



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
DG EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Which role and kind of involvement for stakeholders? The European Taxonomy of Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO)

The development of ESCO is driven by the needs of major players from both the education/training and employment sectors. Its stakeholders therefore include public, private and third sector employment services, the Social Partners, national education, training and qualification authorities and institutions, as well as sector skill councils, human resource management, recruitment and career guidance professionals, research organisations, promoters of other taxonomy and classification systems, developers of ICT HR applications (including other web-based job search tools) and international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and the OECD. All stakeholders or groupings of stakeholders committed to provide an active contribution to the development of ESCO need to have a say and involvement in how ESCO will be designed.

The Commission will in summer 2010 launch a survey among ESCO stakeholders and invite them to describe their expectations towards ESCO and their envisaged level of co-operation in the ESCO project. Different levels and forms of stakeholder involvement in ESCO will be possible including: participation in the ESCO Board (for the most senior representatives of the bodies concerned); or in the ESCO Maintenance Committee (for technical classification experts); or in the Reference Groups (for experts on labour market and skill needs and related terminology); or sending proposals via the web-based tool or mapping national/sectoral classification systems to ESCO.

The Commission will analyse the replies and draw-up preliminary proposals for discussion with the decision-making body – the ESCO Board - which is expected to be established in autumn 2010. The Board will then define the conceptual background of ESCO, decide on its operational structure and agree a work programme.

The Commission will decide on the approximately 15 members of the ESCO Board ensuring parity of representation from the spheres of education/training and the employment/labour market as well as involvement of the Social Partners and other relevant stakeholders. Member State representation for the places available for the education and training side will be co-ordinated through the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group. For the places available for the social partners the Commission will consult the respective European level representative bodies.

Organisational structure of the ESCO initiative

It is envisaged that the structure of ESCO will be composed of:

- ESCO Secretariat
- ESCO Board
- ESCO Maintenance Committee
- ESCO Reference Groups

ESCO Secretariat

The ESCO Secretariat will be composed of three specialists – skills expert, taxonomist, logistic expert - under the direction of the Commission, has kick-started the establishment of ESCO. The secretariat has been gradually put in place since the beginning of 2010 and has started preparatory work. In future it will work closely with the contractors retained for the development of ESCO's technical infrastructure. It will also support the Board, Maintenance Committee and Reference Groups

The Secretariat will be resourced and funded by the Commission and will be located in Commission premises. It will be the permanent central resource that enables the establishment and day-to day maintenance/editing of ESCO. It will respond to inputs from Reference Groups and external parties and evaluate whether to recommend to the Maintenance Committee the inclusion of proposals in ESCO. It will be responsible for maintaining the database and the web tools used by the Reference Groups and Maintenance Committee. It will liaise with other external groups and interested parties as necessary to refine elements of ESCO. In conjunction with the Board it will undertake promotion of ESCO as required.

At a later stage, it will have a key role in assisting owners of other taxonomies/classifications to develop mapping schemas and models so that automatic mapping and updates can be put in place for those taxonomies, if required.

ESCO Board

The ESCO Board is the decision taking body within the ESCO organizational structure; it will provide strategic guidance and take decisions related to ESCO policy, approach, direction and operations including releases of major updates. Furthermore, it will promote the adoption of ESCO as a European standard and drive the establishment and maintenance of ESCO, in collaboration with the Commission. It will be supported by the ESCO secretariat which will provide the day to day management of ESCO.

It is envisaged that the Board will meet two times per year; in the start up phase of ESCO it might be necessary to meet more often to underwrite the policy direction of ESCO. In the interests of operational efficiency, it is recommended to limit the board to around 15 members. All ESCO board meetings will be held in English only.

Main tasks of the ESCO board:

- set out the strategy for the development of ESCO, revisable annually, taking into account the progress so far;
- define the annual ESCO work programme to be subsequently implemented by the ESCO Secretariat, the Maintenance Committee and the Reference Groups;

- approve the conceptual specifications of ESCO as proposed by the ESCO Secretariat and Maintenance Committee such as: the definition of the scope of ESCO's skills and competences part; the relationship between the skills/competences pillar and the qualifications and occupations pillars; the specification of the terminological guidelines for terms and expressions included in ESCO, and the definition of the semantically relevant relationships such as hierarchical relations, synonyms, related terms etc.
- endorse the annual ESCO progress report to be presented to the Employment Committee, Education Committee and others;
- decide on the setting up of the structure under which ESCO is operationally developed; in particular appoint members of Maintenance Committee and endorse requests and proposals for activation of Reference Groups and their members;
- decide on the release of enriched and updated ESCO versions (overall content and changes for next release, decide upon exact date for next release, etc.)
- drive the approval process in which they discuss all proposals, previously approved by the Maintenance Committee and formally adopt it to be part of the next release of the ESCO taxonomy/classification;
- actively promote the development and use of the ESCO taxonomy/classification;
- approve the ESCO communication plan;
- decide on all questions of a strategic nature that have an impact on the further ESCO development.

