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Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

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DRAFT REPORT

on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning
(COM(2006)0479 – C6-0294/2006 – 2006/0163(COD))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Rapporteur: Mario Mantovani

Draftsman (*):
Milan Gaľa, Committee on Culture and Education

(*) Enhanced cooperation between committees – Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

Symbols for procedures

- * Consultation procedure
majority of the votes cast
- **I Cooperation procedure (first reading)
majority of the votes cast
- **II Cooperation procedure (second reading)
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend
the common position*
- *** Assent procedure
*majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases
covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and
Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
- ***I Codecision procedure (first reading)
majority of the votes cast
- ***II Codecision procedure (second reading)
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend
the common position*
- ***III Codecision procedure (third reading)
majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission.)

Amendments to a legislative text

In amendments by Parliament, amended text is highlighted in ***bold italics***. Highlighting in *normal italics* is an indication for the relevant departments showing parts of the legislative text for which a correction is proposed, to assist preparation of the final text (for instance, obvious errors or omissions in a given language version). These suggested corrections are subject to the agreement of the departments concerned.

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(*) Enhanced cooperation between committees – Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (COM(2006)0479 – C6-0294/2006 – 2006/0163(COD))

(Codecision procedure: first reading)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2006)0479)¹,
 - having regard to Article 251(2) and Articles 149(4) and 150(4) of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C6-0294/2006),
 - having regard to Rule 51 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Culture and Education, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0000/2007),
1. Approves the Commission proposal as amended;
 2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it intends to amend the proposal substantially or replace it with another text;
 3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and the Commission.

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendments by Parliament

Amendment 1 Recital 1

(1) The development of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence **is** crucial for competitiveness and social cohesion in the Community. Participation in lifelong learning and the use of qualifications should therefore be promoted and improved at the national and Community levels.

(1) The development **and recognition** of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence **are** crucial for competitiveness and social cohesion in the Community **in order to make transnational professional mobility possible and to meet the requirements of supply and demand in the European labour market**. Participation in lifelong learning and the use of qualifications

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

should therefore be promoted and improved at the national and Community levels.

Amendment 2
Recital 5 a (new)

(5a) The validation of non-formal and informal learning should be promoted in accordance with the Council conclusions on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning of 28 May 2004.

Amendment 3
Recital 8

(8) This Recommendation is compatible with the framework for the European Higher Education Area and cycle descriptors ***adopted*** by the ministers for higher education meeting in Bergen in May 2005.

(8) This Recommendation is compatible with the framework for the European Higher Education Area and cycle descriptors ***agreed*** by the ministers for higher education ***in 45 European countries at their*** meeting in Bergen in May 2005 ***within the framework of the Bologna Process.***

Amendment 4
Recital 8 a (new)

(8a) The Council conclusions on quality assurance in vocational education and training of May 2004, the Recommendation on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education of 15 February 2006 and the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 contain common principles for quality assurance, which should underpin the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework.

Amendment 5
Recital 10

(10) The objective of this Recommendation is to create a common reference framework which should serve as a translation device between different qualifications systems and their levels, whether for general and higher education or for vocational education and training. This will **increase** the transparency, comparability **and** portability of citizens' qualifications in different Member States. The European Qualifications Framework should moreover enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common reference point and thus facilitate the placing of these qualifications within national qualifications systems. This Recommendation therefore contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the mobility of workers and learners.

(10) The objective of this Recommendation is to create a common reference framework which should serve as a translation device between different qualifications systems and their levels, whether for general and higher education or for vocational education and training **and should promote transparency and equivalence as regards certificates issued at national and sectoral level**. This will **improve** the transparency, **the** comparability, **the** portability **and the recognition** of citizens' qualifications **and competences** in different Member States. The European Qualifications Framework should, moreover, enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common reference point and thus facilitate the placing of these qualifications within national qualifications systems. This Recommendation **must, therefore, be followed consistently and mutual trust must be shown so as to ensure the emergence of transparent quality assurance principles, as this Recommendation also** contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the **employability and transnational** mobility of workers and learners.

Amendment 6
Recital 10 a (new)

(10a) This Recommendation contributes to the modernisation of the education and training system, to the linkage between university education and employment and to the building of bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Amendment 7
Recital 11

(11) This Recommendation conforms to the principle of subsidiarity referred to in Article 5 of the Treaty *insofar* as its objective is to support and supplement Member States' action by facilitating further cooperation between them to increase transparency and to promote mobility and lifelong learning. This Recommendation conforms to the principle of proportionality referred to in that Article because it does not replace or define national qualifications systems and/or qualifications. The European Qualifications Framework does not describe specific qualifications or an individual's competences and a particular qualification should be **placed at** the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level via the relevant national qualifications **system**.

(11) This Recommendation conforms to the principle of subsidiarity referred to in Article 5 of the Treaty *in so far* as its objective is to support and supplement Member States' action by facilitating further cooperation between them to increase transparency and to promote mobility and lifelong learning, **and will be implemented in accordance with national legislation and practice**. This Recommendation conforms to the principle of proportionality referred to in that Article because it does not replace or define national qualifications systems and/or qualifications. The European Qualifications Framework does not describe specific qualifications or an individual's competences and a particular qualification should be **referenced to** the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level via the relevant national qualifications **systems**.

