

# Minutes of the expert groups

Brussels, 13 November 2017

Fifth Meeting of the Member States Working Group on ESCO<sup>1</sup>  
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## 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 fifth 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 (AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, RO, SI, SE),
- representatives of two observer countries (IS, NO),
- representatives of European social partners (ETUC),
- Commission services.

The Commission (COM) chaired and opened the meeting. Alison Crabb (Head of Unit E2) introduced Dennis Van Gessel and Dimitrios Pikios (from Unit E2), who will be involved in ESCO from now on.

Representatives from IT, NL, SE, HR were attending the meeting for the first time or from a new position.

The main goals of the meeting were: a) to provide an update on skills related policies, b) to provide feedback on the ESCO conference, c) to inform about the state of play of the qualifications pillar and about the upcoming studies on quality assurance of international qualifications and annotation, d) to present and discuss the mandate of the new Maintenance Committee, e) to present and discuss the continuous updating process of ESCO, f) To update on the state of play of the EURES implementing acts, g) to inform about an upcoming skills mapping pilot.

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:

- On the interinstitutional negotiations on the Europass Decision: triologue discussions are underway and a compromise text may be reached on 7 December.
- On the results of two surveys:

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

- Branding Study on EU tools and services for skills and qualifications
- Survey on education, training and employment needs.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS underlined the importance that all categories of people are represented in these studies, included low skilled categories. The replies should ideally be disaggregated between needs, uses and profiles of the people.
- MS pointed out that it is important to bring all information available on skills needs, living and working conditions together in a portal.
- EU tools and services should be more accessible and promoted among lower qualified and skilled people.
- MS asked for clarification between the surveys presented and the information collected in the EU Skills Panorama

COM acknowledged the need to have one portal accessible to all categories of people, which should be useful and appealing. It underlined the role of PES and other actors at national and regional level concerning outreach of European tools to the final users.

### **3.2 Follow up of the ESCO Conference**

COM presented the outcomes of the ESCO Conference, which took place in Brussels last 9 and 10 October. 36 MSWG members were presented at the conference. Two communication videos on ESCO were shown as well. These videos will be soon available online.

COM asked the MSWG for suggestions regarding what type of communication materials would be useful to disseminate ESCO at national level. The ESCO handbook and four leaflets on different ESCO use cases are currently available.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- IE (PES) made a statement supporting ESCO v1. ESCO is already being used in the "Jobs Ireland" portal.
- MS stressed that the ESCO portal is not mainly addressed to the general public: for instance it can be difficult for jobseekers to use the portal directly, as the portal is not intuitive for this particular use case. The communication should therefore be adapted to different target audiences: for instance the video targeting jobseekers needs to be contextualised with guidelines.
- MS asked for translation of occupations descriptions in all EU languages.

COM underlined that ESCO is a classification or a language, not a portal nor a website. Its main purpose is to be embedded in applications, but it can also be used directly as dictionary. COM confirmed that communication will be focussed on use cases that illustrate how it can be used in different scenarios. Regarding the translation of occupations descriptions, for the moment this option is not underway due to budgetary constraints.

### **3.3 ESCO qualifications pillar**

COM presented the latest updates on the qualifications pillar and the upcoming study on international qualifications and annotation. Alison Crabb introduced Dennis Van Gessel, who replaces Karin Van der Sanden and will be working on international qualifications, skills and migration, and the link between the qualifications and skills pillar of ESCO. COM also reminded MS that the deadline to apply for the 2017 call to develop National Qualifications Databases and link them to EU portals is the 18 December 2017.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS raised questions regarding the criteria to include international qualifications directly in ESCO. They suggested that one of the criteria could be their proven added value for the labour market. Only formal qualifications should be accepted via direct inclusion.
- International qualifications could also be introduced in ESCO via national frameworks: once it is referenced in a national framework, it can be published in ESCO.
- MS asked on which criteria some companies were chosen to carry out pilot projects on direct inclusion of qualifications.
- MS asked whether formal and informal qualifications are included in ESCO.
- Questions were raised regarding annotation of learning outcomes (how it works, who is annotating learning outcomes). MS raised the question of how the complexity of learning outcomes can be captured with ESCO skills.
- Some MS felt that at this stage it is premature to populate the qualifications pillar.
- MS asked if there is another way to populate the qualifications pillar, other than creating a national qualifications database.

COM acknowledged the need to further explore the inclusion of international qualifications and annotation. The forthcoming study will bring clarity on these issues. In the context of the study, one or two workshops will take place in the framework of the EQF AG work. Regarding pilot projects on international qualifications, companies contacted the Commission services to express their interest. Regarding formal and non-formal qualifications, these are displayed in ESCO if they are included in national databases. It is up to Member States whether to include these qualifications in their national frameworks.

