

Brussels, 10 May 2004

OPINION

of the

Committee of the Regions
of

21 April 2004

on the

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (EUROPASS)

COM(2003) 796 final – 2003/0307 (COD)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Having regard to the *Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (EUROPASS)* COM(2003) 796 final - 2003/0307 (COD);

Having regard to the decision of the Council of 14 January 2004 to consult it on this subject, under the first paragraph of Article 265, Article 149 and Article 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

Having regard to the decision of its President of 26 September 2003 to instruct its Commission for Culture and Education to draw up an opinion on this subject;

Having regard to the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 on increased transparency of qualifications;

Having regard to the Mobility action plan adopted by the Nice European Council in December 2000;

Having regard to the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of March 2002 on transparency of EU diplomas and qualifications;

Having regard to the Commission Communication of 21 November 2001 on *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*;

Having regard to European Parliament Recommendation 2001/613/EC and to the Council Recommendation of 10 July 2001 on *promoting and generalising the use of transparency documents, with a view to creating a European qualification area*;

Having regard to the Commission Communication of 13 February 2002 on *an Action Plan for skills and mobility*;

Having regard to the Council Resolution of 3 June 2002 on *skills and mobility*;

Having regard to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on *lifelong learning*;

Having regard to the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002 and the Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 on the *Promotion of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training*;

Having regard to its opinion on the *Promotion of European pathways for work-linked training including apprenticeship* (CdR 431/97 fin)¹, and its Opinion on the new *SOCRATES, LEONARDO and YOUTH programmes* (CdR 226/98 fin)²;

Having regard to its draft opinion CdR 307/2003 rev. 1 adopted on 19 February 2004 by its Commission for Culture and Education (rapporteur: **Mr Florio**, Town Councillor of Asti(IT/EPP),

Whereas:

1) The lack of transparency in qualifications and skills is one of the main obstacles to mobility, particularly of young people, within the European Union.

2) Overcoming this obstacle is consequently an essential step in facilitating, through mobility, lifelong learning, and helping to achieve quality education and training.

3) The process launched in recent years by the European Union to enhance cooperation in education and training by encouraging transparency now needs to make a qualitative leap in order to bring existing instruments together under a single framework.

4) It would appear essential to provide legislative initiatives with back-up measures to promote awareness of the new rules and their widespread use.

5) Local and regional authorities play a key role in European education and training policy, both in terms of their competence in the area and of the direct relationship they have with citizens.

Adopted the following opinion at its 54th plenary session, held on 21-22 April 2004 (meeting of 21 April)

1. Committee of the Regions' views

1. The Committee of the Regions endorses the Commission's aim to establish a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences, as called for in the Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 on the Promotion of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.
2. The CoR has on previous occasions stressed the importance of encouraging ever more transparency in these areas in order to overcome the remaining obstacles to mobility within the EU for purposes of study or work, with particular consideration for people with disabilities.
3. The Committee would point out that the instruments currently available to European citizens, such as the common European CV format, the Diploma Supplement, the Europass-Training document, and the Certificate Supplements and European Language Portfolios currently being prepared by the national authorities, have the drawback of being subject-specific, were established through different arrangements, and are usually managed separately. This means that someone who knows about one or more of these instruments might not be aware of others. This is particularly detrimental to candidates, but also to those called upon to consider applications.

4. The Committee shares the Commission's view that rationalisation and simplification, underpinned by legislative action at Community level to coordinate and integrate the various instruments, could bring considerable added value to the latter. This is also borne out by the results achieved in some countries where coordinated promotion of these instruments has yielded greater visibility, ease of access and efficiency gains.

5. The Committee endorses the Commission's intention to replace the Europass training document, established by Decision 1999/51/EC, with a similar document with a wider scope serving to record all periods of transnational mobility for learning purposes throughout the European Union that satisfy appropriate quality criteria.

6. The Committee agrees with the Commission's view that there is a need to set up a single national body in each Member State to coordinate all Europass-related activities.

