

Report
of the
Meeting of the Contact Points –
Directive 2005/36/EC for the Recognition of Professional Qualifications

Held on 25th February 2010 from 1000 – 1800hrs

At the Conference Centre, Albert Borschette, Brussels

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the role of *Contact Points* which are entrusted with specific tasks under Article 57 of the Professional Qualifications Directive. The *Contact Points* discussed how well the legislation has been achieving its objectives and whether it has done so at a reasonable cost.

Participant : Shirley Micallef – Recognition Officer

Report drawn up by: Shirley Micallef

Abbreviations used: AT – Austria; BE – Belgium; BG – Bulgaria; CZ – Czech Republic; CY – Cyprus; DK – Denmark; EE – Estonia; FI – Finland; FR – France; DE – Germany; EL – Greece; IE – Ireland; HU – Hungary; IT – Italy; LV – Latvia; LT – Lithuania; LU – Luxembourg; MT – Malta; NL – Netherlands; PL – Poland; PT – Portugal; RO – Romania; ES – Spain; SI – Slovenia; SK – Slovakia; SE – Sweden; UK – United Kingdom; CION – Commission; PSY – Presidency; MS – Member States; EP – European Parliament

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone present.

- 1. Adoption of the Agenda and of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd June 2009**
- 2. Setting up of a single Access Point for Professional and Academic Recognition of Qualifications – State-of-Play**

The Chairman pointed out to all member states present that contact points should provide citizens and contact points of the other Member states with the necessary information on the recognition of professional qualifications and also assist citizens in realising the rights conferred to them by the Professional Qualifications Directive together with other *Contact Points* and the Competent Authorities in the host Member State. The Chairman stated that the Commission may request the *Contact Points* to deal with enquiries and should report back to the Commission within two months.

It was emphasized that Professional and Academic Qualifications are two different things and it seems that this is not obvious for the citizens. The Chairman stressed that more effort should be used to explain the differences to the public. He stated that a survey was conducted and a more detailed document should be forwarded in the near future. He also stated that more work should be done in some countries. Luxembourg stated that since it is a small country it feels that there is no need for training and although it is faring off well there still is space for improvement. The Netherlands informed representatives of Member States that they

organize training and information sessions especially courses regarding Competent Authorities.

3. Recasting of “Your Europe” Website – State of Play

A presentation was given, a copy of which will be sent shortly. The Commission invited all representatives of Member States to forward any links so that these may be included on the “Your Europe” website.

4. User Guide - http://eu/internal_market/qualifications/future_en.htm

This Guide was published end of 2009. Its aim is to explain in simple terms what rights citizens have. Examples of which were given. Through this guide citizens can understand the rights they have if they are going to be established in another country be it on a short-term or long-term basis. It also deals about other problems including language problems. On this guide one can place questions. It was strongly recommended that contact points should refer people to this Users’ Guide. It is a Commission’s paper. It would be wise to take into account what the comments say. It was announced that this Users’ Guide will also be on the “Your Europe” website in the near future.

Feedback - Italy declared that they published it on their website and they have been promoting it. They also recommended that a clear distinction between academic and professional recognition of qualifications should be included in this Guide since it’s still unclear for a lot of people.

Denmark stated that it is also on their website with a link and they got positive feedback. They also stated that they had some technical problems and the Chairman asked everyone present that if such problems arise one should immediately inform the Commission.

Poland declared it is a useful guide and easy to read in two languages English and Polish in their case.

At this point the Chairman invited all present to forward the Commission of any domestic users’ guide or website so that these will be inserted as a link on the Commission’s website. Acts of host Member States, brochures, flyers, FAQs and any other documents should also be sent. The Chairman stressed that no legal language should be used and it should be hands-on.

5. Forum for Contact Points <http://forums.ec.europa.eu/profquals/contact-points/>

Chairman invited all present once again to register. He stressed that more interaction between contact points should be happening so that there is a constant up-date of FAQs.

Italy complained of the problem of resources that they have. UK commented that it is useful to download and they will be happy to register.

Chairman confirmed that instructions for registering will be sent again. A document with FAQs will be circulated in the near future and an up-date will be appearing in April. The Chairman invited everyone present to put forward any FAQs within the next 4 weeks.

6. Contacts with Citizens

Contact Points are duty bound to explain to citizens what Competent Authorities represent. *Contact Points* should help citizens that refer to competent authorities but the Chairman stated that in fact this is not happening.

The Chairman explained the functions of *Contact Points* which he referred to as “Front Office”. Citizens need information on how and where to apply for recognition and which conditions they shall satisfy for their professional qualifications to be recognised. Given that the Directive now applies in all Member States and that Contact Points are in place everywhere, the Commission has started to refer citizens more systematically to contact points.

Further explanation of the “Assistance Function” was also given – *Contact Points* should assist citizens in realising their rights. The Directive does certainly not assume that contact points should act like an ombudsman or an appeal authority but their role implies that citizens should receive added value going beyond what can usually be expected from competent authorities. A point of reference could be the Code of Conduct and a second point of reference is that contact points are invited to inform the Commission about the enquiries they receive. A third point of reference is the co-operation between the contact points of different Member States – *Solv-It* between borders.

Representatives of Member States pointed out that they would like to know if there is a petition against their own country. They stressed that they should be made aware.

7. Evaluation of Directive 2005/36/EC

The Chairman admitted that Directive 2005/36/EC is quite a complex directive. He stated that the Users’ Guide is an operational tool for citizens to provide hands-on information. However, it is not designed to clarify legal questions. Discussion took place wherein the Chairman asked if the frequently asked questions (June 2008) satisfy the demands or whether there is a need for developing another tool inviting contact points to submit more legal questions.

It is the intention of the Commission to reach out to competent authorities, including the Group of Co-ordinators to learn more about their experiences in the implementation of the Directive. It seems important to get an understanding from citizens how they see the functioning of the Directive. It is not excluded that a public consultation will take place in the second half of 2010.

8. Information from DG MARKT and DG EMPL

Ms Agnes Bradier held a presentation about EURES.

EURES is a network of people across Europe with 800 certified advisors and thousands of assistant advisors. Its aim is to promote fair information, advice and job matching activities. Although Europe has a problem of unemployment there are still a lot of vacancies, in fact there are 700,000 available vacancies on-line. The number of citizens putting their CV on-line is 395,995. A big event will be held in Brussels on 2nd October, 2010 – European Job Day showing all vacancies from every country. It will have around 500 main events.

Ms Bradier spoke of ESCO – European Skills Competences Occupations. She explained that this is divided in ISCO and ISCED. ISCO shows the occupation names and ISCED shows skills and competences. This is a multi-lingual dictionary of occupations and skills to improve and facilitate matching.

EURES aims to be practical, user-friendly and intuitive. It also aims to be more integrated into Public Employment and move from Database to matching and placement tool.

9. Any other business

A set of draft questions was given to national *Contact Points* to give an idea what kind of FAQs should be put forward. The Chairman asked how it would be best to answer these questions whether we should have a multiple choice system/tick box/answer box. It was suggested that the best would be a combination.