

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

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*Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*

**2006/0163(COD)**

8.5.2007

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

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: Pilar del Castillo Vera

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, which took place in Bergen in 2005, clearly agreed upon the need to establish an overarching framework for qualifications in order to attain greater clarity as to the worth of lifelong learning courses to the labour market. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning is expected to perform this function.

The EQF is a product of the European Union's move to become a knowledge society well prepared for the challenges of globalisation. In such a society, citizens of each European Member State must adjust to meet the needs of a competitiveness-driven labour market. These new changes bring challenges which demand more innovative and flexible education that prepares Europeans to thrive in the modern labour market, a market in which learning is a prerequisite for all age groups and all levels of society.

As the transparency of qualifications increases across the EU and not just inside the individual Member State in which they were created and obtained, this will inevitably encourage a greater free movement of labour across the European Union and allow Member States to benefit better from the size of the European internal market. On a practical level, an increase of transparency in this area will enable employers to determine more rapidly whether a national from a different Member State might be better qualified for a particular job due to the lifelong learning courses s/he has followed.

The current proposal is especially timely, as a surge of new technologies and their availability to citizens has opened up the door to transformation in the education sector, offering new e-learning opportunities. These services offer a much needed flexibility and a freedom for the user to determine his or her own learning path. Moreover, they offer the Member States, which should constantly aim to raise the standard of education programmes, the chance to promote and benefit from more innovative teaching methods and learning patterns. However, in order to secure and enhance the success of these services and learning possibilities, their quality needs to be measured and their very existence needs to be communicated to European citizens through viable channels of information.

One area that needs urgent attention is that of social and labour market exclusion from the life-long learning process and the lagging behind of those without formal qualifications. Youths, adults, immigrants and manual labourers across Europe who have informally acquired skills that have never been officially recognised must be encouraged to engage in lifelong learning programmes, thus avoiding social and labour market exclusion of these groups and increasing their mobility across the European Union. If this does not happen, these groups risk to become even more marginalised as others engage in lifelong learning programmes and the qualifications gap widens. Such problems need to be tackled now and citizens need to be taught the value and importance of education from an early age.

Crucially, Member States need to commit to and act upon these proposals at the national, regional and local levels in order to ensure the success of this initiative. Coordination is of utmost importance, hence the proposed creation of national centres to link the national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework and to disseminate

information about progress in this area.

## AMENDMENTS

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

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Text proposed by the Commission<sup>1</sup>

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Amendments by Parliament

### Amendment 1

Section "Hereby recommend that Member States", paragraph 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 (*EQF*) as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of different ***European*** qualifications systems within a lifelong learning perspective ***in an endeavour to ensure that their value is recognised in the labour market and to reaffirm the importance of lifelong learning across the European Union;***

### *Justification*

*In a Europe in which the nature of the labour market is changing and flexible approaches to learning are needed, Member States should use the EQF to raise the profile of lifelong learning programmes. Moreover, it is essential that the practical value of the qualifications is clarified for employers and students alike in order to facilitate greater movement across the European Union.*

### Amendment 2

Section 'Hereby recommend that Member States', paragraph 1 a (new)

***1a. Use the EQF as a reference tool in order to facilitate the validation of learning taking place outside formal education so as to ensure that skilled individuals have access to a labour market in need of their skills and to further their formal education;***

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<sup>1</sup> Not yet published in OJ.

*Justification*

*The EQF should provide the necessary means for persons lacking the advantages of formal education to acquire the qualifications appropriate to their skills and also to allow them to advance in their formal education.*

Amendment 3

Section "Hereby recommend that Member States", paragraph 2 a (new)

***2a. 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 EQF;***

*Justification*

*The success of this initiative depends upon the coordination achieved between the national, regional and local levels, as these latter two levels diffuse information relating to the EQF.*

Amendment 4

Section "Hereby recommend that Member States", paragraph 4 a (new)

***4a. Raise the standard of their lifelong learning programmes by promoting innovative teaching methods and learning programmes;***

