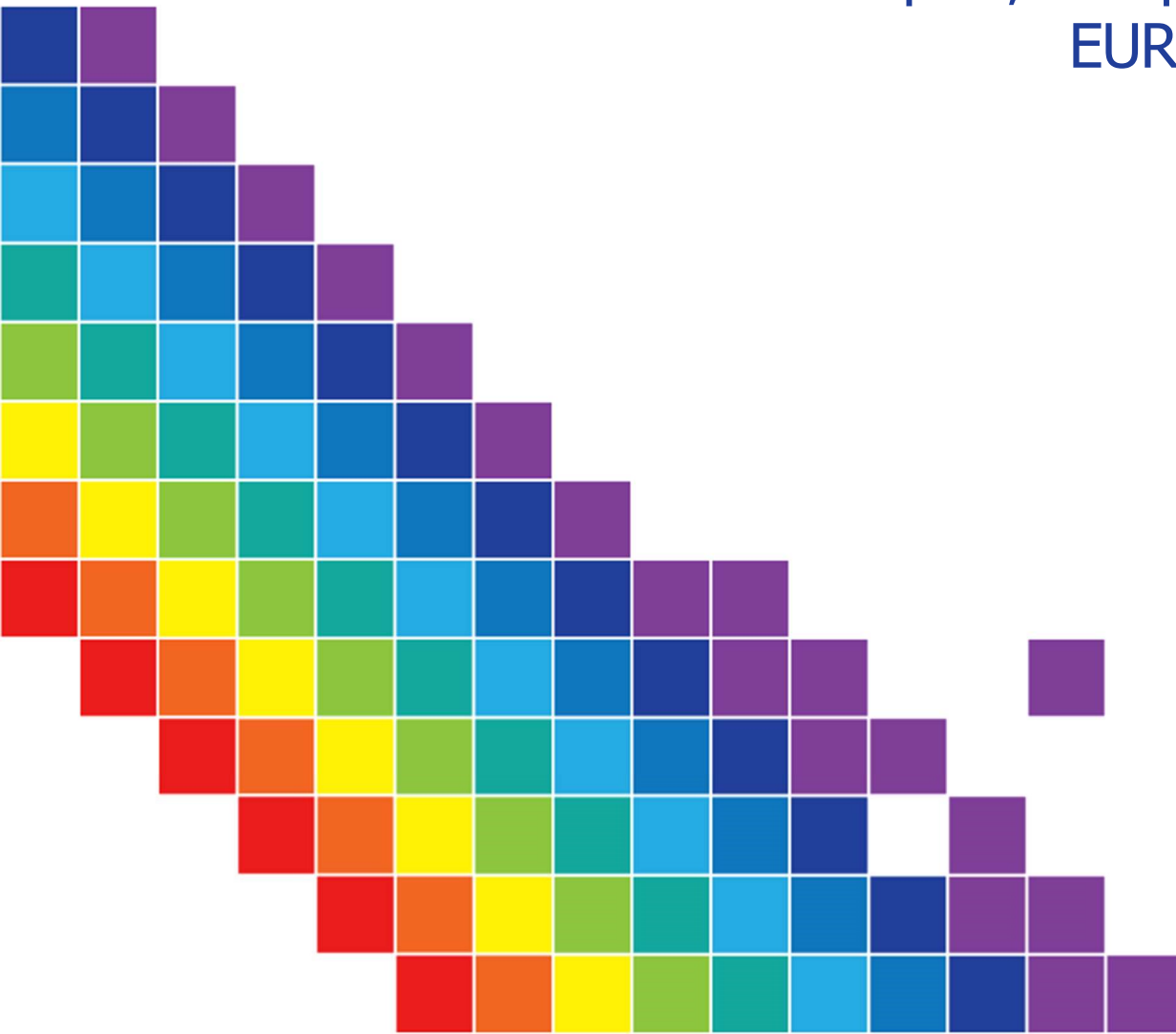




T7.3 ECoVEM Skills Passport, Europass and EURES Suite





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1 Introduction

This report focuses on Vocational Education and Training (VET) frameworks at the European level, standards for the recognition of sectoral skills, and platforms/instruments promoted by the European Commission to facilitate vocational training, job placement, and consequently the free movement of European citizens across member states.

It is one of the outcomes of *WP7 - Cooperation for Sustainable Governance of Vocational Education and Training* and is intended as a complement to T.7.2 Development of Certification and Recognition Pathways - *R3.2 ECoVEM Certification and Recognition Model* of P19 European Association of Career Guidance.

This report aims to provide an overview of the most important frameworks and tools designed and implemented at the European level to support the transparency and transferability of qualifications and skills between EU countries and the mobility of its citizens.

Indeed, the overall objective of "T7.3 Developing the ECoVEM, Europass and EURES Suite skills passport" is to establish how European-level frameworks and platforms/instruments (Europass and EURES Suite in particular) currently serve the microelectronics industry and how they can be improved and further leveraged to meet the industry's skills needs and talent mobility.

