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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND THE COUNCIL**

on the first evaluation of the Europass initiative

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SUMMARY

This report is based on an external evaluation. It presents the evaluator's main findings and recommendations as well as the Commission's conclusions and intended follow-up.

The evaluation concludes that the Europass initiative is achieving its objectives as a mobility tool for citizens and is relevant to their needs, helping them to make their competences and qualifications easier to understand and more acceptable in both learning contexts and the labour market. The implementation of Europass is good value for money. Its cost-effective implementation tools – the network of National Europass Centres (NECs) and the internet portal managed by Cedefop¹ – are appreciated by stakeholders and largely satisfy users, as explicitly confirmed through a specific survey.

This is confirmed by the growing numbers of visitors to the Europass portal (in average 12 000 daily visits in 2007) and active users of its services, with 2 million *Europass CVs* having been created online by September 2007. However, the evaluation points out that the low-qualified are a small share of this large number of users. Also, some of the Europass tools have been less successful. The use of the *Europass Mobility* is increasing, but remains below its potential, while the *Europass Diploma Supplement* and the *Europass Certificate Supplement* are not adequately integrated in the framework.

The high level of user satisfaction, the growing demand and the shortcomings identified, taken together, provide a sound basis for the identification of ways to exploit better the potential of the Europass initiative. The evaluation makes specific recommendations to strengthen the initiative's overall logic, better address occupational mobility, build upon the successful CV tool, widen take-up, enhance effectiveness and improve the management information system.

Based on the evaluation's findings, the Commission concludes that the strength and success of Europass, in particular of the Europass CV tool and its guidance instruments, is linked to the effective use of a learning outcomes approach. Indeed, the shortcomings identified concern those Europass tools that are less based on learning outcomes.

To follow up the evaluation, and improve the support that Europass provides for citizens' mobility, the Commission plans therefore to strengthen this dimension, particularly linked to the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)². The Commission will expand the Europass CV into a more comprehensive instrument, supported by new self-assessment tools addressing skills acquired through all forms of learning. This will be done

¹ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>

² Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1.

with the support of Cedefop and the National Europass Centres and in cooperation with guidance, employment and youth services. Through such cooperation, a better response to the needs of young people, as well as the low-qualified, will also be pursued. In addition, the Europass Mobility will, by 2010, be systematically issued to all citizens who have undertaken mobility actions under the Lifelong Learning Programme, as is the case for Youthpass for the Youth in Action programme, and will be further promoted through other actions. Finally, in cooperation with all relevant parties, the Commission will ensure stronger coordination of the management of the Europass Diploma Supplement and the Europass Certificate Supplement and will examine how they can be developed to take into account better the learning outcomes of their holders. All these elements will also be brought to the attention of the High Level Forum on Mobility, in order for them to take account of the evaluation results when preparing their final report.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is presented under the terms of Article 15 of Decision 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004³ (hereafter “the Decision”), which established Europass.

It summarises the main conclusions and recommendations of the first external evaluation of Europass and puts forward the Commission’s conclusions for follow-up. The external evaluation can be obtained, in English, with a summary also in French or German, via the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Europass was established as a coordinated portfolio of documents, to help citizens make their competences and qualifications better understood throughout Europe and therefore facilitate their mobility. Europass brought together five documents developed at European level and covering the qualifications and competences of a citizen from a lifelong learning perspective. Two Europass documents are completed by citizens themselves, namely through an assisted online tool made available in the Europass portal: the *Europass CV*, with which citizens present themselves, using a format that highlights what they know and can do, and the *Europass language passport*, where citizens self-assess their linguistic skills using a reference framework developed by the Council of Europe. The three other documents are issued to citizens when they have completed specific learning experiences: the *Europass Mobility* describes skills acquired in a mobility experience, while the *Europass Certificate Supplement* explains vocational qualifications in terms of competences and the *Europass Diploma Supplement* (developed jointly with the Council of Europe and Unesco) accompanies higher education diplomas, detailing the achievements of their holders. While two documents are based on self-assessment and three are issued by competent organisations, all share to some extent a pragmatic focus on competences and learning outcomes. The Europass framework is open to development: the Decision defines the criteria to be satisfied by any further document as well as the formal procedure for inclusion in the framework. Participating countries include the Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

³ Decision 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass), OJ L 390, 31.12.2004, p. 6.

The Europass initiative is implemented through the network of National Europass Centres (NECs), coordinated by the Commission, and the Europass portal developed, hosted and managed by Cedefop on behalf of the Commission (<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>).

3. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

3.1. The terms of the evaluation

In accordance with its framework contract with the Commission⁴, Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd was invited to carry out the evaluation. This evaluation covers the period from January 2005 to August/September 2007): two and a half years of operation of the Europass portal and two full years of implementation at national level.

3.2. Methodology

The methodology included analysis of documentation (activity reports, Europass portal statistics, meeting reports, notes), a survey of users of the Europass portal (1 442 respondents from 30 countries, cf. 2.3.2.1 below), targeted surveys (with 93 responses) of staff of NECs, representatives of national authorities, social partners, stakeholders and Bologna experts, and a total of 47 in-depth interviews in a sample of five countries. Information was obtained from the Commission, Cedefop and the Council of Europe (co-owner of the Europass Language Passport and Diploma Supplement).

3.3. The evaluation findings

On a general note, the evaluation finds that the Europass initiative is relevant and provides an effective service to citizens moving for lifelong learning or in the labour market. Its implementation tools are cost-efficient and highly appreciated by users. The potential of the initiative could however be more fully exploited, for which purpose the evaluation presents a number of recommendations.

3.3.1. Relevance, coherence and consistency

Citizens need an instrument that makes competences and qualifications easier to understand throughout Europe, supporting their mobility. Both users and stakeholders find that the Europass framework does help individuals to communicate more clearly their skills and competences and can help employers and staff of education and training providers to better assess applications for both lifelong learning and occupational vacancies. Europass is currently considered particularly relevant for educational and international mobility, but its relevance for occupational mobility could, however, be increased, for example through improved versions of the tools.

Europass is complementary to educational and qualification approaches based on learning outcomes, particularly the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as well as to transparency tools for specific target-groups, such as Youthpass, which was developed for use

⁴ Following an open tender, a framework contract has been agreed with Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd concerning the evaluation of activities in the fields of Directorate General for Education and Culture.

within the Youth in Action programme⁵. Risks of overlap with such initiatives are minimal and easily controlled through coordinated management. The complementarity with current education and training programmes is also clear, though there is room for further enhancement.

3.3.2. *Effectiveness*

The main Europass implementation tools are the National Europass Centres and the Europass internet portal. NECs have been operational in all countries since mid-2005 (January 2007 for Bulgaria and Romania). They have a strong network dimension and their work is considered satisfactory. NECs cooperate to varying degrees with other bodies, in particular the Euroguidance centres. The activity reports by NECs, which are the main source of information on the implementation of Europass, have in general a good level of detail, but might be improved through the use of more specific indicators.

The Europass portal – designed, developed and managed by Cedefop – has proven very successful in terms of visits, use, and users' satisfaction. Available in 26 languages in all its parts, the portal was visited over 8 million times by September 2007, with daily averages growing from 4 000 to 12 000. Many users went beyond browsing the site by creating CV and language passports online (over 2 million) and by downloading templates, examples or guidelines (6.5 million). Over 90% of the 1442 respondents to the survey found the Europass portal very clear (41%) or clear enough. Almost half the respondents were in employment and 16% were unemployed, while 25% were higher education students. Two thirds of users were between 20 and 35 years old and 25% were older.

The Europass portal has to a large extent contributed to greater awareness of transparency tools supporting mobility. Specific communication activities also contributed to this, including the European and national launch conferences in 2005 and the frequent events organised by NECs. While promotion already is a major activity of NECs, priority has to be given to intensified dissemination of the framework to learners and employers. Survey results suggest that the most successful channels to make people aware of Europass are the internet (43%), educational institutions (17%) and word of mouth (15%). Interviews suggest that the CV, the Diploma Supplement and the Language Passport are the best known documents.

The Europass initiative has increased the overall use of transparency instruments to support mobility in Europe. However, its impact on the use of the Certificate Supplement and the Diploma Supplement seems to be more limited (although data on the actual dissemination and use of these instruments is as yet insufficient).

More than 2 million Europass CVs were created online between February 2005 and September 2007, with a clear upward trend. The user survey confirmed the relevance of the Europass CV, with over 90% of users ranking the CV very useful (68%) or useful. Almost as many users found the online tool and the guidance instruments to be specifically helpful. The CV tool clearly deserves further development action, with reference to both the template and its guidance tools in cooperation with employers and guidance experts. The Europass Language Passport was also appreciated by almost two thirds of respondents, though because of its specialised nature it is much less used than the CV (about 70 000 against 2 million).

