LLL HUB

Creating a space for lifelong learning

EU Handbook and Glossary

European legal frameworks and tools regarding education and training

National frameworks, Actors and Communities

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Lifelong Learning Programme

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LIFELONG
LEARNING
PLATFORM
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

This EU Handbook and Glossary is meant to provide you with an insight of the current European legal frameworks (policies and tools) regard to education and training. It shall guide you all along the LLL-HUB project life and beyond to analyse the implementation of lifelong learning strategies in your country, the influence of EU frameworks, the parallels that can be drawn with other partner countries, etc. This document will be particularly useful for the writing of a National/Regional State of Play (compilation of outcomes of LLL-LABS and LLL-FORUMS).

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LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Education has always been regarded as a national rather than an EU competence. To date, the EU has only a supporting competence over education and training, meaning that its role is limited to **supporting, coordinating and supplementing member state actions, without superseding their competence.** However, the Maastricht Treaty already recognised a European dimension to education and allowed the EU to contribute to the development of quality education and the promotion and improvement of vocational training, now included under articles 165 and 166 of the Lisbon Treaty. This influence has been growing with the adoption of the Lisbon (2000-2010) and Europe 2020 Strategies (2010-2020).

The European Commission defined lifelong learning as being about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement (CEC, 2000). Lifelong learning is not just a simple summing up or integration of traditional education programmes and modern learning opportunities. Its **aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning experiences throughout Europe** (Eurostat, 2009). This goal is inscribed within the open method of coordination and EU programmes as an overall priority since the Memorandum "Making a European area of Lifelong Learning a reality"[1] was adopted in 2001.

A turning point in the EU's involvement in education was indeed the formulation of the **Lisbon Agenda** and the application of the **Open Method of Coordination** to the area of education. This agenda aimed at "making the European Union the most competitive economy in the world by 2010" and referred significantly to education and training, predominantly as a way for the EU to become the most competitive and knowledge-based economy. In June 2010 the European Council adopted the so-called **Europe 2020 strategy** where education, training and lifelong learning play an even greater role than in the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010). This Strategy has implications for learning.

The **Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework** (ET2020) drives EU cooperation in Education and Training; it contains four key objectives and seven benchmarks. Two headline targets from the Framework have been top-ranked on the Europe 2020 agenda, namely on reducing early-school leaving and increasing levels of tertiary attainment across the EU. Indeed, the Framework is meant to be tightly linked to the **European Semester,** as part of the Europe 2020 economic governance. It results in Country-Specific Recommendations that are sometimes related to education and training. The ET2020 framework and the Europe 2020 Strategy are currently undergoing a mid-term review that the Lifelong Learning Platform and the project partners are closely following.

In line with legal frameworks, the European Commission is regularly publishing communications, giving political directions for the years to come such as the 2012 **"Rethinking Education"**[2] and the 2013 "**Opening up Education"** Communications[3] – what is referred to as soft law. These documents mention the need to adopt a comprehensive approach with implications for all sectors. Some sectoral policy initiatives also contribute to tackling the crucial challenge of lifelong learning; this is for example the case with the social dimension of the Bologna Process[4] in which opening new routes is stressed particularly with regard to untraditional learners.

Finally, the EU funds many good practices including those promoting lifelong learning through the new **Erasmus+ programme** 2014-2020. This programme supports partnerships between partners from different sectors and promotes tools to develop lifelong learning such as the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Equity and inclusion for example are some of the main features of Erasmus+ and have also been earmarked in the **European Social Fund** 2014-2020 (20% of the budget), another key lever of action for education and training that are one of its thematic objectives for the seven years to come.

I. THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

The Europe 2020 (EU2020) strategy was launched in March 2010[5] as the EU's strategy for promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth for the period 2010-2020. It identifies three key drivers for growth, to be implemented through concrete actions at EU and national levels:

- **Smart growth, fostering knowledge, innovation, education and digital society;**

- **Sustainable growth, ensuring that the European economy makes a transition towards a low-carbon economic model;**

- **Inclusive growth, raising participation in the labour market and reducing poverty.**

It aims to achieve a knowledge-based, competitive European economy while preserving the EU's social market economy model and improving resource efficiency. It was thus conceived as a partnership between the EU and its Member States, driven by the promotion of growth and jobs.

The EU2020 Strategy is currently subject to a mid-term review that is taking stock of its achievements and remaining challenges in a context of economic and social crisis. On 5 March 2014, the Commission adopted a Communication "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (Communication[6] and Annexes[7]). It has launched a public consultation until October 2014 to collect stakeholders' views on how to improve the strategy.

a) Headline Targets

To render this more tangible, five headline targets[8] in the areas of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of the decade. The targets are:

- to have at least 75% of people aged 20-64 in employment;

- to invest 3% of GDP in research and development;

- to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%;

- increase the share of renewables to 20% and improve energy efficiency by 20%;

- to reduce school drop-out rates to below 10% and increase the share of young people with a third-level degree or diploma to at least 40%;

- to ensure at least 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

In 2013, the level of early-leavers reached 11.9% while tertiary attainment topped 36.8%. The headline targets in the field of education and training are therefore about to be reached, even though these figures sometimes hide strong regional disparities (8 Member States had a difference of more than 15% between their top and bottom regions in terms of rates of tertiary education graduates in a region[9]).

In the framework of the EU2020 mid-term review, a reflection on the relevance of indicators in education and poverty reduction has been initiated.

b) The Flagship Initiatives

The strategy also includes seven "flagship initiatives"[10] providing a framework through which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts in areas, supporting the Europe 2020 priorities, namely innovation, the digital economy, employment and youth, industrial policy, poverty, and resource efficiency.

Two of these flagship initiatives are particularly linked to education and training, Youth on the Move and the Agenda for new skills and new jobs.

Youth on the Move is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives aiming to improve young people's education and employability, in order to reduce high youth unemployment and to increase the youth-employment rate – in line with the wider EU target of achieving a 75% employment rate for the working-age population (20-64 years) – by:

• making education and training more relevant to young people's needs;

• encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country;

• encouraging EU countries to take measures simplifying the transition from education to work.

In the implementation of the Youth On the Move initiative, the EU has set the framework and provided some funding for the youth guarantee to facilitate young people's transition from education to the labour market in member states. Nevertheless, at national level, there are still some challenges to overcome before the full implementation of the youth guarantee. A proper monitoring of how the Youth Guarantee needs to be implemented is needed to ensure the respect of the main principles, defined in the recommendation adopted by the Council in February 2013. An agenda for new skills and jobs has the objective of creating the right conditions to modernise labour markets and to allow people to acquire new skills in order to raise employment

levels and to ensure the sustainability of our social models. The concrete actions to be taken include the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training "ET 2020", the acquisition and recognition of learning throughout general, vocational, higher and adult learning, and the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework.

In its Communication "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy", the Commission's assessment of the flagship was particularly negative: its impact at macroeconomic level has been limited, the awareness of the flagship had been hampered, and also its link with the European Semester, including the Country Specific Recommendations, had been limited.

THE SEVEN FLAGSHIPS:

Under Smart Growth:
• **Digital Agenda for Europe**
• **Innovation Union**
• **Youth on the Move**

Under Sustainable growth:
• **Resource efficient Europe**
• **An industrial policy for the globalisation era**

Under Inclusive Growth:
• **An Agenda for new skills and new jobs**
• **European platform against poverty**

c) The European Semester

In their latest joint report on the implementation of the ET2020 Strategic Framework[11] , the Council and the Commission recommended to adapt the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester objectives in order to make it *"the mechanism to mobilise ET2020 stakeholders, increase their ownership and harness their expertise"*. **The European Education, Training and Youth Forum** organised by the Commission every year in October is also meant to feed into the process.

The Europe 2020 strategy calls on each Member State to translate the common European targets into national targets and trajectories by taking its relative starting position and national circumstance into account. Set up in 2011, the European Semester[12] works as an **annual cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination.** Through this process, the Commission evaluates whether and to what extent the commitments undertaken by Member States allow the EU to meet its headline targets for 2020 and provides them with recommendations for the next 12-18 months. It involves discussions among EU institutions on broad priorities, annual commitments by the Member States and **Country Specific Recommendations** (CSRs) prepared by the Commission and endorsed at the highest level by leaders in the European Council. These recommendations should then be taken on board in the Member States' policies and budgets. As such, together with the EU budget, the country-specific recommendations are key instruments for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) have shown some **improvement** over the years. In 2014, the focus was on strengthening the conditions for sustainable growth and employment in the aftermath of the economic and social crisis. The Commission has also adopted several decisions on Member States' public finances under the Stability and Growth Pact.

There is also an **implementation gap** between the recommendations set in the Growth Survey and CSRs and the decisions made by Member States. In the 2014 Annual Growth Survey[13] the Commission considers that "*in terms of expenditure, Member States need to find ways to protect or promote longer term investment in education, research, innovation, energy and climate action*" and that "*it is essential to invest in the modernisation of education and training systems, including lifelong learning, in particular dual learning schemes, and to facilitate the transition from school to work, notably by increasing the availability of good quality traineeships or apprenticeships.*" Education and training are mentioned in all 2014 country specific recommendations[14] made to Member States (except the Netherlands – see table)[15].

However, in the last years most Member States have cut their spending in education. The Education and Training Monitor 2013[16] states that 16 Member States decreased their education expenditure at some stage between 2008 and 2011, with six of them showing further significant budget decreases in 2012 (EL, IT, CY, LV, PT, UK-WLS). There is a clear lack of coherence that hinders the whole process and the trust of citizens and civil society organisations alike. Many voices, especially in civil society, express the **lack of transparency** of the European Semester and the lack of involvement of stakeholders at national and EU level. The Lifelong Learning Platform, in the framework of the Liaison Group with Organised Civil Society of the EESC, has been pushing for a change of governance. Policymaking and implementation has to be rendered democratic and legitimate through the meaningful and structured involvement of civil society at all levels and steps.

Belgium

"Youth unemployment has increased significantly over the past year, with large differences across the regions and groups. Addressing the structural problem of skills mismatches will have to go hand in hand with fighting the pressing problem of early school leaving and of youngsters leaving education without qualifications. The sixth state reform offers the opportunity to improve the efficiency and targeting of employment policies, provided that cooperation between the federal and regional level is optimised."

"Across the country, strengthen partnerships of public authorities, public employment services and education institutions to provide early and tailor-made support to the young."

"Restore competitiveness by pursuing coordinated education and training policies addressing the pervasive skills mismatches and regional disparities in early school leaving."

The Netherlands

"In order to enhance the growth potential of the Netherlands, it is of paramount importance that the required consolidation safeguards growth-enhancing expenditure, such as innovation and research, including fundamental research, education and training."

"Protect expenditure in areas directly relevant for growth such as education, innovation and research."

2014 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS IN PROJECT PARTNERS COUNTRIES ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

France

"The 2013 Programme for International Student Assessment survey showed that educational inequality in France is amongst the highest in OECD countries. A sixth of young people in France leave education and training without a qualification. This is particularly worrying as the unemployment rate of young people was of 25.5% at the end of 2013 and as the risk of being unemployed was almost two times higher for the least qualified young people. Schemes to promote apprenticeships should reach in particular the least qualified young people. Some progress in addressing this issue was made through the launch of the reform of compulsory education in July 2013 and the adoption of a law on vocational education and lifelong learning in March 2014. However, it is too early to assess whether these measures will effectively reduce inequalities in the education system and a new plan targeting lower-secondary education schools in disadvantaged areas announced in January 2014, still needs to be implemented. Lastly, transition from school to work has been facilitated but the number of apprentices decreased in 2012 and the schemes increasingly benefitted students in higher education.""Pursue the modernisation of vocational education and training, implement the reform of compulsory education and take further actions to reduce educational inequalities in particular by strengthening measures on early school leaving. Ensure that active labour market policies effectively support the most vulnerable groups. Improve the transition from school to work, notably by stepping up measures to further develop apprenticeship with a specific emphasis on the low-skilled."