From ECOVEM's perspective, skills mismatch and effective skills allocation require easily accessible windows of opportunity for transnational worker mobility and exchange of best practices. This requires that national VET systems are integrated into an overall framework that ensures transparency and comparability of national vocational programmes and qualifications.

The report is structured in three sections, as follows:

- I) The emergence of the vocational education and training sector in the EU;
- II) The trans-European VET frameworks/standards/instruments and EU platforms (EUROPASS Suite, EURES and ESCO) for the recognition of sectoral skills also in the microelectronics sector;
- III) The Recommendations and practical suggestions for the practical use of the described portals and the building of fruitful relations between the National Contact Points.

The first section describes the pathway and steps towards the progressive ensurance of transparency and comparability of national vocational programmes and qualifications at European level.

The second section focuses on the trends in the most recent EU VET policies, as well as the most important platforms developed to support transparency and integration. In particular, the chapter clarifies the functioning, structure and division of labour between agencies and organisations active in the field of skills, employability and VET. In particular, this section describes the role of Europass and EURES at European level and their operational interface with ESCO.

The third part, more practical, contains the operational guidelines and the steps to approach the EURES National Contact Points and, as an example, the procedure followed to approach the Italian National Contact Point and the practical results of the report (collection of secondary data on skills



and competences in the area of microelectronics, promotion of the recognition of study courses at EU level...).

2 The evolution of the VET sector in the EU

2.1 From a national to a European vision

2.1.1 Introductory remarks

For many years, the European institutions have been striving to harmonise national VET systems with the aim of progressively facilitating the transparency and comparability of national vocational programmes and qualifications at European level.

The EU institutions have highly encouraged this process by creating dedicated policies and tools and funding research and pilot projects on the application and effectiveness of these tools in different countries, such as the earlier Leonardo da Vinci and the current Erasmus+ and Horizon2020 Programmes.

However, it is necessary to highlight some critical issues that emerged both at the conceptual and theoretical level and at the methodological and practical level, related to the comparison, transfer and application of these tools from different national contexts.

2.1.2 Brief historical background

The convergence path of European vocational education and training systems, in the mid-21st century, started when the governing body of the European Coal and Steel Community began to pay more attention to vocational education and training, as a way to improve occupational safety, especially in the mining sector.

Subsequently, the 1957 treaty of Rome established in Article 118 that the Commission has the task of fostering strong cooperation among Member States in various social fields, including basic and advanced vocational training. Indeed, "joint action in the field of education and vocational training has been identified as a prerequisite for the free mobility of the labor force and the exchange of young workers within the EEC"¹

¹(<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-rome>).



In the 1960s and early 1970s, the idea to harmonise national Vocational Education and Training systems and make them transparent and comparable was slow to evolve due to the stonewalling of some nations worried about replacing their own well-established training of their programs and pathways. A clear signal of the EEC's determination to press the convergence of national VET systems was the founding in 1975 of Cedefop.

(European Center for the Development of Vocational Training²). A further push came in the late 1980s, with the launch of the first Erasmus Programme, aimed at supporting pilot student exchanges throughout Europe, and again in 1995, with the introduction of specific transnational programmes for vocational education and training, such as Leonardo da Vinci (1995-2013).

In 2000, the Lisbon European Council endorsed that "education and training systems in Europe must adapt both to the needs of the knowledge society and to the need for an improvement in the level and quality of employment." and that "a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning"³

In the same paper, the Council indicated the need for "a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities." of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity."⁴. The Council also signaled the necessity of "a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities." of education systems, concentrating on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversities ".

The November 2002 Copenhagen Declaration represented a very significant milestone on the way to converge national VET systems⁵. It affirmed the importance of high-quality VET to promote social inclusion, cohesion, mobility, employability and competitiveness and reaffirmed the urgent need for EU Member States to reinforce voluntary cooperation to encourage mutual trust, transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications.

Table of Copenhagen Declaration Priorities

EU dimension	Strengthening the EU dimension in vocational education and training with the aim of improving a closer cooperation in order to facilitate and promote mobility and the development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and other transnational initiatives, all in order to raise the profile of the European education and training area in an international context so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners
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² <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/>

³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm

⁴ *idem*

⁵ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/content/copenhagen-declaration>



Transparency, information and guidance	Increasing transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, Certificate and Diploma Supplements, the Common European framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework.
	Strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment, particularly on issues concerning access to learning, vocational education and training, and the transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe.
Recognition of competences and qualifications	Investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training.
	Increasing support to the development of competences and qualifications at sectoral level, by reinforcing cooperation and co-ordination especially involving the social partners. Several initiatives, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, including those already identified in various sectors aiming at mutually recognised qualifications, illustrate this approach.
	Developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries and at different levels.
Quality assurance	Promoting cooperation in quality assurance with particular focus on exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality in vocational education and training.
	Giving attention to the learning needs of teachers and trainers within all forms of Vocational Education and Training.