7. The Committee calls on the Commission to provide for ways of involving the regional and local authorities, which are major players in education and training and whose direct relationship with citizens could be crucial to the success of the proposal.

2. Committee of the Regions recommendations

Recommendation 1

3rd recital

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|--|---|
| This framework should consist in a portfolio of documents with a common brand name and a common logo, open to the future inclusion of other documents consistent with its purpose, supported by adequate information systems and promoted through sustained promotional action at European and national level. | This framework should consist in a portfolio of documents with a common brand name and a common logo, open to the future inclusion of other documents consistent with its purpose, supported by adequate information systems and promoted through sustained promotional action at European, and national, <u>regional and local</u> level. |

Reason

The amendment takes account of the crucial role the regional and local authorities could play in promoting Europass.

Recommendation 2

6th recital

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|---|---|
| It is therefore necessary to ensure coherence and complementarity between the actions implemented in pursuance of this Decision and other relevant policies, instruments and actions. | It is therefore necessary to ensure coherence and complementarity between the actions implemented in pursuance of this Decision and other relevant policies, instruments and actions, <u>by seeking to simplify them.</u> |

Reason

The amendment takes account of the need for administrative simplification to make the new instrument more user-friendly.

Recommendation 3

After the 10th recital, add the following new recital:

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|----------------------------|--|
| | (11) <u>Within the framework of this initiative, particular attention must be paid to consulting local and regional authorities, in view of their competence in the field of education and training and the direct relationship they have with citizens.</u> |

Reason

The amendment takes account of the federal nature of several Member States and of the key role the regional and local authorities play in education and training.

Recommendation 4

Article 2(2)

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|--|--|
| The Europass documents shall carry the Europass logo | The Europass documents shall carry the Europass logo <u>and the European Union flag.</u> |

Reason

The amendment highlights the case for including the EU flag in all official documents issued by the Union, so that the instrument can be easily recognised as originating from the EU.

Recommendation 5

Article 8(1)

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|---|---|
| In order to implement this Decision, the Commission and the relevant national authorities shall cooperate in setting up and managing a Europass Internet-based information system, which shall include elements managed at European level and elements managed at national level. | In order to implement this Decision, the Commission and the relevant national, <u>regional and local</u> authorities shall cooperate in setting up and managing a system <u>to provide information about Europass either on the Internet or, where appropriate, through those communication media that guarantee access to information for people with disabilities; this system shall include elements managed at European level and elements managed at national, regional and local level. Access to information about Europass must be ensured.</u> |

Reason

The amendment takes account of the federal nature of several Member States and of the key role the regional and local authorities play in education and training.

Recommendation 6

Article 9(2)(a)

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|--|---|
| coordinate, in cooperation with the relevant national bodies, the activities related to making available or issuing the Europass documents, or where appropriate carry out these activities; | coordinate, in cooperation with the relevant national, <u>regional and local</u> bodies, the activities related to making available or issuing the Europass documents, or where appropriate carry out these activities; |

Reason

The amendment takes account of the federal nature of several Member States and of the key role the regional and local authorities play in education and training.

Recommendation 7

Article 10(a)

| <i>Commission proposal</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|---|---|
| ensure that adequate promotion and information activities are carried out at European and national level, supporting and integrating as necessary the action of the ENAs; | ensure that adequate promotion and information activities are carried out at European, and national, <u>regional and local</u> level, <u>including by means of the role played by the regional and local authorities in disseminating information directly to citizens,</u> <u>and</u> supporting and integrating as necessary the action of the ENAs; |

Reason

The amendment takes account of the key role the regional and local authorities can play in promoting Europass. The regional and local authorities should be involved in any initiatives and information campaigns that are planned.

Brussels, 21 April 2004.

The President
of the
Committee of the Regions

The Secretary-General
of the
Committee of the Regions

Peter Straub

Gerhard Stahl

¹ OJ C 180, 11.6.1998, p.43

² OJ C 51, 22.9.1999, p.77

CdR 307/2003 fin EN/o

CdR 307/2003 fin EN/o