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

Evaluation of the Europass initiative

**Second evaluation of the Decision of the European Parliament and the Council on a
single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences
(Europass)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today's learning opportunities are limitless, borderless and immediate. Individuals can learn and acquire new skills and competences not only in the traditional setting of the classroom, but increasingly outside it and at their own speed. In the present climate of rapid economic and technological changes, individuals also go through several transitions in their professional and academic life, crossing borders, alternating or combining work, education, further training or volunteering. As pressure for employability and better skills grows, more open and flexible education and training systems are needed, better tailored for the needs and circumstances of learners and workers. Their full qualifications, skills and competences should be easily and quickly recognised and understood by employers and education and training establishments anywhere in Europe.

In recent years, under several Europe 2020 initiatives and particularly in light of persistent high unemployment,¹ the Commission has stressed the importance of enabling learners and workers to clearly present their skills and qualification profiles, acquired either in formal, non-formal or informal settings. This serves to facilitate mobility and improve job and lifelong learning prospects. This objective is stressed in 'Rethinking Education',² in which the Commission announces exploratory work on the European Area for Skills and Qualifications to ensure that skills and qualifications can be easily recognised across borders.

Established in 2005³, Europass supports these goals by helping learners and workers make their competencies and knowledge better understood across Europe through tools to register and make their skills and qualifications transparent (see section 2 for a comprehensive description). While its founding goal is ever more relevant, some of its present tools need adapting to address the challenges posed by the expectations and needs of today's learners and evolving labour markets.

This report analyses the achievements of the Europass framework on the basis of the external evaluation of Europass carried out in 2012.⁴ It stresses that the original objectives remain relevant, in particular to the Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework for European cooperation (ET 2020).⁵ Europass supports the movement of learners and workers for lifelong learning or work by allowing skills, qualifications and learning outcomes to be compared. Europass, and in particular the Europass CV, has established itself as a well-recognised, well-trusted brand for transparency and recognition, in Europe and beyond. Figures from March 2013 indicate that more than 27 million Europass CVs were completed on-line since its launch in 2005. Moreover Europass tools are cost-efficient and their use and dissemination have evolved considerably since the first evaluation of Europass, in 2008.

¹ COM(2010) 478 final, COM(2010) 682 final, COM(2010) 245 final/2, COM(2012) 173 final, COM(2012) 485 final.

² COM(2012)669 final.

³ Decision 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004, referred in this report as 'the Decision'.

⁴See Article 15 of the Decision. The current report focuses on the findings of the second evaluation of Europass, carried out in 2012 by the Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI). See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm#trainingHeader.

⁵ OJ 2009/C 119/02.

This report also points to current shortcomings of Europass in coping with changing educational, training and labour market conditions. Some of its tools do not promote flexible learning pathways nor do they allow for the comprehensive recording of skills acquired through non-formal or informal learning, including through on-line learning, as stated in the recent Commission's Communication 'Opening up Education'.⁶ Evaluation data also show that most Europass tools still do not fully reach large groups of potential users. At present Europass users tend to be young, female and highly educated. Better coordination with services providing career guidance and their integration within the Europass framework, would enable large groups to be targeted — such as low-skilled unemployed people, who often lack the necessary skills to complete the Europass documents or who may find them too complex or confusing. Other necessary improvements include enhanced convergence with other European reference tools and better interoperability of Europass IT tools with EU tools used for job matching.

In order to address such shortcomings, the current Europass structure should be revamped into a simpler, more target-oriented and up-to-date service, whilst maintaining its original aim of comparability and transparency of skills and qualifications to improve the geographical and occupational mobility of learners and workers. Revisiting Europass is becoming even more urgent as several private, local and/or national initiatives with similar objectives are in the process of being developed, in particular in electronic form such as e-portfolios.

These considerations will be crucial to enhancing the role of Europass in the development of a European Area for Skills and Qualifications whereby the Commission will strengthen synergies between the different European transparency and recognition tools for skills qualifications. For this purpose, the findings of this report will be combined with the results of evaluations of the European Qualifications Framework and the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and of the Progress Report on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Together they will support the public debate to be carried out on the European Area for Skills and Qualifications in winter 2013/2014.

2. OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Established in 2005, Europass is a portfolio of five different documents aiming to contain descriptions of the entire holder's learning achievements, official qualifications, work experience, skills and competences, acquired over time. Two Europass documents are self-declaration tools: the European Curriculum Vitae (CV)⁷ and the Europass Language Passport,⁸ and three are issued by education and training bodies: the Europass Diploma Supplement,⁹ the Europass Certificate Supplement¹⁰ and the Europass Mobility document.¹¹ All documents share a common brand name (Europass) and logo. Europass is available, free

⁶ COM(2013) 654 final.

⁷ Template for the description of the holder's curriculum vitae.

⁸ A self-assessment tool for language skills, using the reference scales of language proficiency of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

⁹ It lists the achievements of holders of higher education diplomas or degrees, including the subjects studied and the grades achieved.

¹⁰ Description of the content of vocational qualifications to supplement a vocational education and training certificate already issued.

¹¹ Document issued by national educational and training authorities which records work and education experiences in other European countries.

of charge and in 27 languages, in an accessible electronic format on the Europass portal.¹² Since 2012 individuals have been able to assemble all Europass documents in the European Skills Passport, a user-friendly electronic folder that helps the holder to build up a personal, modular inventory of personal skills and qualifications acquired throughout their lives.

2.1 Reaching new audiences

All Europass documents are deemed to be successful — to varying extents — in making skills, competences and qualifications more comparable across countries and sectors, as well as in making the selection processes for employers and educational institutions easier. International recognition of the documents is the key reason for end users to choose Europass. Europass is perceived as a strong brand with significant European added value, reaching a wide and targeted audience. For example, stakeholders and national EURES¹³ representatives suggest that the CV and the Diploma and Certificate Supplements are the most useful Europass documents for current users of EURES.

The CV is regarded as the most useful, appreciated and best-known instrument of all the Europass tools. Its use has seen steady growth — in 2012 alone almost twelve times more CVs were created online than in 2006. As indicated, by March 2013 more than 27 million CVs had been produced since Europass's launch. Moreover, the Diploma Supplement and Certificate Supplement are regarded as important tools that help educational institutions to steer and structure their educational programmes more effectively by making use of international standards. Despite this, most Europass tools do not yet fully reach large groups of potential users. In 2012 only 115 000 European Language Passports were created online and just 80 000 Europass Mobility documents distributed.

Stakeholders — including employers and trade unions — end-users and potential users agree that the Europass tools contributing positively to mobility for lifelong learning or in the labour market. 58% of respondents to a survey carried out under the external evaluation¹⁴ felt that the CV helped them to be invited to a job, training or volunteering interview / be pre-selected for a job, training or volunteering position; 46% felt it helped them to be accepted on lifelong learning programmes (e.g. Erasmus), language courses etc. In particular, the Europass makes a valuable contribution to a change in job or location: 60.4% of respondents acknowledged Europass's contribution to this development. Europass documents meet the needs of the vast majority (around 80%) of its users, regardless of age and educational achievements.

Nonetheless, post-graduates use Europass the most. 40% of end users of Europass have a job and 37% are in education and training. Europass also plays an important role in both transnational and national mobility: more than 40% of domestically mobile people now use Europass documents. Europass users tend to be young, female and highly educated: almost 60% have a higher education diploma. Females account for 59.4% of Europass users.

¹² The portal has been developed, hosted and managed by Cedefop on behalf of the Commission. See http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home?loc=en_GB.

¹³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>.

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/training/2013/europass_en.pdf Data in this report have been extracted from the external evaluation.

Low skilled, unemployed individuals are the hardest group to reach, together with volunteers, accounting for 12.8% and 1.1% of Europass users respectively. The data (Fig. 1) show that a large number of low skilled and/or unemployed people not using Europass often lack the skills to complete the documents or find them too complex or confusing. Targeted guidance for these groups could improve their access to Europass documents.

Fig. 1: Users of the Europass by educational/occupational status¹⁵

Educational/ occupational status	All Europass documents	Europass CV	Europass LP	Europass CS	Europass DS	Europass MD
Education or training	37.3%	30.2%	26.3%	20.1%	19.5%	30.5%
Voluntary arrangement	1.1%	1.5%	1.5%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%
Employment (less than five years)	19.5%	20.2%	21.1%	31.4%	25.8%	32.4%
Employment (more than five years)	20.8%	26.4%	32.0%	29.1%	35.2%	12.3%
Unemployed/ job-seeking	12.8%	15.9%	12.5%	9.9%	14.4%	12.6%
Other	8.5%	5.8%	6.6%	8.4%	4.0%	11.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2012 Europass evaluation from PPMI.