Bulgaria

"Improve the efficiency of the Employment Agency by developing a performance monitoring system and better targeting the most vulnerable, such as low-skilled and elderly workers, the long-term unemployed and Roma. Extend the coverage and effectiveness of active labour market policies to match the profiles of job-seekers, and reach out to non-registered young people who are neither in employment, education or training, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee."

"Bulgaria has still not adopted the School Education Act providing a framework for implementation of the necessary comprehensive reforms of the school system, including the modernisation of curricula and the improved training for teachers. There is a need to enhance the quality of vocational education and training in Bulgaria and to integrate it better into the general educational structures so as to allow for flexible pathways, reduce early school leaving and improve access to lifelong learning. Higher education, in turn, faces persisting challenges in responding better to labour market needs. The low standard of quality certification contributes to poor performance. A new strategy on higher education is being discussed, calling for the restructuring of university management through the direct involvement of interested stakeholders such as businesses and students, the consolidation of universities, and a performance-based approach to better align educational outputs with the demands of the labour market. A continuing challenge concerns the access to education for disadvantaged children, in particular Roma children. The two-year obligatory pre-school is a key measure going in the right direction and should be strictly implemented, together with measures to prevent early school leaving. There is a need to scale up existing initiatives to improve the training of teachers and reduce de facto segregation in schools. The rules linking the child allowance with participation in education are not yet effectively implemented.''

"Adopt the School Education Act and pursue the reforms of vocational and higher education in order to increase the level and relevance of skills acquired at all levels, while fostering partnerships between educational institutions and businesses with a view to better aligning outcomes to labour market needs. Strengthen the quality of vocational education and training institutions and improve access to life-long learning. Step up efforts to improve access to quality inclusive pre-school and school education of disadvantaged children, in particular Roma, and implement strictly the rules linking the payment of child allowance to participation in education."

Poland

"To ensure the success of the fiscal consolidation strategy, it is important that the fiscal consolidation is backed by comprehensive structural reforms. A low share of growth-enhancing expenditure (education, research and innovation) hampers long-term growth prospects."

"Youth unemployment has been gradually increasing over the last year, which partly results from the ongoing mismatch between education outcomes and labour market needs as well as the growing proportion of young people that are not in education, employment or training. Despite ongoing efforts to reform, the vocational education and training system, there is a need to further facilitate access to good quality apprenticeships and work-based learning, to strengthen cooperation between schools and employers and to reach out non-registered youth, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee. Adjustment of skills to labour market requirements is also particularly important in the context of lifelong learning, where participation remains very low, especially with regard to older workers, whose competencies are often outdated."

"Female labour market participation remains low. Poland has taken several measures to enhance female employment, including an increase in the availability of early childcare services (nurseries),

and an increase in public funding for kindergartens to encourage parents to enrol their children in pre-school education. Nevertheless, availability of early childcare services is still low, especially in rural areas, and disparities in access to pre-school education remain."

"Strengthen efforts to reduce youth unemployment, notably by further improving the relevance of education to labour market needs, increasing the availability of apprenticeships and work-based learning places and by strengthening outreach to unregistered youth and the cooperation between schools and employers, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee. Increase adult's participation in lifelong learning in order to adjust skills supply to skills demand. Combat labour market segmentation by stepping up efforts to ensure a better transition from fixed-term to permanent employment and by reducing the excessive use of civil law contracts.''

"Continue efforts to increase female labour market participation, in particular by taking further steps to increase the availability of affordable quality childcare and pre-school education and ensuring stable funding."

Turkey

N/A

Portugal

"Portugal faces challenges relating to unemployment which, notwithstanding the recent decline, remains very high, particularly for the younger cohorts. The unemployment rate stood at 17% in 2013 and youth unemployment at 37.7%, substantially above the EU average, as well as the percentage of young people not in education, employment, or training. Portugal's traditionally high employment rate has declined markedly since the start of the economic crisis, from 73.1%

in 2008 to 65.6 % in 2013. As regards youth unemployment, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee, the main challenges include weak outreach to non-registered young people, and a need to better align education and training with labour market needs."

"Portugal has made significant progress in reforming its education system by means of several measures to fight early school leaving, and improve tertiary attainment rate and labour market matching. However, the full implementation and efficient use of funding remain crucial. In particular, further work is necessary to reduce skills mismatches, including by increasing the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training, including dual vocational education and training, fostering employers' involvement in helping to design programmes and providing adequate in job trainings and apprenticeships. There is also a need to effectively implement career guidance and counselling services for secondary and tertiary students in line with labour market needs and skills anticipation, and strengthen links with the business sector."

"Improve the quality and labour-market relevance of the education system in order to reduce early school leaving and address low educational performance rates. Ensure efficient public expenditure in education and reduce skills mismatches, including by increasing the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and fostering co-operation with the business sector. Enhance cooperation between public research and business and foster knowledge transfer."

Spain

"The inadequate labour-market relevance of education and training and the high proportion of unemployed without formal qualifications (35.2%) contribute to the high youth unemployment rate, as well as to long term unemployment. The rate of young people not in employment, education or training remains higher than the EU average and has been increasing sharply. The proportion of pupils and students leaving education and training early, although decreasing, also remains very high (23.5%). Tertiary attainment rates are sustained, but vocational education and training and apprenticeship schemes are still under-used and the proficiency of upper secondary vocational education and training graduates lags behind the EU average. Spain is also working on measures to encourage youth employment. The national 2013-2016 Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Strategy, presented in March 2013 is now being implemented, although some measures have yet to be put in place. Building on the Strategy, Spain has undertaken steps to fight youth unemployment, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee. Some progress has been registered in measures to fight early school leaving and to promote dual vocational education and training, but full implementation and efficient use of funding remain crucial. On dual vocational training, continued coordination among all stakeholders, including decision makers and training providers at all government levels and employers, is needed to streamline the system, favour a better match of training to labour demands and guarantee the compatibility of dual vocational education and training models across regions."

"Reinforce the coordination between labour market and education and training policies. Accelerate the modernisation of public employment services to ensure effective personalised counselling, adequate training and job-matching, with special focus on the long-term unemployed."

"Implement the 2013-2016 Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Strategy and evaluate its effectiveness. Provide good quality offers of employment opportunities, apprenticeships and traineeships for young people and improve the outreach to non-registered unemployed young people, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee. Effectively implement the new educational schemes to increase the quality of primary and secondary education. Enhance guidance and support for groups at risk of early school leaving. Increase the labour-market relevance of vocational education and training and of higher education, in particular by enhancing the cooperation with employers and supporting the training of trainers and tutors."

II. THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2020 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (ET2020)

The Education and Training 2020 strategic framework **"ET2020"** is the successor of the "Education and Training 2010" (ET 2010) work programme, which was launched as a response to the Lisbon Agenda in 2000. The main aim of the framework is to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, covering all levels and contexts (including non-formal and informal learning).

ET2020 provides common **strategic objectives** for Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas for each periodic work cycle:

- Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improve the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

For each of these strategic objectives, the programme identifies key issues and indicators for measuring progress and proposed ways with the follow-up work for achieving the concrete objectives in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) working method.

A new element that has been introduced by the ET2020 is that the period up to 2020 is divided into a series of **cycles**, with the current one covering the three years from 2012 to 2014. For each work cycle, a number of **priority areas** are adopted on the basis of the above-mentioned four strategic objectives. This more "flexible" approach is meant to allow more regular evaluation of progress and, when necessary, adjustment of priority areas for the following cycle.

A **joint Council-Commission progress report** is drawn up at the end of each cycle, which assesses Member States' progress towards the common ET2020 objectives and also contributes to the establishment of the priority areas for the next cycle.

2012 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of ET2020

The first joint report was adopted in February 2012 and, apart from adjusting some of these priority areas, it also reviewed some of the working arrangements under ET2020 in order for them to be better aligned with Europe 2020 and the European Semester. In particular, it strengthened the Council's involvement and role on the education and training dimension of Europe 2020 in both the European and national semester process (i.e. peer-reviews on the outcomes of the semester) and it suggested the creation of two new tools: the **Education and Training Forum,** to consult stakeholders on modernising education and training systems drawing on the discussion of education issues in the European Semester, and the **Education & Training Monitor,** an annual analytical report to monitor progress on the ET 2020 benchmarks and core indicators.

PRIORITY AREAS 2012-2014

Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality:
- Lifelong Learning Strategies
- European reference tools
- Learning mobility

Improve the quality and efficiency of education and training:
- Basic skills, languages
- Professional development of teachers, trainers and school leaders
- Modernising higher education and increasing tertiary attainment levels
- Attractiveness and relevance of VET
- Efficient funding and evaluation

Promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:
- Early-school leaving
- Early-childhood education and care
- Equity and diversity

Enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:
- Partnerships with business, research, civil society
- Transversal key competences, entrepreneurship education, e-literacy, media literacy, innovative learning environments

a) The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in Education and Training

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is an instrument from the Lisbon Strategy. It consists of a **voluntary process for political cooperation** based on agreeing common objectives and common indicators, which show how progress towards these goals can be measured. It is applied in policy areas where the European Union has limited competences according to the EU Treaties, such as education and training, but where Member States feel there is an added value in working together at the European level. This is therefore an **intergovernmental method** where Member States assess each other according to a method based on "naming and shaming" and under the supervision of the Commission. The Commission plays indeed a very active role in setting goals, indicators and benchmarks and monitoring their evolution, which makes it gain significant influence in the process. The OMC is the working method applied to implement the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training **(ET2020).**

From a practical level point of view, this work within the OMC can be undertaken through different working methods and tools, like establishing groups/networks with the aim of implementing legal instruments (i.e. EQF advisory Group), setting up thematic working groups and expert groups to address specific policy areas, organising peer-learning activities and conducting research, data collection and analysis. In the field of education, **ET2020 Thematic Working Groups** (TWGs) underwent a revision after the Council's request in February 2013. Their new mandate focuses on implementing the ET2020 agenda and building tighter links with the European Semester, and their number has been reduced to match key policy challenges. Their results should be regularly presented to the Education Committee of the Council and national representatives should turn over within the TWGs representation in order to gain more ownership of what happens there.

In education and training, the Commission has

WORKING GROUPS MANDATES 2016-2018

- Schools
- Modernisation of Higher Education
- Vocational education and training
- Adult Learning
- Digital skills and competences
- Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (follow-up to the Paris Declaration)

also been putting in place **"soft law" measures** (non-legally binding measures for Member States but with significant impact in practice, a "soft influence"), such as Commission staff working documents and Communications, to give substance to the OMC process.

b) EU Legal & Policy Instruments

As the EU has only a supporting competence in the field of education and training, it mostly issues **soft-law policy measures**, which are non-binding, but nonetheless carry political weight:

- **Communications** usually set out a Commission action plan. They may also include concrete proposals for legislation.

- **Green Papers** are usually used to launch a consultation process. They present Commission policy orientations to interested parties that may wish to comment. The Commission will generally prepare a subsequent proposal.

- **White Papers**, which are often the follow-up of a Green Paper, set out concrete proposals for action by the Commission in a specific area.

- **Council Conclusions** are policy guidelines adopted at Council meetings. Although not legally binding, the conclusions have political power as a frame of reference.

