.1. The list of all economic sectors is available on the [ESCO portal](#).

At the same time, all ESCO occupations present an entry point to the forum, so that experts will be able to access the forum also when searching for a particular occupation by clicking on a dedicated icon.

3.4 How are the sectors defined?

The 27 economic sectors are defined following the criteria established in [NACE rev2](#). Each ESCO occupation has been associated to one sector following the criteria of economic activities. The description of the scope of each sector is provided in the dedicated space.

However, occupations in ESCO are not sector specific, because many occupations can be linked with more than one economic activity: the allocation of the existing occupations to specific sectors only aimed at facilitating the work of experts.

3.5 Are users assigned to a specific sector? Can they also comment in other sections?

Users will be redirected to a landing page according to the economic sector to which they belong. The primary goal is in fact to group sectoral expertise in order to have a sufficient number of experts debating about the content of the current occupations and the future evolution of the classification with regards to their own sector.

However, as most occupations are not sector specific, users are encouraged also to comment on occupations grouped in other sections of the forum.

3.6 What is the role of users in the forum?

Users are encouraged to comment and provide feedback on specific occupations, skills and knowledge concepts.

Regarding existing occupations and skills concepts, users are encouraged to provide their feedback on:

- the formulation of the preferred term,
- the alternative labels,
- the formulation of the description,
- the mapping to ISCO,
- the essential and optional skills and knowledge foreseen for an occupation,
- the relations between occupations and skills,
- the translations of ESCO concepts
- spelling mistakes

But also on:

- new occupations emerging on the labour market
- new skills and knowledge emerging on the labour market.

3.7 What is an occupation in ESCO?

[Occupations](#) are not the same as jobs (which are not covered in ESCO).

While with the term "job" we refer to a set of tasks and duties carried out by one person for a particular employer (including self-employment), occupations are defined as a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity.

ESCO currently contains [2942 occupations](#). Each occupation concept describes the meaning of the occupation, and provides a number of useful pieces of information about it (also referred to as "metadata").

3.8 How are the skills, competencies and knowledge areas described in ESCO?

In ESCO, the notions of "[skill](#)" and "[competence](#)" are used as synonyms, to indicate the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

[Knowledge](#) instead is referred to as the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning, and represent the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study.

ESCO distinguish four types of skills, according to their [reusability level](#): (i) transversal knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to a broad range of occupations and sectors; (ii) cross-sector knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to occupations across several economic sectors; (iii) sector-specific knowledge, skills and competences are specific to one sector, but are relevant for more than one occupation within that sector and (iv) occupation-specific knowledge, skills and competences are usually applied only within one occupation or specialism.

3.9 How are the skills structured? Are they linked with occupations?

The [ESCO v1 skills pillar](#) does not contain a full, top-down hierarchical structure. Instead, the 13 485 elements of the pillar are structured in four different manners:

- through their relationship with occupations, by using occupational profiles as an entry point;
- through a hierarchy (only for transversal knowledge, skills and competences);
- through relationships indicating how knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to other knowledge, skills and competences (in particular in cases of the contextualisation of skills)
- through functional collections that allow subsections of the skills pillar to be selected, according to the purpose it is going to be used for.

3.10 Can my organisation have more participants in the forum?

Interested organisations can appoint as many representatives in charge of providing feedback and participating to the discussions. In case of umbrella organisations, the ESCO team encourages them to pass the information about the forum to national organisations so that their view is also taken into account.

3.11 In which language should I provide my contribution?

English is the working language for the community fora.

3.12 Can I propose modifications of translated terms and/or signal errors in the translations of ESCO concepts?

Organisations are invited to look at all the 27 languages of ESCO, according to their respective mother tongue and expertise in the labour market. The ESCO team welcomes feedback also in case of misspelling or other translations errors.

3.13 How will the discussions be moderated?

The ESCO team will actively moderate the discussion. It will constantly stimulate users to review existing concepts and propose modifications for each of the 27 sectors. It will post articles, studies and reflections on the evolution of a specific sector and suggest adding or removing concepts when needed. It will coordinate the discussions among the stakeholders in order to build consensus and address diverging opinions.

In general, the ESCO team encourages a respectful communication in the fora and will not tolerate any inadequate or illicit comments.

3.14 What will happen to my comments? What is the process of decision-making?

The ESCO team will analyse the comments received and promote an active discussion between the stakeholders to build consensus on the feedback provided.

