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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the implementation and impact of Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018

on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC

(submitted pursuant to Art. 9 of the Decision (EU) 2018/646)

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the European Commission's evaluation of the Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC[1]. It is accompanied by the staff working document that assesses to what extent Europass is effective, efficient and coherent, provides EU added value and remains relevant to tackle present and future needs. Moreover, the evaluation reviewed the uptake and wider impact of Europass on the European labour market and on skills and lifelong learning policies. It examined aspects including better transparency and comparability of qualifications, skills and competences and the consistency of different skills and qualification tools. The evaluation also examines the degree to which Europass provides access to information and guidance on job and learning opportunities and skills required in the labour market. The evaluation covers the period from 2018, when the Europass Decision was adopted, until 2022. It focuses on 2020 when the new platform was launched and beyond. The geographical scope of the evaluation covers the 27 EU Member States, the European Economic Area (EEA) as well as candidate and potential candidate countries under their agreements concluded with the EU.

1.1 Europass and its implementation

Europass is one of the 12 actions of the 2020 European Skills Agenda[2], which aims to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills to support upskilling and reskilling. This will contribute to achieving socially fair green and digital transitions. Moreover, the Europass platform directly supports the European Education Area and Europe's Digital Decade.

The 2018 Decision aimed to improve Europass and develop it from a portal providing downloadable templates into a service-based platform. This development considered advancements in technology and changes in the labour market, education and training systems and society at large that had taken place since the initial launch of Europass in 2004.

The new Europass platform was launched by the Commission in July 2020. Its objective is to provide a new EU-wide online platform, which offers users access to a range of online tools and services. These can be used by learners, workers, jobseekers and volunteers to communicate and present their skills, qualifications and experience clearly and consistently across Europe. Other stakeholders include education and training providers, guidance practitioners, employers, public employment services, social partners, youth work providers, youth organisations, volunteer organisations and policymakers.

[1] See Decision (EU) 2018/ 646 of the European Parliament and of the Council - of 18 April 2018 - on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241 / 2004/ EC.
[2] See EUR-Lex - 52020DC0274 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu).

The new Europass is a 'one-stop shop' for several existing EU tools and services, supporting the exchange of information and understanding of skills and qualifications, including those needed for mobility, training and employability.

Although many of the tools, services and information on Europass had been implemented and available on the platform when it was launched in July 2020, additional tools have been added subsequently, such as the European Digital Credentials for Learning in October 2021, the Digital skills self-assessment tool in December 2021 and the Jobs & Skill Trends tool[3] in June 2023.

The different tools and services are regularly updated, and artificial intelligence and data analysis are starting to be used more to further customise the platform to users' needs, e.g. through personalised suggestions of job and learning opportunities. The aim is to improve the platform's service to end users to better match profiles, skills, qualifications and interests with jobs and learning and volunteering opportunities, etc.

Member States are implementing the tasks set out in the Europass Decision mostly through the National Europass Centres (NECs), which already existed before the 2018 Europass Decision. The centres are designated at national level, operate independently and are co-financed through EU grants. They support users and promote the documentation of skills and qualifications through Europass. Overall, they contribute to the operational and promotional support of Europass, its national outreach and connecting the platform to individual users and their needs.

1.2 Overview of the evaluation methodology

A mixed-method approach[4] combining primary and secondary data was implemented as part of the external study supporting the evaluation[5]. It included a desk review of relevant official documents and literature, data analysis (Europass platform user data, cost data provided by the Commission, Google search and a social media analysis), the collection of quantitative primary data (three targeted surveys to Europass users and non-users, employers, and education and training providers) and qualitative insights from in-depth stakeholder interviews, targeted qualitative observations of non-users, a public consultation and a call for evidence[6].

An intervention logic[7] was developed as part of this evaluation as well as an evaluation matrix. The matrix linked the evaluation criteria to the intervention logic and used the key elements to draw up research questions.

[3] The Jobs & Skill Trends tool was referred to as "Skills Intelligence tool" during the development phase.
[4] Further information on data collection tools, stakeholder groups covered and the number of respondents is included in the staff working document, section 1.2 "Overview of the methodology" and Annex V "Synopsis report".
[5] See "Study supporting the Europass ex-post evaluation", Verian Group (former Kantar Public) (https://op.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications).
[6] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13323-Lifelong-learning-and-career-management-evaluation-of-Europass-since-2018/public-consultation_en.
[7] See Figure 10 (Intervention logic for Europass) in Annex II to the staff working document.

One of the evaluation's challenges relates to structural changes between the pre-2018 Europass framework and the 2018 framework, which has a much broader scope (and led to the launch of the new platform in 2020). This made the frameworks only partially comparable. Another challenge concerned the granularity of data available to prepare the supporting study.