As shown in Fig. 2, younger respondents (under 20 to 35 years) are the biggest users of Europass document, possibly because they are probably more open to mobility (between locations, jobs and professional sectors).

Fig. 2: Users of the Europass by age¹⁶

Age	All Europass documents	Europass CV	Europass LP	Europass DS	Europass CS	Europass MD
<20	9%	9%	10%	2%	11%	10%
21-25	41%	40%	35%	35%	42%	49%
26-35	30%	32%	31%	40%	27%	31%
36-49	14%	15%	18%	18%	17%	7%

¹⁵ Acronyms stand for: CV: Curriculum Vitae; LP: Language passport; MD: Mobility document; DS: Diploma supplement; CS: Certificate supplement.

¹⁶ idem.

Age	All Europass documents	Europass CV	Europass LP	Europass DS	Europass CS	Europass MD
50+	5 %	5 %	6 %	4 %	5 %	3 %

Source: 2012 Europass evaluation from PPMI. Percentages have been rounded.

Europass also has a ‘pedagogical impact’ on the owner of these documents. Individuals are encouraged to review their own skills and competencies and to communicate them more clearly. This helps job seekers to focus on those skills and competencies that are requested most in job vacancies.

2.2 Facilitating flexible learning pathways

The survey showed a growing expectation from stakeholders for Europass to adapt to the changing needs of its users. Europass should enable an individual’s full skills and qualifications, encompassing all sectors of education and training and types of learning experience, to be fully and easily documented. A simplification and updating of the entire framework, plus stronger internal coherence, is clearly welcome to cope with modern, flexible, learner-oriented pathways in education and training. Issues such as the growing importance of non-formal or informal learning for acquiring new skills and qualifications or tools such as ‘open badges’ generated by online education providers are currently not being addressed by Europass.

In formal education and training, Europass presently has two separate supplementary documents, each covering a specific educational sector and a different credit system. This format may impair the recommended permeability of learning pathways. Creating a common structure for these supplements to cover all levels and kinds of education and training (schools, vocational education and training, higher education and adult education) would facilitate a common understanding of qualifications, irrespective of the sector of issue. Learners and workers would then be able to present their skills more easily when applying for further learning in another sector. A common model which avoids divergence would also make the supplements easier for employers to read.

Europass currently lacks a tool that allows for the comprehensive recording of skills and competences acquired through any non-formal or informal learning experience (including online). The current Europass Mobility document has had limited use up to now and can only be applied in the strict context of international mobility.

Finally the only Europass self-declaration document supplementing the CV — the Languages Passport — has been used by a very limited number of people. Users and employers feel that the CV should, on its own, give a comprehensive overview of personal skills, such as languages and ICT competences, without the need for supplementary self-declaratory documents produced by the CV holder.

These improvements should make the entire framework easier and simpler to use. Reshaping Europass may require a revision of its current legal basis, as the present Decision does not allow for the replacement, change or abolition of any of the five Europass founding documents.

2.3 Creating more synergies with other European initiatives

Other European instruments such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF),¹⁷ the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)¹⁸ and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)¹⁹ have been implemented alongside Europass in the last decade to support the movement of learners and workers. They contribute to real European mobility whereby a person's knowledge, skills and competences can be clearly understood and quickly recognised.

These instruments were not developed in isolation from each other and are complementary to Europass. Gradual integration and reference to the EQF, ECVET and ECTS in Europass can be expected as implementation of these instruments progresses. The European Recommendation on EQF specified that from 2012 all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities were to contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level. Some countries (CZ, DK, EE, FR and IE) have already begun to record these levels in the relevant Europass documents (the Diploma and Certificate Supplement) but additional efforts are needed from the remaining countries.

Despite the complementarity of these initiatives, there is still room to improve coherence so that the different tools and services are offered in a coordinated way. At present users are not offered easy-to-understand, coherent access to these instruments. While almost all the European transparency and mobility tools have their own portal and some have points of convergence (such as the CV Online tool helping EURES users to create their Europass CV on EURES website), they are not sufficiently well connected. This makes it more difficult for potential users to access relevant information, documents and services.

