



► **2.2.342 – Governance effect of supranational classification systems: A comparative analysis of the significance of the European classification system ESCO for curricular issues and design principles [EUKLASS]**

Research project: Abstract

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### ***Key points in brief***

The development of the ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) Classification System has created a new transparency instrument <sup>1</sup> to encourage labour mobility in Europe. ESCO represents a continuation of previous transparency instruments drawn up within the scope of European (vocational) education policy. It brings a multitude of existing classifications of occupations<sup>2</sup>, competencies and qualifications together within a single tool and attempts to form a link between them.

A further goal of ESCO is the identification of new skill requirements, qualifications and curricular development. With regard to national vocational education and training, the ESCO implementation process comprises the collection, interpretation, definition and reciprocal linking of a large number of qualification and competence concepts and of existing domestic and European classification schemes for the alignment of occupations and competence levels. Hence, the design of this implementation process gives rise to the question of the extent to which ESCO can be expected to move beyond its function as a control instrument for international labour mobility and also exert indirect effects on the governance of national VET systems.

The aim of the project is to analyse the relevance, reception, function and possible governance impacts of ESCO for various EU member states with a particular emphasis on Germany. The project will include an investigation of the objectives pursued via ESCO whilst also looking at its unintended action consequences for national governance instruments and VET standards as well as at potential reciprocal effects with the latter. The focus of the analysis will be on potential effects on curricular design principles and structural processes.

The research design includes a documentary analysis of the genesis, function and implementation of ESCO in order to arrive at a better understanding of the instrument itself and to align it to the institutional structures of selected European vocational education and training systems. This will further encompass an analysis and alignment of digital linking, automation (semantic network), connection and dissemination.

Another intention is to present brief reports on selected countries (Germany, Ireland, Poland and Latvia) which compare various conceptual foundations and guiding principles of vocational education and training, analyse the consistencies and inconsistencies these display with ESCO as well as demonstrate relevant stakeholder constellations in the ESCO constitution and implementation process. With regard to the superordinate issue of the significance of ESCO for curricular developments, the aim is to use an internationally comparative research design to investigate the extent to which the basic conceptual principles of ESCO are compatible with various national policy models and target dimensions in VET (employability skills in the case of Germany). In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the set of

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<sup>1</sup> Transparency instruments within the EU context are defined as being mechanisms which aim to help provide greater comparability between the various European education systems, particularly with regard to competencies and qualifications. Examples include EQF, EQVET and EUROPASS. The primary objective is to “raise the comprehensibility of training and task profiles in other EU member countries” (Diekmann 2011: p. 43).

<sup>2</sup> The focus of ESCO is on the occupation exercised (rather than on the occupation in which training has taken place or in which a qualification has been achieved).

instruments, the project team will conduct a second documentary analysis based on comparative content analyses of selected occupational or task profiles in the construction industry and in the IT sector. The aim of this analysis is to investigate how the respective national occupational profiles and/or the competence requirements for the respective labour markets are recorded and presented in ESCO. Furthermore, this project phase aims to identify which competencies and learning outcomes of individual occupational profiles are included in national curricula in selected home and host countries, and how occupational profiles differ in country-comparative terms as well as how these profiles are transported into ESCO for possible standardisation as new European core profiles.

Within the scope of the comparative country studies in Germany, Ireland, Poland and Latvia, qualitative interviews shall be conducted with experts and relevant stakeholders on the significance and (governance) effect of ESCO in the respective countries. These interviews will also facilitate a qualitative analysis of stakeholder structures. In order to investigate areas of application and the governance impacts of ESCO, a further intention within this context is to carry out interviews with “early adopters”, i.e. companies and other users who are directly deploying ESCO for placement or for the structuring of their requirement profiles.