Frequently Asked Questions for the ESCO community fora

Frequently Asked Questions for the ESCO community fora

1. Categories of fora

1.1 What are the ESCO community fora?

The ESCO community fora are collaborative spaces designed to facilitate the interaction, communication and exchange of information between the European Commission (EC) and different stakeholders interested in ESCO. The fora offer a single place where to share comments and feedback on the content of the classification, exchange best practices and experiences on how to use ESCO and propose new ideas to further improve ESCO.

1.2 What does the European Commission want to achieve with the community fora?

The community fora are an important element of the workflow for the continuous improvement of ESCO. By setting up dedicated community fora for different target groups, the EC aims at channelling and collecting proposals and feedback on the content of the classification, on the practical use of ESCO, on the further conceptual improvement of the project and on the relation with national classifications. Information collected via the fora will be a key input for the revision of the classification and will feed into the process for scoping ESCO v.1.1.

1.3 Why are there four different fora? Which are the differences?

The Commission has decided to set up 4 different categories of community fora, namely a forum for **domain experts**, a forum for the **ESCO implementers**, a forum for the **ESCO Maintenance Committee members** and one open to representatives from the **Member States Working Group.**

The community forum for domain experts aims at providing sectoral and cross sectoral experts with a single point for discussion in order to share feedbacks, suggestions and proposals on how to improve the content of the ESCO classification.

The community forum dedicated to Member States' representatives aims at discussing and sharing experiences in mapping national classifications to ESCO or in integrating ESCO for the purpose of the EURES regulation.

The community forum for the ESCO Maintenance Committee will be a collaborative space dedicated to the members of the Committee. The goal of this forum is to facilitate the discussion and the exchange of information between members, to allow members to share with the Commission their proposals and comments on the ongoing work of the Maintenance Committee and to be informed about the latest ESCO developments.

Finally, the community forum for ESCO implementers will allow organisations implementing ESCO in their own services to provide feedback on the practical use of ESCO as a building block of their system, share eventual issues related to the IT implementation and raise any change in IT requirements.

The first three fora are available upon invitation and registration only. On the other hand, the implementers' forum is open to all in order to facilitate as much as possible the access to technical guidance or feedback: by ensuring there are no registration barriers to the forum, the implementers can more easily obtain the information or support that they require.

1.4 Where do I find the fora?

The ESCO community fora are accessible from the ESCO portal. A dedicated icon is available in the top bar of the ESCO portal.

1.5 Can I have access to multiple fora?

Access to the community fora is granted by the European Commission on a case by case basis. Multi-access to different fora is allowed only when the contribution of a specific expert is considered to benefit different areas of improvement of ESCO. To this end, the user should contact the forum administrator and ask for access to other fora.

1.6 What is the ESCO MAI?

The ESCO Maintenance Committee (MAI) is a Commission expert group providing advice on the continuous technical and conceptual improvement of ESCO. It formulates opinions on the approach for technical implementation, on quality control principles and on the revision of ESCO data. Additionally, the Committee advises the Commission on the implementation of ESCO in software applications. Its members are appointed on the basis of their personal expertise and do not officially represent organisations or Member States. The mandate of the current MAI runs from 2018 to 2022.

1.7 What is the ESCO MSWG?

The ESCO Member States Working Group (MSWG) is composed of representatives of Member States (authorities on labour market and education and training) and European social partners. Its aim is to support the development and implementation of ESCO.

2. Registration process

2.1 How do I access the forum?

Invitations to participate in the community fora are managed by the European Commission.

For the domain expert forum, the Commission compiled a list of experts in the various sectors of economic activity, ranging from existing experts who got involved with ESCO

in the past to new stakeholders whose area of expertise and input is beneficial for the revision of ESCO.

Registration to the fora is done via the EU log in. Users are therefore invited to create an ECAS account (or to use their existing account if they have one). Once logged in, users will be able to access the forum where they belong according to their status (domain expert, MAI member and Member State representative).

