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Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

2006/2002(INI)

22.6.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the creation of a European qualifications framework
(2006/2002(INI))

Draftsman: Stefano Zappalà

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas a single learning environment and a single employment market at European level are essential requirements if the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy are to be attained,
 - B. whereas it is necessary to establish a European system for the recognition of qualifications and skills while at the same time preserving the rich diversity and special strengths of Europe's constituent territories,
 - C. whereas a common reference framework (based on skills, levels and learning outcomes), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), could encourage the adoption of instruments to identify skills requirements,
 - D. whereas the EQF represents the interface between the Bruges-Copenhagen process and the Bologna process and, on that basis, the proposed indicators take account of the full complexity of lifelong learning by also incorporating the Dublin descriptors;
 - E. whereas the term 'qualification' should be taken to mean all the titles, qualifications and certificates and professional experience recognised in the European Union,
1. Considers that the EQF is a useful means of enhancing and consolidating mutual trust in the various systems and fully supports its objectives, namely the achievement at European level of transparency in relation to qualifications, mobility for members of the professions and lifelong learning;
 2. Approves the establishment of a system based on common levels, instruments and principles which is both flexible and, at the same time, rooted in the principle of lifelong learning, but calls on the Commission to clarify the relationship between qualification levels, Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications and the provisions for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which already exist or are currently being established at national and regional level;
 3. Notes that the EQF has certain important defects which must be remedied:
 - it is not clear to whom it is addressed,
 - the structure and language are too complex, and therefore unlikely to strike a chord with the general European public,

- the concept of 'qualification' is ambiguous and could lead to confusion between similar terms¹. The tables which provide descriptions of the various levels offer an incoherent mixture of training-based and employment-based models,
 - the fact that the indicators (and consequently the learning outcomes) are divided into separate elements (knowledge, skills, competences) could encourage a compartmentalised approach to knowledge acquisition, whereas education and training should on the contrary be geared towards integrating the various aspects of knowledge ('knowing how to act in a given context');
4. Considers that the definition and content of the proposed levels are not precise enough to allow the objectives of the European qualifications network to be attained;
 5. Notes that, for the EQF to function as well as possible, it is necessary to define, in each Member State, consistent and comprehensible national qualifications and certification systems based on the principles of lifelong learning;
 6. Calls on the Commission to launch the process of harmonising conceptual approaches and terms;
 7. Calls on the Commission to set in motion a process of harmonising methodologies and aligning education systems to improve the free movement of persons;
 8. Calls on the Commission, therefore, to clarify the relationship between the framework of qualifications envisaged under the Bologna process and the EQF, and to specify whether the indicators proposed under the EQF will constitute the sole point of reference for a common European area of lifelong learning;
 9. Considers that there is an urgent need to lay down common principles as regards study credits and the recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts to keep pace with the development of lifelong learning policies;
 10. Rejects the setting of prescriptive criteria for learning pathways or for the duration and location of education and training courses;
 11. Considers that the Commission must establish a close connection between the EQF system and the Europass system in order to ensure that qualifications are of more direct and practical use to the individuals who have obtained them;
 12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance the role and structure of the National Europass Centre (NEC) and to make it easier for the NEC to fulfil its core tasks and to achieve the objectives laid down by the European Union, with particular reference to the wider dissemination of the instruments directly managed by the NEC (European Curriculum Vitae, Mobility Europass) and the progressive adoption of the Europass

¹ [*Translator's note: in Italian, at least. In this paragraph - as in recital E, above - Mr Zappalà draws a distinction between the Italian terms 'qualificazione' and 'qualifica' (the term usually used in this context, and in the title of this document), both of which are rendered as 'qualification' in the English version of Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of professional qualifications, for example*].

system;

13. Calls on the Commission to revise its proposal on the basis of Parliament's observations.

PROCEDURE

Title	The creation of a European qualifications framework		
Procedure number	2006/2002(INI)		
Committee responsible	EMPL		
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	IMCO 19.1.2006		
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary			
Draftsman Date appointed	Stefano Zappalà 21.2.2006		
Previous drafts(wo)man			
Discussed in committee	19.4.2006	29.5.2006	20.5.2006
Date adopted	20.6.2006		
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 0 0: 0		
Members present for the final vote	Charlotte Cederschiöld, Janelly Fourtou, Evelyne Gebhardt, Małgorzata Handzlik, Henrik Dam Kristensen, Kurt Lechner, Lasse Lehtinen, Arlene McCarthy, Toine Manders, Zita Pleštinšská, Giovanni Rivera, Luisa Fernanda Rudi Ubeda, Heide Rühle, Andreas Schwab, József Szájer, Bernadette Vergnaud, Jaroslav Zvěřina		
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	André Brie, Benoît Hamon, Joseph Muscat, Stefano Zappalà		
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote			
Comments (available in one language only)	...		