The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)⁶ which was adopted by the Council in May 2009, in a continuum with the Lisbon Strategy, acknowledged the challenges posed by demographic changing and the necessity to develop a lifelong approach to education and training. The paper provides a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training until 2020, defining 4 strategic goals to help every citizen to realize their potential and create sustainable economic prosperity in Europe. The first strategic point, entitled "Achieving Lifelong Learning and Mobility," emphasizes the value of guaranteeing National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)⁷ based on learning outcomes and connecting them to the EQF to facilitate transitions between different education and training sectors, openness to informal and non-formal learning, transparency and recognition of learning outcomes.

2.1.3 EU comparative support in VET

Information on occupations, qualifications, skills and competencies can only be comparable across EU Member States if they share a common vision and a common set of principles, guidelines, frameworks, tools and platforms.

Since the early 2000s, with the introduction at the EU level of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), EU institutions focused in this direction by initiating substantial changes that can be summarized in the following key steps:

- (a) learning outcomes approach;
- (b) unit/module approach;
- (c) establishment of a credit system;
- (d) introduction of mechanisms for recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning;
- (e) Quality assurance systems.

The above tools/frameworks and programmes are detailed in many studies and researchs (cf. in particularly Cedefop website).

EU institutions have thus been supported in the process of putting the comparative system into practice by the development of shared European frameworks and suites for use by citizens.

Specifically, we refer to the **Europass, EURES and ESCO** suites, which give to the EU citizens the opportunity to enhance the skills they possess at the European level, thus guaranteeing them the opportunity to study or work throughout Europe.

In the following paragraphs we will deal with describing in more details these frameworks and portals that are not yet well known with respect to all their features, functionalities and connections.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:ef0016>

⁷ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf>



2.2 EUROPASS Suite

Europass is a European Union (Directorate General for Education and Culture) initiative to increase transparency of qualification and mobility of citizens in Europe (Decision No 2241/2004/EC Art.1)⁸. It aims to make a person's skills and qualifications clearly understood throughout Europe (including the European Union, European Economic Area and EU Candidate Countries).

Europass documents help:

- citizens to present their skills and qualifications in a more effective way to find a job or accrue training experience;
- employers to understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce;
- education and training providers to establish and communicate the content of training programmes.

Europass originally consisted of the following five elements, available in the 26 languages of the EU countries:

1. the Europass Curriculum Vitae (completed on individual level for qualifications, professional experience, skills and competences);
2. the Europass Language Passport (completed on individual level for language skills);
3. the Europass Certificate Supplement (issued by the authorities that award VET certificates, to add further information, make them more comprehensible to employers and institutions outside the issuing country);
4. the Europass Diploma Supplement (issued by higher education institutions along with graduates' degrees or diplomas, to make them more comprehensible outside the awarding country);
5. the Europass Mobility Document (issued by national institutions at the request of education and training providers, records all organized periods of time a person spends in another EU country for learning or training purposes).

The five Europass documents shared a common mark and logo (Decision No 2241/2004/EC Art.2)⁹.

Since 2012 until 2019 the people have been able to assemble all Europass documents in the European Skills Passport. It allowed users to create a collection of documents in a single file.

As of 2020, the Europass Skills Passport is no longer offered, but Europass users, once registered, can use new and old revised tools on the new Europass portal that can be reached at the URL <https://europa.eu/europass>.

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2004/2241/oj>

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2004/2241/oj>



The new portal is structured into 5 sections, which in turn give access to the various sub-sections. The five sections on the home page are as follows, respectively:

1. Europass tools
2. Learn in Europe
3. Work in Europe
4. About Europass
5. Stakeholders

The **first section " Europass tools"**¹⁰ includes:

- Europass Profile
- Test your digital skills
- Digital credentials
- European Qualifications Framework

"Europass Profile"¹¹ comprises:

- Europass cv editor - to create and update resumes, choosing from among different templates, save and store them, and share them in 29 different languages;
- cover letter editor - to create cover letters using several different templates;

" Test your digital skills"¹² contains a self-assessment test that allows you to check the level of your digital knowledge, add the result to your cv and improve it by accessing European-level trainings.

A total of 5 competences areas are being investigated

Information and data literacy

The skills needed to search, access and navigate different types of digital content (files, websites, etc.) are tested. This also includes the ability to compare different sources of information and understand which ones are reliable. The ability to store, manage and organize folders and various types of files is also part of this skill area.

Communication and collaboration

The skills needed to use digital technologies to interact, communicate and collaborate with other people are assessed. This also includes the ability to participate in society, through the use of public

¹⁰ <https://europa.eu/europass/eportfolio/screen/profile-wizard?lang=en>

¹¹ <https://europa.eu/europass/eportfolio/screen/profile-wizard?lang=en>

¹² <https://europa.eu/europass/en/test-your-digital-skills>



and private digital services. The ability to manage one's identity and reputation on the Web is also part of this competency area.