Increased interoperability of Europass with other EU tools used for job matching, including with EURES, is needed. Similarly, synergies between Europass and Youthpass, a tool to improve the recognition of the learning outcomes of young people taking part in projects supported under the EU Youth in Action Programme, need to be improved to avoid potential overlaps. Another example is the decision recognising a professional qualification in a Member State authorising access to a regulated profession²⁰. Holders of the qualification should be able to join to Europass the recognition decision, on paper or electronically, including when obtained through the new European Professional Card's procedure.

2.4 Pursuing efficient and sustainable governance

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/eqf_en.htm.

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ecvet_en.htm.

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ects_en.htm.

²⁰ Directive 2005/36/EC

Use and awareness of the different Europass tools has grown steadily since the launch of the initiative in 2005. The Europass portal is largely responsible for the increasing use and awareness of these transparency tools. It has proved very successful as far as visits, use and user satisfaction are concerned. The number of visits has been rising every year from approximately 3 million in 2006 to almost 15 million in 2012. Some 88% of the users surveyed agreed that the Europass portal is user-friendly and clear. 60% felt that future developments of the portal should, in particular, include information and advice on transnational mobility, recognition of qualifications and job searching.

Together with the Europass internet portal, the National Europass Centres (NECs) are the main vehicles for implementing Europass. The NECs have been operational in all EU countries, as well as in Iceland and Norway, since mid-2005 (2007 for Bulgaria and Romania and 2011 for Croatia), in Liechtenstein since 2006, in Turkey since 2008, and in Switzerland since 2011. Their mission in raising awareness of Europass and providing the necessary information to all interested parties is considered satisfactory.

A majority of the NECs cooperate regularly with other bodies, such as the Euroguidance and NARIC centres, EURES agencies, the national LLP agencies, Eurodesk and Europe Direct, although such cooperation could be strengthened and synergies could be better exploited. Enhanced convergence of these bodies would lead to simplified structures and better services closer to the learners and workers, facilitating access to Europass, particularly by those groups presently benefiting the least from it. However, efforts by the NEC to promote the Europass tools among private employment service providers have proved less successful. Most of these providers would only be willing to promote the use of Europass documents for financial reward.

Cedefop plays a clear role in the success of Europass. In addition to efficiently managing the Europass portal and providing support to NECs, it contributes with its expertise to the conceptual development of the Europass framework.

In 2012 the Commission provided financial support totalling €2 250 000 to the NECs through the Lifelong Learning Programme. Overall, the external evaluation found an increase in the efficiency levels in all Europass aspects analysed compared with the 2008 evaluation. Whilst the funding provided by the EU²¹ and national sources did not see a marked increase during the 2008-2011 period, the numbers of Europass documents created online and issued, and the number of visits to the portal, have been steadily increasing with no sign of a decline in the popularity of Europass tools. Growing efficiency was observed both in terms of promotional activities by the NECs and the use of various Europass tools.

The total cost of Europass (from national, Commission and Cedefop budgets) since its launch is around €31.5 million. Based on 54 million Europass CVs issued since 2005 (28 million created online and 27 million downloaded), the average cost of one CV produced is approximately €0.58, which is about four times less than the estimate made in 2008 (€2.1). Given such a low cost per document and the high level of user satisfaction, the evaluation concludes that the implementation of Europass provides good value for money. Europass is however unlikely to remain sustainable without continued European financial support. Most

²¹ The EU contribution accounts for up to 50% of the operating costs of the national Europass centres.

NECs would be unable to continue to operate without EU funding, since no viable alternative financing sources for Europass have been identified and additional public funding is unlikely. There is no specific incentive for private actors to become involved, as the Europass does not provide any immediate financial benefit.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Against the current backdrop of a shrinking workforce and sluggish economic growth, one of the most urgent challenges for Member States today is modernising their education and training systems and upgrading their supply of skills to better match labour market needs. Europass should help to address these challenges and should be strengthened accordingly in the coming years.