In general, ESCO Board decisions should be taken by consensus. However, in the event of disagreement matters may be put to a vote. The practical details for voting and its corresponding internal procedures will be prepared by the ESCO Secretariat and should then be approved unanimously by the Board members.

Chairmanship/President of the ESCO board

The role of the chairperson shall be undertaken by one of the members of the Board. The chair person should be proposed by the Commission and nominated for two years by consensus or otherwise by simple majority. He/she chairs the meetings of the Steering Committee and acts as the representative of the ESCO initiative.

Main tasks of the Chairperson/President

- To determine the agenda of the ESCO Board after proposal of the ESCO Secretariat;
- To chair the meetings of the Board;
- To prepare the meetings together with the ESCO Secretariat;
- The president shall not have special voting rights;
- To represent the ESCO initiative.

Expected profile of ESCO board members

- Serve at decision-taking level in their organisations or grouping of organisations, empowered to represent their organisation or grouping of organisations and/or the collective national interest at European level;
- Should be prepared to invest time to improve and actively promote the development and use of ESCO; availability for ESCO Board meetings, their preparation and follow up;
- Good knowledge of the labour market & its terminology (occupations & skills)

and/or education/training sector & its terminology (skills & qualifications/learning outcomes)

- Sound knowledge about issues related to taxonomies and classification systems and their potential use;
- Good English language skills

The Commission will, via the ESCO Secretariat, cover accommodation and travel costs of Board members for the meetings that take place in Brussels.

ESCO Maintenance Committee

Tasks: The Maintenance Committee will have the major role in the conceptual work and in technical decisions concerning the acceptance or rejection of documented proposals that come from the Reference Groups and Secretariat. After validation of the proposals the Maintenance Committee will recommend them for final approval to the Board. In the ESCO inception period its main role will be to oversee the consolidation and the upgrade of the existing taxonomy to ISCO 08 and to oversee the work of the contractors. It will ensure that decisions are in line with the overall direction and content of the ESCO classification. The Maintenance Committee will meet not more than 6 times per year; additional meetings can be organized virtually.

Required profile: Expertise in the field of the content of classifications/taxonomies; experience with taxonomy, metadata, controlled vocabularies and classification; good knowledge of the labour market and education/training terminology including related to skills, qualifications and learning outcomes; sound understanding of employment & skills & education/training related standards (ISCO, ISCED, NACE, etc); good knowledge on relations between occupations and skills, good knowledge of other related taxonomies such as ROME, BERUFENET, AGRIPASS, etc.; knowledge of grouping of occupations; very good English language skills.

The Commission will, via the ESCO Secretariat, cover accommodation and travel costs of Maintenance Committee members for the meetings that will take place in Brussels.

ESCO Reference Groups

Tasks: The main tasks of the different Reference Groups will be to suggest, update, validate the skills and competences sets and formal qualifications related to each occupation. Its members will ensure that changes in labour markets and occupational demands/qualifications/skills/competences/sets will also be brought to the attention of ESCO and incorporated in the continual updating envisaged for ESCO. Reference groups might be organised on industrial sector level and/or on organisation-type level; they will regularly meet to discuss their proposals, some parts of their tasks might be done in virtual meetings. The size of each reference group should be such that the group can function efficiently and effectively (e.g. 5-10 members). The members of the Reference Groups will have access to the ESCO updating/editing tool where changes can be proposed to the Maintenance Committee. The ESCO Secretariat will provide technical and logistical support to the Reference Groups.

Required profile:

Sound knowledge of the terminology related to education and training and labour market including related to skills, qualifications and learning outcomes; good

understanding of required skills, competences, qualifications, and occupations of at least one particular industrial sector, experience with classifications, taxonomies, controlled vocabularies, good understanding of the employment and skills related standards (ISCO, ISCED, NACE, etc; very good English language skills

The Commission will, via the ESCO Secretariat, cover accommodation and travel costs of reference group members for the meetings that will take place in Brussels.

What will the practical work of a Reference Group look like?

As a first step the existing ESCO version - developed by the Swedish Public Employment Service and currently used on the European Job Mobility Portal - will be merged with DISCO, the Dictionary of Skills and Competences which contains around 10.000 skills and competence terms and exists in seven languages. This merged classification will be updated to ISCO 08 and become ESCO V0.

The Reference Group(s) will then, on the basis of this ESCO V0 classification, define skills, competences and relate them to qualifications and occupations. Using the relevant specifications in existing national/sectoral/etc. classifications/taxonomies they will bring together the knowledge so far available on the market. The Reference Group(s) will follow the general instructions established by the ESCO board to construct the classification of the skills/competences pillar and the qualifications and occupations pillars in such a way that they can be accessed independently to enable the preparation of skill profiles and qualifications descriptions not linked to specific occupations and relate them to show the relevance of skills, competences and qualifications to occupations to enable skill and job matching.

The work of the Reference Groups could be started on a sectoral basis, subject to the approval of the ESCO work plan by the ESCO Board. In the beginning, preference could be given to those sectors where substantial preparatory work has been carried out by social partners organisations e.g. in agriculture and hotel, restaurant and catering (HORECA). The meetings of the Reference Groups will be facilitated by the ESCO Secretariat which, for example, will put at the disposal of the members the relevant examples of national classifications/taxonomies.