Digital content creation

The skills needed to create and edit various types of digital content, including text and multimedia files, are considered. This includes the skills needed to enhance and integrate different types of information and content. Part of this competency area are the skills to understand how copyright and licensing works and to develop instructions for a computer system.

Security

Skills needed to protect devices, content, personal data and privacy are tested, understanding the risks and threats of digital environments. This also includes the skills needed to protect physical and psychological health and to be aware of digital technologies for wellness and social inclusion. Awareness of the environmental impact of using digital technologies is also part of this skill area.

Problem Solving

The ability to identify technical needs and problems and to select appropriate technological responses to solve them are tested. This also includes the skills needed to use digital tools to innovate processes and products. Also, part of this competency area are the abilities to understand which digital skills need to be improved and to keep abreast of digital advances.

The test is based on the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, developed by the Joint Research Centre and the European Commission. The latest version of the Framework, DigComp 2.1¹³, includes five competence areas, 21 digital competences, and 8 proficiency levels. The test allows you to evaluate the level, from 1 to 6, in five competence areas. Levels 7 and 8 of DigComp 2.1 are not taken into consideration for the purpose of this test. When completing the test, the users receive overall results per competence area and an average level for all competences (Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced).

The test measures, with a time allotted of 30 minutes, the user level of digital skills to help the users to reflect on the need to increase the chances of success in the current or future job.. The users get suggestions for courses to improve the digital skills based on his/her results. A learning roadmap guide the users through the next steps to reach the learning goals.

The attention to people with special needs is highly innovative: if the user has special needs, it is possible to run the test without the timer by activating the accessibility mode. The results report will specify that the test was performed without any time constraint.

Once the assessment is completed, the results are soon available:

¹³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3c5e7879-308f-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>



* 'Receive course suggestions' that will allow users to receive course suggestions and learning opportunities based on the test results and take your digital skills to the next level.

* A crossroads of different paths to discover a personalised learning roadmap.

With this function, users can identify learning paths that help them to understand which digital competences they should focus on and guide them on how to improve them to reach their educational and professional goal.

"Digital credentials"¹⁴

The Digital Credentials section is divided into two subsections:

- 1) European Digital Credentials for Learning;
- 2) Issuer of European Digital Credentials.

The "European Digital Credentials for Learning" section informs users about the existence of so-called "European Digital Credentials for Learning," which are statements issued by an organization to a learner documenting his or her learning. These new certifications were developed by the European Commission and launched in October 2021.

European digital learning credentials include diplomas, transcripts of documents and a wide range of other types of learning certificates. They are multilingual and signed with a unique electronic seal (which is the digital equivalent of an institution's stamp). This allows education and training institutions to easily authenticate, validate and recognize credentials of any size, shape or type.

European digital learning credentials can describe and certify:

- qualifications (e.g., professional certificates, university degrees and other learning outcomes);
- activities (e.g., participation in courses and nonformal learning events);
- assessments (e.g., transcripts of records);
- entitlements (e.g., the right to enroll in learning opportunities or work).

The built-in instant and automated authentication and verification checks support recognition and help reduce administrative burdens by showing immediately if a credential has been tampered with or if it was issued by an unauthorized organization. European digital learning credentials have the same legal validity as paper credentials and are recognized throughout the European Education Area.

They are portable digital documents that use open standards and are fully aligned with familiar EU frameworks and tools, such as the [European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning \(EQF\)](#), and the [European Classification of Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations \(ESCO\)](#).

European digital learning credentials offer numerous benefits to citizens, employers and organizations.

¹⁴ <https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-tools/digital-credentials>



Learners

- can build an online portfolio to keep track of all their learning, having full control of their data;
- can easily reuse their credentials to get a job or apply for further training throughout Europe;
- can submit and have their credentials verified at any point in their careers, even if the institution that issued them closes or the data used to create them is lost.

Employers

- can dramatically reduce the time and cost of verifying credentials and processing job applications;
- can better understand applicants' credentials, especially those from other EU Member States, since they will be translated into their language and can trust the tamper-proof credentials of their employer.

Education and training providers

- can reduce the administrative burden and cost of issuing credentials while speeding up issuance procedures due to the digital shift;
- can better understand the credentials of learners, particularly those from other EU Member States, as they will be translated into their own language.

National Europass Centers can support all stakeholders in understanding and using these tools.

Learn and work in Europe

Once registered in Europass and created the profile, allowing it, the system will use the profile information to analyze the skills and suggest interesting jobs and courses. However, the option can always be turned off.

In the “My Skills” section of Europass, the user can in fact build an overview of all his or her skills. Europass will analyze the profile information and provide a list of skills, knowledge, and abilities that reflect the person's experience, selecting them directly from those mapped in the ESCO portal (<https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en>).