The implementers' forum is an exception, as the forum is open to everybody and is intended for those who are using ESCO or are trying to set it up in their applications or processes.

2.2 What personal information do I need to provide and why?

When creating an EU log in, the user is required to insert the following information before creating a dedicated password: name, surname and email address.

Moreover, when registering in the fora, users also have to indicate their nationality, organisation and the position held within that organisation.

2.3 Whom can I contact in case of problems with the registration?

In case of issues with the registration, you can contact the ESCO Secretariat at the following email address: EMPL-ESCO-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu

2.4 How will my personal data be stored?

Personal data provided by users are processed by the European Commission in full compliance with the Regulation on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions. Your personal information can be accessed only by members of the European Commission staff and by external contractors acting on behalf of the European Commission. The European Commission will not process the collected data for any other purpose than those described above.

2.5 Whom can I contact to delete my account?

In case you want to verify which personal data is stored, or in case you want to have it modified or deleted, please contact the ESCO Secretariat by e-mail to EMPL-ESCO-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu.

2.6 How do I manage my profile?

Once registered to the fora, users will be able to see their profile and change the default picture if they wish so.

The individual profile page shows the activity performed by the user together with certain default information (username, email, date of membership, date of last activity, role). Users can also contact the administrator or other members by clicking on the icon "Message".

By clicking on the top right icon, users are able to set their notification preferences. Users are invited to indicate how and in which case they wish to receive notifications, by selecting amongst the different options available.

From the same icon users can express their notification preferences regarding the categories of fora. Domain experts in particular are invited to indicate in which economic sector they have a particular interest and set their notification preferences: this will allow the ESCO team to group expertise relevant to a specific economic sector.

3. Community forum for domain experts

3.1 Who is a domain expert?

Domain experts have a deeper insight into the knowledge, skills and competences needed in specific economic sectors or specific occupations or into cross-sectoral knowledge, skills and competences and therefore they can provide valuable information on how an economic sector evolves or what new occupations or skills requirements emerge in the market and point out quality issues.

They include *inter alia* specialised recruiters, education and training professionals, social partners, industry associations, professional associations, sector skills councils and alliances.

3.2 Who participates in the domain experts forum?

The European Commission invited around (1000) organisations with an adequate European geographical balance to participate in the domain expert community forum, building on the expertise and organisations already involved in the development of ESCO v.1.0.

The Commission also ensured the contribution of organisations and experts active at European level, such as EU agencies active in the domain of employment, education and training, organisations partners in EU funded projects focusing on skills, EU networks and innovation centers.

Domain experts therefore come from sectoral umbrella organisations, universities and higher education institutions, VET providers, large, medium and small sized enterprises, NGO, social partners, public employment services, public bodies and research centers.

3.3 How is the forum organised?

The forum is organized around 27 economic sectors. To ensure the continuity with the work done for the development of ESCO v.1, the 27 economic sectors reflect the configuration used during the development of ESCO v.1. The list of all economic sectors is available on the [ESCO portal](#).

At the same time, all ESCO occupations have an entry point to the forum, so that experts will be able to access the forum also when searching for a particular occupation by clicking on a dedicated icon.

3.4 How are the sectors defined?

The 27 economic sectors are defined following the criteria established in NACE rev2. Each ESCO occupation has been associated to one sector following the criteria of economic activities. The description of the scope of each sector is provided in the dedicated space.

However, occupations in ESCO are not sector specific, because many occupations can be linked with more than one economic activity: the allocation of the existing occupations to specific sectors only aimed at facilitating the work of experts.

3.5 Are users assigned to a specific sector? Can they also comment in other sections?

As occupations are not sector specific, users can access all sectors and provide their feedback on all ESCO occupations.

However, the goal of the domain expert forum is to group sectoral expertise in order to review the content of the current occupations and discuss about the future evolution of the classification.

Therefore, users are encouraged to indicate their economic sector of interest and provide their feedback only in those subgroups belonging to the domain/field of activity of their organisation or in which they hold a particular expertise. The particular expertise of the user would be taken in due account when assessing the comments received.

