



Council of the
European Union

153565/EU XXV. GP
Eingelangt am 08/09/17

Brussels, 8 September 2017
(OR. en)

11094/17

Interinstitutional File:
2017/0100 (NLE)

EDUC 314
JEUN 91
EMPL 405
SOC 532

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. Cion doc.:	9844/17 EDUC 278 JEUN 81 EMPL 348 SOC 451 + ADD 1 COM(2017) 249 final
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on tracking graduates

Delegations will find attached a revised version of the above proposal prepared by the Presidency with a view to the Education Committee's meeting on 14-15 September 2017.

Delegations are kindly invited to send any written comments already prior to the meeting and at the latest on 14 September (cob).

Bold type and [...] are used to indicate changes to the Commission proposal (9844/17).

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on tracking graduates

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) The employability of graduates leaving education and training is a matter of concern in many Member States, in particular because the employment rate of recent higher education graduates in the Union has not fully recovered after the 2008 financial crisis¹ and the employment situation of graduates of vocational education and training programmes varies across Member States.
- (2) Therefore, Member States, in cooperation with social partners, were encouraged, through the Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States for 2015², to promote productivity and employability through an appropriate supply of relevant knowledge, skills and competences.

¹ COM/2015/0690 final.

² Council Decision (EU) 2015/1848 of 5 October 2015 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States for 2015 (OJ L 268, 15.10.2015, p. 28).

- (3) To achieve that objective, good quality information about what graduates do after obtaining their qualification or leaving education and training is essential, in order to both understand the causes of graduate employability problems in particular regions, economic sectors or for graduates from particular higher education or vocational education and training disciplines, and to identify solutions for those employability problems. The value of such information is highlighted in both the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)³ and the European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)⁴.
- (4) However, since the systems for collecting, analysing and using data on the outcomes for graduates from higher education and vocational education and training are not well developed in many parts of the Union, information is often not sufficient for students to make informed choices about what to study, or for the design of educational programmes or government policy.
- (5) Moreover, transitions to the labour market are largely driven by the economic context, level of qualification and field of study. They are also influenced by socio-demographic factors such as sex, country of birth, citizenship, ethnic origin and socio-economic background of the family⁵. Therefore gathering data on the impact of those various factors is essential to address the issue comprehensively.
- (6) Although many Member States are developing systems for tracking, the exchange of knowledge, good practice and mutual learning is limited.
- (7) Since existing comparable data are limited in scope and data collected nationally are not comparable to that collected in other Member States, it is challenging to draw any conclusions from differences in trends or outcomes across countries and regions.

³ ISBN 952-5539-04-0.

⁴ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (OJ C 155, 8.07.2009, p. 1).

⁵ On the impact of the sex and migration background on transition from school to the labour market, see OECD/European Union (2015), *Indicators of Immigration Integration 2015 – Settling In*, Chapter 13.

- (8) The results of the public consultation⁶ on the Union's modernisation agenda for higher education revealed concerns that higher education is not providing graduates with the knowledge, skills and competences that they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving educational and employment environment, and that there remain continued skills mismatches in some Member States.
- (9) Member States have called for action at Union level, aimed at improving the flow of information about employability, skills mismatches and labour market needs. In particular, the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)⁷ proposes the promotion of the relevance of higher education to the labour market and society, including through better intelligence and anticipation about labour market needs and outcomes, for example tracking the career of graduates.
- (10) Member States also committed themselves to ensuring continuous information and feedback loops in the Riga Conclusions of 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015 – 2020, through actions such as the use of data on VET graduate employability and a combination of data on learning, labour market entry and career, developing capacities of actors at national level to use graduate data for adapting curricula, occupational profiles and the content of VET qualifications to new economic and technical requirements.
- (11) Subsequently, in the Resolution on promoting socio-economic development and inclusiveness in the EU through education: the contribution of education and training to the European Semester 2016⁸, Member States highlighted the importance of addressing skills mismatches and skills gaps as a matter of priority.

⁶ SWD/2016/0195 final.

⁷ OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 25.

⁸ [...] Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, **of 24 February 2016** on promoting socio-economic development and inclusiveness in the EU through education: the contribution of education and training to the European Semester 2016, (OJ C 105, 19.3.2016, p. 1).

- (12) This built on previous work. Member States agreed, in the Council Conclusions on entrepreneurship in education⁹ from 2014, to make use of tracking information, wherever possible, when assessing the quality and effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and training.
- (13) In 2013, Member States agreed, in the Council Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Higher Education¹⁰, to facilitate the provision of information on educational and labour market-related opportunities and outcomes.
- (14) Member States also agreed, in the Council Conclusions on the employability of graduates from education and training¹¹ of 2012, to establish a benchmark that by 2020 82% of 20-34 year-old graduates, having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year, should be employed and to monitor the share of employed graduates from education and training, with a view to enhancing the evidence base for policy development on the interface between education and training and employment, while Member States and the Commission agreed to collect qualitative information and good practices, in order to complement quantitative monitoring and enhance the foundation for evidence-based policy making.
- (15) Therefore, the European Commission, in the Communication on a New Skills Agenda for Europe¹², has prioritised the improvement of skills intelligence and information for better career choices by proposing an initiative on tertiary graduate tracking to support Member States in improving information about the transition of graduates to the labour market.

