



QQI

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland



Erasmus+

***7th Meeting of the
Irish EU Reference Group of Agencies of the
Department of Education and Skills***

October 8th, 2019

Glucksman Library, University of Limerick



AGENDA

09:45 Registration

10.00 Welcome, Josephine Page, Director of International Education Division, UL
Session 1 - Poster Updates

- *Erasmus+ Adult Education, School, VET and Youth, Fionnuala Broughan, Léargas*
- *Higher Education, Gerry O'Sullivan, HEA*
- *Euroguidance, ELGPN & Learning Opportunities Portal, Jennifer McKenzie, NCGE*
- *European Qualifications Framework, Beata Sokolowska, QQI*
- *Europass & NARIC, Angela Lambkin, QQI*
- **Q & A**

11:30 Networking Break

12.00 Session 2 – New Agenda for Skills and Qualifications
Chair: Roisín Doherty, Director Active Inclusion, SOLAS

Update from European Commission including the new Europass service for communicating skills and qualifications

Speaker: William O'Keeffe, Policy Officer, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

13:15 Questions & Answers / Panel Discussion

Chaired by: Barbara Kelly, Director of Qualifications, QQI

Secretary: Marie Cleary, Third Space Consulting Limited

Lunch & Close

Report of the 7th Meeting of the Irish Reference Group for EU Initiatives in Education and Skills



Photo: William O'Keeffe, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion; Angela Lambkin, QQI; Josephine Page, University of Limerick; Fionnuala Broughan, Léargas; Jennifer McKenzie, NCGE; Roisín Doherty, SOLAS; Gerry O'Sullivan, HEA

Introduction

1. The annual meeting took place at University of Limerick on 8th October 2019. It was attended by approximately 50 delegates drawn from the wider further and higher education and training sectors. On this occasion the event was hosted by University of Limerick particularly the International Education Division.
2. The primary purpose of the meeting was to share updates on a broad range of European initiatives which support and promote mobility. This is in line with the purpose of the EU Reference Group for the agencies of the DES.
3. The meeting was opened by Dr Josephine Paige, Director of the International Division at UL who welcomed all to the Glucksman Library for this meeting which offered an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the progress and practice of European initiatives. While the 2018 meeting focused on wider promotion of mobility **opportunities**, the 2019 theme planned was on **Digitization of Skills and Qualifications** with particular reference to the new Europass.

4. The meeting was divided into two sessions:

Session one – Poster Updates – a regular feature of Reference Group meeting - which provided an update on progress and existing developments. This session was chaired by Angela Lambkin, QQI.

Session two - provided an update from the European Commission on the New Europass Service for communicating skills and qualifications. This session was chaired by Roisín Doherty, Director of Active Inclusion, SOLAS.

5. The meeting was closed by Barbara Kelly, Director of Qualifications, QQI.

Session 1 - This session consisted of five short presentations and was chaired by Angela Lambkin, QQI

Fionnuala Broughan, Communications Manager at [Léargas](#) presented on the work of Léargas with regard to mobility for 2018. She outlined the breadth of the work carried out by Léargas covering the fields of Adult Education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), Schools, Youth and European Solidarity Corps which included:

- €16.4 million allocated to projects in 2018 with 250 projects funded;
- Launch of the European Solidarity Corps in 2018;
- Launch of the ***Impact Study on Erasmus+ Work Placements for Vocational Learners from Irelandⁱ***
- Appointed an Inclusion and Diversity Officer and produced a directory of Inclusion projects;
- Collaborating with other National Agencies to carry out a longitudinal study;
- Working with the HEA on Erasmus+ participation and the acquisition of language skills for which a report is expected at end 2019;
- Preparing for the new Erasmus+ programme and preparing for Brexitⁱⁱ. The new Programme will run from 2021 to 2027 and will offer more people the opportunity to experience intercultural exchange. It will also focus on people with fewer opportunities and aims to simplify procedures;

Current Executive Director of Léargas will be retiring in 2020.