The meetings of the group will be held in English, no interpretation will be available. The master version of ESCO will be established in English and will subsequently, after approval by the Maintenance Committee and endorsement by the Board, be translated into all official EU languages.

Translation is clearly a major challenge. The Directorate General for Translation of the Commission has committed itself to carry out this job and will ensure high-quality translations that can be tested by experts in the specific fields concerned.

What level of information should be available through ESCO?

The information should be sufficiently detailed to:

- support citizens to build not only CVs that can be used for job matching but also meaningful personal skill profiles covering key competences as well as

- occupational skills and to record their learning outcomes;
- enable education/training institutions and bodies developing or awarding qualifications to describe the learning outcomes of individual qualifications in terms operationally relevant to labour market actors;
- enable employers to prepare job descriptions and PES and other employment services to publish job vacancies containing skill and competence sets in terms that are easy for citizens and education/training actors to understand and relate to learning outcomes.

For example, for the occupation of a Biologist¹

Required skills and competences could include: Knowledge of specific fields of biology; Ability to design and conduct experiments, master observation techniques and analyse data; Advanced communication skills, aptitude to write technical documents, etc.

Recommended skills and competences could include: Organisational skills and project management, Advanced ICT skills, Team working skills, etc.

Optional skills and competences could include: Foreign languages, Leadership, etc.

Qualifications needed could include: Bachelor/Master/Doctorate in Biology.

How will the ESCO management process work in practice?

At a conceptual level, the ESCO management process could be described as follows:

- **Reference Groups** can create **proposals** for adding occupations, skills, competences and qualifications, for changes and new concepts for ESCO via a web-based proposal management tool; at a later stage **External Parties** could also create **proposals** via the web-based tool
- These proposals are **evaluated** by the **Secretariat**, a team of skills experts and taxonomists. And they **enter (or import) the approved data** in the Taxonomy Management System (TMS). Proposals made by Reference Groups are directly validated by the Maintenance Committee; proposals from other external parties are first screened (more thoroughly) by the secretariat alone. The secretariat also **elaborates & documents** the changes, which then will enter the **approval** process.
- The documented changes are sent by the Secretariat to the **Maintenance Committee**. This committee **discuss the proposals and take decisions** on the further actions:
 - They can **reject** the proposal; in that case the proposal and its data are deleted from the TMS and Proposal Management Tool (PMT)
 - They can mark the proposal as not finished (**pending**); the proposal will be

¹ This is an indicative example with a limited number of descriptors, which does not reflect necessarily the future content of ESCO. The conceptual specifications of ESCO such as the definition of the scope of ESCO's skills and competences part, the specification of the terminological guidelines for terms and expressions included in ESCO, and the definition of the semantically relevant relationships such as hierarchical relations, synonyms, related terms etc are subject to approval of the ESCO board

sent back again to the editorial team or impacted reference group

- Or they can **accept** the change; changes approved by the Maintenance Committee [and endorsed by the Board?] are pushed through to the translation process. If translation is required; a **notification** (via mail or TMS) is sent to the **translation department** with the request to translate the approved concepts & changes. If no translation is required, the change is stored and **ready for adoption** by the **Board**.
- Depending on the release calendar of the ESCO taxonomy; a **Board** meeting is scheduled. During this meeting the Board formally **adopts the changes** that can be inserted in the next release of the ESCO taxonomy.
- The last step of the process is the **release** of a new version of the taxonomy by the **Secretariat**. They will create a new stable release in the TMS and execute consequent publication activities (update website; extract XML, PDF; formats of the ESCO taxonomy)

Annex 1:

Time planning for ESCO start-up phase in 2010-2011

January/February 2010: ESCO-Secretariat is set up by Commission, ESCO-Secretariat starts operating

17-18 March 2010: The ESCO (European Skills, Competences and Occupations taxonomy) stakeholders' conference

June/July 2010: Secretariat starts updating existing ESCO taxonomy to ISCO 08

Summer 2010: Commission sends a broad range of ESCO stakeholders a questionnaire to get feedback on the design and development of ESCO

Autumn 2010: ESCO board is established

Autumn /Winter 2010: Preliminary version of ESCO available on the web (browse and download); First meeting of ESCO Board, establishment of Maintenance Committee and Reference Groups; ESCO Board decides on ESCO work programme for 2011.

Winter 2010-2011: ESCO-Secretariat organises kick-off meeting of the different ESCO Reference Groups. Reference Groups start correcting/enriching/extending the ESCO existing taxonomy and control the updated ESCO version. Basic proposal management process starts.

Early 2011: Reference Groups pass on first proposals for correcting/enriching/extending ESCO via the ESCO Secretariat to the ESCO Maintenance Committee. ESCO Board meets to take stock of developments. Progress report on the ESCO development will be sent to stakeholders.

Spring 2011: Release of version 1.0 of ESCO. Production mode with releases starts, releases with updated ESCO versions will from now on published regularly

Proposed ESCO structure

