1. What is ESCO?

ESCO is a multilingual classification of European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations. ESCO organises concepts that are relevant in the European labour market and in the education/training sector. It will be available free of charge to all stakeholders.

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and DG Education and Culture jointly coordinate the development of ESCO. Although ESCO is a European Commission initiative, the active involvement of stakeholders in its development is essential to shape ESCO into a tool which meets practical needs and is up-to-date. Stakeholders potentially concerned by ESCO include public, private and third sector employment services, social partners, national education, training and qualification authorities and institutions, sector skill councils, human resource management, recruitment and career guidance professionals, statistical and research organisations, promoters of other taxonomies and classification systems, developers of ICT HR applications (including other web-based job search tools) and international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and the OECD.

2. What can ESCO be used for?

Applications performing job matching, identifying skill shortages, providing career guidance or presenting labour market information can use ESCO as a building block. These specific needs will be covered by applications using ESCO, rather than ESCO itself. However, ESCO will facilitate the development and implementation of instruments responding to these needs. The following examples of practical applications illustrate the added value of ESCO:

- Online job portals could use the vocabulary of ESCO for analysing CVs and job vacancies in the 22 official European languages (except Irish). The skills/competence pillar of ESCO will allow job matching on the basis of skill sets. Instead of finding job vacancies in a certain occupation, job portals can then find the jobs that best match a jobseeker's individual skill set.
ESCO will be a European interoperability classification. It can be used to exchange information across borders and language barriers. For example, employment services can exchange job vacancies that are written in different languages, interpret them correctly and use them for online job matching.

At European level, ESCO will provide for a closer matching of jobseekers to jobs through [EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal](#) – as well as facilitate the development by individuals of a [Europass CV](#) and/or Europass Experience.

Learners could use ESCO to build personal skill profiles and to record their learning outcomes in applications.

Education and training institutions could use ESCO to improve planning and curriculum development. ESCO will allow them to react quicker on emerging skill needs.

### 3. The three pillars of ESCO

Once ESCO is finalised, applications can use its three-pillar structure. The three pillars of ESCO will cover i) occupations; ii) skills/competences; and iii) qualifications. Each pillar will have its own structure and the pillars will be interlinked as shown in diagram 1.

![Diagram 1: ESCO – The three pillar approach](image)
The **occupations pillar** currently contains around 4760 occupations. It organises them by using ISCO\(^1\) as a hierarchical structure.

The **skills/competences pillar** currently consists of around 4720 job-specific skills/competences. Apart from job specific skills/competences (such as *accounting*, *machine tool setting* or *PHP programming*) it will also contain transversal skills/competences (such as the *ability to learn*, *numeracy* or *communication skills*) in future. A tailor-made and relevant structure for grouping skills/competences is currently being developed.

The **qualifications pillar** of ESCO is still under development. The following types and categories of qualifications will be included into the ESCO qualifications pillar:

- National qualifications;
- Qualifications awarded at national level but regulated at European level;
- (International) qualifications, certificates and licences linked to tasks, technologies;
- (International) qualifications and certificates linked to occupations and sectors.

National qualifications need to be considered with particular care as ESCO will need to build on the work already carried out in relation to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the related national qualifications frameworks.

ESCO will be linked to national, regional and sectoral classifications as well as relevant international classifications and standards, such as NACE\(^2\), ISCED\(^3\) and the EQF.

### 4. Developing ESCO

ESCO is a long-term project that can only be achieved gradually and that requires a pragmatic, step-by-step approach. Occupational profiles will be developed, containing skills/competences sets and qualifications for each occupation. All interested parties are encouraged to actively contribute throughout the development and continuous revision of ESCO.

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1. **ISCO**: *International Standard Classification of Occupations*; designed and managed by the International Labour Organization, ILO.
2. **NACE**: *Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community*.
3. **ISCED**: *International Standard Classification of Education*; designed and managed by UNESCO.
The current version of ESCO (pre-ESCO v0) has not yet been published. It will be made available to selected stakeholders for testing purposes. The European commission will organise a stakeholder’s conference on ESCO to launch the ESCO Portal in autumn 2013. The ESCO Portal will contain general information on ESCO, its synergies with other European initiatives (the European Vacancy Monitor, European Sector Skills Councils, the European Skills Panorama), as well as a first publicly available version of ESCO: ESCO v0. ESCO v0 is based on the EURES classification, used on the European Job Mobility portal, and ISCO 08. After completion of the revision of a sector of economic activities by a sectoral Reference Group, quality control by the Maintenance Committee and endorsement by the Board, intermediate versions of ESCO will be published. The Reference Groups therefore play a crucial role in the development of ESCO’s content. The work results of the 28 Reference Groups will result into the first entirely revised version of ESCO, ESCO v1, by 2017.