

Position Paper

UEAPME¹ position on the proposal for a Decision on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC

The European Commission on 4 October 2016 published its proposal for revising the Europass Decision with the aim to modernise EU tools and services to facilitate mobility and encourage transparency of skills and qualifications. The proposal is part of the actions foreseen in the context of the “new Skills Agenda for Europa”, a package of measures to ensure that the right training, skills and support is available to European citizens.

Key messages

- UEAPME calls for a strategic approach to make tools and services in the field of education and training user-friendly. The proven relevance for end-users remains the guiding principle and Member States and social partners need to be closely involved.
- The relevance for the labour market of the European taxonomy for skills and classification of occupations (ESCO) has not yet been sufficiently proven. UEAPME disagrees with the aim for ESCO to be a common reference language to support the functioning of Europass and requests deletion of relevant Articles.

Comments

- UEAPME takes note of the Commission’s proposal to revise the Europass decision. In view of changing requirements of the labour market as well as changing ways of acquiring skills, efforts to facilitate mobility and encourage transparency of skills and qualifications are in principle welcome. Relevant EU services and tools only have an added value if they are easily accessible, visible, and **adapted to the needs of end-users**.
- Over the years, the EU has developed several transparency and quality tools with the objective to enhance cooperation between Member States in the field of education and training. As a general remark, UEAPME finds it important that actions should be limited to areas the EU can bring clear added value in comparison to national efforts, as Education and Training policies are essentially the competence of Member States. When revising existing or developing new tools, it is important to **set ambitious but realistic objectives at EU level**, accompanied by adequate financial resources. Cooperation at EU level should promote a better understanding of the different education and training systems and serve as a source of inspiration for reforms, but cannot replace the logic of national systems.

¹ UEAPME subscribes to the EC’s Register of Interest Representatives and to the related code of conduct as requested by the European Transparency Initiative. Our ID number is 55820581197-35

- **The relation between and the scope of different transparency tools is still unclear in some cases.** In general, UEAPME supports efforts to streamline documents and improve synergies while respecting the national and regional VET systems. Clarification of objectives, and **piloting with new tools** to ensure their relevance and user-friendliness is essential to avoid overlaps and ‘shopping lists’. Tools need to be useful, cost-effective, and have a proven added value for stakeholders on the labour market, including competent authorities, national centres, social partners, business organisations, chambers of skilled crafts and chambers of commerce, training centres and other end-users. **UEAPME calls for a strategic approach to make the different tools user-friendly, for an assessment of the use of instruments by various stakeholders, and a consultation on what should be further developed.**
- Creating a European-wide platform allowing all individuals to access a range of services on skills and qualifications could have an added value if it respects certain key conditions. Moving from a document-based facility into an online service-based platform is useful to respond to technological developments and opportunities. However, **the need to merge all of these services and tools is not straightforward**, as they sometimes have rather divergent objectives and end-users, and are in different stages of development. Many of them are still in very early stages. **UEAPME insists that the proven relevance for end-users remains the guiding principle.**
- On **ESCO**, **UEAPME deems it premature to give the European taxonomy for Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations a legal status** through the Europass Decision, and to link it with other existing tools. Even if ESCO, which is still under development, could be a useful tool once it is completed to facilitate matching on the European labour market and bring added value as a translation tool between the labour market and the world of education (e.g. through the EURES portal), its real relevance for the labour market has to be proven. Before applying it as a full-fledged EU tool, sufficient time should be taken for ample testing, developing robust pilots (e.g. with public employment services) and proceed to an in-depth evaluation. **It is important that financing schemes in the field of education and training e.g. through Erasmus+ are not conditioned by ESCO-related projects.** For the time being, **UEAPME disagrees with the aim for ESCO to be a common reference language to support the functioning of Europass and requests deletion of relevant Articles.**
- UEAPME supports coordination between centres or contact points at national level for EU tools and services for skills and qualifications. At the same time, due to reasons stated above, the fact that different services have sometimes rather divergent objectives and end-users justifies in some cases the separation between them. **The decision to merge such centres or contact points should be left to each Member State**, in accordance with their education and training systems and labour market specificities.
- With regard to the **Europass document including the CV**, UEAPME welcomes efforts making it more flexible and able to document skills that are acquired through non-formal and informal learning and facilitate self-assessment.
- On the governance of the various tools and services (EQF, Europass, ESCO...), UEAPME asks for more in-depth explanations before **merging advisory committees at European level**. The current justification is not sufficiently convincing.

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