

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Culture and Education

2006/0163(COD)

8.5.2007

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

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))

Draftsman: Milan Gal'a (*)

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

PA_Legam

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

A. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL

Lifelong learning has become a necessity in a Europe characterised by rapid economic and social change and ageing population. The need for a continuous development and recognition of citizens' knowledge, skills and competences is crucial for the EU's competitiveness and social cohesion.

The existing barriers hinder individual citizens from accessing education and training and from combining qualifications from different institutions. These make it difficult for them to pursue genuine lifelong learning and to move within the European labour market.

The main purpose of the EQF is to act as a translation device and neutral reference point for comparing qualifications across different education and training systems and to strengthen co-operation and mutual trust between the relevant stakeholders. This should increase transparency, facilitate the transfer and use of qualifications across different education and training systems and levels in national and international context.

The core element of the EQF is a set of 8 reference levels which will act as a common reference point for education and training authorities at national and sectoral level. These eight levels cover the entire span of qualifications from those achieved at the end of compulsory education and training to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional and vocational education and training.

The primary users of the EQF will be bodies in charge of national and/or sectoral qualification systems and frameworks.

B. DRAFTSMAN'S COMMENTS

The EQF should be a framework for cooperation and an instrument for strengthening mutual trust between national stakeholders and also international sectoral organisations involved in education and training.

The draftsman would like to point to the fact that the successful implementation of the EQF requires that national education and training authorities and sectoral stakeholders commit to it on a voluntary basis. The objective of EQF will also be to develop stronger links between national qualifications systems. He agrees that the development of national QFs increases EQF's potential for success.

The draftsman also believes that establishing the EQF should be built upon developments that have taken place and are already a feature of European education, including in particular the achievements agreed in the framework of the Bologna process.

In addition, the draftsman emphasizes the importance of mutual recognition of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence that is crucial for EU's competitiveness and social cohesion as well as for mobility of individual citizens.

He further underlines that the decision at national and sectoral level to use the EQF must be based on a commitment to quality assurance. Introducing systems for quality assurance at all

relevant levels of education and training - and in relation to the cooperation process itself - is crucial for developing mutual trust. 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 February 2006 and the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area represent the most important documents of reference in this context.

Finally, he is convinced that particular attention should be paid to the impact of learning outcomes approach, including outcomes of the informal and non-formal education, as used in the EQF on classifications of knowledge, skills and competences.

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Text proposed by the Commission ¹	Amendments by Parliament
Amendment 1 Recital 1	
(1) The development of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence <i>is</i> 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 <i>and recognition</i> of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence <i>are</i> crucial for competitiveness and social cohesion in the Community. <i>Access to and recognition and</i> use of qualifications should therefore be promoted and improved at the national and Community levels.
Amendment 2 Recital 8	
(8) This Recommendation <i>is compatible with</i> the framework for the European Higher Education Area and cycle descriptors <i>adopted</i> by the ministers for higher education meeting in Bergen in May 2005.	(8) This Recommendation <i>builds upon</i> the framework for the European Higher Education Area and cycle descriptors <i>agreed</i> by the ministers for higher education <i>in 45 European countries at their</i> meeting in Bergen in May 2005 <i>within the framework of the Bologna Process (the Bergen</i>

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

Framework).

Justification

It is important to build upon developments that have taken place and are already a feature of European education.

Amendment 3
Recital 8 a (new)

(8a) The Council Conclusions on Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training of May 2004¹, the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education² and the Bergen Framework contain common principles for quality assurance which should underpin the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework.

¹Doc. 9599/04.

²OJ L 64, 4.3.2006, p. 60.

Amendment 4
Recommendation to Member States, paragraph 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 qualifications framework, ***where appropriate*** according to national legislation and practice;

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Amendment 5
Recommendation to Member States, paragraph 4 a (new)

4a. 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;

Amendment 6

Recommendations to the Member States, paragraph 5, subparagraph 1

5. Designate a national centre to support and coordinate the relationship between the national qualifications system and the European Qualifications Framework.

5. Designate a national centre to support and coordinate the relationship between the national qualifications system and the European Qualifications Framework, ***as well as providing information to interested parties and promoting recognition of professional qualifications.***

Justification

The aim is to highlight that the essential tasks of the centre should be to inform interested parties and promote the European Qualifications Framework.

Amendment 7

Recommendations to the Member States, paragraph 5, point (c)

(c) ***ensuring that the methodology used to refer*** national qualifications levels to the European Qualifications Framework ***is transparent and that the resulting decisions are published;***

(c) ***making available and disseminating a transparent methodology, making it possible to compare*** national qualifications levels ***with and relate them*** to the European Qualifications Framework ***and publishing relevant information;***

Justification

The centre must make available and disseminate a transparent methodology making it possible to compare and relate national qualifications levels to the European Qualifications Framework.

Amendment 8

Recommendations to the Member States, paragraph 5, point (d)

(d) providing guidance to stakeholders on how national qualifications relate to the European Qualifications Framework through the national qualifications system;

(d) providing ***access to information and*** guidance to stakeholders on how national qualifications relate to the European Qualifications Framework through the national qualifications system;

Justification

One of the most important tasks of the centre should be to ensure that interested parties have access to information.

Amendment 9
Recommendation to Member States, paragraph 6, point (i)

(i) ‘competence’ means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional *and/or* personal development. In the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

(i) ‘competence’ means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social, ***intercultural*** and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

Amendment 10
Annex I, footnote **

** The descriptor for the first cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6

** The descriptor for the first cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area ***agreed by the ministers for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process*** corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6.

Amendment 11
Annex I, footnote ***

*** The descriptor for the second cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7

*** The descriptor for the second cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area ***agreed by the ministers for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process*** corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7.

Amendment 12
Annex I, footnote ****

**** The descriptor for the third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8

**** The descriptor for the third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area ***agreed by the ministers for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process***

corresponds to the learning outcomes for
EQF level 8.

Amendment 13
Annex II, title

Principles for Quality Assurance in
Education and Training

Common Principles for Quality Assurance
in ***Higher Education and Vocational***
Education and Training ***in the context of the***
European Qualifications Framework

PROCEDURE

Title	Qualifications framework for lifelong learning		
References	COM(2006)0479 - C6-0294/2006 - 2006/0163(COD)		
Committee responsible	EMPL		
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	CULT 12.10.2006		
Enhanced cooperation - date announced in plenary	12.10.2006		
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Milan Gaľa 18.12.2006		
Discussed in committee	22.3.2007	10.4.2007	7.5.2007
Date adopted	7.5.2007		
Result of final vote	+: 17 -: 0 0: 0		
Members present for the final vote	Ivo Belet, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Věra Flasarová, Milan Gaľa, Claire Gibault, Vasco Graça Moura, Manolis Mavrommatis, Ljudmila Novak, Karin Resetarits, Pál Schmitt, Nikolaos Sifunakis, Tomáš Zatloukal		
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Gyula Hegyi, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Mary Honeyball, Jaroslav Zvěřina, Tadeusz Zwiefka		