For this evaluation, the Member States were consulted on a regular basis through the Europass Advisory Group[8].

2. THE EVALUATION'S MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the evaluation's findings and conclusions on the impact and implementation of the Europass Decision in line with the five criteria set out in the Better Regulation guidelines: effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value and relevance.

2.1 Effectiveness

In terms of effectiveness, users and stakeholders appreciate the new Europass platform as a one-stop shop bringing together skills, qualifications and labour mobility tools. Some Europass features are not complete (information on qualifications and on learning opportunities) as data from national authorities are still missing. The Jobs & Skill Trends tool, released in June 2023, is expected to further strengthen the integration process of the platform with other initiatives and data sources.

The user and non-user survey show that there are differences in the of uptake of Europass tools and services. The Europass CV and Cover Letter are the best known and most frequently used Europass tools. Most Europass users (76%) use the CV and cover letter often or sometimes. Europass tools and services are generally perceived as useful. The majority of the public consultation respondents (at least 80%) find the tools and services useful or very useful, whereas they appreciate most the Europass CV (90%). Other functionalities, such as the creation and tracking of applications, the supplement templates, the Digital skills self-assessment tool and the European Digital Credentials for Learning, are used to a lesser extent (respectively 37%, 31%, 28% and 28% of surveyed Europass users used these tools often or sometimes). It should be noted that the various tools are different in nature and have slightly different target groups, which may explain some differences in numbers. This suggests that more analysis is required targeting the root causes of this lower use. It also suggests that the different Europass tools need to be better integrated into an improved data analysis system to provide users with better tailored suggestions for working and learning in Europe.

Europass provides tools, services and information supporting individuals' labour and learning mobility in the EU and facilitating cross-border standardisation. The tools and services allow users to present personal information and document their skills, qualifications and learning outcomes in a standardised European format in up to 31 languages. Employers and education

[8] The Europass Advisory Group is an EU-level consultative body comprised of stakeholders. The Commission set up the Europass Advisory Group to support implementing the Europass Decision.

and training providers mainly use Europass as a tool to support mobility and present knowledge, skills and competences in a standardised way. Moreover, interviews with EU and national stakeholders showed that they mostly perceive Europass as a platform that supports mobility for work and educational opportunities in the EU. EU level interviewees also found that Europass supports the implementation of other European policies (e.g. EU mobility programmes).

Europass is effective in fostering a common framework for the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications among Member States. This relies on several elements: the link with the European Qualifications Framework, the publication of information on qualifications and learning opportunities (although this area is still in progress), the common supplement templates, and the European Digital Credentials for Learning.

Communication about Europass takes place at EU and national levels, led by the National Europass Centres. It has resulted in successfully engaging with end users and stakeholders. Platform data shows a substantial increase in the number registered users after the launch of the new platform (more than 4,5 million profiles were created by users by the end of 2022). By 31 January 2023, the new platform received around 32.4 million unique visitors[9] and more than 261 million page views across 58.8 million sessions.

Awareness of Europass differs between countries. Based on a user and non-user survey carried out in 10 countries, Portugal, Romania, and Croatia are the countries where Europass is known the most: 88%, 79% and 77% of respondents to the survey, respectively, were aware of Europass. Two countries where Europass is known less are France and Germany (24% and 19% respectively)[10]. Based on 2022 platform data and Eurostat statistics on the EU population, most Europass users are in Italy, Portugal and Romania (in total numbers). These countries also host higher shares of Europass profiles when compared to the total population. The percentage of profiles per country (out of the total population) for Portugal, Romania and Italy is 4.5%, 1,9% and 1.8% respectively. There are also relatively high percentages of profiles (out of the total population) in Malta, Croatia, Slovenia and Latvia. Countries with relatively lower percentages of Europass users (out of the total population) include Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, France and Ireland[11]. More action could be taken to promote Europass in those countries where it is known and used less, both by the Commission and those countries' National Europass Centres.

Most Europass users are under 35 years and are well educated. The strong appeal of Europass to young people who are at the start of their careers is a particular strength that should be built on. There is a slight under-representation of women among users. Most users have some level of work experience. In terms of profile languages, English is the most used language followed by Italian, Portuguese and Romanian. The remaining languages are less represented.

[9] A unique visitor is anyone that visits the platform from a specific IP address. They are only counted once, even if they visit the platform through different profiles.
[10] Based on a user and non-user survey carried out in 10 countries: Germany, Spain, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Sweden.
[11] For a complete overview of the share of Europass profiles per Member State as percentage of the total population, see Annex VII of the staff working document.