3.6 What is the role of users in the domain experts forum?

Users are encouraged to comment and provide feedback on specific occupations, skills and knowledge concepts.

Regarding existing occupations and skills concepts, users are encouraged to provide their feedback on:

- the formulation of the preferred term,

- the alternative labels,

- the formulation of the description,

- the mapping to ISCO,

- the essential and optional skills and knowledge foreseen for an occupation,

- the relations between occupations and skills,

- spelling mistakes

Users also encouraged to provide their feedback on:

- new occupations emerging in the labour market

- new skills and knowledge emerging in the labour market.

3.7 What is an occupation in ESCO?

Occupations are not the same as jobs (which are not covered in ESCO).

While with the term "job" we refer to a set of tasks and duties carried out by one person for a particular employer (including self-employment), occupations are defined as a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity.

ESCO currently contains 2942 occupations. Each occupation concept describes the meaning of the occupation and provides a number of useful pieces of information about it (also referred to as "metadata").

3.8 How are the skills, competencies and knowledge areas described in ESCO?

In ESCO, the notions of "skill" and "competence" are used as synonyms, to indicate the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

Knowledge instead is referred to as the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning, and represent the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study.

ESCO distinguishes four types of skills, according to their reusability level: (i) transversal knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to a broad range of occupations and sectors; (ii) cross-sector knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to specific occupations across several economic sectors; (iii) sector-specific knowledge, skills and competences are specific to one sector, but are relevant for more than one occupation within that sector and (iv) occupation-specific knowledge, skills and competences are usually applied only within one occupation or specialism.

3.9 How are the skills structured? Are they linked with occupations?

At this stage, the ESCO skills pillar does not contain a full, top-down hierarchical structure. Instead, the 13 485 elements of the pillar are structured in four different manners:

- through their relationship with occupations, by using occupational profiles as an entry point;

- through a partial hierarchy only for transversal knowledge, skills and competences;

- through relationships indicating how knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to other knowledge, skills and competences (in particular in cases of contextualisation of skills)

- through functional collections that allow subsections of the skills pillar to be selected, according to the purpose it is going to be used for.

The Commission is currently working to a new structure for the Skills Pillar. A new skill and knowledge hierarchy will be completed by the end of 2019.

3.10 Can my organisation have more participants in the forum?

Interested organisations can appoint as many representatives as they want for providing feedback and participating to the discussions. In case of umbrella organisations, the Commission encourages them to pass the information about the forum to national organisations so that their view is also taken into account.

3.11 In which language should I provide my contribution?

English is the working language for the community fora.

3.12 How will the discussions be moderated?

The Commission will actively moderate the discussion, aiming at building consensus by the community of experts on the changes required in ESCO in the different fields of ESCO, especially for important ones.

The Commission will stimulate users to review existing concepts and propose modifications for each of the 27 sectors. It will also post articles, studies and reflections on the evolution of a specific sector and suggest adding or removing concepts when needed. In addition, the Commission will coordinate the discussions among the stakeholders in order to build consensus and address diverging opinions.

In general, the Commission encourages a respectful communication in the fora and will not accept any inadequate or illicit comments.

3.13 What will happen to my comments? What is the process of decision-making?

The Commission will analyse the comments received and promote an active discussion between the stakeholders to build consensus on the feedback provided.

The Commission will ask users to provide further evidence to back the consistency of the feedback provided, to make sure the proposed modification corresponds to the reality of the European labour market. In particular, it will analyse whether the proposed modifications correspond to the reality of the European labour market or rather reflect a specific national circumstance or the individual position of the user. In all cases, the Commission will use the ESCO guidelines and the continuous improvement process to base all decisions on.

In case of disagreements between users, the Commission will facilitate the dialogue, will do further desk research and even consult the Maintenance Committee members, if needed, in order to reach a conclusion.