In the “My Interests” section of Europass, the user can define his or her learning and career goals and interests in life. Among other things, he or she will be able to include the activities and topics he or she wishes to focus on, as well as the places where he or she wishes to achieve these goals.

With this information, the system will be able to select and propose to the user individual training proposals, or structured pathways, or even job proposals, either by transmitting them directly from the specified mailbox or by accessing their Europass Dashboard.



The training proposals are those mapped in Europass and selected from those entered by the various national structures responsible for composing and updating the national frameworks or systems of qualifications and related training paths and thus authorized for inclusion in the training proposals suggested by Europass. It should be noted that not all EU countries have updated their referencing frameworks, and therefore nationally developed training proposals are not yet visible on the Europass portal.

Job proposals, on the other hand, are those that are mapped directly in the EURES portal (<https://EURES.ec.europa.eu/>) to which the ESCO portal is directly linked.

Any country wishing to relate its national levels of qualifications to the EQF must prepare a detailed referencing report that follows the 10 EQF referencing criteria agreed upon in Annex III of the revised EQF Recommendation. The national referencing reports are submitted to the EQF Advisory Group, which approves them if they meet the referencing criteria.

Another possible solution is the free consultation of training and job offerings at the European level, which the user can freely consult by accessing the home page of the Web Site Europass <https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-tools/european-qualifications-framework>.

2.3 The EURES Suite

Launched in 1993, EURES is a cooperative network between the Commission and public employment services in Europe. It serves to exchange job vacancies and applications and information on living and working conditions.

EURES consists of a website and a network of about 900 employment counselors in all participating countries: 28 EU states, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland (<https://EURES.ec.europa.eu/>)

About 150,000 placements are made each year.

In 2014, the European Commission launched proposal to reform the EURES network and consequently also the reference portal.

The overriding goal of the reform was to provide better job search and recruitment services throughout Europe. Another no less important objective was to stimulate much-needed labor mobility within the EU.

Following an agreement with the European Parliament, the Permanent Representatives Committee approved the new rules on December 2, 2015.



The new rules modernized the EURES portal, which became an updated mobility tool using the latest information technology, accessible to all. They lead to an increase in the number of job vacancies and CVs of job seekers available through EURES.

They also introduced automatic matching between job seekers' skills and job vacancies.

Why do we need this?

Previously, not all EU countries made all job vacancies posted nationally available on the EURES Internet portal, and there was no automatic exchange of job seekers' CVs at the European level.

This meant that job seekers and employers had access to a limited number of job vacancies and CVs.

Both workers and employers were often unaware of EURES and the services it offers. Member states' employment services, which are often the first point of contact, were not required to inform clients about what EURES can do for them and how it can do it.

In addition, Member States did not exchange enough information about labor shortages and surpluses, which hindered targeted cooperation in the EURES network. This, in turn, did little to address labor market imbalances in Europe, where some countries suffered from high unemployment while others had labor shortages.

The new rules addressed these shortages by transforming EURES into a true European placement, matching and recruitment tool. The modernized EURES network made job information more easily accessible throughout Europe and provided better support to both job seekers and employers.

Thanks to the new tools, the benefits for job seekers and employers looking for employees have definitely increased.

The range of services offered to job seekers and employers were expanded to include:

- more personalized career and recruitment counseling
- job search and recruitment assistance
- information on social security, tax payment and other relevant regulations
- information on post-employment assistance, such as language courses.

This complemented the services already offered, which included information on job vacancies or advice on writing CVs, applications and job offers.

Now a person seeking employment abroad can benefit from the same level of assistance as a person seeking employment in his or her home country. Anyone who contacts an employment service in a Member State receives basic information about the EURES network and the advisory services it offers.



Member States are therefore required to make available on the EURES portal:

- * all job vacancies available from public employment services and those offered by other organizations involved, including apprenticeships and traineeships;

- * CVs of job seekers available from public employment services and other involved organizations, provided that the persons concerned consent to the transfer of their personal data.

In order to ensure the quality and protection of minors, Member States may exclude internships or apprenticeships that have a primarily educational objective.

The range of EURES members and partners was then expanded.

Private employment organizations have the option of joining the network and their job vacancies can be advertised on the web portal alongside public ones. For-profit organizations must provide all services, e.g., job vacancies, CVs to the portal, and support services to job seekers and employers, unless they can justify to national authorities that they are unable to provide all three services.

Nonprofit organizations can choose among the three options.

Public employment services also offered all services and provide all non-computer-savvy users with offline access to information.

Trade unions, employer organizations and other relevant labor market actors are also involved in the network. Representatives of the social partners are involved at the European level but also at the national and cross-border levels.

2.4 European classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)

ESCO is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, and Occupations. ESCO is part of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The ESCO classification identifies and categorises skills, competences, and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. It systematically shows the relationships between the different concepts.

A demo version of the ESCO system was launched in October 2013, while the first version was released in July 2017¹⁵.