- **Council Resolutions** are documents that are produced at the end of thematic debates at the European Council. While they are not legally binding, they have often been transposed into EU law through the work of the European Commission, Council of Ministers or the European Parliament.

- **Recommendations and Opinions** are non-binding instruments issued by the Commission to define its view and suggest a line of action a specific issue. Though they have technically no legal force, they do carry political and moral weight.

c) Measuring Progress: Indicators and Benchmarks

To measure progress towards the ET2020 strategic objectives in education and training, Member States agreed to set up measurement tools, the so-called **benchmarks** and **progress indicators.** The role of these indicators and benchmarks is to help structure educational performance data on different education systems among Member States and thus, for them to become frames of reference and comparison for setting future policy development and discussion.

In May 2009 the Council adopted the set of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020. Two of these five benchmarks (to reduce the number of early school leavers and to increase the share of young adults holding tertiary education qualifications) have been given further importance, having been selected as headline targets for the Europe 2020 Strategy in the area of socio-economic development until 2020.

FIVE BENCHMARKS FOR 2020

- Pre-school participation: at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education;

- Low achievers: the share of 15-years olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%;

- Early school leavers: the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%;

- Tertiary attainment: the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%;

- Adult lifelong learning participation: an average of at least 15 % of adults (age group 25-64) should participate in lifelong Learning

The new framework for cooperation ET 2020 explicitly mentions that the benchmarks are not to be considered as binding targets for Member States. EU countries are rather encouraged to contribute to the collective achievement of the benchmarks at EU level according to their specific needs and national priorities.

In addition, since 2009, two new benchmarks on learning mobility and the employability of young graduates have been adopted and the European Commission has proposed another benchmark on language teaching.

THREE MORE BENCHMARKS FOR 2020

- **Learning mobility** (adopted in 2011): at least 20 % of higher education graduates in the EU should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) lasting for a minimum of three months or representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits; more than 6 % of 18-34 year olds with an initial vocational education and training qualification should have had an initial study or training period abroad of at least two weeks by 2020.

- **Employability of young graduates** (adopted in 2012): by 2020, the share of employed graduates (20-34 year olds) having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year should be at least 82% (as compared to 76.5 % in 2010).

- **Language teaching** (launched in 2012, see Staff Working Document[17]) by 2020, at least 50% of 15 year-olds should attain the level of independent user of a first foreign language; by 2020, at least 75% of pupils in lower secondary education should study at least two foreign languages (compared to the present 61 %).

Monitoring progress: Joint Reports and Annual Commission Reports

Monitoring of both performance and progress is an essential part of the European Union's education and training policies, assessing strengths and weaknesses and guiding the future strategy. Although it seems unlikely that all these targets will be reached across the EU, comparing Member States' performance and showing their strengths and weaknesses lead them to "compete" towards the achievement of these benchmarks.

The Commission publishes regular **annual reports** and Commission staff working documents that present a detailed analysis and national statistics on performance and progress under ET2020 using all of these benchmarks and indicators.

The European Council and the Commission publish a **joint report** on the overall situation every two years, based on both the progress reports and national reports. These joint reports evaluate the overall progress made towards the set education objectives and assess developments across national education systems. They present the state of play, identify areas where progress has remained insufficient, and propose measures to be taken. The next joint report is due to be published in 2015.

Since 2012 a new **Education & Training Monitor**[18] has been put in place, to provide an annual analytical report to monitor progress on the ET2020 benchmarks and core indicators and that is accompanied by 28 country reports. The next Education and Training Monitor is due to be published in early 2015. In 2013, the Monitor acknowledged in particular decreasing investments in education in 16 Member States, increasing early-school leaving rates in 3 countries and growing inequalities in European education and training systems. The yearly progress in benchmarks and indicators can also be found on Eurostat.[19]

Targets in education and training

The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of 30-34 years old should have completed a tertiary or equivalent education					
	Unit	2013	2014	2015	Target
Early leavers from education and training	% of population aged 18-24	11.9	11.2	11.0	**10.0**
Tertiary educational attainment	% of population aged 30-34	37.1	37.9	38.7	**40.0**
75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed					
Employment rate - age group 20-64	% of population aged 20-64	68.4	69.2	70.1	**75**

Source: EUROSTAT,
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/europe-2020-indicators/europe-2020-strategy/headline-indicators-scoreboard

III. EU FUNDING PROGRAMMES

a) Erasmus+

Community programmes such as Erasmus+ are also key policy implementation instruments. EU funds, managed mostly by the European Commission and National Agencies, can be granted to public or non-governmental institutions. The funds are intended to support the implementation of EU policies or to further pursue EU interests in specific policy areas. The funds are particularly important in areas where the EU lacks formal competence, such as education and training.

Having been enforced at the beginning of 2014 and being in place up until 2020, the new Erasmus+ programme brings together seven former programmes including the Lifelong Learning programme and Youth in Action programme 2007-2013. Sport is also included for the first time as a community programme. With a budget of **14.7 billion EUR** that is meant to represent a **40% increase** compared to former programmes' spending levels, Erasmus+ aims to provide **opportunities for over 4 million Europeans** to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad.

The programme has been conceived with a simplified architecture based on three key actions:

- **Learning mobility** of individuals supporting mobility of learners and staff, joint master degrees and the master student loan guarantee;

- **Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices** supporting strategic partnerships, sector skills alliances and knowledge alliances as well as capacity-building projects and IT sectoral platforms;

- **Support for policy reforms** encouraging stakeholders' participation, evidence-based policy-making, the Open Method of Coordination and prospective initiatives from public authorities.

Within those three strands, former brand names and sectors have been kept (Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig), making it easier to read for beneficiaries. In a general manner, administrative and financial rules have been simplified (i.e. generalisation of the use of lump-sums).

The programme general objectives are meant to be **more closely linked to EU2020 and ET2020 priorities** as well as the renewed Framework for EU cooperation in the youth field. Important features should be emphasised in the current programming period such as the recognition and validation of skills and qualifications, the international dimension, multilingualism, **equity and inclusion**. Indeed, Erasmus+ aims at facilitating the access to learning mobility to disadvantaged learners (disability, poor socio-economic background, migrants, remote areas inhabitants, etc.).

b) The European Social Fund

The European Social Fund is as old as the European Union and belongs to the EU Structural Funds that are **financial tools set up to implement the European regional policy**. It was created to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across the EU, especially through the promotion of employment and with a focus on vocational training when it comes to education and training. From the 2000s, its priorities were aligned with the Lisbon Strategy and one of its **main focuses was improving education and training as part of a lifelong learning policy.** With the elaboration of the new ESF 2014-2020, a new category of regions has been created (transition regions) in order to ease the transition of the regions, which have become more competitive in recent years, but still need targeted support.

The funding is allocated for projects managed by public and/or private sector beneficiaries within member states and their regions according to co-financing and shared management principles. Indeed, working in **partnership** with stakeholders is a founding principle of the ESF. The 2014 European Code of Conduct on Partnerships says that the European Social Fund should be designed and implemented in partnership between the European Commission, national and regional authorities as well as other stakeholders such as civil society.

Since 2014, Operational Programmes have been elaborated jointly by Member States and the Commission for the programming period, describing thematic objectives and investment priorities chosen by countries.

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning

ESF Investment priorities:

- **Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education, including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training.**

- **Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups.**

- **Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways, for example through career guidance and validation of acquired competences.**

- **Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training (VET) systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.**[20]

European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills
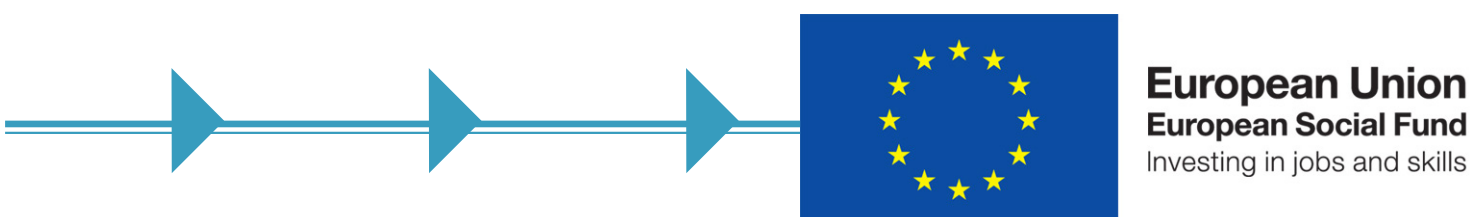
IV. STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT IN EU POLICY-MAKING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In the field of education and training, there is no structured dialogue with stakeholders as it can exist in different fields of EU action such as the youth, citizenship, development and culture sectors. Participative democracy can, however, be practiced by citizens in different ways depending on the level of openness and transparency of each EU institution. In 2012, the Commission issued a Staff Working Document [21] on **"Partnership and flexible pathways for lifelong skills development"**. The document underlines that working in **cooperation and partnership with stakeholders increases flexibility and relevance of learning and improves efficient use of resources.** However, it requires strong and sustainable coordination structures and a shared vision among stakeholders with adapted funding. The document also recommends breaking down barriers between sectors in a transversal and more **comprehensive approach for more flexible pathways and integrated learning services.**

For an analysis on policy dialogue with European stakeholders and changing consultation cultures in member states, you can also consult the EUCIS-LLL feasibility study on National Stakeholders' Forums [22] (May 2012) – p.5 to 9.

a) The Case of the European Commission

In the field of education and training there is **no structured dialogue** with stakeholders. Other directorates have structured dialogue groups such as the Structured Dialogue Group of DG Communication and the EU Stakeholders Group of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion of DG Employment. DG EAC has launched a recent tender to implement a structured dialogue in culture but not for education and training. The Lifelong Learning Platform (EUCIS-LLL)[22] has been calling for such a dialogue for several years now to improve the implementation of the ET2020 work programme, as the proposed regulation "Erasmus for all" points out: *"Support for policy reform action shall include the activities initiated at Union level related to (...) **the policy dialogue with relevant European stakeholders in the area of education, training and youth**"*. The open, transparent and regular dialogue evoked by the article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty is the only way to successfully achieve the EU strategic objectives in lifelong learning; and this will not be possible without clear mechanisms of communication, consultation and cooperation. However, there are several ways in which the stakeholders are consulted today.

Public and semi-public consultations

When the Commission starts working on a new policy initiative or revises existing legislation, it usually opens a public consultation.[24] Individuals, businesses and other organisations with an interest in or expert knowledge on a given topic can help shape the Commission's draft proposal before it goes to the Council and European Parliament for discussion and adoption.

This was the case for instance in 2014 with the consultation on a European Area of Skills and Qualifications, to be potentially proposed by the European Commission and already announced in the 2012 "Rethinking Education" Communication. The new Area would be meant to improve the overall coherence of tools and policies and further implement the learning outcomes approach as well as to ensure clarity of rules and procedures for the recognition of skills and qualifications for further learning.

Other consultations from the European Commission or its subcontractors can take place and could be qualified as "semi-public" as they are often targeted at stakeholders known as "experts" on the topic. In 2014 GHK was for instance running a survey on the impact of the ET2020 Strategic Framework in view of its revision for the Commission.

a) The Case of the European Commission

European Education, Training and Youth Forum

The European Education, Training and Youth Forum aims to be a space for consultation and dialogue with Education, Training and Youth stakeholders (policy makers, employers, trade unions, organisations representing educational institutions and staff, civil society and youth organisations) about the priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy[25] as it was pinpointed in the 2012 Joint Report on European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)[26] .

The Forum is therefore an opportunity to involve a broad range of stakeholders in the implementation of Europe 2020. For the first time, it offers a wide range of stakeholders and policy-makers a platform to exchange views about how to respond to the Country-specific Recommendations. The findings of the Forum are meant to be conveyed to the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration) through official conclusions presented by the Commissioner.