Gerry O’Sullivan, Head of International Programmes at the [Higher Education Authority](#) (HEA), outlined the work carried out by the HEA in support of Erasmus+ mobility. He highlighted the University of Limerick as an example of an inclusive internationally focussed institution. Gerry reported the total number of study-mobilities in 2018 was 2,818 and the top three mobility **receiving** universities were:

- University of Limerick (492)
- University College Dublin (444)
- Trinity College Dublin (352)

Over a thousand students undertook traineeships as part of their university study. University of Limerick, National University of Ireland, Galway and Technological University Dublin were the top **sending** institutions. UK, Spain and Germany were noted as the top 3 **receiving** countries for traineeships in 2018. The UK is the most popular destination for traineeships, and this was noted as a challenge pending the outcome of Brexit. Gerry reported that €15m was allocated for 2019-2020 by HEA to provide support for mobilities and strategic partnerships and around 4500 students and 500 staff would be provided with the opportunity to engage in international mobility projects.

Under Erasmus + KA107 – International Credit Mobility offers mobility opportunity for staff and students to, and from, Partner Countries. €1.8M available funding for 2019.

Jennifer McKenzie, Director of the National Centre for Guidance in Education ([NCGE](#)) which aims to inform and support guidance practice in schools; support and EU focus on guidance and provide policy advice on guidance. NCGE also hosts the Euroguidance Centre for Ireland funded by the European Commission.

Jennifer outlined recent work including:

- NCGE’s work with the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) in 13 Member States focuses on the development of guidelines on how Member States can set up guidance and develop requisite skills;
- Coordinating the provision of guidance to those who work with Irish students in international schools;

- The Euroguidance networks provision of an on-line course for guidance counsellors who support students to make the right decisions;
- In 2018, NCGE launched a suite of online resources to support the development of whole school guidance.

Finally, Jennifer noted that a national strategy for career guidance is needed as well as the development of a system which will gather the requisite data needed to provide a lifelong guidance service.

Beata Sokolowska, Project Officer Framework Development at [QQI](#), provided an update on European Qualifications Framework (EQF) developments specifically the work carried out between NARIC Ireland, EQF-NCP Ireland and NZQA, producing a guide to comparing qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand using EQF as a translation device to make the systems more transparent and comprehensible. The guide offers mutual recognition based on such agreements that focus support on mobility and mutual understanding.

Beata also referenced research carried out by recruiters in 2019 ***Making Sense of Qualifications – views of recruitment professionals in Ireland***ⁱⁱⁱ which had findings around three topics:

- Digital Badges;
- European Qualifications Framework;
- Foreign Qualifications Recognition.

Beata also provided an update on the re-reference of UK frameworks to the EQF. Two re-referencing reports were completed in 2019, one for the frameworks of CQFW (Wales) and the SCQF (Scotland).

The Irish NFQ was initially referenced to the EQF in 2009. QQI was reported to having commenced the work to re-reference the NQF to reflect changes over the last ten years.

Angela Lambkin, QQI, concluded the first session by providing an *update on the New Europass* and the work of NARIC Ireland. She outlined the role and remit of QQI and noted the QQI strategy 2019-2021 and the key priorities which include:

- Integrity of NQF;
- Analysis and Impact;
- Collaboration & Impact;
- Organisational Capacity.

Additionally, there is a focus on amended legislation – ***Quality and Qualifications Assurance Amendment Bill 2018^{iv}*** - and the consequent implication for additional functions.

Europass continues to be extended and remodelled with the Europass EQF-NCP continuing until 2020. Progress thus far includes the completion of the Interim Report, updating of the website about Europass and updating of the materials relating to the Europass Diploma Supplement. The ***New Europass^v*** is pending for 2021 and the Europass Advisory Committee represented by Ireland jointly by Angela Lambkin (QQI) and Jennifer McKenzie (NCGE).