The system is updated by the Directorate Generale Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion with the support of Cedefop and stakeholders. Basically, ESCO “works as a dictionary, describing, identifying and classifying professional occupations, skills, and qualifications relevant to the EU labour market and education and training”¹⁶. As mentioned on the official ESCO portal, the main aim of the system is to support workers’ mobility across the EU and a more integrated labour market by offering a common understanding on skills, occupations and qualifications.

¹⁵

https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/European_Skills_44_Compentences_44_Qualifications_and_Occu-pations_40_ESCO_41

¹⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/howtouse/21da6a9a-02d1-4533-8057-dea0a824a17a>



The ESCO database helps users to understand: a) the knowledge and skills related with a specific occupation b) the knowledge, skills and competences related with a specific qualification c) the qualifications related with a specific occupation. The European Commission developed ESCO with the following aims¹⁷:

1. to improve the communication between the education and training sector and the EU labour market;
2. to support geographical and occupational mobility;
3. to make data more transparent and easily available for use by various stakeholders;
4. to facilitate the exchange of data between employers, education providers and job seekers;
5. to support evidence-based policy making by enhancing the collection, comparison and dissemination of data in skills intelligence and statistical tools, and enabling better analysis of skills supply and demand.

The ESCO system is based on three pillars, qualifications, skills and occupations, that are interrelated with each other. The occupations pillar currently entails 3008 occupations, linked with the ISCO-08 classification. The skills pillar contain 13890 skills linked to the occupations.

The qualifications pillar collect data about the formal qualifications delivered in the EU countries. ESCO occupations commonly entail:

- a description, which provides a short explanation of the meaning of the occupation and how it should be understood:
 - alternative labels for the same occupation - regulatory aspects;
 - hierarchical location within ISCO-08;
 - essential skills, competences and knowledge¹⁸;
 - optional skills, competences and knowledge.

It is relevant to underline that the relationship between a specific qualification and occupation reproduces information that are managed at national level, while ESCO does not establish actively such relationships¹⁹.

Table 3 – Occupations, skills and qualifications in the ESCO view Occupation Skills and Competences Qualifications

Occupation	An occupation is a grouping of jobs involving similar tasks and which require a similar skills set. Occupations should not be confused with jobs or
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¹⁷ DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2019), ESCO Handbook. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/documents>

¹⁸ Within ESCO, skills, knowledge and competences are defined as “essential” or “optional”, depending on their being common for the occupation or not.

¹⁹ 28 https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Three_pillar_structure



	job titles. While a job is bound to a specific work context and executed by one person, occupations group jobs by common characteristics ²⁰ .
Skills and Competences	<p>Skill means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. It can be described as cognitive or practical.</p> <p>The term skill refers typically to the use of methods or instruments in a particular setting and in relation to defined tasks. The term competence is broader and refers typically to the ability of a person to use and apply knowledge and skills in an independent and self-directed way²¹.</p>
Qualifications	A qualification is the formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards ²² .

The ESCO occupations pillar is made of the ESCO occupations profiles and the related ISCO08 hierarchies.

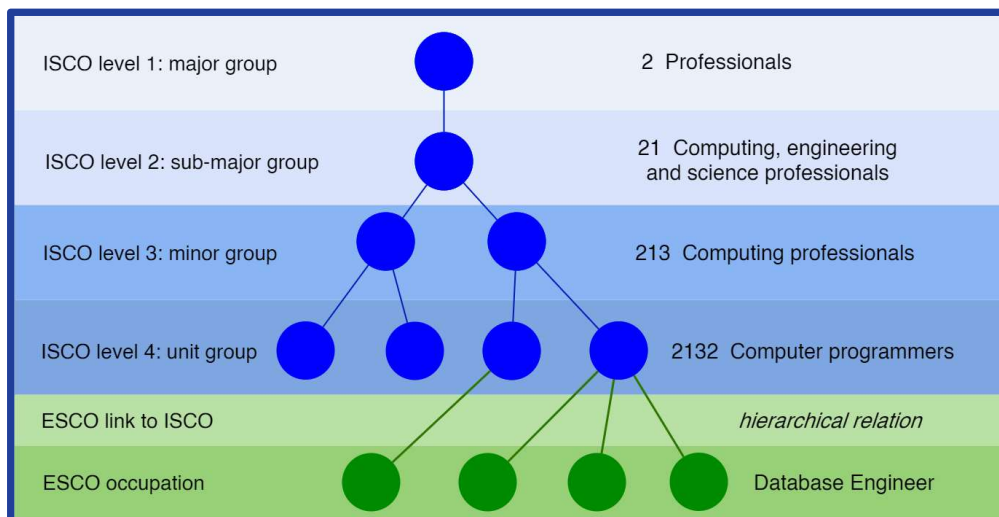
Fig.1 - ESCO is mapped to the 4th level of the ISCO hierarchical model.

