

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted by a large majority the report drafted by Mario **MANTOVANI** (EPP-ED, IT) and made several amendments to the Commission's proposal, with particular reference to the Recommendations to Member States. The principal ones are as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** Member States should use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of the different qualifications systems within a lifelong learning perspective while respecting and integrating the rich diversity and special strengths of the European Union's constituent territories, as well as the diversity of national education systems and the way in which they interact with national labour markets, in particular from a cultural, economic, democratic, social and individual perspective, and while fostering a knowledge-based European economy and the greatest possible integration through the European employment market, without discrimination or exclusion;

- **Recommendation 2:** Member States should relate their national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010, (rather than 2011 as proposed by the Commission);

- a new Recommendation 2a states that Member States should commit to and act upon proposals

concerning the qualifications addressed in lifelong learning programmes at national, regional and local levels in order to ensure the success of the European Qualifications Framework;

- **Recommendation 3:** Member States should adopt measures so that by 2012 (rather than 2011 as the commission had proposed) all new qualification certificates, diplomas and "Europass" documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference – via national qualifications systems – to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

The Committee adopted **new Recommendations 4(a) to (e):**

- Recommendation 4(a): promote and apply the principles for quality assurance in education and training set out in Annex II when relating higher education and vocational education and training qualifications within national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework;

- Recommendation 4(b): pay particular attention to validating informal learning acquired by those categories of workers most likely to be subject to unemployment or insecure forms of employment, in order to make it easier for them to change jobs and ensure they are not excluded from the employment

market;

- Recommendation 4(c): raise the standard of their lifelong learning programmes by promoting innovative teaching methods and learning programmes;

- Recommendation 4(d): enhance and promote a system for providing European citizens with permanent, full and widely circulated information about all the results of transnational pilot projects on the basis of procedures designed to take advantage of experience gained and spread good practice.

- Recommendation 4(e): recognise the growing importance of online services, the flexibility they offer and the freedom they allow users to determine their own learning path whilst prioritising the establishment of good information channels that enable citizens to acquire information on the existence and quality of such services.

The Committee stated that “national coordination points” are to be substituted for “national centres”.

The list of the Commission’s **Intentions** was also amended:

- the Commission should establish, within one year of the date on which the Recommendation is approved, a European Qualifications Framework advisory group. The remit and duration of the group should be reviewed by Member States on an agreed date;

- it should assess and evaluate, in cooperation with the Member States and after having

consulted the stakeholders concerned, the action taken in response to the Recommendation, gather age- and gender-disaggregated data and report, five years after its adoption on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a possible review and revision of the Recommendation;

- a new Intention 3 states that the Commission should promote, on the basis of the Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, the development and implementation of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) which is intended to facilitate the transfer, the accumulation and the recognition of learning outcomes, irrespective of where or how they have been acquired;

- a new Intention 3b states that the Commission should ensure that the European Qualifications Framework is flexible in order that it can be used in combination with existing sectoral initiatives for the development of professional qualifications and to encourage Member States to further national priorities and strategic convergence with each other.

Lastly, some amendments are made to the Annexes.