In 2012 the Forum focused on investment in skills for growth and jobs, while the 2013 edition was primarily aimed at discussing the new Erasmus+ programme. In 2014 the Forum focused on the revision of the Education and Training 2020 strategic work programme and in 2015 on how to implement the priority areas for European cooperation in Education and Training 2016-2020.

Participation in Thematic Working Groups and Expert Groups

Under the Open Method of Coordination, peer-learning activities are either organised by groups ("clusters") of Member States interested in specific topics or by expert groups set up by the European Commission. Independent experts and stakeholders may be invited by the Commission to join. Other expert groups can also be set up on specific issues, such as the European Qualifications Framework advisory group in charge of overseeing

the implementation of the EQF, and now the 2012 Council Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning. The units in charge of coordinating these groups have the possibility to invite external experts including civil society organisations.

Other tools

Other tools exist to have a say in EU cooperation on education and training such as the **European Citizens Initiative.** The European Citizens Initiative is an **invitation** to the **European Commission to propose legislation** on matters where the EU has competence to legislate. It has to be backed by at least one million EU citizens, coming from at least 7 out of the 28 member states. A minimum of signatures is required in each of those 7 member states. A citizens' initiative is possible in **any field where the Commission has the power to propose legislation.**

In 2014 for instance, the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in education!"[27] was collecting signatures to combat inequality in the field of education by providing equal opportunities for education and training to all young people in Europe; ensure adequate and appropriate infrastructures and tools for high quality education in Europe in times of crisis; enhance and safeguard growth, development and democratic institutions and ensure the employability of younger generations through investment in education.

If the initiative reaches one million signatures, the Commission examines the proposal, **meets the organisers** and adopts a formal response spelling out what **action it will propose in response** to the citizens' initiative. The Commission is not obliged to propose legislation as a result of an initiative. If the Commission decides to put forward a legislative proposal, the normal legislative procedure kicks off: the Commission proposal is submitted to the legislator and, if adopted, it becomes law.

V. FOCUS ON LLL-HUB THEMES OF INVESTIGATION

In this section you can find developments on each of the themes tackled as part of the LLL-HUB project, starting with the LLL-LABS of fields of investigation. This part of the document is meant to help with framing the type of reflection expected in each chapter of the Regional/National State of Play, and to give potential ideas of topics to work on. Please keep in mind that it is important to investigate topics that will be:

- relevant with your country's situation, your organisation's interests and fields of expertise;
- presented as easily analysed regarding the grid of four themes.

This grid will be used to categorise the data collected and thus enable us to produce some elements of comparison, common issues and specificities, that will enlighten our views of:

- the current situation in the different countries;
- and how to orientate the reflection in order to start moving towards more comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategies.

In this section you can find links between the four chapters of the national reports and the LLL-HUB portal in which the data collected is organised by topics/categories. It is important that partners insert key works for each of the case studies they collect during the research phase of the LLL-LABS so that topics can be refined.

a) National Frameworks for Lifelong Learning- towards flexible pathways and comprehensive Education and Training systems

1.1 National culture as regards to lifelong learning

Progress in lifelong learning has been made in a number of key areas. For instance, explicit lifelong learning strategies have been developed by a large number of EU countries. Most of these incorporated a comprehensive vision of lifelong learning, covering all types and levels of education and training. In addition, National Qualifications Frameworks linked to the establishments of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning are being developed in most countries. While at a slower pace, systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are also visible.

Implementing lifelong learning is not easy. Lifelong learning remains a **difficult policy to implement** as it combines various administrations, tools and policies. If strategies are adopted, their concrete implementation is very often limited. There is also a lack of a coherent and equitable system for financing lifelong learning for all. And last but not least, we face an underestimated resistance to change among the main stakeholders in the traditional system of education. Lifelong learning still represents a radical change from existing norms and patterns of learning when compared with traditional front-end education. It means adopting an integrated, lifelong and life-wide approach to learning and enhancing the importance of non-formal and informal education. It is thus important to understand the national culture as regards learning and the way the sectors – adult education, higher education, VET – work together. Society – educators, families and employers – have different perceptions of learning coming from non-formal and informal learning and it is interesting to understand the learning culture in the different countries being investigated.

a) National Frameworks for Lifelong Learning- towards flexible pathways and comprehensive Education and Training Systems

1.2 Existence/Absence of a national lifelong learning strategy

According to EU strategies (ET2010 and ET2020), the rationale for adopting overarching lifelong learning strategies lies in the wide economic, social and environmental challenges of our times. *"Traditional policies and institutions are increasingly ill equipped to empower citizens for actively dealing with the consequences of globalisation, demographic change, digital technology and environmental damage. Yet, people, their knowledge and competences are the key to Europe's future (...) The scale of such changes calls for a radical new approach to education and training."* (CEC Memorandum, 2001).

Explicit lifelong learning strategies have been developed by a large number of EU countries. Most of these incorporated a comprehensive vision of lifelong learning, covering all types and levels of education and training. In addition, National Qualifications Frameworks linked to the establishments of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning are being developed in most countries. While at a slower pace, systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are also visible. In other countries some policies are in place to support this approach while in another group, the concept is not translated into policies.

It is evident that major gaps still exist in ensuring that current EU policies are developed and implemented at a national level. Implementation of lifelong learning **remains uneven** and strong political commitment is lacking in most countries. This is particularly true in times of economic crisis, when budgetary constraints take over the necessary long-term investment in human capital. This may explain the shift towards a more utilitarian or economic approach to lifelong learning versus a more holistic one involving both social and cultural objectives.

Topic: Lifelong learning terminologies/definition

Definitions of lifelong learning vary according to the perspectives and priorities of the policy makers at a given moment. The European Commission defined lifelong learning as '*All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.*' A literal definition of lifelong learning is simply '**all learning**' that people acquire across their entire life spans – in formal, non-formal or informal settings. Therefore, learning is a continuous task of the society and the individual that extends to all areas of life **'from cradle to grave'.**

This concept emerged in European Union policy papers in the 1990´s. However, it is not new in international literature (UNESCO, OECD, Council of Europe). Of particular importance, the two landmark UNESCO publications, Learning to Be (1972)[28], and Learning: The Treasure Within (1996)[29] have been key sources for education policy makers and practitioners internationally. They have been influential in promoting an integrated and humanistic vision of education framed by the paradigm of lifelong learning and by the **four pillars** of *learning to be*, to know, to do, and to live together. The paradigm of lifelong learning, initially introduced in Learning To Be (1972), is linked to the principle of equal opportunity in the perspective of the democratization of education and training opportunities. In Learning: The Treasure Within (1996) lifelong learning is understood as '*a continuum of learning, expanded to the whole of society, open in time and space, and which becomes a dimension of life itself.*'

This approach has influenced the European Union. Lifelong learning is about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement (CEC, 2000). However, lifelong learning is not just a simple summing up or integration of traditional education programmes and modern learning opportunities. Its **aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning experiences throughout Europe** (Eurostat, 2009). These **inclusive life-wide definitions** of lifelong learning suggest that it covers a broad spectrum of learning, learners, contexts and motivations for learning.

However, in recent years, the EU's focus on lifelong learning has **shifted to emphasise employability**, (occupational) skills development and (upward) labour mobility. This approach was confirmed in the Commission's Communication "Rethinking Education: Investing in Education for better socio-economic outcomes"[30]. The first sentence of the Communication sets the scene: *"Investment in education and training for skills development is essential to boost growth and competitiveness: skills determine Europe's capacity to increase productivity"*. In this document the concept of lifelong learning is somehow narrowed to adult education services and to adult education participation. The concept thus seems to be losing support at the EU level even if it remains important as part of first priority of the ET2020 "Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality" and of Erasmus+.

Other institutions such as UNESCO have launched a global reflection to revisit the concept which is also called "Re-thinking education"[31]. The preliminary conclusion is that *''There appears to be general agreement that the integrated and humanistic vision of learning outlined in the Faure and Delors reports is of continued relevance in today's world; and that it constitutes a viable foundation for the rethinking of education. The vision is seen as a meaningful alternative to the utilitarian and productionist approach that has dominated international education development discourse and practice since the 1970s. In rethinking education today, a fresh reappraisal of this vision is needed that takes into account contemporary*

conditions." (p. 11)

Topic: the shift to learning outcomes

In education systems as they are designed today, a **paradigm shift is occurring towards a focus on learning outcomes**, defined by the European Commission as *"a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a learning process"* [32] . **The shift towards learning outcomes is less on the results and more on the learning process itself**, or as CEDEFOP states: *"to shape the learner's experience, rather than give primacy to the content of the subjects that make up the curriculum"*. Whatever the way you learn, the outcomes will be valued. Valuing this life-wide approach to learning cannot be conceived without a debate on quality of all types of learning opportunities, to ensure that each European citizen can find an appropriate pathway towards knowledge.

As the CEDEFOP puts it: *"Increasing use of learning outcomes is expected to have profound implications for making systems more learner-centred, organising institutions, curricula and for the roles and training of teachers and trainers. The environment in which learning outcome approaches are becoming more prominent is the **shift in European education and training systems towards lifelong learning strategies.** [...] Learning outcomes are best understood as a collection of useful processes and tools that can be applied in diverse ways in different policy, teaching and learning settings. Policy-makers are necessarily using learning outcomes somewhat differently at different levels of the conceptualisation and reform process. [...] The main stakeholders in the fields of education and training all have a role both in forging change and in developing and implementing learning outcomes. [...] Interaction between top-down and bottom-up interventions are an important part of the process and identifying learning outcomes has to be a collaborative effort, if it is to be meaningful. Learning outcomes are flexible and evolving tools which function within policy and structural contexts. For them to become an embedded and effective part of lifelong learning*

strategies that contribute to the individual's opportunities for learning there is a need for a dynamic interplay between policy frameworks, institutions and mechanisms in place and the tools developed."

The following topics are illustrations of how this paradigm shift to learning outcomes can be seen concretely. The European framework for (eight) key competences for lifelong learning (2006), translated in national education schemes, has been one of the successful EU initiatives of the past decade to formalise those outcomes.

To know more: "The shift to learning outcomes", CEDEFOP, 2008[33]

1.3 How are EU frameworks implemented?

The European Union has developed several frameworks to support increased learning and labour mobility across Member States, by providing transparent "translation" devises such as the EQF. In time it appears that these tools that are based on a learning outcomes approach have become transformative tools and contribute to modernising education and training systems in Europe. The implementation of the **European Qualifications Framework** (EQF) and National Qualifications Frameworks, for example, is an important step towards the implementation of lifelong learning. EQF is a cross-cutting tool relating to all types and levels of qualifications and is closely linked to all other tools, no matter the sector (e.g. HE, VET, adult learning) or the dimension (credit systems, quality assurance, learning outcomes, validation of non-formal and informal learning) of the tools. It has the potential to play a key role in enhancing the transparency and recognition of skills and competences and promoting the implementation of the learning outcomes approach. It encouraged EU countries to rethink their systems. There is also an increased interest from third countries.

Many other tools have been developed in the last decades such as ECTS, ECVET, ESCO, etc. The European Commission and the CEDEFOP are currently taking stock to progress and are looking at ways to integrate them better (see CEDEFOP conference). It is thus very interesting to see how far these tools have influenced national systems and encouraged reforms in light of achieving the ET2020 targets.