(https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/labourR/vignettes/occupations_retrieval.html)

²⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Occupation>

²¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Skill>

²² <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Qualification>



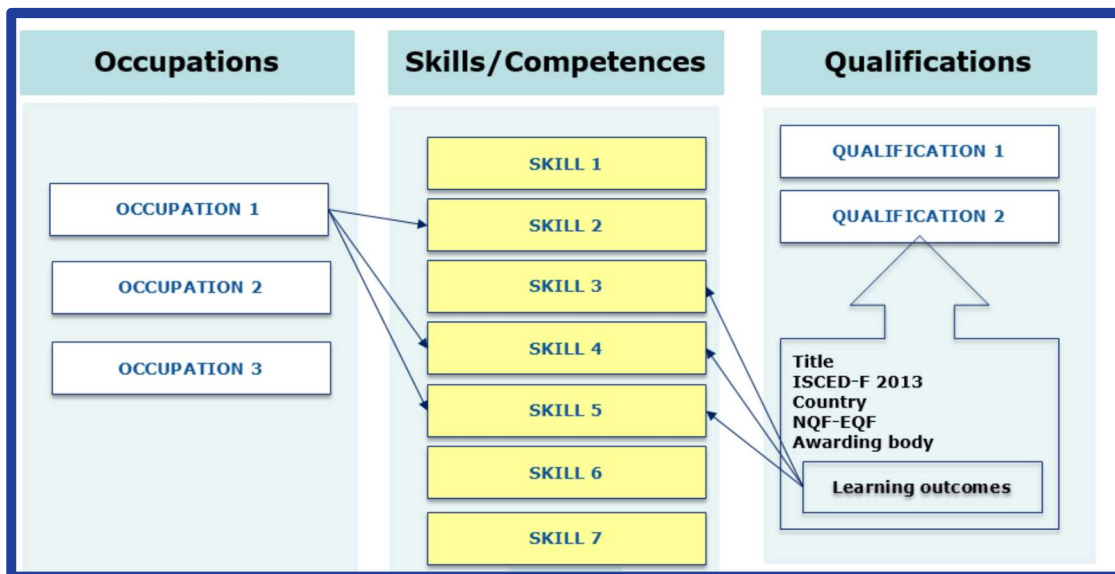
ISCO-08 provides the top four levels of the hierarchy (Major group, sub-major groups, minor groups and unit groups), while ESCO provides the fifth and lower level.

As for the qualifications pillar, it is made of qualifications coming from the databases of Member States. These are included in the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) and referenced to EQF.

The core information displayed in each qualification include:

- the title and the field
- the country in which the qualification is located
- the EQF level
- a brief description of the qualification
- the contents of the qualification in terms of knowledge, skills and competences
- the type of programme to which the qualification refers
- the awarding body.

Figure 2 – Links between the three ESCO pillars. Source: ESCO Handbook (2019)



The most relevant feature of ESCO is that it is strictly interrelated with the most important cross-European frameworks such as EQF, ISCO-08, ISCED-F 2013 and the Digital Competences Framework (DigComp).

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1223&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10193>

The ISCO-08 complementarity is crucial as ISCO is already a well-established reference system in most of the EU countries, making it easier to map the occupations to ESCO as well. Furthermore, as ISCO-08 coding is used for statistical analysis, it allows ESCO to be used also as a refined tool for EU labour market statistical surveys, since the terminology used in ESCO is more detailed than ISCO-08 and closer to the labour market language. Linking a qualification included in the qualification pillar with an EQF level and mapping them to ISCED-F 2013²³ enhances the transparency and comparability of qualifications across different countries. Finally, the DigComp framework works as a shared vocabulary of digital competences at the European level. DigComp is integrated in the set of digital transversal skills.

Figure 3 – DigComp: The European Digital Competence Framework (factsheet).

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1223&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10193>

²³ ISCED-F is part of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and it has been designed to describe and categorise fields of education and training at the secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels of formal education.



One of ESCO's main missions is to build stronger bridges between the world of education and training and the world of work, contributing to reduce skill mismatches and supporting the better functioning of the labour market. The vision behind ESCO is the provision of a common reference language that could support transparency, translation, comparison, identification and analysis of the content of a qualification, thus helping to indicate how those relate to the skills and occupations needed across occupations and sectors. ESCO does so in multiple ways.

ESCO supports describing and understanding of learning outcomes of a qualification

A labour market terminology that can help understanding which occupations and skills are related to a particular qualification allows learners, job seekers and employers to best use this information: ESCO fills this need by providing an updated, evidence – based and multilingual skills and occupation vocabulary.

ESCO supports education and training systems in the shift to learning outcomes that serves better the labour market needs. Organisations that provide data on qualifications can use ESCO to annotate learning outcomes descriptions with skills terminology, integrating knowledge, skills and competence concepts that correspond to the learning outcomes description of the qualification. This helps learning institutions to express their learning outcomes in a way that facilitates the understanding of their qualifications by labour market actors and to attract learners from within and across borders.



