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REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD OPINION

Impact assessment accompanying a proposal to facilitate worker mobility through improved transparency of skills and qualifications and digitalisation (Action 1 – Skills Portability Initiative)

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD

Brussels,
RSB

Opinion

Title: Impact assessment accompanying a proposal to facilitate worker mobility through improved transparency of skills and qualifications and digitalisation (Action 1 – Skills Portability Initiative)

Overall 2nd opinion: POSITIVE WITH RESERVATIONS

(A) Policy context

The initiative is part of the broader Skills Portability Initiative (SPI), which comprises three complementary actions: improving availability of reliable, comparable and verifiable digitalised information on qualifications and skills in the EU (action 1); modernising and expanding the recognition of qualifications for access to regulated professions (action 2); improving the recognition of qualifications and skills for third-country nationals (action 3).

The aim of this action therefore is to make qualifications easier to understand and verify for labour market actors across the Single Market and facilitate comparison of the level and content of qualifications issued in the EU. It will notably do so by requiring digitalisation of qualifications and giving a legal value to digital credentials.

(B) Summary of findings

The Board notes the improvements to the quality of the report. However, the report still contains significant shortcomings. The Board gives a positive opinion with reservations because it expects the DG to rectify the following aspects:

(1) The preferred option is not clearly defined regarding the 'automatic issuance on demand for the purpose of the employment in another Member States' of qualifications issued over the last ten years.

(2) The analysis of costs and cost savings is not clear, including regarding the baseline as well as in relation to the digitalisation of qualifications issued in past ten years under the preferred option. The report does not sufficiently explain some of the key assumptions and the resulting uncertainties.

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(C) What to improve

(1) Based on the Europass and EQF evaluations, the report should provide more information on the use of existing tools and systems (Europass, ESCO) across Member States and the underlying reasons for the diverse take up. The rationale for leaving out upper secondary schools should be substantiated reflecting the evidence related to the practices of labour market actors in different Member States. The report should explain what share of qualifications in the scope, i.e. EQF 2 to 8, will not be covered by the initiative and it should analyse related consequences.

(2) The report should more precisely describe the baseline and the main elements of the preferred option, specifically regarding the digitalisation of qualifications issued in the past ten years as well as the trust framework. It should be clear and granular enough on which elements (including IT systems, registries, and data needed for records of individuals) are part of the baseline and which ones are new mandatory elements introduced by the proposed initiative, notably for Member States and for issuers**.** The report should be clearer on existing gaps or delays in relation to the implementation by MS of elements relating to other initiatives and belonging to the baseline, which are nonetheless critical to the success of this initiative. The impact of the preferred option on all affected issuers in national systems should be better analysed including the related costs. The report should provide a clearer analysis of the distribution of the costs between the private sector and public administrations as well as the differences between MS.

(3) The estimates of key parameters used for the calculation of costs and cost-savings should be substantiated with appropriate evidence, in particular related to the digitalisation of past qualifications to allow for an automatic issuance and the marginal costs of manual and automatic issuance under the different options. The choice of parameters for the cost savings quantification tables in Annex 4, in particular for how the 10-year backlog was incorporated in this calculation, should be better explained and reflected in the main report to the extent that it has an impact on the cost and cost saving estimates. The report should be clear which samples used to derive input parameters are representative. For example, the extrapolation used to quantify the costs for including micro-credentials under PO1 and PO3, based on a survey of 69 issuers (to arrive at a total number of 45,000 providers), seems to be based on a non-representative sample. The report should discuss the uncertainties related to the input parameters and their impact on the calculations.

(4) The coherence of this initiative with existing legislation and/or voluntary initiatives, in particular in the field of digitalisation, should be further developed, with a view to clarifying what this initiative will add to elements which are already underway under those other initiatives.

(5) The monitoring and reporting framework should provide more information on how data would be collected, in particular for monitoring the impact indicators.

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(D) Conclusion **The lead Service(s) may proceed with the initiative.** **The lead Service(s) must revise the report and its executive summary in accordance with the Board's findings before launching the interservice consultation.**	
Full title	Impact Assessment Report accompanying a Legislative Proposal to facilitate worker mobility through improved transparency of skills and qualifications and digitalisation. Action 1 under the Skills Portability Initiative.
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Date of RSB meeting	Written Procedure

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD

Brussels,
RSB

Opinion

Title: Impact assessment accompanying a proposal to facilitate worker mobility through improved transparency of skills and qualifications and digitalisation (Action 1 – Skills Portability Initiative)

Overall opinion: NEGATIVE

(A) Policy context

The Skills Portability Initiative comprises three complementary actions: (i) to facilitate worker mobility across the EU through skills transparency and digitalisation (Action 1); (ii) to modernise and expand the recognition of qualifications for access to regulated professions (Action 2); and (iii) to improve the recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals (Action 3).