Angela also explained the work of NARIC Ireland providing advice on the recognition of foreign and Irish qualifications. This advice is mainly provided through an on-line service and in 2018 there were over 72,000 website users. She also provided information on on-going **projects 2018-2020^{vi}** which include:

- Q entry: a public information database on upper secondary/school leaving qualifications
- E Valuate: a review of practices associated with MOOC's
- React – refugees' qualifications: Quality Assurance Review
- Arnet – automatic recognition: moving on towards automatic recognition by drawing together best practice across the networks and identifying issues

Further information on these projects is available at www.enic-naric.net. Angela also reported that QQI / NARIC Ireland will host the ENIC-NARIC Annual Networks Conference in June 2021.

The requirements around GDPR were noted as a challenge in the NARIC Ireland role and addressed via the use of the secure online portal.

Session 2 - This session featured a presentation from special guest speaker **William O’Keeffe, Policy Officer, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission**. This session was chaired by **Roisin Doherty, Director of Active Inclusion, SOLAS**.



Photo: William O’Keeffe, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and Roisín Doherty, SOLAS

William presented an update from European Commission including the planned new Europass service for communicating skills and qualifications. He noted the proposal to triple the budget of the new Erasmus + Programme and discussed how the much bigger Erasmus + programme would be structured. William outlined some changes in the structure of the new Commission 2019-2024.

The proposed changes included:

DG Employment taking responsibility for the areas of:

- Adult Education
- Vocational Education & Training
- EQF
- NARIC
- Europass

DG Education & Culture taking responsibility for:

- Higher Education
- Schools
- Youth
- Culture

In addition, two commissioner positions will be appointed, a **Commissioner for Jobs** and a **Commissioner for Innovation and Youth**. Decisions on these appointments were pending at the time of this meeting.

William explained that the focus going forward is on the creation of a European Education area. As Education is a national competence, the Commission role is related to the provision of a range of supports, enabling measures for mobility and driving a focus on innovation. The development of **Digital Education Plan**^{vii} was also noted as an essential part of this objective towards achievement of the European Education Area.

In Higher Education, the focus was noted as on the establishment of new European Universities – colleges with shared curricula and content.

With regard to the Modernisation of VET, an advisory committee on VET has been established to progress the New Agenda for Skills and Qualifications focusing on VET, Europass and EQF and looking at effective mechanisms for Graduate tracking.

The most important themes emerging noted were those of **Lifelong Learning** and **employability**.

William reported that the Europass instrument is being overhauled to produce a free, open e-portfolio tool which will allow the creation of one's own space to assess skills and find jobs. Europass will be a lifelong learning tool and described as the '**new European tool to showcase your skills, plan your learning and your career.... all in one place**'.



Ploteus, the Learning Opportunities portal is noted as to be retired and its function moved into Europass. **The new Europass^{viii}** will have strong digital credentials with tamper-proof documents and will be fully controlled. It is expected that the new Europass will be launched in early 2021. The ultimate aim is that Europass will be a central hub for users proactive in the mobility space.

William indicated that Europass is evolving into a very different instrument with its continual communication of skills and learning and there will be multiple language versions. Users will be able to receive feeds and access information on jobs and courses specific and related to the individual's profile. Profiles and skills will need to be kept updated.



European Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)

Functions



William also referenced the **Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)^{ix}** – one European Framework for issuing digital credentials. A legally equivalent, tamper-proof completely digital credential is the goal. The Commission are currently working to develop policy and tools. William indicated that Irish participation would be welcome onto the working group should there be interest.



European Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)

Scope



Following the presentation there were a number of comments and queries noted in the general discussion:

- There was broad agreement that digital credentials are the way forward. There was some discussion about electronic signatures and their validity. E-seal is the electronic signature enabler and has the same legal status as a hand-written signature;
- Conferring ceremonies will continue and parchments will be issued as the digital document was noted as different to the parchment received at conferring. The digital credential lists all the competency information acquired by the individual;
- Youthpass should be included on the platform – this was noted as currently in process;
- Europass Mobility documents will continue to be used. There was a suggestion that Europass Mobility should be introduced into all mobility activity;
- It was noted that recruiters are looking beyond the qualification and Europass can provide that additional information sought about the wider capacity of the candidate.