*Justification*

*Lifelong learning programmes must strive to be innovative and to promote innovative thought in order to meet the demands of the labour market.*

Amendment 5

Section 'Hereby recommend that Member States', paragraph 4 b (new)

***4b. Encourage a wider and better use of ICT in their lifelong learning programmes, focusing in particular on the differences in technological literacy between regions and between the sexes with the aim of eliminating the various aspects of the digital divide;***

*Justification*

*ICT could be an important means of empowerment if they help to widen and democratise*

*educational opportunities: that is why it is necessary to reduce the potential inequalities stemming from the digital divide between both regions and the sexes.*

Amendment 6

Section "Hereby recommend that Member States", paragraph 4 c (new)

***4c. 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;***

*Justification*

*The nature of the labour market is changing, requiring more flexible models of education. New learning paths have arisen in response to these changes, and these need to be publicised to encourage their uptake.*

Amendment 7

Section "Hereby recommend that Member States", paragraph 4 d (new)

***4d. Work to ensure that young people, adults and manual workers across Europe whose informally obtained skills have never been accredited are able to have their skills officially recognised and that they, alongside those who lack basic skills and qualifications, are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning programmes, thus avoiding social and labour market exclusion and increasing their mobility across the European Union;***

*Justification*

*Those who lack basic qualifications must be encouraged to re-enter the education system.*

Amendment 8

Section 'Endorse the Commission's intention to', paragraph 1

1. Support Member States in carrying out the above tasks and international sectoral organisations in using the reference levels

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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;

and principles of the European Qualifications Framework as set out in this Recommendation, in particular by facilitating cooperation and testing, ***exchanging good practice***, and developing support and guidance material;

*Justification*

*Exchange of good practice will enable 'intelligence' to be pooled with a view to consolidating the EQF more securely.*

Amendment 9

Section "Endorse the Commission's intention to", paragraph 2

2. Establish ***a European Qualifications Framework*** advisory group (including representatives of the national centres, the European social partners and other stakeholders, as appropriate) in order to monitor, *co-ordinate* and to ensure the quality and overall coherence of the process of relating qualifications systems to the ***European Qualifications Framework***;

2. Establish ***an EQF*** advisory group (***with equal representation of the sexes and*** including representatives of the national centres, ***business organisations***, the European social partners, ***organisations specialising in gender-related training issues***, and other stakeholders, as appropriate) in order to ***improve***, monitor, *coordinate* and to ensure the quality and overall coherence of the process of relating qualifications systems to the ***EQF***;

*Justification*

*As lifelong learning programmes are primarily geared towards those who need to acquire skills or knowledge relevant to their line of work, it is crucial to consult business organisations in this process.*

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Qualifications framework for lifelong learning
<b>References</b>	COM(2006)0479 - C6-0294/2006 - 2006/0163(COD)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	EMPL
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	ITRE 12.10.2006
<b>Enhanced cooperation - date announced in plenary</b>	12.10.2006
<b>Drafts(wo)man</b> Date appointed	Pilar del Castillo Vera 23.11.2006
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	27.3.2007                      3.5.2007
<b>Date adopted</b>	3.5.2007
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:                      40 -:                      0 0:                      0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Šarūnas Birutis, Renato Brunetta, Jerzy Buzek, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Silvia Ciornei, Pilar del Castillo Vera, Lena Ek, Nicole Fontaine, Adam Gierek, Norbert Glante, Fiona Hall, David Hammerstein, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Mary Honeyball, Romana Jordan Cizelj, Romano Maria La Russa, Pia Elda Locatelli, Angelika Niebler, Reino Paasilinna, Miloslav Ransdorf, Vladimír Remek, Herbert Reul, Mechtild Rothe, Paul Rübig, Andres Tarand, Patrizia Toia, Catherine Trautmann, Claude Turmes, Nikolaos Vakalis, Alejo Vidal-Quadras
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Ivo Belet, Philip Dimitrov Dimitrov, Robert Goebbels, Satu Hassi, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Erika Mann, John Purvis, Hannes Swoboda, Silvia-Adriana Țicău
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	Zuzana Roithová