Topic: Transversal competences

In a very complex and ever-changing environment, Europeans must not only acquire and update specific job-related skills but also possess the transversal competences that will enable them to manage change and become lifelong learners. Education and training systems should equip learners with the competences and skills they will need in order to take an active role in the social, civic and economic dimensions of society. In the Council Conclusions of 14/02/2011, most Member States *"recalled the importance of establishing lifelong learning strategies [and] the need to continue acquiring and developing new skills throughout life"*, in other words to be a *"lifelong learner"*.

The importance of digital and entrepreneurial skills is especially stressed at EU level. Entrepreneurial skills do not only aim to encourage young people to become entrepreneurs, as this brings the focus on a very small share of labour market qualifications.
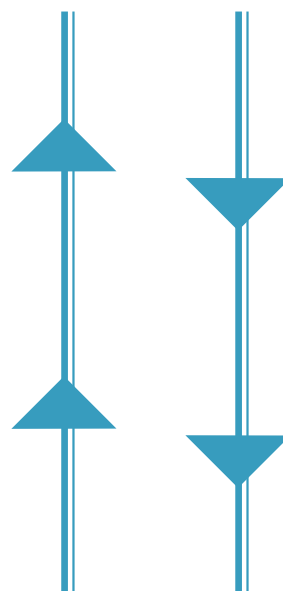
It is about giving them the right skills to develop an entrepreneurial mindset for their personal and professional endeavours: what are entrepreneurial skills if not transversal competences such as critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, creativity and innovation skills?

Sustaining the legacy of the 2006 European Framework of Key Competences [34] is in that sense particularly important. It is a **reference document** in the sense that it embodied the European Union's will to follow international developments and **shift to a learning outcomes approach through a basic set of core competences for all individuals.** It was essential for Europe to align with UNESCO (1998 Delors report) and the OECD (2001 DeSeCo project) and define what learners should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the learning process. The Framework operated a **broad paradigm shift** because it could correspond to different levels of education and contributed to fostering a **lifelong learning perspective,** but it could also apply to various education and training sectors in a life-wide span. It was also very innovative in putting all eight competences on the same level, and defining them as precise knowledge, attitudes and skills. It contributed to placing basic skills in the spotlight with requirements in mother tongue, foreign language and STEM skills that are still very much valued today and closely monitored under ET2020 benchmarks but also under PISA and PIAAC - two surveys that were also greatly influenced by this new approach and that assessed competence use in real-life situations, a genuine methodological revolution. It also enhanced digital literacy as an essential asset, almost ten years before the Opening Up Education Communication.

Finally, transversal competences that are also still very much relevant today are ranked high on the EU political agenda when adaptability is the key word to cope with labour market and societal changes. By trying to implement the Framework, almost all Member States adapted to this new vision of education and made the competence-based approach a policy priority. The influence of the Framework **incited governments to reshape their teaching and learning systems**, as implementation

needed a cross-curricular vision, collaborative, interactive and technology-enhanced learning environments as well as properly trained and committed educators. The Framework is still very much valuable today for its lifelong and life-wide dimension; it has entailed so many positive changes within Member States as mentioned above that it should keep on being widely promoted. The added value of the framework is indeed to support a comprehensive and holistic approach of learning (life-long and life-wide) something which has relevance, more than ever. The Lifelong Learning Platform is now involved in two of the Commission Thematic Working Groups: on "Digital skills and competences" and on "Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (follow-up to the Paris Declaration)". LLL-Platform would be able to regularly feed these topics with EU level developments.

USEFUL LINKS

- **EUCIS-LLL position on Rethinking Education[35]**
- **EUCIS-LLL position and good practices compendium on Fostering Entrepreneurial mindsets [36]**

Topic: European and National Qualifications Frameworks/EU transparency tools

When moving to a new job or to further learning, whether within or across borders, learners and workers should see their competences quickly and easily recognised. The European Union has developed several instruments to support the transparency and recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences to make it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe. To date, a variety of initiatives have been launched with a view of simplifying the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications across Europe.

These include for instance the European Qualifications Framework[37] of which the specific intention is to bring different forms of qualification into alignment, through the adoption of common levels based on generalised learning outcomes. However, there are serious limitations, even at the European level, where the development of the higher education framework (Bologna process) has occurred separately from the VET developmental work (Copenhagen process). In consequence, differing approaches are also being taken to credit accumulation and transfer in higher education (ECTS) and in VET (ECVET). The actors involved differ as well. In higher education there is active involvement at three levels: European, national governmental and institutional. In VET, social partners are key players in all countries alongside the government. For general education, learning outcomes are defined by ministries of education and their specialist agencies and staff as part of overall curriculum development. The emphasis on learning outcomes is consistently identified with the need to define such outcomes within an **inclusive approach** to lifelong learning, rather than being tied to particular kinds and phases of institutions, curricula and qualifications. The EQF aims to relate different countries' national qualifications system to a common European reference framework. Setting up a national qualifications framework (NQF) is relevant to validating non-formal and informal learning. The **shift to learning outcomes** promoted by the EQF, and increasingly part of new NQFs developing across Europe, may prove important for further development of validation. The EQF is expressed as a discrete table of eight levels, each one defined by a series of statements relating to knowledge, skills and competences. These statements of learning outcomes are intended to coincide with the most widely recognised landmarks and stages in mainstream education and training systems, and, at the same time, with the extent of difficulty, autonomy and responsibility associated with different jobs in the labour market. The ECTS Credit System for higher education[38] and the ECVET[39] system for vocational education and training as well as Europass[40], a set of five standardised documents available for free in 26

languages designed to enable users to present their skills, qualifications and experience, are other examples of recognition and transparency tools. The European Commission is also currently conducting a consultation on a European Area of Skills and Qualifications.[41]

USEFUL LINKS

- 2014 EUCIS-LLL contribution to the Commission consultation on a European Area of skills and qualifications[42]
- 2014 EUCIS-LLL position paper on the European Area of skills and qualifications[43]

Topic: Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning

Coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies are needed to achieve the ET2020 Strategic Framework objectives and equip learners with the adequate transversal competences needed for their personal and professional life. Coherence means building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal education so that only learning outcomes matter, whichever way you acquired them. In previous years this focus on flexible learning pathways has led to increased attention to the validation and recognition of learning that takes place outside formal systems. Yet, if these mechanisms are now acknowledged as concrete tools for employment and vectors of personal development and social inclusion, their implementation remains very different from one Member State to another (today, only four have a functioning validation system) and a strong political will is needed to boost the process.

Concretising a life-wide approach to learning is all the more delicate since more and more learning opportunities are developing in various settings (volunteering, distance learning, etc.).

On 20 December 2013 the Council of the EU adopted a Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning following a 2012 Commission proposal[44]· This concrete political impulse opens the way to increased cooperation between the EU and Member States with the goal to have national validation systems in all countries by 2018.

USEFUL LINKS

- **2012 Council Recommendation on VNFIL**[45]
- **EUCIS-LLL task force on VNFIL**[46]
- **EUCIS-LLL first LLL Magazine on VNFIL and key messages (June 2012)**[47]
- **General report on EUCIS-LLL Seminar on VNFIL (December 2011)**[48]
- **EUCIS-LLL database of good practices on VNFIL**[49]

Topic: EU mobility tools for learning mobility

The Council of Europe (CoR) defines learning mobility as *"transnational mobility undertaken for a period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes or to acquire new competences or knowledge. It covers a wide variety of projects and activities and can be implemented in formal or non-formal settings·"*[50] The European Commission published a Green Paper on "Promoting the learning mobility of young people"[51] to open up a debate on how best to boost the opportunities for young people to develop their knowledge and skills by going abroad in 2009. This objective is supported by EU programmes and by the development of frameworks to facilitate the recognition of the learning that is taking place abroad (see tools listed below and previous section on EQF and validation).

The Erasmus+[52] programme aims to provide opportunities for young people at almost all levels of education and training to participate in a learning mobility. The programme supports, for example, opportunities for young people to participate in activities abroad, including through youth exchanges and voluntary services while youth workers can take part in activities abroad, including training, networking events and job shadowing. Such opportunities are also offered to adult educators.

The EU has developed some tools to help citizens such as the Europass[40] which aims to help citizens communicate their skills and qualifications effectively when looking for a job or training to help employers understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce and give documents to make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe. It comprises:

- Curriculum Vitae[52] helps you present your skills and qualifications effectively and clearly. You can create your CV online using tutorials or download the template, examples and instructions.
- Language Passport[53]: a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications. You can create your Language Passport online using tutorials or download the template, examples and instructions.

Three documents issued by education and training authorities:
- Europass Mobility[54] records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country;
- Certificate Supplement[55] describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates;
- Diploma Supplement[56] describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees.

The network of National Europass Centres[57] is the first point of contact if you want to learn more about Europass to help education and training authorities define and communicate the content of curricula.

USEFUL LINKS

- **CoR European Platform on Learning Mobility in the Youth Field (EPLM)** [58]
- **Erasmus + Programme** [59]
- **Europass Mobility** [60]
- **Green Paper: Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People (2009)** [61]

Topic: European Agenda for Adult Learning, participation of adults in lifelong learning

The Commission is working with 32 countries to implement the European Agenda for Adult Learning (2011) [62] . The Agenda highlights the need to increase participation in adult learning of all kinds (formal, non-formal and informal learning) whether to acquire new work skills, for active citizenship, or for personal development and fulfilment. It builds on the Communication on Adult Learning (2006), and the subsequent Action Plan on Adult Learning 2008–2010[63]. It builds on the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020[64]) from an adult learning perspective. The Agenda should be seen in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy.[65]
Several priorities have been established for 2012-2014:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning;
- enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments;
- improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector.

The sector has been recently shaken by the results of the **OECD Survey of Adult Skills**[67], an international survey carried out in 33 countries as part of the **PIAAC – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies**[68]. The first results[69] of the latest survey were released on 8 October 2013. The European Association for the Education of Adults[70] sees the recent PIAAC results as a wakeup call for a Europe that should increase investment in adult learning, highlight the wider benefits of adult learning more, increase cooperation between different stakeholders in a coherent approach and support adult education providers, among other recommendations.

USEFUL LINKS

- **OECD Skills Outlook 2013 – First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills**[71]

- **Commission webpage on adult learning**[72] **EAEA webpage on PIAAC**[73] **and the renewed agenda for adult learning**[74]

Topic: Basic skills for all

By 2020 according to the Europe 2020 Strategy, less than 15% of 15-year-olds should be classed as 'low-achieving'[75] in those basic skills. Literacy, numeracy, science, and technology are the foundation for further learning and are a gateway to employment and social inclusion[76]. In Europe, approximately 20% of the young generation is not equipped with the necessary basic skills in literacy, mathematics, science and technology. These skills are becoming even more important as the digital revolution gives rise to new forms of reading and writing, as well as diversifying sources of information. In 2010, EU Ministers set out an agenda for European policy cooperation on basic skills[77]. As a follow-up, a working group on Maths, Science, and Technology[78] has been set up to help policy-makers develop and implement policies aimed at raising attainment levels[79] and improving attitudes, with a particular emphasis on low-achievers.

A High-Level Group on Literacy has also been set up, bringing together European academics and policy-makers to map Europe's literacy landscape, identifying changing needs and requirements, as well as the best way to tackle them. The report of the High-Level Group on literacy[80] underscores the importance of literacy in the 21st century, as well as the need to ensure political ownership and cooperation to create genuine improvement, and continued economic growth. The European Commission also aims to launch a European Policy Network of National Literacy Organisations in February 2014. This network will, amongst other things, raise awareness, exchange good practices, policies, campaigns and initiatives promoting literacy.