The aim of Action 1 is twofold. First, it aims to provide legal clarity on how to treat qualifications and skills obtained in another EU Member State in non-regulated professions, by requiring the use of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels in job postings across the EU and adopting the legal presumption of equivalence. Second, Action 1 should improve the availability of information on qualifications and skills obtained in the EU, which is relevant for regulated and non-regulated professions, by requiring digitalisation of qualifications and giving a legal value to digital credentials.

(B) Key issues

The Board notes the additional information provided.

However, the Board gives a negative opinion because the report contains the following serious shortcomings that the lead Service must address:

(1) The report does not demonstrate the proportionality of preferred option.

(2) The report does not sufficiently demonstrate the problems to be tackled, their root causes and their magnitude, building on appropriate evidence-base. The intervention logic is not substantiated. The report does not establish that an obligation to refer to EQF levels in labour market contexts can effectively support the free movement of workers in the EU.

(3) The report does not sufficiently describe the dynamic baseline, including existing digital tools and projects under development, and their expected effects. The

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definition of some policy measures is not sufficiently clear for the purposes of assessing their impacts.

(4) The coherence of this initiative with the other SPI actions as well as with other legislation and initiatives in the field of labour, skills and qualification is not sufficiently assessed.

(C) What to improve

(1) Based on an improved evidence-base and building on recent evaluations, including on the EQF and Europass, the problem definition should demonstrate the direct contribution of obstacles related to the skills and qualification portability to EU workers' mobility and the scale of the problems that the initiative aims to address. It should demonstrate to what extent the lack of understanding of non-national qualifications plays a role in the workers' and employers' decisions and to what extent fraud is pervasive and hence constitutes an issue in relation to proof of qualification in the labour market context.

(2) The report should consider how the findings of the EQF and Europass evaluations affect the design of the measures and the potential impacts. In particular, the report should assess to what extent the EQF can be considered an effective tool for facilitating recruitments, considering that the EQF evaluation found that effects on employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners were less tangible. The relevant evidence should be reflected in the intervention logic.

(3) The report should improve the description of the dynamic baseline, explaining better the current situation, practices in Member States related to the use of qualifications including the practise related to qualifications in job postings. For example, to the extent possible, the report should provide an estimation of the share of job advertisements referring to qualifications, which would be affected by the obligation to refer to EQF levels, in large companies and SMEs. The report should describe relevant existing initiatives, tools and projects to support labour mobility (e.g. EQF, NQF, Europass and its certificate supplement, ESCO), including IT ones (DC4EU, EUDI Wallet etc.). It should also provide a clear overview of the situation in Member States regarding both the various types of different organisations and practices for issuing qualifications and the different levels of readiness of issuers for issuing qualifications digitally, distinguishing the qualifications issued in the past and the qualifications to be issued in the future. It should also provide a deeper analysis on how AI-enabled solutions could address the identified problems and/or their drivers.

(4) The report should explain the content of the options more precisely and describe how the measures would work in practice. It should also clearly demonstrate the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts of the proposed measures, considering the evidence base. It should clarify whether the proposal will include supporting non-legislative measures.

(5) The costs and benefits analysis should be revised. The main report should provide a transparent overview of the assumptions that drive the results, their rationale and corroborating evidence, their limitations and uncertainties. It should be clear and consistent throughout the report and its annexes as to whether cost and savings allocated to employers include public and private entities. The report should consider recurrent

costs affecting employers. The report should be clear on how many entities would be impacted under each option over the assessment period and to what extent. The report should provide robust analysis of costs for issuers, allowing to establish the costs to different types of issuers. Any efficiency gains estimate for enterprises as well the increased productivity due to reduced mismatch and higher mobility should be substantiated.

(6) The report should better justify the proportionality of the preferred option which includes a legal presumption of equivalence; mandating the systematic inclusion of the EQF levels in labour market situations and requiring the digitalisation of all newly issued qualifications and those issued in the past 10 years that are part of MS NQF. The report should assess a sufficient range of options to allow for demonstrating proportionality.

(7) The analysis of the interplay between this action and the other actions of the Skills Portability Initiative, in particular Action 2 should be reinforced, including as regards digital aspects. The report should also further develop the analysis of the coherence of this initiative with on-going projects and initiatives both in the field of the Skills and qualifications on the EU labour market or in relation to the EU digital strategy (e.IDAS.2.0, Interoperability regulation).

(8) The report should present better how the stakeholders views have informed the design and the analysis of the measures.

Some more technical comments have been sent directly to the author Service.

(D) Conclusion

The lead Service must revise the report and its executive summary in accordance with the Board's findings and resubmit it for a final RSB opinion.

Full title	Impact Assessment Report accompanying a Legislative Proposal to facilitate worker mobility through improved transparency of skills and qualifications and digitalisation. Action 1 under the Skills Portability Initiative.
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