There have been improvements to the platform's accessibility since its launch. However, there are still some issues affecting different groups of people, including people with lower digital skills, older people and people with disabilities. A lack of digital skills is seen as the main accessibility barrier.

Two thirds of public consultation participants considered the platform as easy to use. However, respondents also raised issues regarding its complexity, which according to them makes the platform less user-friendly and intuitive.

2.2 Efficiency

In terms of budget allocated to developing and implementing Europass, the significant increase in new users since the launch of the platform in July 2020 (an average of 150 000 profiles were created every month between July 2020 and December 2022) and the expected stability of costs in the coming years linked to the platform's maturity and the completion of most tools, should contribute to a reduction of the cost per Europass profile (cost per additional Europass profile in 2022: EUR 1.22). The platform's cost-effectiveness improved between 2021 and 2022, and this is expected to continue as digital platforms tend to have low marginal costs for additional users.

Since 2018, the governance has been more efficient than before due to a more solid multi-level structure and the wider distribution of responsibilities and tasks both from the Commission to the Member States and across multiple organisations at EU and national level. Stakeholders and National Europass Centres expressed the need for more resources because there are additional tasks to cover and the new platform provides more tools and services than the previous one. The fact that additional tasks are carried out with a budget[12] similar to the one before the launch of the platform in July 2020 demonstrates an improvement in cost-effectiveness.

Stakeholders recognise that a lot of work has been put into improving the user-friendliness of Europass and addressing technical issues This includes a significant reduction of bugs reported by end users in the second half of 2022 and first half of 2023. Stakeholders believe more focus is needed on fixing the platform's technical issues rather than further developing new tools. This would help make the platform more functional, visible and easy to use.

2.3. Coherence

Europass is coherent with the broader policy context. The Europass platform directly supports the European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area and Europe's Digital Decade. Many of the initiatives of the European Skills Agenda rely on Europass for their practical implementation at EU level, e.g. skills intelligence. In addition, Europass contributes to the priorities of the European Education Area, which are to improve quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training for all and to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all. Lastly, the evolution of Europass from a platform that consisted of five document templates into a one-stop-shop digital solution is directly aligned with Europe's Digital Decade.

[12] Overall, the Commission granted around EUR 6 million to NECs for both periods before and after the platform's launch in July 2020 (i.e. 2018-2020 and 2021-2023).

Europass is strongly linked with the European Qualifications Framework given that information about the framework and tools (comparison tool, interconnection of national qualifications registers) are integrated into Europass. Europass is also aligned with the priorities adopted by the von der Leyen Commission: 'A Europe fit for the digital age' and 'An economy that works for people'. In addition, Europass has strong synergies and technical interoperability with EU tools and initiatives in employment, education, training and guidance, such as EURES, the European Classification of Occupations and Skills (ESCO), Erasmus+ and EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education). In this context, more synergies could be created between Europass and those EU and national platforms that provide similar tools and services (for example, on skills intelligence, career guidance information, education and training information and labour market information). Additional synergies with EURES, in cooperation with the European Labour Authority (ELA), could include a single CV and profile builder, aligning visual identities while maintaining separate branding, improved navigation across the two platforms and ensuring that the services on both platforms complement each other.

2.4 EU added value and impact

Europass provides added value through unique, multilingual, and standardised tools and services free of charge as well as access to information on job opportunities, learning opportunities and qualifications. The standardised tools help employers and education and training providers across EU Member States and other Europass countries better understand and compare candidates' educational and professional backgrounds and match their skills with job requirements.

As a result, Europass supports learning and labour mobility of candidates across borders and thereby helps to address labour and skills shortages in the EU. In addition, the standardised tools and services of Europass help create equal opportunities among job applicants. According to participants of the qualitative observations, this is particularly true for young people transitioning from education and training to the labour market.

Currently, Europass is used as a standard part of public sector applications in several European countries (e.g. Portugal, Romania and Italy). Europass can also play an essential role in standardising tools and services within the same country, where labour market policies differ between regions. Moreover, Europass fills gaps in the market, where no equivalent national alternatives are available.

As regards the use of Europass in the private sector, 66% of employers that responded to the survey are aware of Europass and 44% use it. Standardisation leads to more consistency and comparability of skills across European countries. Promoting the uptake of Europass could help it become a standard not only for public administrations but also EU initiatives, mobility programmes and different labour market and education and training institutions.

Most public consultation respondents (77%) consider as the main advantage of Europass to provide free services, followed by standardised templates and multilingual features of the platform (66% and 65% respectively).