USEFUL LINKS

- European Commission webpage[81]
- 2010 Council conclusions on basic skills[82]
- EUCIS-LLL 2012 Public Hearing on Basic Skills[83]
- PISA[84] and PIAAC[85] surveys; EUCIS-LLL reaction to PIAAC survey[86]

b) Lifelong Learning Actors- taking the jump towards Learner-Centered Systems

Adopting a holistic vision when it comes to lifelong learning means enabling each individual to achieve his/her full potential; in other words, **fostering a learner-centred approach** rather than a teacher-centred one, a labour market one, etc. This approach entails many innovative ways of teaching and learning. For instance, the relation between the educator and the learner is much more interactive and the learner does not passively integrate the knowledge but takes an active part in the process; the learning conditions such as settings or language have to be adapted to the learner; learners also actively participate in their own evaluation and assessment; etc. It does not come to simply transmitting the information anymore but to the success and well-being of the learners which are the result of the best possible learning conditions. Lifelong learning policies shall therefore aim to provide incentives for the learner but also tailored learning opportunities. Tailored opportunities also mean adapting to the needs of each individual disregarding their age, sex, socio-economic background, etc. The following topics illustrate the efforts made in the past years at EU level to move towards this direction.

b) Lifelong Learning Actors- taking the jump towards Learner-Centered Systems

2.1. Educators, teachers, school heads, inspectors, guidance professionals

The quality of their teaching has a strong influence upon learners' attainment. The number of teachers, school leaders and teacher educators are increasing and their profiles are changing. They are called on to play a key role in modernising education, and in particular to adapt to new learners' needs. In order to achieve this, they need to develop their own knowledge and skills. Initial education and training and continuous professional development of the highest quality, as well as access to support throughout their careers are essential.

The "Rethinking Education"[87] 2012 Communication highlights that well-resourced strategies are necessary to recruit, retain and develop high-quality teachers, spanning both initial teacher education and career-long professional development and encourages Member States to establish a competence framework or professional profile for teachers, including trainers in initial and continuing VET. An equal emphasis should be put on the educators and trainers involved in non-formal learning pathways. To support this, the role of the educators should be clearly defined through competence-based criteria.

USEFUL LINKS

- European Commission dedicated webpage[88]
- Commission 2012 staff working document on supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes[89]
- 2013 Commission study "Supporting teacher competence development[90]
- Council conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the professional development of teachers and school leaders"[91]
- Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on effective teacher education[92]

Topic: Lifelong Guidance

In 1992 the European Commission took the initiative to form a European Network of national resource and information centres for guidance, the NRCVGs´, now called Euroguidance [93]. A reason for this was that guidance played and still plays a significant role in EU policies for education, training and employment. The provision of lifelong guidance is recognised as a prerequisite to make lifelong learning a reality for European citizens. The Euroguidance Network is a network of centres (55 Centres in 32 EU countries) linking together the Careers Guidance systems in Europe. Euroguidance[93] promotes mobility, helping guidance counsellors and individuals to better understand the opportunities available to European citizens throughout Europe. Euroguidance promotes mobility, helping guidance counsellors and individuals to better understand the opportunities available to European citizens throughout Europe. This database includes examples of good practice in guidance, projects concerning guidance and useful tools and resources for guidance from the Euroguidance member countries. The projects can be searched by topic, target group or by country of origin.

2.2. Lifelong learners

Topic: Migrants integration through lifelong learning

Inequalities persist in European education systems. Pupils from poor socio-economic backgrounds perform worse at school than their peers in all EU countries. Children from immigrant backgrounds, the disabled, and Roma children are among the most vulnerable groups affected. At the same time, there are large differences between countries in the extent to which family background influences learning outcomes. Against this background, Europe needs more efficient but at the same time more inclusive and equitable education systems, which give access to quality educational provision.

The European Union actively supports and supplements Member States efforts in this regard. A series of European initiatives in recent years has provided strong stimulus, comparison and policy guidance to help Member States strengthen equity in their education systems in a way that would ensure both quality and fairness.

As part of its commitment to promoting evidence-based policy-making[94] in education, the European Commission issues independent reviews of research[95] on equity-related issues, principally through the Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training[96]. These summarise existing knowledge on specific topics, provide independent policy guidance and set out the supporting evidence.

USEFUL LINKS

- The Council Recommendation on Roma integration measures[97]
- The Communication on National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020[98]
- The Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training[99]
- The Working Document on education and mobility/migration[100]
- The Communication on Efficiency and Equity in European Education Systems[101]
- EUCIS-LLL position on the social dimension of education and training[102]

Topic: Equal access and tailored opportunities for special needs learners

In addition to what has been mentioned above for social inclusion in education, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education[103] provides analysis, evidence and information at EU level about the reality of inclusive education across Europe, recommendations for policy and practice as well as tools to evaluate and monitor progress. It has appeared clearly that disabled people should be integrated in mainstream systems of education and training. The problem has to be reversed: we have to adapt the labour market / traditional schools to disabled people and not the other way

round. The whole of the education community has to commit to it. However, this involves additional costs, in terms of specific training for teachers, but also with regard to infrastructures, equipment and transportation. Public authorities have to invest to support these integration actions.

USEFUL LINKS

- EUCIS-LLL position on access to lifelong learning for disabled people [104]

2.3. Employers

The Commission believes education and training are crucial for both economic and social progress, and aligning skills with labour market needs, play a key role in this. In an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy, Europe is in need of a well-skilled workforce[105] to compete in terms of productivity, quality, and innovation. The EU is thus more and more encouraging partnerships between educational actors and employers at all levels. It is also promoting entrepreneurship education notably thanks to stronger partnerships. Entrepreneurship in education is about developing a key competence[106], supporting economic and social well-being. In particular, these are the skills that employers say increase employability.

USEFUL LINKS

- ESCO[107] is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations. It introduces a standard terminology in 25 European languages and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training;
- The European Skills Panorama[108] helps regular monitoring of skills anticipation and skills assessment at the national and European level. It is a central access point providing data, information and intelligence on skills trends in occupations and sectors at the national and EU level.
- EUCIS-LLL call for a renewed Memorandum in Lifelong Learning[109]

2.4. Learning strategies

Topic: Flexible learning provision through new learning tools and environments (e-learning, distance learning)

"Disruptive innovation", "tsunami", "first genuine revolution since Gutenberg"… a lot of hopes and fears have emerged in the past years on Open Educational Resources (OERs), making the debate on harnessing the potential of ICT for education and training more vivid than ever. While the 2013 Commission's Communication on "Opening Up Education" (echoing the commitments made in the Digital Agenda for Europe) strives for a new learning ecosystem enriched with digital environments and contents, we see that in reality not everyone benefits from these new possibilities. In 2010 only 39% of Europeans used the Internet for any training and education related activity, with huge disparities across countries. We know that the main barriers to access to ICT are technological but also linked to attitudes, interests and abilities. In this context, there is a huge potential for progress, and there are more open questions than

solid answers and reliable solutions in the field; therefore a critical and responsible approach is recommended. It is timely for European decision-makers to reflect on what digital learning can really do to modernise our education and training systems, unveiling its expected impact in terms of both growth and social cohesion – and it is now up to Member States to show good political will.

USEFUL LINKS

- European Commission dedicated webpage[64]
- European Commission communication "Opening Up Education", 25 October 2013[3]
- Open Education Europa[110]: an EU portal to provide a single gateway to European OER
- European Parliament draft report[111] on Opening Up Education and public hearing[112] (see also EUCIS-LLL representative intervention[113])
- EUCIS-LLL policy paper on Opening Up Education[114]
- EUCIS-LLL database of good practices[115]

c) Lifelong Communities - towards genuine partnerships and a shared responsibilty

The 2012 European Commission's Communication "Rethinking Education" and more specifically the Staff Working Document on "Partnership and flexible pathways for lifelong skills development" outline the need for a partnership approach between the various stakeholders. The Staff Working Document emphasises that "weak communication and cooperation between stakeholders representing different relevant policy fields is a major source of policy failure". The Document also states that "effective partnerships and cooperation require strong and sustainable coordination structures and a shared vision among stakeholders" and that "while public authorities have a leading role in the design and implementation of lifelong learning policies this cannot be done effectively without involvement and cooperation with non-governmental stakeholders". Some sensitive issues, such as the funding of education, have to be discussed with all actors concerned. How can we strengthen lifelong learning communities and build genuine transversal partnerships to lead a global reflection on such issues? How can we structure a real dialogue between stakeholders in the field of education and training?

c) Lifelong Learning Communities - towards genuine partnerships and a shared responsibility

3.1. Partnerships

In 2011 EUCIS-LLL conducted a feasibility study on National Stakeholders' Forums and in 2013 a survey to evaluate stakeholders' interest in the new Erasmus+ programme for the European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2013. In both cases, it seems that more efforts are needed to develop partnerships between different types of actors (companies, civil society and youth organisations, research, education and training institutions) and across sectors. When asked about the main obstacles to such partnerships, the lack of cooperation mechanisms comes first, followed by the lack of awareness about the benefits. This confirms the fact that we need a political impulse to encourage a dynamic of "working together" but also to support cooperation mechanisms. This is comforted by the fact that most respondents believe dialogue is possible, and only a minority think that there is a lack of mutual trust and interest. Beyond the actors' mutual will, educational structures themselves should be more flexible to answer to learners' needs for tailored pathways. Smoother transitions for instance between VET and higher education should be made possible, i.e. through the intermediary of Qualifications Frameworks.

USEFUL LINKS

- Commission staff working document on partnerships[116]
- EUCIS-LLL survey and feasibility study on National Stakeholders Forums[117]
- EUCIS-LLL survey[118] for the European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2013

3.2. Raising awareness on lifelong learning

Today, the concept of "lifelong learning" (LLL) is widely used but its meaning differs according to whom is using it. According to the Lifelong Learning Platform, lifelong learning covers education and training across all ages and in all areas of life be it formal, non-formal or informal. It shall enable citizen's emancipation and full participation in society in its civic, social and economic dimensions. The idea of organising Lifelong Learning Weeks aims to **raise awareness on Lifelong Learning** (LLL) in Europe and to put forward the need to adopt a holistic approach at all levels of decision-making, implementation and evaluation. This is necessary if we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy as set in the Europe 2020 strategy.

LLLWEEK

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT / 30.11-04.12.2015
ROUND TABLES - DEBATES - FIELD TRIPS

Organised by the Lifelong Learning Platform (EUCIS-LLL)
Under the patronage of MEP K. Lybacka (PL, S&D)

c) Lifelong Communities - towards genuine partnerships and a shared responsibilty

3.3. Funding: Invest where and how

The 2012 Commission Communication on Rethinking Education highlights that the economic downturn and the associated need for fiscal consolidation has led many Member States to reduce investment in education and training. While the room for manoeuvre may be greater for some Member States than others, all share the same double challenge: to prioritise public investment in the education and training sector, and to find more efficient ways of deploying available financial resources which might call for structural reform in particular education systems. The main lever for increasing the efficiency of investment in education and training is to enhance the quality of provision and to focus on the prevention of educational failure. Increasingly, Member States are developing models of cost-sharing between different partners in the educational process – the state, businesses and individuals, foundations and alumni – with public investment helping to leverage private sector match-funding. In a context of fewer resources, governments also need to make effective use of available Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund. For the period 2014-2020, further concentration and prioritisation in Erasmus+ is necessary to sustain investment in education and respective infrastructure.