⁵ Decision No 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the Youth in Action programme for the period 2007 to 2013, OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 30.

Compared to its predecessor (the Europass Training 2000-2004)⁶, the Europass Mobility has reached a wider audience (38 000 citizens received a Europass Mobility in 2006, compared to an annual average of 25 000 recipients of Europass Training). However, this remains far below the number of mobile learners, more of which could be reached by associating additional delivery bodies to the NECs.

The Diploma Supplement and the Certificate Supplement have not been a priority for NECs so far. The Diploma Supplement, in particular, should be much more integrated into the Europass framework, and developments of its template should take more into account the learning outcomes approach.

Based on the survey, 40% of users who had tried to change job or location consider that Europass was helpful. This indicates that Europass does indeed support mobility. However, the survey indicated that Europass had been more often beneficial among people in employment and students (46%) than among the unemployed (36%). It should be noted that users of the Europass tended to be highly educated: more than 60% had a higher education diploma. This suggests the need for targeted improvements. Stakeholders, while agreeing that Europass is effective, suggested that its impact could be increased by enhanced cooperation with employers and recruitment agencies. Intensified cooperation with employment and guidance services could increase the impact among the unemployed and the low skilled.

Data shows that the Europass portal is also used and appreciated by people who are not actively considering mobility, which suggests that the initiative has a wider potential as a general information and guidance tool.

3.3.3. *Efficiency*

Europass is a low cost initiative that provides a concrete service with a good level of efficiency. The total cost (from national, Commission and Cedefop budgets) for the period covered is about € 11.5 million against well above 2 million documents (CV, Language Passport and Europass Mobility, for which data are sure). Therefore, the evaluation concludes that, with a cost per document of roughly €5 and the high level of user satisfaction, the implementation of Europass provides good value for money.

4. SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The evaluation's main recommendations to improve the relevance and effectiveness of Europass are summarised as follows:

- Europass is already particularly relevant for learners' mobility and development action is now needed on occupational mobility, namely international job mobility (recommendations 1 and 21).
- The Europass CV is highly valued and should be developed further, by improving its template and offering a shorter version, in consultation with employers, recruitment agencies and guidance centres (recommendations 7, 8, 9).

⁶ Council Decision 1999/51/EC of 21 December 1998 on the promotion of European pathways in work-linked training, including apprenticeship, OJ L 17, 22.1.1999, p. 45.

- Promotion at national level should be intensified through cooperation with guidance centres and businesses (recommendation 10).
- More examples and guidelines on the use of all Europass documents should be provided on the portal (recommendation 11).
- The Europass Diploma Supplement should be developed further to take learning outcomes better into account (recommendation 13).
- Complementarity of Europass with the education and training programmes should be intensified (recommendation 5).
- Cooperation with other transparency developments should be ensured (recommendation 6).

5. THE COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTION

The Commission welcomes the first external evaluation of Europass. Its findings suggest that implementation in the first years of operation was broadly successful, cost-effective and focused on the right priorities. Its recommendations give valuable indications as to the way forward, building upon the positive features of the initiative and addressing its shortcomings.

5.1. Strengths and weaknesses

In order to facilitate their mobility, Europass helps citizens describe what they know and can do. Europass was thus the first European initiative to put in practice the shift to assessment based on **learning outcomes** rather than learning inputs such as the duration of learning and the level of entry.

The learning outcomes approach is now the cornerstone of the recently adopted **European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)**. Learning outcomes have been integrated in the **European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS)** and will be a key element of the forthcoming **European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET)**⁷. These initiatives are not isolated: along with Europass they are complementary elements of a coordinated European strategy, which contributes to the Lisbon goals by making it easier for citizens to value their learning and move freely within the European lifelong learning area and labour market. These learning outcomes-based initiatives are also informing and supporting the process of modernisation of national education, training and qualifications systems throughout Europe. As the evaluation indicates, Europass works better where it is strongly oriented to learning outcomes, while shortcomings mostly concern the elements where this dimension is weaker.

The shift to learning outcomes is particularly critical for the identification and **validation of non-formal or informal learning** taking place outside formal education and training institutions and systems. Specific developments of Europass can further help make citizens more aware of these (frequently hidden) learning outcomes acquired within non-formal and informal settings, for example through youth activities or volunteer work.

⁷ Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) [COM(2008) 180 final].