It will ask the user to provide further evidence to back the consistency of the feedback provided, to make sure the proposed modification corresponds to the reality of the European labour market. In particular, it will analyse where the proposed modifications correspond to the reality of the European labour market, or rather reflect a specific national circumstance or the individual position of the user. In all cases, the ESCO team will use the [ESCO guidelines](#) and the [continuous improvement process](#) to base all their decisions on.

In case of disagreements between users, the ESCO team will facilitate the dialogue, will do further desk research and even consult the Maintenance Committee members, if needed, in order to reach a conclusion.

3.15 How long will the forum be open for comments?

The forum remains open for feedback on a continuous basis. However, in order to prepare the scoping phase for the next version of ESCO (v1.1 foreseen for 2021) the Commission will take into account all the feedback received until **31th of August 2019**. After this period, all

the incoming comments will still be taken into consideration for the following knowledge engineering phase.

4. Community forum for ESCO implementers

4.1 Who are the ESCO implementers?

ESCO implementers use the ESCO classification in order to provide software solutions, products or services to customers or end users. This includes inter alia public and private employment services, job boards, HR software vendors, social media platforms, recruiters, career guidance services, training providers and awarding bodies. Since they use ESCO in their applications and systems, implementers have valuable insights on the performance of ESCO in specific use cases.

For the purpose of the online forum dedicated to ESCO implementers, the European Commission invites all public and private organisations currently using ESCO within their services or products.

4.2 How can ESCO be used?

One year after its launch, ESCO has already been used in a substantial number of IT implementations covering a variety of areas like recruiting, matching skills to jobs and trainings, advertising job vacancies, career planning, documenting and mapping skills and qualifications of jobseekers and analysing the labour market. ESCO is a powerful tool in order to bridge the communication gap between education and work, enable online matching of people to jobs, promote mobility, support re-skilling and up-skilling, and support skills intelligence, big data analyses and statistics.

More information on how ESCO can be used is available on the [ESCO portal](#).

4.3 How is the forum organised?

The forum is organised around a generic section to discuss the broad implementation of ESCO. It would address issues such as missing features, key performance indicators and requirements for improving the classification: ESCO's users would share and discuss implementation options including feature requests, best practices and practical issues related to ESCO such as how to use the ESCO classification in their systems.

Specific subsections are dedicated to specific questions regarding the ESCO APIs and the ESCO dataset.

4.4 How can I submit my contribution?

Users of ESCO are invited to share their experience and signal any shortcoming and technical issue as well as potential improvement in the dedicated section of the forum. New users might want to first read the comments/questions addressed by other users so as not to duplicate the communication.

4.5 How will the discussion be moderated?

The ESCO team will actively moderate the forum and ask users to share their experience and feedback on the concrete use of ESCO, signal any potential issue and propose further improvements. To this end, it will also ask users to fill a survey on the specific use of ESCO within their products and services. The survey contains key performance indicators that are useful in tracking the success of ESCO and any improvement areas.

In general, the ESCO team encourages a respectful communication in the fora and will not tolerate any inadequate or illicit comments.

5. Community forum for the ESCO Maintenance Committee

5.1 How will the discussions be moderated?

The ESCO team will consult members on specific topics when needed. Committee members can also actively start the discussion and propose topics for debate.

5.2 How can I provide feedback to specific work topics of the ESCO Maintenance Committee?

The ESCO team will use the forum to consult committee members on specific topics and subjects on which the Committee has competence. Examples include the work on structuring the skills pillar, the scoping of ESCO v.1.1, the results of the key performance indicators, the outcomes of the study visits to ESCO implementers and the ongoing work for building the qualifications pillar.

5.3 Is the forum going to be an official communication channel for all the ESCO Maintenance Committee meetings?

No. All official meeting documents and presentations will be sent via the AGM system.

5.4 Can I share the information and the content of the discussion with my colleagues/in my organisation?

No, topics discussed in the forum are confidential and cannot be used for commercial purposes.

6. Community forum for the ESCO Member States Working Group

6.1 What is the purpose of this forum?

The purpose of the forum is to provide Member States with a place where to share experiences on ESCO and to comment on the preliminary results of the mapping exercise.

6.2 Is the discussion public/accessible to all Member States or can we discuss bilaterally with the European Commission?

Comments and feedbacks can be public or private: Member States that do not want to publicly share their experience will have therefore the possibility to directly address the ESCO team at the address: EMPL-ESCO-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu

6.3 Where do I find the supporting documents?

All the supporting documents mentioned above can be found on the [ESCO service portal](#).