The meeting was closed by Barbara Kelly, Director of Qualifications at QQI.

The next 2020 meeting of the EU Reference Group will be at a Dublin venue and subject to the requirements of the launch of the new Europass requirements.

Full reports and presentations available at

<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Qualifications-and-Skills.aspx>

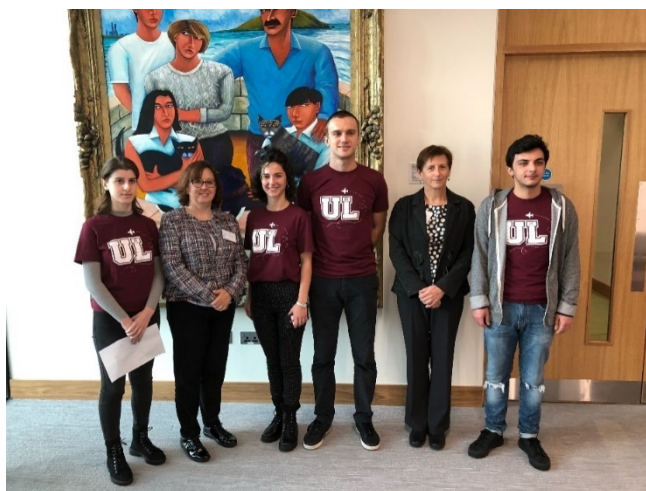


Photo: Angela Lambkin, QQI with Jennifer McKenzie, NCGE and students from UL who kindly supported meeting delegates. Missing from photo, Ivanna D'Arcy, UL. Europass would like to extend a special thank you to Ivanna for organising the venue and overseeing IT support, her facilitating skills greatly contributed to the success of the meeting.

Speakers



Fionnuala Broughan, Léargas

Erasmus+ Adult Education, School, VET and Youth



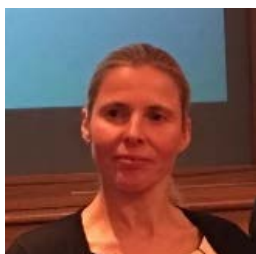
Gerry O'Sullivan, HEA

Higher Education Authority



Jennifer McKenzie, NCGE

Euroguidance & Ploteus



Beata Sokolowska, QQI

EQF



Angela Lambkin, QQI,

Europass & NARIC



William O'Keeffe, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the

European Commission, Europass



QQI

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland



Erasmus+

Endnotes

ⁱ **Impact Study on Erasmus+ Work Placements for Vocational Learners from Ireland**

http://www.leargas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Leargas_Impact_Study_Erasmus_VET_Placements.pdf

ⁱⁱ **New Erasmus+ programme and preparing for Brexit**

Erasmus 2021-2027, The Union programme for education, training, youth and sport

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628313/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)628313_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628313/EPRS_BRI(2018)628313_EN.pdf)

ⁱⁱⁱ **Making Sense of Qualifications - How Recruitment Professionals in Ireland view Qualifications**

<https://www.qqi.ie/News/Pages/Making-Sense-of-Qualifications----How-Recruitment-Professionals-in-Ireland-view-Qualifications.aspx>

^{iv} **Qualifications and Quality Assurance Amendment Act**

<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Qualifications-and-Quality-Assurance-Amendment-Bill.aspx>

^v **The New Europass, updates available at**

<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass/news>

^{vi} **NARIC Ireland projects 2018-2020**

<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Qualifications-Recognition-Development-Work.aspx>

^{vii} **Digital Education Plan**

https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

^{viii} **The new Europass**

<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass/e-portfolio>

^{ix} **Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)**

<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass/changes-digital-skills-self-assessment-grid-developing-new-europass>