The success of the **Europass portal and the CV tool** is based on a variety of factors: the quality of the website developed by Cedefop, the promotional efforts by NECs, and the relevance of these instruments to the needs of citizens. This success needs to be built upon by responding better to the growing demands of users and the needs of employers. The survey shows that the CV tool is appreciated not only as a support for mobility but also as a tool for better awareness of one's skills, in pursue of self-development. To better address the need of all users, the CV tool needs to develop into a more comprehensive instrument supported by new tools for the self-assessment of learning outcomes, meeting the needs of all potential users, such as the low-qualified, the unemployed, volunteers and young people in general.

The **Europass Mobility** is certainly far from being used to its full potential as a tool to increase the quality and the visibility of mobility. The geometric growth from 2005 to 2006 indicates that the efforts of NECs are paying off, but to this date many beneficiaries of national or European mobility actions – for example, through the Lifelong Learning Programme – do not receive any record of their experience.

While being a clear part of the Europass framework, the **Europass Diploma Supplement** and the **Europass Certificate Supplement** are established and issued by national institutions other than the NECs. In these first years of implementation, the limited resources available for Europass have been concentrated on the elements directly managed by the NECs or made available at European level. However, further integration of the Diploma Supplement and the Certificate Supplement into the Europass framework should become a priority, requiring stronger European coordination and their active promotion as Europass tools at the national level. The further development of both tools should also be examined in line with European and national policy objectives. For example, the learning outcomes approach is only partially applied in the Certificate Supplement, which is not an individual document, and in the Diploma Supplement, which is still largely based on formal educational inputs. A better reflection of individual learning outcomes in both cases would provide citizens with more effective documents.

5.2. Follow up action

The Commission, in consultation with the Lifelong Learning Programme Committee, the European network of NECs, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training and the High Level Forum on Mobility, and in accordance with available resources, plans to:

- cooperate further with guidance, employment and youth services to make Europass more useful for and better known to the **low-qualified and the unemployed**, now inadequately represented among the users of the Europass portal and the Europass CV (cf. point on the CV below);
- develop, with the support of Cedefop, a fully fledged **Europass CV and self assessment service**, including:
 - a more flexible **Europass CV**, with options targeting different user groups, such as inexperienced young people, the low-qualified, mid-career professionals or professional researchers, also drawing on existing resources addressing such. A shorter and lighter version of the CV will also be developed. Compatibility with the CV databases of national employment services and recruitment agencies will be further pursued, following the forthcoming compatibility with the CV service of EURES (European Employment Services), the European Job Mobility portal;

- self assessment tools to allow people go deeper in identifying and describing their learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. These will include developing further the existing **Europass Language Passport**, in cooperation the Council of Europe, and developing new self-assessment tools focusing on personal skills, namely those acquired through **non formal and informal learning**, and also on **ICT** skills;
- appropriate tutorials, guidelines and examples, to be developed in cooperation with the NECs, the Euroguidance network, the youth and employment services, and the social partners;
- generalise by 2010 the use of **Europass Mobility** under the Lifelong Learning Programme so that it is systematically issued to all citizens who have completed mobility actions under any of the individual Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, as is the case for Youthpass in the Youth in Action programme, and promote its use within the Marie Curie programme. This will be undertaken in consultation with and require the support of the programme national agencies and the NECs;
- through the NECs, and in cooperation with the guidance, youth and employment services, promote further the use of **Europass Mobility** in mobility actions established at the national or regional level, including as a standard part of higher education exchanges and in relation to the mobility of apprentices, as well as within youth and volunteer activities;
- encourage the coordinated management, promotion and integration within the Europass framework of the **Europass Diploma Supplement** in cooperation with the relevant actors at the European level (Council of Europe, Unesco-Cepes, Bologna process secretariat, ENIC-NARIC networks, university and students' associations) and at the national level (the NECs, programme national agencies, higher education institutions, Bologna experts, ENIC-NARIC centres, stakeholders associations). The further development of the Europass Diploma Supplement will be examined, in cooperation with the relevant actors, in order to record better its holder's learning outcomes;
- encourage the coordinated management, promotion and development of the **Europass Certificate Supplement** at the European and national levels, in cooperation with Cedefop, the Social Partners and other relevant stakeholders. This will take into account the relevant developments within the Copenhagen process, for instance in relation to occupational profiles, the European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET), as well as the shift towards learning outcomes;
- ensure that, by 2012, the templates of all relevant Europass documents include a reference to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.