



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

Labour Mobility and International Affairs
Labour Mobility, Public Employment Services, ELA

Brussels
EMPL.E.1

ESCO MEMBER STATES WORKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

ESCO is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. It identifies and categorises skills, competences and occupations relevant for the European labour market and education and training. The aim of ESCO is to establish a common language that bridges communication between different countries and between the domains of employment, education and training and to increase transparency of occupations, skills and competences and qualifications.

The Commission launched on 28 July 2017 the first full version of the ESCO (v1). The second major version of ESCO (v1.1) was launched in January 2022 while a third major version of ESCO (v1.2) was published in May 2024.

ESCO is available in 28 languages (the 24 EU official languages, Arabic, Icelandic Norwegian and Ukrainian) and free of charge through the ESCO service platform <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en>

In 2022, the Commission's Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion ('DG EMPL') decided to set up a new informal expert group, the ESCO Member States working group, to support the Commission from 2022 to 2025 (or until the next major version of ESCO is released) in the further development of ESCO. The work of the expert group has been instrumental for the publication of ESCO v1.2 and the further development of the classification. Moreover, the group provided a valuable forum to promote the uptake of ESCO by national employment services.

The Commission has therefore decided to extend the mandate of the group until 2030.

2. TASKS

The main objective of the ESCO Member States working group (hereinafter referred to as 'the group') is to advise and support the Commission on the implementation and development of ESCO.

The group's tasks shall be:

- (1) to act as consultation and information forum on ESCO between Commission, Member States' authorities and European social partners and to stimulate the uptake of ESCO in the labour market and in education at national level.
- (2) to provide the Commission with expertise concerning the continuous updating, improvement, management and quality assurance of the ESCO classification.
- (3) to support the Commission in the preparation of the next versions of ESCO, and provide terminological and linguistic feedback.
- (4) to identify relevant data sources supporting the continuous improvement and the evolution of ESCO.
- (5) to assist the Commission in the implementation of ESCO related projects at national level and the continuous quality improvement of ESCO, including its fitness-for-purpose in various use cases and its interoperability with related national classification systems.
- (6) to support the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2016/589 of the European Parliament and the Council on a European Network of Employment Services, workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets (EURES) and its ESCO related implementing acts ⁽¹⁾, and other future legislative initiatives including the EU Talent Pool ⁽²⁾, once adopted by the co-legislators.
- (7) to cooperate, whether possible and appropriate, and establish synergies with other expert groups involved in the Union of Skills Initiative, including the future High-Level Board on Skills.

Under the supervision of DG EMPL, the group will also cooperate with other European Union working groups whose remit includes policy management of topics related to labour mobility and transparency of skills and qualifications, such as the EURES Coordination Group (ECG), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group and the Europass Advisory Group.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Implementing Decision No 2018/1020 on the adoption and updating of the list of skills, competences and occupations of the European classification for the purpose of automated matching through the EURES common IT platform, and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1021 of 18 July 2018 on the adoption of technical standards and formats necessary for the operation of the automated matching through the common IT platform using the European classification and the interoperability between national systems and the European classification.

⁽²⁾ In 2023, the Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation establishing an EU talent pool, i.e. an EU-wide platform for international recruitment through which skilled third-country nationals could express their interest in migrating to the EU and could be identified by EU migration authorities and employers based on their need.

General management of the ESCO project, including its financial aspects, is the responsibility of the Commission.

The Commission supports the group through the ESCO Secretariat.

3. MEMBERSHIP

1. The group should be composed of the competent authorities from the Member States.
2. Each Member State shall appoint two national experts as representatives of the group.
3. Members' representatives should have experience and knowledge in some or all of the following fields:
 - Development, management, dissemination or usage of taxonomies, metadata, controlled vocabularies and/or classification systems.
 - Terminologies used in the labour market, education or training, in particular related to occupations, competences, qualifications and learning outcomes.
 - European/international standards, frameworks or classifications used in the labour market, education or training, such as International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO), Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE), European Qualifications Framework (EQF), International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).
 - National classification systems.
 - Skills certification systems, job matching mechanisms and other labour mobility instruments.

4. CHAIR

1. The group shall be chaired by a representative of DG EMPL. The chair shall be assisted by the ESCO Secretariat.
2. Tasks of the chair include among others drafting of the meeting agenda, steering the discussion on the appropriate subject, and summing up the result of the discussion and call for appropriate follow up whenever pertinent.

5. OPERATIONS

1. The group shall act at the request of DG EMPL in compliance with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups ⁽³⁾ ('the horizontal rules').
2. Meetings of the group shall be convened by the Chair whenever required, but at least once a year. Meetings of the group shall be held on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.

The Commission can also organise ad-hoc information webinars when new information for the work of the group is available and consultation at a physical meeting in Brussels is not required. Secretarial services for the organisation of these

⁽³⁾ C(2016) 3301, Article 13.1.

meetings will be provided by the Commission through the ESCO Secretariat. Other Commission officials with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the group and its sub-groups.

In agreement with DG EMPL, the group may decide, by simple majority of its members, that its meetings shall be public.

3. As far as possible, the group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. Members who have voted against or abstained shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.
4. Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the group shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the ESCO Secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair. In principle, draft minutes shall be circulated within one month after the meeting. Group members may submit their proposed amendments in writing to the chair and the ESCO Secretariat with a proposal for a concrete (re-)phrasing. After approval by the group, the draft minutes shall become final.

The ESCO Secretariat shall publish the final minutes of the group meeting on the ESCO portal. DG EMPL shall publish final minutes in the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('The Register of expert groups').

6. SUB-GROUPS

1. DG EMPL can set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of defined terms of reference. The sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled.
2. The members of sub-groups that are not members of the group shall be selected via a public call for applications, in compliance with the horizontal rules ⁽⁴⁾.

7. INVITED EXPERTS

The chair may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group or sub-groups on an *ad hoc* basis.

8. OBSERVERS

1. Individuals, international organisations, candidate countries, EEA countries, or additional public entities other than Member States' authorities may be granted an observer status, particularly European social partners on cross-industry level on employment and education and training affairs, in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation.

⁽⁴⁾ C(2016), Articles 10 and 14.2.

2. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives.
3. Observers and observers' representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group and sub-groups, and provide expertise. However, they shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group and sub-groups.

9. PROFESSIONAL SECRECY AND HANDLING OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

The members of the group and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, are subject to the obligation of professional secrecy, which by virtue of the Treaties and the rules implementing them applies to all members of the institutions and their staff, as well as to the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of Union classified information, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 ⁽⁵⁾ and 2015/444 ⁽⁶⁾. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

10. TRANSPARENCY

1. The group and sub-groups shall be registered in the Register of expert groups.
2. As regards the group and sub-groups composition, the following data shall be published on the Register of expert groups:
 - (a) the name of Member States' authorities;
 - (b) the name of observers.
2. All relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, shall be made available on the Register of expert groups. In particular, DG EMPL shall publish the agenda and other relevant background documents in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. Exceptions to publication shall only be possible where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) N° 1049/2001 ⁽⁷⁾.

11. MEETING EXPENSES

1. Participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.

⁽⁵⁾ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

⁽⁶⁾ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

⁽⁷⁾ These exceptions are intended to protect public security, military affairs, international relations, financial, monetary or economic policy, privacy and integrity of the individual, commercial interests, court proceedings and legal advice, inspections/investigations/audits and the institution's decision-making process.

2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall be reimbursed by the Commission. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

Done in Brussels, on 12 June.

David DION
Head of Unit