



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE



27.02.2009

COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

COM (2008) 865 - COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS. An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training.

Building higher skills through better education and training systems is an essential part of Europe's strategy to meet future challenges. This is one of the main priorities of the Lisbon strategy. Knowledge, skills and competences determine an individual's chances to succeed in the labour market and to have an active role in society. They are crucial for social cohesion as well as the competitiveness and innovative capacity of enterprises and the entire economy.

In this Communication, the Commission proposes that European cooperation in education and training should address four strategic challenges in the years to 2020:

1. Making lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality.

Lifelong learning and learner mobility represent the two key areas of the European cooperation in education and training. Lifelong learning comprises learning at all ages and in all contexts.

2. Improving the quality and efficiency of provision and outcomes.

High quality education and training systems which are both efficient and equitable are crucial for Europe's success. The major challenge is to ensure the acquisition of key competences by everyone, while developing the excellence that will allow Europe to retain a strong global role in higher education. Learning outcomes at all levels must be relevant for professional and private life.

3. Promoting equity and active citizenship

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Education and training policy should enable all citizens, irrespective of age, gender and socio-economic background, to acquire, update and develop over a lifetime both job-specific skills and the key competences needed to foster further learning, active citizenship and inter-cultural dialogue.

4. Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Innovation and creativity are key factors in enterprise development and crucial to Europe's ability to face the challenges of international competition and sustainable development.



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COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS – 16/2/2009

There was broad agreement on the four strategic objectives to be addressed by European cooperation in education and training. Of the five existing benchmarks, only one has so far been achieved, namely the number of tertiary graduates in mathematics, science and technology. Many delegations therefore considered that the remaining four benchmarks (concerning the participation of adults in lifelong learning, the number of early school leavers, the number of low achievers in reading and completion of upper secondary education) should broadly be retained in order to build on the progress already made.

Which are the most urgent new priorities with potential added value for European cooperation in education and training, including through the development of benchmarks and/or indicators?

Diverging opinions were expressed in relation to the six additional benchmarks proposed by the European Commission (mobility, employability, creativity and innovation, languages, pre-primary education and investment in higher education). Many Member States queried whether they were realistic and achievable, and stressed that benchmarks must be pertinent and carefully defined in order to properly reflect measures taken and progress made by governments. A number of Member States pointed out that "less is sometimes more", while others stressed the principle of subsidiarity and the voluntary nature of benchmarks.

All agreed that more detailed work on the number, content and scope of the benchmarks would be required in order to prepare the ground for adoption of the updated strategic framework at the next Education Council in May 2009.



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NEW SKILLS - NEW JOBS

COM (2008) 868 - COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - New Skills for New Jobs - Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs.

Skills upgrading is critically important for Europe's short-term recovery and longer term growth and productivity, for its jobs and its capacity to adapt to change, for equity, gender equality and social cohesion.

The European Council, in March 2008, stressed that investing in people and modernising labour markets is one of the four priority areas of the Lisbon strategy, and invited the Commission "to present a comprehensive assessment of the future skills requirements in Europe up to 2020, taking account of the impacts of technological change and ageing populations and to propose steps to anticipate future needs".

In response to the European Council mandate, chapter 2 of this Communication presents a first assessment of future skills requirements up to 2020. But this analysis cannot be a one-shot exercise. It must be followed by a sustained, strategic effort as new sectors increase their potential to spark growth and job creation. Assessments need to be updated regularly to integrate these new developments.

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ERASMUS PROGRAMME STUDY

Brussels, 20 February 2009

Where would European higher education be without the Erasmus programme?

According to a recent study, the EU's Erasmus programme for mobility and cooperation in higher education has been a strong driving force in shaping the landscape of higher education in Europe. The programme, which is particularly popular for its student mobility activities, has contributed to improving, opening up and modernising both higher education institutions and education policies. For the vast majority of them, participation in Erasmus has led to innovation in

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core activity areas such as teaching and learning methods, recognition of study periods, support services for students, research activities, business cooperation as well as institutional management.

Ján Figel, European Commissioner with responsibility for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said: "The Erasmus programme has been the grandfather of some of the biggest reform initiatives in higher education in Europe today. Erasmus paved the way for the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System—ECTS—and the 'Bologna process', in which 46 European countries have agreed to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010. This study reinforces my view that Erasmus, which celebrates its 22nd anniversary this year, should be further expanded in the future as a key vehicle for modernising higher education and promoting mobility opportunities for students."

The study focused on the impact of Erasmus since its inception in 1987. It is based on a survey to which around 750 institutions' top management and more than 1,800 Erasmus coordinators both at international offices and faculties responded. Its main findings focus on the programme's impact on two levels: policies and institutions.

Erasmus and higher education policy : The Erasmus programme has played a leading role in the internationalisation of national, European and international higher education. Erasmus was the **driving force behind the Bologna Process** and many actions have been directly drawn from it, such as easily readable and comparable degrees, the establishment of a credit system, quality assurance and the application of joint and double degrees. The programme continues to have an impact on policy in the field of education, for example, by supporting projects to explore new, more sophisticated ways to enhance the transparency of the missions and performances of higher education institutions.

