

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Culture and Education

2006/2002(INI)

29.5.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the creation of a European Qualifications Framework
(2006/2002(INI))

Draftsman (*): Milan Gaľa

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

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) aimed at facilitating the transfer and recognition of individuals' qualifications and promoting life-long learning, transparency, mobility and flexibility in education and training systems;
2. Appreciates the potential of EQF as a meta-framework, translation device and a reference tool for national and sectoral qualifications systems;
3. Welcomes the fact that EQF is built on learning outcomes, reflects the complexity of lifelong learning and stimulates national and sectoral reform processes;
4. Underlines that the implementation of EQF on a voluntary basis requires the support and commitment of national and sectoral stakeholders;
5. Urges that EQF is further developed reflecting stakeholders' requests for clarification presented in the consultations process;
6. Recommends that the 8-level descriptors are improved to be more transparent, user friendly and fully operational;
7. Stresses that the competences set out in the 8-level descriptors should include knowledge not only of social and ethical issues, but also of cultural issues;
8. Calls for inclusion of systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning within the scope of lifelong learning;
9. Stresses that EQF must be based on previous work carried out within the Bologna and the Copenhagen processes and links to existing instruments developed at European level supporting individual citizens, such as Europass, Ploteus and Credit transfer system, should be established;
10. Points to the importance of a wide and well-structured communication and dissemination strategy to raise awareness and interest in EQF's benefits;
11. Notes that the optimal approach would be to set up National Qualifications Frameworks and link them to EQF to make it easier to correlate national qualifications with European reference levels;
12. Recognizes that EQF as a translation tool among different qualification systems requires consistency and mutual trust;
13. Recommends to elaborate principles of transparent and trustworthy quality assurance mechanisms so that comparisons may be made allowing for mutual recognition of the qualifications of EU citizens.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The objective of the planned European Qualification Framework (EQF) is to create a meta-framework which will enable qualifications systems at the national and sectoral levels to relate to each other. This reference structure will facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens.

The Commission working document was presented to the public in July 2005. The Commission consulted the 32 countries participating in the Education and Training 2010 work programme, the European Social Partners, the relevant European associations, NGOs and networks, and the European industry sector associations e.g. ICT, construction, marketing etc. The draftsman appreciates that the responses together with EPs report will be taken into account in establishing the final content and structure of the EQF, prior to a formal/final proposal in the end of 2006.

The implementation of the EQF will be an important move towards realising the goal of providing real and attractive opportunities for lifelong learning at all levels. An EQF would be developed and implemented on a voluntary basis, not entailing any legal obligations. In this sense, the draftsman stresses the importance of an active support and commitment of national and sectoral stakeholders which is essential for the success of an operational EQS.

The EQF is envisaged as a translation device increasing transparency and supporting mutual trust. It would thereby enable qualifications frameworks and systems at national and sectoral level to be related to each other. In the large majority of countries, the process would result in the development of an overarching national QF.

An EQF should consist of three main elements. The core would be a set of common reference points – referring to learning outcomes-located in a structure of 8 levels. These reference levels would be supported by a range of tools and instruments addressing the need of individual citizens (an integrated European credit transfer and accumulation system for lifelong learning, the Europass instrument, the Ploteus database on learning opportunities). An EQF would also include a set of common principles and procedures providing guidelines for co-operation between stakeholders at different levels; in particular focussing on quality assurance, validation, guidance and key competences. In this context, the experience and achievements made in the Bologna and Copenhagen processes shall be taken into account and, at the same time, links have to be established between the EQF and existing/emerging tools and instruments developed at European level.

Qualifications at each level in the EQF are defined in terms of three types of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and wider competences described as personal and professional outcomes.

The draftsman calls, among other things, for an inclusion of methods and systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning within the scope of lifelong learning and stresses the importance of a wide and well-structured communication and dissemination strategy to raise awareness and interest of learners and civil society as a whole and to show the concrete advantages that the EQF will bring for individual citizens, for the labour market, and for education and training systems.

He sees a necessity to agree principles in relation to quality assurance, in the scope of those the Member States will need to commit themselves fully and transparently and, believes that an ongoing updating and appropriate testing of the EQF based on facilitating a framework for co-operation and peer-learning is necessary.

The EQF is clearly a constructive initiative, which should contribute significantly to the transparency, transferability and recognition of qualifications at European level. It should also stimulate national and sectoral reforms in support of lifelong learning, it will be very important for mobility of students and employees.

PROCEDURE

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| Title | The creation of a European Qualifications Framework |
| Procedure number | 2006/2002(INI) |
| Committee responsible | EMPL |
| Opinion by Date announced in plenary | CULT 19.1.2006 |
| Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary | 19.1.2006 |
| Draftsman Date appointed | Milan Gaľa 7.2.2006 |
| Previous drafts(wo)man | |
| Discussed in committee | 20.3.2006 |
| Date adopted | 29.5.2006 |
| Result of final vote | + : 23 - : 0 : 1 |
| Members present for the final vote | Maria Badia I Cutchet, Christopher Beazley, Ivo Belet, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Milan Gaľa, Vasco Graça Moura, Lissy Gröner, Luis Herrero-Tejedor, Ruth Hieronymi, Manolis Mavrommatis, Marianne Mikko, Ljudmila Novak, Christa Prets, Karin Resetarits, Pál Schmitt, Nikolaos Sifunakis, Helga Trüpel, Thomas Wise, Tomáš Zatloukal |
| Substitute(s) present for the final vote | Gyula Hegyi, Nina Škottová, Grażyna Staniszevska, Jaroslav Zvěřina |
| Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote | Catherine Trautmann |
| Comments (available in one language only) | — |