Amendment 8
Recommendation 1

1. Use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of different qualifications systems within a lifelong learning perspective;

1. Use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of different qualifications systems within a lifelong learning perspective, **while respecting the rich diversity and special strengths of Europe's constituent territories**;

Amendment 9
Recommendation 2

2. Relate their national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework by **2009**, in particular by referencing in a transparent manner their qualification levels to the levels set out in Annex I, and by developing a national

2. Relate their national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework by **2010**, in particular by referencing in a transparent manner their qualification levels to the levels set out in Annex I, and by developing a national

qualifications framework, where appropriate according to national legislation and practice;

qualifications framework, where appropriate according to national legislation and practice;

Amendment 10
Recommendation 3

3. **Ensure that, by 2011**, all new **qualifications** and “Europass” documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level;

3. **Adopt measures, as appropriate, so that by 2012** 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;

Amendment 11
Intention 1

1. Support Member States in carrying out the above tasks and international sectoral organisations in using the reference levels and principles of the European Qualifications Framework as set out in this Recommendation, in particular by facilitating cooperation and testing, and developing support and guidance material;

1. Support Member States in carrying out the above tasks and international sectoral organisations in using the reference levels and principles of the European Qualifications Framework as set out in this Recommendation, in particular by facilitating cooperation and testing, **including through voluntary peer review and pilot projects under Community programmes**, and developing support and guidance material;

Amendment 12
Intention 3

3. **Monitor** the action taken in response to this Recommendation and report, five years after its adoption, to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a possible review of this Recommendation.

3. **Assess and evaluate, in cooperation with the Member States**, the action taken in response to this Recommendation and report, five years after its adoption, to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a possible review of this Recommendation;

Amendment 13
Intention 3 a (new)

3a. 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.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Now that the Union, having undergone repeated enlargements, is being exposed to the unremitting economic and social momentum of globalisation, the future development of European society will depend more and more on the key influences that mould the personality, such as education, research, innovation, and technology.

These policy areas must be regarded as prerequisites and the foundations for the evolution laid down in the Lisbon strategy with the aim of building a prosperous future for the Union as such, viewed as a body politic, and above all for its citizens, viewed as a social community.

The four factors are closely interconnected. The only way to achieve growth and employment in our future society will be through innovation and progress; and education and research will constitute the fund of creativity that will undoubtedly help to change the EU system for the better.

The concept of change for the better merely denotes the contribution to the Union's international competitiveness, proceeding in every case according to the policy guidelines charted in the Lisbon strategy.

Cross-border mobility on the labour market within the Union should therefore be encouraged, and, to enable this to happen, the various national education systems need to be opened up more widely to mutual interpenetration.

In Bologna in 1999 the Member States set themselves the goal of establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) thus came into being to enable learning outcomes to be recognised transnationally.

At the March 2002 Barcelona Summit the European Council decided to set up an equivalent system for vocational training, namely the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

The February 2004 joint Council and Commission progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme signalled the determination to establish a European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The European Council, moreover, in March 2005, reiterated the need to adopt an EQF no later than 2006.

At the end of September 2006 Parliament adopted a report on the creation of a European Qualifications Framework¹.

Having scrutinised the documents relating to the EQF, the rapporteur believes the Commission proposal¹ to be well produced. The proposal was drawn up with the aid not only

¹ P6-TA-PROV(2006)0368 (Rapporteur: Thomas Mann).

of the 32 European countries participating in the EQF project and hence involved in the Education and Training 2010 programme, but also of the social partners, sector and branch organisations, experts from the learning world, and non-governmental organisations. This consultation process has served to gather together all the requests, comments, and suggestions likely to make for the broadest possible consensus on the text.

The European Qualifications Framework has three main roles: first of all to link national and sectoral reference frameworks, secondly to enable educational and vocational training qualifications to be recognised, compared, and transferred, and finally to increase the transparency of procedures, the mutual interpenetration of national systems, and the mobility of learners.

The structure of the EQF is based on eight vertical levels, termed 'reference levels', defined in terms of three horizontal criteria, namely knowledge, skills, and competence, thus enabling individuals to be classified more accurately according to learning outcomes.

Essentially, the EQF will be called upon to act as a common reference point and as a translation device spanning the different qualifications systems and the levels that they encompass, both where general and higher education and where vocational education and training are concerned. Although it is to be applied voluntarily by the stakeholders involved, such as Member States, the social partners, and the sectors concerned, the arrangement will need proper commitment if it is to become a reality. Failing that it would be unthinkable for a project of this scope and importance to be abandoned to its fate, without the necessary support from national and sectoral stakeholders.

Another point to note regarding the current preparatory work is the favourable comments on the European Qualifications Framework by the Economic and Social Committee², which in its conclusions highlights and stresses the idea that implementation of the EQF will widen and facilitate access to the European labour market by virtue of recognition enabling qualifications obtained in one Member State to be used in another.

If the European Qualifications Framework is to succeed, it is absolutely essential for Member States and the social partners to work together during the implementation stage on a footing of mutual trust and for the EQF to yield practical benefits for end-users, be they citizens, workers and employers, or those involved in education and training.

¹ COM(2006)0479.

² SOC/256 Lifelong learning.