In 2019, the European Commission conducted a pilot project with the Member States, in order to test automated linking of learning outcomes of qualifications with ESCO skills in different languages and developed a dedicated IT tool to support national authorities in this exercise. The project demonstrated the value of using the ESCO skills thesaurus to provide transparency of qualifications and better quality of data on individual learning outcomes.

ESCO skills and occupations can be used to provide jobseekers and learners with tailored suggestions of learning and training opportunities. Digital platforms can use ESCO to provide citizens with information on learning opportunities, suggest courses, develop tailor made training opportunities and recommend learning paths based on people's skills. Career guidance providers can use ESCO to provide guidance services and recommend adequate training based on the skills set and career aspirations of an individual.

ESCO can be used for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The clear and detailed learning outcomes that are provided through ESCO can be used to identify, document, assess and certify the skills and experience that an individual has acquired through informal or non-formal learning.

Organisations can use ESCO to identify the skills developed in a given activity. Furthermore, once the learning activity in a given project is concluded, the learner can receive a form of certification, for instance an open badge, which links the skills of learners with a standard terminology and supports the validation of informal and non-formal learning achievements. The badges can then be displayed in e-portfolios and shared with employers and others as verifiable records of learning.

2.5 Interoperability between the Europass, EURES and ESCO portals

Interoperability is the ability of any system to work with other products or systems without restrictions or limitations. It enables connection and communication between platforms, where information can be exchanged and reused.

Europass, since its new development, has been structured to ensure technical interoperability and synergies with other relevant tools and services offered at the Union and, where appropriate, national level.

The EURES and ESCO tools as European development platforms are closely related to Europass:

- EURES as a platform aimed at tracking job proposals mapped at the European level;
- ESCO as an up-to-date vocabulary to describe in the clearest and most shared way possible one's background of competencies, skills and knowledge and make it transparent in all European training and employment contexts as they can be translated into all EU languages.

Private organizations that manage CV databases, operate information systems where end users fill out a profile, process applications, or provide databases of information can also benefit from interoperability with the new Europass.

The Commission is currently in contact with interoperability partners (e.g., Monster, Indeed.com, Xing) about upcoming changes to Europass so that links to these services are always updated.



With this feature, the user is able to share his or her Europass with other platforms instead of re-filling out all of his or her data in online forms; use Europass to apply online for jobs or training courses; find opportunities that are relevant to them; always check the personal data in the profile, who it shared with, and how it is used.

2.6 Instructions for hooking national referents EUROPASS, EURES to ESCO

National Europass Centres

Europass is active in more than 30 countries. A National Europass Center coordinates all Europass related activities in each participating country. It is the first point of contact for any person or organization interested in using or learning more about Europass.

At this link "<https://europa.eu/europass/it/contact-us/centri-nazionali-europass>" you can find all the Europass contact points broken down by country and for each one they are listed:

Web site

E-mail contact

Address:

Phone:

Social media links:

Facebook

Youtube

To get in touch with the Europass reference center in a country, everybody can simply use one of the above tools. Operators respond with great professionalism and friendliness.

EURES Advisors (EURES Advisors) operating in the different countries are also readily available and can give important information on the functionality of their portal, on related portals, and can put interested parties in touch with colleagues at the Europass Contact Point

(to locate an operator use the link https://ec.europa.eu/EURES/EURES-core/um/page/public?lang=en&pageCode=search_advisers#/adviser/search/list)

2.7 The Italian practical case

In the specific case of Italy, P9 IAL FVG opted for the second solution, i.e. first of all contacting the EURES Advisor operating in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, who is more easily involved in the ECOVEM project activities, due to a question of territorial proximity and interests. Thanks to the contact made, it was possible to reach the National EURES Advisor operating in the capital, Rome, to whom the ECOVEM project and its activities were presented. Following a couple of meetings, we established an



excellent working relationship that allowed our organisation to be able to count on the provision, if necessary, of statistical data on national labour needs broken down by sector, including microelectronics. The national EURES contact also put us in direct contact with experts from the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies - ANPAL, who are involved in various capacities in the Italian qualification referencing system, the promotion and testing of the Europass portal's functionalities, and experimental projects for cross-referencing data between European and private portals.

The privileged means of contact was the e-mail followed by on-line calls during which we had the opportunity to present the ECOVEM project and ask for explanations on the state of implementation of European strategies in Italy, including the state of the Italian reference framework which is currently being finalised. For this reason, the Italian training courses are not yet available on the Europass portal.

The relations with all the referents we met (about ten in all) were fruitful and functional for the development of our training organisation also at the level of notoriety and credibility at national and cross-border level.

We advise all interested parties to contact the Europass and EURES national points, make the ECOVEM project known and be informed about the state of the art of their national reference framework also with a view to promoting their ECOVEM pathways on the Europass portal.

Good work to all.