

ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) is the European multilingual classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.

ESCO works as a dictionary, describing, identifying and classifying professional occupations, skills, and qualifications relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. Those concepts and the relationships between them can be understood by electronic systems, which allows different online platforms to use ESCO for services like matching jobseekers to jobs on the basis of their skills, suggesting trainings to people who want to reskill or upskill etc.

The aim of ESCO is to support job mobility across Europe and therefore a more integrated and efficient labour market, by offering a “common language” on occupations and skills that can be used by different stakeholders on employment and education and training topics. ESCO is a European Commission project, run by Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL). It is available in an online portal and can be consulted free of charge. Its first full version (ESCO v1) was published on the 28th of July 2017.

ESCO is organised in three pillars:

- the occupations pillar;
- the knowledge, skills and competences pillar;
- the qualifications pillar.

The ESCO Occupations Pillar aims to describe all occupations relevant for the European labour market: ESCO v1 features 2 942 occupations.

Occupations are not the same as jobs (which are not covered in ESCO), and are defined as a ‘set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity’. ESCO is strongly interlinked with the latest version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). Each occupation is therefore mapped to an ISCO code, and further specified (ISCO has only 4 levels of occupations, so ESCO further details those levels): the two classifications are interlinked through a hierarchical structure.

Each ESCO occupation consists of a **preferred term**, i.e. the most used expression in a given country to refer to that specific occupation (e "Bartenders"). It then provides the **non-preferred terms** (they can be alternative labels, synonymous, spelling variants, declensions, abbreviations), the reference to the corresponding **ISCO group**, a short **description** of the occupation, a **scope note** explaining which specific occupations are in or out the scope of the preferred term (if applicable). It also offers information on **regulatory aspects** and, where relevant, reference to narrower occupations.

Most importantly, each occupation is related to **essential and optional knowledge, skill and competence concepts**, describing in detail with skills and knowledges are essential for people willing to work in the area, and which are optional. This makes possible to understand which skills are typically needed to work in a certain occupation, helping employers to assess which skills a candidate can have, job seekers to realize which skills they lack, and career guidance

providers, trainers and education providers to shape their training offer according to the skills needed for a given occupation.

The ESCO Skills Pillar provides for a definition of 13 485 competences, skills and knowledges. Currently ESCO does not contain a full, top-down hierarchical structure for the skills pillar: such structure will be available at the end of 2019.

However, skills are structured in different manners: i) through their relationship with occupations, ii) through relationships indicating how knowledge, skills and competences are relevant to other knowledge, skills and competences, and iii) through a hierarchy (only for transversal knowledge, skills and competences).

For each skill, ESCO offers a **preferred term**, **non-preferred terms** (if applicable), a **description**, a **scope note** (if applicable, clarifying the boundaries of the concept), the **skill type** (knowledge vs competence) and, above all, a list of all ESCO occupations where the skill can be used, distinguishing between those occupations where such skills is essential, and those where is only optional. Furthermore, it provides information on the **reusability level** of a skill, i.e. whether the skill is a transversal, cross-sector, sector specific or occupation-specific skill.

The Qualifications Pillar aims to collect existing information on qualifications.

Qualifications in ESCO come from national qualifications databases of Member States that are included in National Qualifications Frameworks that have been referenced to the EQF. Since 2014, the Commission has been financially supporting Member States and other partner countries (EFTA, EEA and candidate countries) to develop national qualifications databases and to interconnect these with the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe portal (LOQ) and with ESCO.

For more information about ESCO and to see how ESCO can be used, you can consult the followi<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I161740>

- <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I144718>
- <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I144716>
- ESCO connecting people and jobs
- ESCO Connecting education and training with the labour market
- ESCO improving career guidance services
- ESCO harnessing the power of big data analysis for a functional labour market
- ESCO Handbook