USEFUL LINKS:

- 2012 Commission Communication on "Rethinking Education"[119]
- EUCIS-LLL position paper[120] "Austerity measures, lifelong learning and social cohesion", February 2011
- Report[121] on the EUCIS-LLL Round Table organised at the European Parliament in March 2011
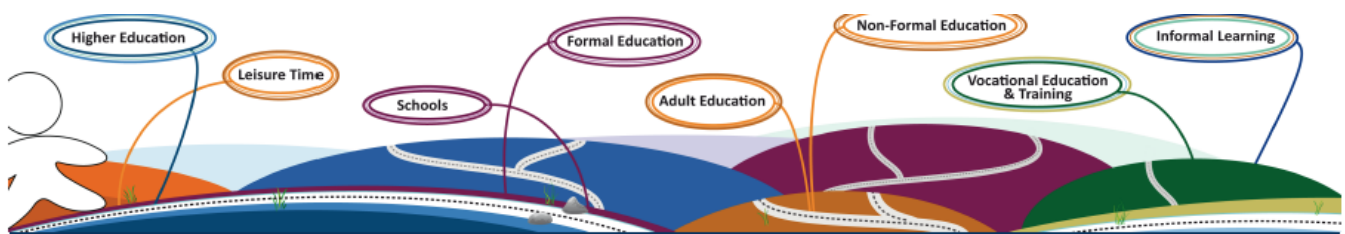
d) Policy Recommendations to improve the implementation of Lifelong Learning

By gathering all the experts of the different sectors of lifelong learning in a common enterprise, first at local/regional/national level and then at European level, the LLL-HUB project fosters the sharing and dissemination of legal frameworks, best practices and life stories.
This report collects project partners' recommendations concerning the building of LLL-LABS and LLL-FORUMS as well as their recommendations for policy-makers concerning lifelong learning strategies.

d) Policy Recommendations to improve the implementation of Lifelong Learning

4.1. Recommendations on building LLL-LABS and LLL-FORUMS

FREREF, the project partner in charge of quality assurance, conducted an analysis on the implementation of the LLL-LABS and LLL-FORUMS. On the whole, the partnership reported that the project methodology was very helpful in that it enabled them to lead an in-depth research during the LLL-LABS and constructive discussions during the LLL-FORUMS. Some partners even decided to organise Forums in addition to the ones foreseen by the project. For example APG, the Portuguese partner, organised four regional Forums on top of the national one. Moreover, partners shared the will to continue to organise Forums at least twice a year beyond the lifetime of the LLL-HUB project. The partnership strongly recommends for other organisations to follow the LLL-HUB methodology in order to create and share expertise on their regional/national situation.

As mentioned in the methodology, the LLL-FORUMS are the "visible" expression of the LLL-LABS, the way all the fieldwork becomes apparent and sharable. According to FREREF's research, the partners found the Forums fruitful and relevant, exciting and very valuable in terms of creating outcomes and motivating the experts to work together.

This same research shows that the main outcomes of the Forums are threefold. First of all, they provided spaces for actors who are not used to working together (including civil society, educational, cultural and socio-cultural organisations, "teachers" and "learners" and decision-makers and policy-makers) to meet and discuss on a common level.

Secondly, the LLL-FORUMS fostered creative exchanges of successful practices. Indeed, having anchored the discussion on concrete practices enabled an open and in depth discussion, breaking barriers and habits, allowing for new contacts and new subjects in the implementation of LLL policies.

Finally, LLL-FORUMS enabled discussions on the concrete implementation of European strategies in the field and for knowledge about regional and national situations to be shared at the European level. Although the Forums mostly focused on regional and national issues and situations, European policies and initiatives were always in the background of the discussions, exchanges and concerns. Also, they enabled to put together best practices to be shared at European level.

Participants of the LLL-FORUMS agree that the dynamics started through the Forums should not be lost and must be sustained and accompanied after them, within the LLL-LABS. As mentioned in the methodology, the LLL-LABS are the permanent structure which nurture the Forums, ensure continuity and support the long-term capitalisation of their work and provide tools to share best practices. The work done during the project confirms the relevance of the Lab structure as designed at the beginning of the project (see Annex 2).

Nevertheless, taking their own experience into account, partners made suggestions to further perfect the methodology. Many recommendations elaborated by the project partners concern the preparation of the LLL-LABS. They insisted on how well-aware the coordinator of the Lab has to be of the methodology in order to ensure the success of each meeting. It was suggested for the coordinator to prepare a brief summary about each member's role in the LLL-LAB so that each member is well informed of what is expected from him or her and what final results the Lab is expected to deliver.

Partners also made recommendations concerning the composition of the Labs. They suggest taking the national context of each Lab into consideration. In Bulgaria for example, the tripartite format with public authorities, employers and employees representatives is well accepted. Hence, it makes sense for the Bulgarian Lab to be based on these three groups on top of representatives of educational institutions and organisations (educators, school

directors, training providers, volunteers, etc.).

Concerning the choice of experts, partners suggest for the coordinator to invite experts he or she has already worked with in order to facilitate communication and ease the work. Nevertheless, partners also insist on the need to reach out to new organisations from a wide range of sectors to genuinely develop a lifelong learning approach. They also consider that since experts are very busy, they should not be put aside if their participation in the Lab's work is limited. However, a core group of highly motivated experts who the coordinator can count on is essential for the Lab to achieve concrete results.

As regards the LLL-FORUM format, partners suggest to make it less intensive in order to ensure the best possible results. They recommend to insert longer coffee breaks and to make it last longer (several days), informal meetings between the experts being at least as fruitful as formal discussions.

4.2. Recommendations for policy-makers

By bringing together experts from all the sectors of lifelong learning, the partners were able to evidence the main successes in their countries' lifelong learning strategies, to identify potential improvements and to issue key recommendations for their local, regional and national policy-makers as well as for European ones.

Elaborate a holistic vision on learning

> *Policy coherence is a prerequisite for building learning societies, and therefore there is a strong demand for developing more comprehensive lifelong learning strategies.*

Although lifelong learning policies have become more popular lately, their implementation often lags behind. Effective educational strategies include measures aimed at **increasing the permeability between sectors** in order to offer **flexible lifelong learning pathways to individuals. This includes amongst other measures implementing a learning outcome approach** across sectors, developing

efficient and coherent **qualification frameworks** and setting up **validation mechanisms**. In order to support the implementation of such strategies at regional and national level, the policy exchange and monitoring done via the Open Method of Coordination should be further strengthened until 2030. A dedicated **thematic working group** should be set up to monitor the implementation of lifelong learning strategies in Europe jointly coordinated by the European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture and the Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs. Similar coordination structures should be set up at national and regional level in the Member States.

Besides, lifelong learning policies usually focus on concerns around **employability**. Without undermining the importance of developing skills and competences to foster employability, the partners insist on the holistic mission of education that also seeks to encourage **social inclusion, personal development and the acquisition of fundamental values.** The 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the New Priorities for ET2020 rightly addresses these important points and they ought to maintain this direction for 2030. The same should be reflected in local, regional and national educational strategies.

> *In order to implement comprehensive lifelong learning strategies, partners insist on the need for cross-sectorial partnerships and on adopting a transversal approach at all levels.*

There is an always pending need for cooperation and coordination between **Education, Employment, Social Affairs, Culture and other departments**, as it is proved that they have significant positive effects on lifelong learning. Such cooperation leads to independent legal frameworks and programmes that take into account the potential positive or negative externalities different policies can have on each other, and therefore making them considerably more efficient.

Hence, an increased cooperation is necessary between the different educational departments at **local, regional, national and at EU level**. In addition to the horizontal cooperation a vertical

one, between the different levels, is crucial in order to implement a better projection of national strategies. As mentioned above, an EU Thematic Working Group on lifelong learning implementation bringing together representatives from the different directorates of the Commission dealing with education, representatives from national governments and relevant stakeholders should be set up. Such mechanisms should be implemented at all levels.

Focus on the effects of learning

> *It is imperative to take into account the wide benefits of learning in terms of learning gains, such as empowerment, well-being, new career opportunities, health, social inclusion and employment.*

When evaluating the impact of educational policies and programmes, the sole focus on quantitative participation rates does not reveal all the wider benefits of learning. That is why a valid and effective lifelong learning strategy should insist more on the **effects of learning.** These include learning gains (in terms of skills, competences, knowledge, attitudes, etc.), empowerment, well-being, career opportunities and social inclusion.

Additionally, learners are equipped with **transversal competences** through lifelong learning that enable them to cope with rapid social and economic changes and find their way through an increasingly uncertain and complex world (e.g. sense of initiative, learning to learn, resilience, risk-taking and problem-solving) and deal with an increasing job uncertainty. Transversal competences such as civic and social competences should be particularly highlighted as they support learners' capacity to think critically and creatively.

> *Adopting a learner-centred approach is not only important for increasing learning outcomes, but it is also vital to ensure a positive learning experience and therefore learners' motivation to further pave their learning path.*

The answer to many educational challenges is placing the learner in the centre of attention and insisting more on the **autonomy of the learner**. He/she should be regarded as an **equal partner in the process** and not as an object. Even when courses and trainings are mandatory, the learner should be able to influence his/her own learning path.

Securing a learner-centred approach is also crucial for the process of establishing a positive learning climate. The latter is essential for the **prevention of drop-out**, encouraging adults to participate in learning activities and the **reintegration of learners under mandatory schooling** (early-school leavers, migrant children, ethnic minorities, etc.). Providing a safe and open learning environment is therefore essential especially when policies/programmes aim to reach out to disadvantaged groups. This approach should be mainstreamed in lifelong learning strategies while current policies and initiatives should be evaluated against indicators that measure their efficiency in matching the needs of individuals and those of society – in terms of employment, social inclusion and civic participation.

> *Investing in initial and continuous professional development of educators and ensuring more engagement of directors/headmasters are prerequisites to offer high quality of learning.*

There is an urge to provide **quality training for teachers/educators** to support them in ensuring the best effects of learning. On top of improving initial teacher training, educators should receive more professional development training throughout their career. They should also be encouraged to take part in training and peer learning activities at local, national and European level (e.g. through their participation in projects and European networks).

In this regard, the responsibility of **directors/headmasters** of educational institutions and the role of the institutions are closely related to the **quality of teaching**. Beyond quality assurance, directors/headmasters are also responsible for implementing the **cultural shift towards lifelong learning**, encouraging the staff to participate in trainings and making sure that teachers/educators deliver learner-centred education and training. Furthermore, they

should make sure that the **educational institution is open to its local community** by developing partnerships with civil society, social and economic actors and other stakeholders including families/parents.

Stimulate networks, partnerships and cooperation

It is essential to foster cooperation between educational institutions of the same sector, but also between different types of educational institutions and between educational institutions and civil society/the private sector.

Although encouraging new practices within educational institutions is vital, it is not enough. Incentives should be made to ensure an **exchange of good practices** between institutions of the same type, such as universities. Although they have independent statutes, such initiatives can ensure their **coordination and learning from one another**. The same counts for cooperation between different sectors, such as VET and Higher Education, schools and libraries, secondary education and youth work, etc.

Furthermore, this also necessitates enhancing the **social commitment of employers** and their role in building career paths, advising them to develop educational offers, offering training opportunities and participating in validation of non-formal and informal learning procedures. **Socio-cultural organisations** involved in non-formal and informal learning can contribute significantly to renewing formal education systems with their experience of innovative learning methods and dealing with heterogeneous publics and complex issues.

The partners advocate for sustainable dialogue mechanisms, supporting national and/or regional lifelong learning platforms based on LLL-HUB methodologies and the model of the LLL-LABS.

In order to make a regular communication between all relevant stakeholders a reality, a more **dynamic approach to partnerships** based on common aims and ambitions should be found. Developing national/regional lifelong learning platforms is a highly relevant example and the only way to effectively implement a comprehensive lifelong learning strategy in a **balanced top-down/ bottom-up approach** and for these strategies to reach their goals in terms of learning outcomes, employability, social inclusion and civic participation.