COM informed that currently about 9 national frameworks include international qualifications. However, the idea behind including international qualifications directly in ESCO is to foster transparency for the end user.

COM called on MS to now populate the qualifications pillar, even if an approach to link the different pillars is not developed yet. Building the qualifications pillar is a process that implies 3 steps: 1) building a repository; 2) populating the pillar; 3) linking the pillars. The first step is completed and COM is currently working on the second step. It is important to have the qualifications pillar populated before moving to the next step. The study on annotation will provide a consistent approach on how to link the pillars.

### **3.4 ESCO: the new Maintenance Committee**

COM presented the mandate of the new ESCO Maintenance Committee, which will start in 2018 and will last until 2022, and invited MS feedback.

### Comments, questions and answers

- MS asked to clarify the relation of the new Maintenance Committee with the MSWG. They underlined the importance of communication between the two groups. They also asked whether there will be a relation between these two groups and the expert groups set up in the framework of the New Skills Agenda.
- MS pointed out the importance of having members with expertise in ICT related issues in the new Maintenance Committee. In any case, the group as a whole should cover the different domains of expertise of ESCO.
- MS proposed sending a letter of expertise to COM certifying the expertise of candidates to join the group.

COM clarified that the Maintenance Committee is a technical expert group advising the Commission on the quality assurance and content of ESCO. The mandate of the MSWG is to support the Commission on the dissemination and implementation of ESCO at national level and the implementation of the ESCO through the EURES regulation. Coordination of both groups will be through the COM. However, a member of the Maintenance Committee could eventually be invited to the MSWG. In any case, all information related to the Maintenance Committee (members, minutes etc.) is public and can be consulted at any time. These groups will also be coordinated with other working groups on skills and qualifications.

The expertise in the group will be balanced. The ICT expertise required refers to general understanding on how applications and processes work within ESCO.

### **3.5 ESCO continuous updating**

COM presented the continuous updating process foreseen for ESCO and opened the floor for suggestions on how to improve this process to foster cooperation with MS.

### Comments, questions and answers

- MS asked to clarify if the process was foreseen to cover the three pillars or the occupation and skills pillars separately.
- MS asked how minor changes to the classification would be communicated and where the work related to keep new content in, for example the skills hierarchy, would fit in the process.
- MS considered the three years timing for the next major update too long, some occupations, for example, as result of the digitalisation would disappear within a very short period of time and pointed out the need for a system to easily keep up to date the qualifications pillar.

COM informed that the continuous improvement process is applied to cover only the occupations and skills pillars, due to the different nature of the pillars. In the qualifications pillar, the content is provided by MS.

Regarding the minor updates, they are not very time critical, the information will be disseminated through the interoperability working group in EURES and published in the

ESCO portal. COM acknowledged that changes in the skills hierarchy would fit into the category of a major update, although this doesn't constitute a change in the data model.

Regarding the question of the timeline for major updates, COM believes that 3 years is suitable, and it is equivalent to the timeline foreseen in the EURES Regulations to map to/adopt ESCO. A period of stability of three years is workable.

COM confirmed that if an occupation becomes obsolete, the information will remain in the history of the classification.

### **3.6 ESCO and EURES**

COM updated the MSWG on the import role of ESCO for EURES and the implementing acts processes related to ESCO. A document on Q&A was circulated to the MSWG.

COM also presented a skills mapping pilot that will be carried out with some interested MS on how a mapping of skills can work in practice.

#### Comments, questions and answers

- MS asked for clarification of the role and function of the MSWG in the skills mapping process considering the timeline foreseen. MS also requested information on how to deal with the process in case they do not have their own national occupations classification or a national skills classification. MS also requested information on how to map ISCO 08 to ESCO.
- MS pointed out the importance of a good coordination of the MSWG with the EURES interoperability working group.
- MS asked clarification on how all MS can be informed of the process of the mapping pilot.

COM clarified that ESCO v1 is already published with a mapping to ISCO 08. In addition, COM informed that the implementing acts of the EURES Regulation foresee two lines of action: one concerns the adoption of the classification as such while the other is more related to the process of mapping. This last one will require more substantial discussions.

COM clarified that the timeline for the skills mapping pilot is different from the one on the implementing acts of the EURES Regulation and confirmed that the results of the mapping pilot will be published. COM confirmed that the call for interest for the mapping pilot was included in the general e-mail message sent to the group before the meeting (with all the documents' meetings attached) with an invitation to MS to participate in the pilot.

COM informed that the next EURES coordination group meeting will take place in December.

### **3.7 Any other businesses**

There were no any other business.

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

COM closed the meeting and thanked the participants for their active participation. The presentations will be sent to the group, together with the minutes of the meeting. The next MSWG is tentatively scheduled for the 5 of March.

## **5. List of participants**

The list of participants will be provided with the minutes.