3.14 How long will the domain experts forum be open for comments?

The forum remains open for feedback on a continuous basis. However, in order to prepare the scoping phase for the next version of ESCO (v1.1 foreseen for 2021) the Commission

will take into account all the feedback received until **31 August 2019**. After this period, all the incoming comments will still be taken into consideration for the following knowledge engineering phase.

4. Community forum for ESCO implementers

4.1 Who are the ESCO implementers?

ESCO implementers use the ESCO classification in order to provide software solutions, products or services to customers or end users. This includes inter alia public and private employment services, job boards, HR software vendors, social media platforms, recruiters, career guidance services, training providers and awarding bodies. Since they use ESCO in their applications and systems, implementers have valuable insights on the performance of ESCO in specific use cases.

For the purpose of the online forum dedicated to ESCO implementers, the European Commission invites all public and private organisations currently using ESCO within their services or products to participate and contribute their insights.

4.2 How can ESCO be used?

Almost two years after its launch, ESCO is being used in a substantial number of IT implementations covering a variety of areas like recruiting, matching skills to jobs and trainings, advertising job vacancies, career planning, documenting and mapping skills and qualifications of jobseekers and analysing the labour market. ESCO is a powerful tool that can bridge the communication gap between education and work, enable online matching of people to jobs, promote mobility, support re-skilling and up-skilling, and support skills intelligence, big data analyses and statistics.

More information on how ESCO can be used is available on the ESCO portal.

4.3 How is the forum organised?

The forum is organised around a generic section where the broad implementation of ESCO can be discussed. It addresses issues such as missing features, key performance indicators and requirements for improving the classification: ESCO's users can share and discuss implementation options including feature requests, best practices and practical issues related to ESCO such as how to use the ESCO classification in their systems.

Specific subsections are dedicated to specific questions regarding the ESCO APIs and the ESCO dataset.

4.4 How can I submit my contribution?

Users of ESCO are invited to share their experience and signal any shortcoming and technical issue as well as potential improvement in the dedicated section of the forum. New users might want to first read the comments/questions addressed by other users so as not to duplicate the communication.

4.5 How will the discussion be moderated?

The Commission will actively moderate the forum and ask users to share their experience and feedback on the concrete use of ESCO, signal any potential issue and propose further improvements. To this end, it will also ask users to fill in a survey on the specific use of ESCO within their products and services. The survey contains key performance indicators that are useful in tracking the performance of ESCO and any improvement areas.

As the forum is open to all organisations interested in ESCO, there will be a "moderation queue" aimed at filtering the comments received, whereby the Commission will first have to approve comments added by the implementers before they are public in the forum. This precaution is necessary in order to avoid inappropriate comments or spamming.

In general, the Commission encourages a respectful communication in the fora and will not accept any inadequate or illicit comments.

5. Community forum for the ESCO Maintenance Committee

5.1 How will the discussions be moderated?

The Commission will consult members on specific topics when needed. Committee members can also actively start the discussion and propose topics for debate.

5.2 How can I provide feedback to specific work topics of the ESCO Maintenance Committee?

The ESCO team will use the forum to consult Committee members on specific topics and subjects on which the Committee has competence.

5.3 Is the forum going to be the official communication channel for all the ESCO Maintenance Committee meetings?

No. All official meeting documents and presentations will be sent via the AGM system.

5.4 Can I share the information and the content of the discussion with my colleagues in my organisation?

No, topics discussed in the forum are confidential and cannot be used for commercial purposes.

6. Community forum for the ESCO Member States Working Group

6.1 What is the purpose of this forum?

The purpose of the forum is to provide Member States with a place where to share comments or experiences on ESCO and to comment on the preliminary results of the mapping exercise.

6.2 Is the discussion public/accessible to all Member States or can we discuss bilaterally with the European Commission?

Comments and feedbacks in the forum are public. Member States that do not want to publicly share their experience can therefore directly address the Commission at the address: EMPL-ESCO-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu. Members can also directly contact the Commission in the forum via messages.

6.3 Where do I find the supporting documents?

All the supporting documents mentioned above can be found in the dedicated section of the ESCO service portal.