The findings and recommendations of the external evaluation confirm that Europass must maintain its strong role in promoting mobility and the comparability of skills and qualifications. Proposed improvements also include better rationalisation and mainstreaming of Europass documents to improve convergence with other European reference tools and target-oriented guidance services linked to Europass instruments, thereby supporting transnational mobility, recognition of qualifications and job searching. Above all, Europass needs to become a more flexible and user-friendly tool, which should exploit the potential of modern technologies to evolve constantly with users' needs. It should retain existing users and attract new ones, in particular low skilled individuals. To achieve this, a new Europass legal basis, permitting regular updates and adjustments of these tools, may be needed.

With a view to increasing Europass support to learners and workers seeking to present their skills and competences, the following developments should be particularly considered:

- **Improved synergies between Europass and other European initiatives** — Despite the overall success of Europass, guidance on using Europass tools could be improved and strengthened through better coordination with services providing career guidance and transparency and recognition of qualifications, so as to reach wider audiences and generate greater value added. This appears to be particularly relevant for groups which have greater difficulty in using Europass, such as the low skilled and the unemployed. Within a future European Area for Skills and Qualifications, Europass could focus on providing information services and interactive tools for the transparency of skills and qualifications, bringing the different European networks, information services and other tools currently concerned with skills and qualifications together under a single entry point. This would enable learners and workers to make better use of EU transparency and recognition tools, which would also become better known among institutions and businesses and therefore more effective. Pooling these resources should achieve efficiency gains and allow the mainstreaming of resources with their counterparts at national level. Furthermore this would probably contribute to a much wider promotion and implementation of Europass tools among its different stakeholders throughout the resulting single merged service network.
- **Europass as an instrument to facilitate flexible learning pathways** — There is a clear need to adapt the current Europass tools to more flexible and learner-oriented learning

pathways, meeting the needs of individuals. The revamped framework should be supple enough to appropriately integrate new developments and techniques on education and training, including in ICT. At present, there are two sectors where these needs appear more urgent:

a) Europass has two different tools providing supplementary information on learning outcomes: the Diploma Supplement for higher education qualifications and the Certificate Supplement for vocational training. It is worth exploring whether a single document could facilitate a common understanding of qualifications issued in any education and training sector and stimulate the interoperability of European credit transfer systems, such as ECTS and ECVET, between education and training levels and across countries.

b) Recording of skills acquired through any non-formal or informal learning experience, including through online education: today only the Europass Mobility document provides for the recording of skills acquired in a non-formal setting abroad. In line with the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, Europass should be revised to allow for the identification and documentation of skills, including skills audits, acquired through non-formal or informal learning, with or without mobility. Based on the preparatory work already undertaken by the Commission on a potential new document ‘Europass experience’, this new feature should support the European guidelines on validating non-formal and informal learning. These new features would also be relevant to the youth guarantee and traineeship initiatives.²²

The way certificates generated by the Youthpass mechanism are to be registered in Europass should also be explored in order to avoid overlaps. Further work is also necessary to analyse how new transparency tools such as ‘open badges’ created by new certification processes on digital learning should be integrated in/a complement to Europass. Finally functional and advanced ICT skills should be more visible in the Europass CV.

- **Improving the interoperability of Europass with EU tools used for job matching –** Different technical standards currently prevent improved convergence among some EU tools used by job seekers. Further efforts are needed to link the Europass CV tool and the new European Skills Passport with the EURES CV database and tools of private employment services, guidance and validation centres as well as skills assessment tools. Joining the decision recognising a professional qualification in a Member State, including when obtained through the new European Professional Card's procedure, to Europass should also be explored.

As mentioned, ‘Rethinking Education’ emphasised the role of education and skills as core strategic assets for economic growth, competitiveness and employment. One of the proposals of ‘Rethinking Education’ is to explore further synergies and the convergence of existing EU tools for transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications with the goal of forming a European Area of Skills and Qualifications, enabling everyone to move freely and have their

²² See also <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1006>.

competences and qualifications quickly recognised for further learning and be adequately understood and assessed by employers.

The Commission will discuss the conclusions presented in this report with relevant stakeholders during the public debate on the European Area of Skills and Qualifications in winter 2013/2014. Based on the conclusions of this debate on the Europass framework and on an Impact Assessment, the Commission may consider proposing a revision of the current legal basis of Europass — Decision 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004.