In addition to the positive impact on students, such as upgraded skills and enhanced employability, which have already been highlighted in previous studies, the **institutional impact of Erasmus** is considered to be strong, particularly in larger institutions and in the new EU Member States. Student and staff mobility have stimulated the introduction of international offices and support services for mobile but also home students. Erasmus has also had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning as the mobility of international students and teachers has led to the introduction of new teaching methods and exchange of good practices. It has also triggered the modernisation and internationalisation of university curricula as well as the transparency and transferability of qualifications such as the generalised use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). This is attested to by more than 85 % of the central Erasmus coordinators consulted.



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In the area of **research**, Erasmus has encouraged active participation in international projects, attendance at conferences and tendering for international projects, all of which has strengthened excellence and competition in the field. In addition, benchmarking and quality standards have become common practice. An unexpected benefit was that, according to 30 % of the participating institutions, results were also achieved in the field of **closer cooperation between universities and businesses**.

For almost 90 % of the central Erasmus coordinators, regular progress was made on giving their institution a **more international profile**, and nearly 50 % reported a high or very high impact when it comes to making the **management of higher education institutions** more professional. 92 % of the higher management agreed that their institution's participation in Erasmus supported institutional changes and modernisation.

To find out more:

Executive summary and full study:

[The Impact of Erasmus on European Higher Education: Quality, Openness and Internationalisation](#)

European Commission:
[The Erasmus programme](#)

European Commission:
[European agenda for the modernisation of higher education](#)

SEE ALSO THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE

http://ec.europa.eu/news/culture/090216_1_en.htm

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COM (2009) 73 - EUROPEAN COMMISSION ANNUAL POLICY STRATEGY – 2010

This Annual Policy Strategy paves the way for establishing a policy agenda for 2010 and launches the inter-institutional dialogue on the priorities for next year. While it is the responsibility of the current Commission to ensure the continuity of the institution's strategic planning and programming system, it must also take

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account of the fact that a new Commission will be in office in 2010. It will be for the next Commission to review the policy priorities in the light of its strategic objectives, and to turn them into an operational programme when it draws up its Work Programme for 2010.

The European Economic Recovery Plan (see summary further down), provides a solid basis for building the conditions for recovery. Its implementation during the rest of 2009 and into 2010 will be a matter of high priority. To make sure that the EU comes out of the crisis stronger and better able to take advantage of the upturn, the structural reforms under the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy need to be continued, in a spirit of partnership between the European institutions and Member States.

FOCUS OF THE ANNUAL POLICY STRATEGY ON EDUCATION

Employment, education and training policies will be at the centre of efforts to deal with the consequences of the present crisis. As a follow-up to the renewed Social Agenda, the next Commission will continue to work in the fields of employment, social affairs, gender equality and youth to help meet key policy challenges such as globalisation, technological development and demographic change. The Commission should also present a follow-up strategy to the Roadmap on gender equality, which will end in 2010, and pursue its work to make equal opportunities for disabled people a reality. The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion will help to underline the EU's political commitment to eradicating poverty and fighting social exclusion. The Commission will prepare, along with the Member States, stakeholders and other EU institutions, to hold a European Year of Volunteering in 2011.

Research and Innovation

The financial crisis and the subsequent squeeze on financial resources, both public and private, may tempt some to delay, or substantially cut, planned research and development and education investments, as has happened in the past when Europe was hit by a downturn. With hindsight, such decisions amounted to a major capital and knowledge destruction with very negative effects for Europe's growth and employment prospects in the medium to longer-term.

However, there have also been examples of countries, both inside and outside Europe, which had the foresight to increase research and development and education expenditure in difficult economic times by which they laid the basis for their strong position in innovation.



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Increase Investment in Research and Development , Innovation and Education

Member States and the private sector should increase planned investments in Education and Research and Development (consistent with **their national Research and Development targets**) to stimulate growth and productivity. They should also consider ways to **increase private sector Research and Development investments**, for example, by providing fiscal incentives, grants and/or subsidies. Member States should maintain investments to increase the quality of education.

The European Economic Recovery Plan

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/Comm_20081126.pdf

has two key pillars, and one underlying principle:

- **The first pillar** is a major injection of purchasing power into the economy, to boost demand and stimulate confidence. The Commission is proposing that, as a matter of urgency, Member States and the EU agree to an immediate budgetary impulse amounting to € 200 billion (1.5% of GDP), to boost demand in full respect of the Stability and Growth Pact.

- **The second pillar** rests on the need to direct short-term action to reinforce Europe's competitiveness in the long term. The Plan sets out a comprehensive programme to direct action to "smart" investment. Smart investment means investing in the right skills for tomorrow's needs; investing in energy efficiency to create jobs and save energy; investing in clean technologies to boost sectors like construction and automobiles in the low-carbon markets of the future; and investing in infrastructure and inter-connection to promote efficiency and innovation.

At the same time, the ten Actions for Recovery included in the Plan will help Member States to put the right social and economic levers in place to meet today's challenge: to open up new finance for SMEs, cut administrative burdens and kick-start investment to modernise infrastructure. It will drive a competitive Europe ready for the low-carbon economy.

- *The fundamental principle of this Plan is solidarity and social justice. In times of hardship, action must be geared to help those most in need.*

- *To work to protect jobs through action on social changes.*



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- *To immediately address the long-term job prospects of those losing their jobs, through the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and an accelerated European Social Fund.*
- *To cut energy costs for the vulnerable through targeted energy efficiency.*
- *To address the needs of those who cannot yet use the internet as a tool to connect.*





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