⁹ OJ C 17, 20.1.2015, p. 2
¹⁰ OJ C 168, 14.6.2013, p. 2.
¹¹ OJ C 169/15.6.2012, p. 11.
¹² COM(2016) 381 final.

RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBER STATES:

In accordance with national and European legislation, in particular Directive 95/46/EC concerning the protection of personal data¹³, available resources and national circumstances, and in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders:

1. Improve the availability and quality of data about the activities of graduates¹⁴ and, where appropriate, people leaving higher education and vocational education and training without graduating, including through the establishment by 2020 of graduate tracking systems that **may** include:
 - (a) the collection of relevant administrative **statistical** data from education, tax, **population and** social security databases;
 - (b) the development of longitudinal graduate surveys at education system level, in recognition of the importance of qualitative data on people's transition to the labour market, or to further education and training, and their subsequent career paths; and
 - (c) the possibility for public authorities to link, on an anonymised basis, data from different sources, in order to build a composite picture of graduate outcomes.

¹³ Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 281, 23.11.1995 p. 31).

¹⁴ For the purposes of this Council Recommendation, 'graduate' refers to a person completing any level of higher education or vocational education and training. It is recognised, however, that some Member States have initiatives to track school leavers also.

Content of data to be collected

2. **In recognition of the ambition behind this Council Recommendation of improving the comparability and compatibility of data between Member States, collect data that should, where possible, include:**

(a) the following quantitative data

- i) socio-biographical and socio-economic information
- ii) study intensity
- iii) study method
- iv) qualification(s)
- v) credits received
- vi) field of study

vi.a) financing of study and support schemes

vi.b) work experience during study

- vii) transition to employment or further education and training
- viii) earnings
- ix) type of contract
- x) employment status
- xi) occupation, professional status and/or activity
- xii) geographical and/or sectoral mobility

(b) the following qualitative data

- i) relevance of study to employment **or further education and training**
- ii) participation in volunteering or civic engagement activities
- iii) career progression and satisfaction
- iv) perceptions of the quality and relevance of their education and training experience

Longitudinal graduate surveys

3. Encourage a high, representative and continued response rate to longitudinal graduate surveys, **and, when possible**, the tracking of graduates who have migrated, whether for the purposes of education and training or on completion of their education and training.

European Cooperation

4. Participate in a network of experts, **which supports Member States in their further development of tracking systems and which is** to be organised in line with existing governance structures for cooperation within the Education and Training 2020 framework, without prejudice to any new structures which may follow **it**.
- 4a. This network** will encourage cooperation and mutual learning, explore options for developing mutually compatible and comparable data, **common definitions** and, **with regard to** longitudinal surveys, **common principles, optimal frequency and how to track graduates who have migrated**.

Dissemination of data and exploitation of results

5. Ensure the timely, regular and broad dissemination of data and exploitation of the results, with the objective of:
- (a) strengthening career guidance for prospective students, current students and graduates;
 - (b) **supporting the** designing and updating **of** curricula to improve acquisition of relevant skills and employability;
 - (c) improving skills matching to support competitiveness and innovation at local, regional and national level, **and to resolve any skills shortages**;
 - (d) planning for **and forecasting of** evolving employment, educational and social needs; and
 - (e) contributing to policy development at both national and Union level.

Funding

6. Ensure the sustainability of graduate tracking initiatives by allocating adequate and multi-annual resources, making use of national or European sources of funding, such as Erasmus+ or European Structural and Investment Funds, where appropriate and in line with their existing resources, legal basis and priorities defined for the period 2014-2020, without any prejudice to negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

Reporting [...]

7. Within two years from the adoption of this Recommendation, and **regularly** thereafter, **assess and** report to the Commission, **through the network of experts**, on the implementation [...] of this Recommendation.

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMMISSION:

8. Develops the pilot phase of a European graduate survey in tertiary education, which aims to improve the availability of comparable information on graduate employment and social outcomes and which will build on the results of the Eurograduate Feasibility Study¹⁵.
9. Provides capacity building support in **higher education and** vocational education and training, as needed, for the establishment of graduate tracking systems, based on good practices. **In the case of vocational education and training, this will include** a comprehensive mapping across Member States, and **support for** cooperation among authorities, providers of vocational education and training and guidance services with regards to the use of graduate tracking data.
10. Promotes mutual learning and strengthens cooperation by establishing and supporting the network of experts **and cooperating with international organisations and EU institutions and agencies**.
11. Ensures that **statistical** data collected and related analyses are made available for use by Member States and stakeholders, including through existing online EU tools.
12. Supports the use of European sources of funding, such as Erasmus+ or European Structural and Investment Funds, where appropriate and in line with their financial capacity, legal basis, **decision-making procedures** and priorities defined for the period 2014-2020, without any prejudice to negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework.
13. Reports to the Council on the implementation of this Recommendation within five years of its adoption.

¹⁵ The Eurograduate Feasibility Study covers only higher education.

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

Done at Brussels,

For the Council

The President