2.5 Relevance

Europass is likely to continue to be relevant due to the need to understand people's qualifications and skills in a European context and in view of the importance of fostering labour mobility across the EU and developments in digitalisation. In this regard, it would be important to further develop the data analysis system of Europass. This will make it possible to use user interaction data from the platform's different tools to personalise suggestions for working and learning in Europe.

Information and guidance on job opportunities is provided via the EURES job search tool and country specific information on both, Europass and EURES. More sector or industry specific information could further increase the attractiveness and relevance of Europass tools.

On information on lifelong learning and transnational mobility for learning purposes, Europass depends on Members States and Europass countries to provide information on qualifications and learning opportunities.

Information on job opportunities and learning opportunities are perceived as particularly relevant by younger people who are beginning their careers as well as people from non-EU countries (European Economic Area and candidate and potential candidate countries)[13].

More customised guidance could further increase the relevance of Europass tools. Personalised recommendations on job opportunities could also help address skills and labour shortages. This would require more national information on career guidance, which could be integrated into Europass for its users.

Integrating several previously standalone skills, qualification and labour mobility tools as well as introducing new tools (e.g. the Digital skills self-assessment tool) has helped reduce fragmentation in this area. Stakeholders seek further interoperability with other EU instruments and initiatives. However, a balance needs to be ensured between the complexity and user-friendliness of the platform to avoid overloading it with different tools targeted at stakeholders rather than end users.

Europass contributes to transparency, a common understanding of skills and qualifications and comparability. In this context, users and stakeholders consider the European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC) to be highly relevant, as EU standards ensure interoperability and avoid fragmentation in an area still in development.

3. LESSONS LEARNED

Europass supports the objectives of the **European Year of Skills** to strengthen **skills relevance** and match people's aspirations, needs and skill sets with labour market needs and opportunities. Information and guidance on skills required by the labour market are

[13] User and non-user survey respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Ukraine.

considered as very important by users and stakeholders. Europass also provides tools that help users reflect on their skills and interests.

Europass already has links with several EU initiatives, such as EURES, ESCO, the European Qualifications Framework and the European Learning Model. In addition, the **interoperability** and **synergies** of Europass with other relevant EU and national portals, including national guidance services, could be further explored.

Europass is relevant to **jobseeking** and responds to the need for information and guidance on job opportunities by providing access to the EURES job search tool. Stronger synergies between Europass and EURES could strengthen the impact of both platforms and benefit all users.

Member States and Europass countries need to make further efforts in developing **qualification and learning opportunity databases and registers**. These would link to the Europass platform via the Qualifications Dataset Register, so the information is available to Europass users.

If Europass was adopted by more stakeholders as a **standard profile tool for learning and jobs in the EU** as well as in the context of **EU initiatives and mobility programmes**, this would ensure more end users use the tools and services, creating economies of scale. This would also further strengthen the relevance and impact of Europass. Moreover, the uptake of Europass in the private sector could be further explored. In terms of geographical coverage, Europass promotional activities could focus on countries where Europass is known and used less. While the attractiveness of Europass to young people is a particular strength to build on, promotion activities could also focus on people aged over 35.

A balance needs to be ensured between further integrating new EU initiatives into Europass (leading to more **complexity**) and the user-friendliness of the platform.

For Europass to reach its full potential as a platform for career management and lifelong learning, information on **career guidance, validation opportunities and recognition of qualifications** could be improved, given that the current information on the platform remains general. This would particularly require stronger links to national services and institutions.

The use of Europass as a solution to present knowledge, skills and competencies in a standardised way is particularly effective in the context of **mobility for labour and learning purposes across the EU**.

There is a clear need to complete the **EDC infrastructure** and to leverage the **European Digital Credentials for Learning standards** to support Member States in their digital transformation of credentials and to ensure interoperability between national credential platforms at EU level.

The use of **data analysis** and **artificial intelligence** in Europass could be further developed. Personalised recommendations on job opportunities could contribute to tackling skills and labour shortages.

To improve the user-friendliness of the Europass platform, it is important to give priority to **fixing technical issues** before developing any new tools. This would make the platform more functional, visible and easy to use.

Future developments for Europass could be implemented through an **'accessibility by design' approach** to ensure the platform is accessible to as many people as possible, including those with lower levels of digital skills, older people, long-term unemployed people and people with disabilities. By implementing these principles, Europass could contribute to promoting inclusiveness and equal opportunities.

To measure the impact and use of Europass, a **data monitoring plan** could be put in place and regular **user satisfaction surveys** could be carried out.

This evaluation makes it possible to focus efforts on implementing improvements arising from these lessons learned. Some improvements are already in progress. These and future developments will require further effort and commitment at both EU and national levels.