Setting up a sustainable and regular dialogue/platform between national level stakeholders and with policy-makers, would support a genuine multi-stakeholder debate on lifelong learning at the national/regional level in a long-term perspective. Its mission would be to make a state of play of current strategies/policies, coordinate existing instruments and identify potential gaps and synergies. It could stimulate national campaigns, activities and research that feed into work carried out at the European level.

The LLL-HUB project has clearly demonstrated that collaboration on a regional and national level is of interest to the LLL sector in the partner countries; it also shows the potential to influence policy at the European level through dedicated research and activities by experts at the national level. The LLL-HUB methodology which has been successfully tested offers an initial structure for collaboration which can be explored before a national platform is created.

The partners stress the need to support a cultural shift towards learning by raising awareness on lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning Days, Weeks and Festivals and other promotional campaigns are organised at national and regional level in various countries/regions. These events are very well known and established and are the annual "rendez-vous" to promote lifelong learning. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding these awareness-raising events get cancelled regularly. Even though they are sometimes replaced by smaller events the trans-sectoral scope and the outreach of an LLL Week

is lost. The partners thus call national and regional authorities to set up such events on an annual basis in order to encourage stakeholders to join forces and to reach out to the general public.

Promote and recognise flexible learning pathways

Flexible and open learning pathways should be expanded, which has the potential to enhance learning and widen opportunities for participation, especially for socio-economically vulnerable people, including low-skilled workers.

Acknowledging the fact that learning takes place in **various forms and settings throughout life** is the starting point in changing mindsets towards a holistic vision of learning. Namely, greater flexibility in learning – in relation to **location, delivery and learning modes** can serve to attract and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners. For instance, promoting non-formal learning opportunities, which are usually more flexible and open to all, or introducing an increased number of, for instance, distance learning, dual learning and blended learning opportunities, has the potential to attract various learners with distinct needs.

Although systems for validating non-formal and informal learning have already been developed in some member states, solid efforts are needed to establish coherent legal frameworks and effectively implement them across the EU.

In addition to adopting a learner-centred approach in educational institutions, it is necessary to **value alternative learning paths and non-formal and informal learning better**, which requires consistent validation and recognition mechanisms. Validation of non-formal and informal learning gives new opportunities to learners, improves their access to education, particularly for the disadvantaged ones, and enhances motivation to learn. In addition, it also contributes to tackling unemployment and achieve a better match between jobs and skills by acknowledging those acquired outside of the formal education system.

Foster evidence-based policies and involve stakeholders in decision-making

Policies and programmes have to be based on a sound understanding of learners' needs and that should also be a criterion when evaluating their efficiency, which is closely linked to building a culture of experimentation.

In order to be effective and achieve the expected results, lifelong learning policies need to **be based on evidence.** Indeed, it is essential for policy-makers to understand why particular groups are not participating in education and training in order to overcome the existing barriers and develop tailor-made initiatives. However, research about lifelong learning in many regions and countries is alarmingly low. **Local information centres** and the above mentioned lifelong learning platforms could be responsible for monitoring tools that cover all areas related to lifelong learning (education and training, employment, social policies, etc.) and play a role as disseminator of European and national strategies, such as the National Qualification Framework. Collecting all the relevant information in **single databases** could greatly increase the effectiveness of long-term forecasting.

In order to support the process, **innovation should be stimulated.** Public authorities should encourage the trial-and-error approach, allow new methods and pilot them to evaluate their qualitative and quantitative impact. Successful initiatives should be mainstreamed and adapted to other contexts afterwards.

Capacity-building of civil society and its regular dialogue and exchange of practices with policy-makers is crucial for creating positive developments regarding the implementation of lifelong learning.

Learner-centred systems take into account a diversity of learners and their goals, motivations, capabilities, competences, as well as different local contexts and needs. Civil society organisations have

a **direct access to beneficiaries** on the ground and should **be empowered** in order to better support policy-making processes. Besides, in order to make sure that the voice of learners is heard, there should be a **balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches.**

On top of developing field research, policy-makers should systematically **involve civil society organisations** in decision-making processes that impact them. They can also contribute with their first-hand experience and an in-depth knowledge about challenges and opportunities their sectors convey. The involvement can take multiple forms: consultations, partnerships, participation of the stakeholders in policy-makers expert groups, etc. **Meaningful and structured consultation bodies and regular dialogue mechanisms should therefore be insisted upon.**

different target groups. Partners have identified quality guidance and counselling as a key success factor when promoting and implementing lifelong learning policies/programmes especially those targeting disadvantaged groups.

Last but not least, the creation of a **Lifelong Learning Institute** on the European level, such as the CEDEFOP Agency, could contribute to raising awareness on lifelong learning in Europe and provide the evidence to support policies. This could be done by extending the mission of the CEDEFOP and/or by setting up a new agency (e.g. the Lifelong Learning Institute of the UNESCO for the UN).

Raising awareness on lifelong learning and creating culture of learning

Quality guidance and counselling services should be provided in order to promote a positive learning climate and support positive attitudes to learning, and therefore motivate learners to carry on with their learning pathways.

Guidance and learning support services have a crucial role to play in a learner-centred education system, and therefore guidance practitioners' continuous training is imperative. Apart from strengthening existing services, it is advisable to **support/implement independent local information centres** that would gather relevant information from the education and training entities in the area covered by the information points ("lifelong learning platforms/houses") and via that contribute to the outreach.

A national-wide guidance structure is necessary in order to tackle the issue of fragmentation of educational policies and to safeguard coherence, as well as offer more and better opportunities to

VI. GLOSSARY

Annual Growth Survey

The Annual Growth Survey launches the European Semester[12] by setting out the broad EU economic priorities for the year to come. It is the first step in the annual cycle.

Basic Skills

Minimum level of skills in literacy, numeracy, science and technology; also called "foundation skills".

Benchmark

A standard or point of reference against which things may be compared to evaluate performance. In the framework of EU cooperation in education and training, a certain number of quantitative objectives are to be reached by Member States by 2020.

Regional Policy

The EU regional policy is an investment policy. It supports job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development. These investments support the delivery of the Europe 2020[25] strategy. Regional policy is also the expression of the EU's solidarity with less developed countries and regions, concentrating funds on the areas and sectors where they can make the most difference. Regional policy aims to reduce the significant economic, social and territorial disparities that still exist between Europe's regions.

Communication

Considered as soft law; usually set out a Commission action plan. Communications may also include concrete proposals for legislation. Green and White Papers are example of Communications; can end up being adopted as Directive.

Conclusions

Policy guidelines adopted at Council meetings. Although not legally binding, the conclusions have political power as a frame of reference.

Country-specific recommendations

A set of recommendations for each Member State published by the Commission on what is needed to return to growth and jobs in the framework of the European Semester[12]. The recommendations are based on a thorough assessment of every Member State's plans for sound public finances (Stability or Convergence Programmes, or SCPs) and policy measures to boost growth and jobs (National Reform Programmes, or NRPs). Recommendations increasingly include elements on education and training.

Distance learning

Education and training delivery mode without regular and physical presence in a classroom/with a teacher.

Early school leaving

For the European headline target (less than 10%): population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education that is not in further education or training.

VI. GLOSSARY

Education and training 2010 work programme

At the Barcelona European Council meeting, the "Education" Council and the Commission jointly proposed the following work programme, together with a detailed timetable for working towards the concrete future objectives of education and training systems[122] , with particular reference to key issues: improving the quality of education and training systems, facilitating the access of all to education and training and opening up education and training systems to the wider world. In keeping with the open method of coordination, this work programme also identifies the main instruments to be used for measuring progress and comparing results across Europe, at both European and international levels.

Education and training 2020 strategic framework

ET2020 is the successor of the **"Education and Training 2010"** (ET 2010) work programme, which was launched as a response to the Lisbon Agenda in 2000. The main aim of the framework is to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, covering all levels and contexts (including non-formal and informal learning). It provides common **strategic objectives** for Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas for each periodic work cycle: make lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improve the quality and efficiency of education and training; promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

E-learning

Learning through information and communication technologies (ICT). Has been mainly tackled at EU level with the Commission's Communication on Opening Up Education.

Erasmus+

European funding programme for education and training for the period 2014-2020. Aims to reach more than 4 million people with a budget of 14.7 billion euros.

Europe 2020

Europe 2020 is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy that was launched in 2010. It is about more than just overcoming the crisis from which our economies are now gradually recovering. It is also about addressing the shortcomings of our growth model and creating the conditions for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

European citizens initiative

A European citizens' initiative is an invitation to the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate. A citizens' initiative has to be backed by at least one million EU citizens, coming from at least 7 out of the 28 member states. A minimum number of signatories [123] is required in each of those 7 member states.

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European Qualifications Framework

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) provides a common reference framework which assists in comparing the national qualifications systems, frameworks and their levels. It serves as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe, and thus promote lifelong and life-wide learning, and the mobility of European citizens whether for studying or working abroad.

European reference and transparency tools

Usually comprises ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training), EQF (European Qualifications Framework), EQAVET (European Quality Assurance in VET) and Europass.

European Semester

Set up in 2011, the European Semester[12] works as an annual cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination. Through this process, the Commission evaluates whether and to what extent the commitments undertaken by Member States allow the EU to meet its headline targets for 2020 and provides them with recommendations for the next 12-18 months. It involves discussion among EU institutions on broad priorities, annual commitments by the Member States and Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) prepared by the Commission and endorsed at the highest level by leaders in the European Council.

European Social Fund

The ESF is Europe's main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. It works by investing in Europe's human capital – its workers, its young people and all those seeking a job. ESF financing of 10 billion EUR a year is improving job prospects for millions of Europeans, in particular those who find it difficult to get work.

Flagship Initiative

Europe has identified new engines to boost growth and jobs. These areas are addressed by 7 flagship initiatives. Within each initiative, both the EU and national authorities have to coordinate their efforts so they are mutually reinforcing. Most of these initiatives have been presented by the Commission in 2010.

Green Paper

Usually used to launch a consultation process. Green Papers present Commission policy orientations to interested parties that may wish to comment. The Commission will generally prepare a subsequent proposal.

Headline Target

Europe 2020, a strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, is based on five EU headline targets which are currently measured by ten headline indicators: 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed; 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D; Greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by 20% compared to 1990; The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of 30-34 years old should have completed a tertiary or equivalent education; Poverty should be reduced by lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

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Key Competences

Key competences for lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. They are particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. The European framework of eight key competences comprises: communication in the mother tongue, in foreign languages, basic STEM competences, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.

Knowledge based societies

Societies based on the concept of openness, universality, liberty and equality through a public forum for knowledge, today particularly emphasised by new technologies. Societies of which the cornerstone should be equal and universal access to knowledge and genuine sharing (UNESCO World Report, 2005).

Learning outcome

A statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a learning process.

Lifelong learning

All purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an on-going basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.

Lifewide learning

Comprises various and flexible learning pathways, from formal to non-formal and informal learning settings.

Lisbon agenda

The European Council held a special meeting on 23-24 March 2000 in Lisbon to agree a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. It gave birth to the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme.

Open Method of Coordination

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is an instrument from the Lisbon Strategy. It consists in a voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing common objectives and common indicators, which show how progress towards these goals can be measured. It is applied in policy areas where the European Union has limited competences according to the EU Treaties, such as education and training, but where Member States feel there is an added value in working together at the European level.

Recommendation

Non-binding instruments issued by the Commission to define its view and suggest a line of action a specific issue. Though they have technically no legal force, they do carry political and moral weight.

Resolution

Document produced at the end of thematic debates at the European Council. While they are not legally binding, they have often been transposed into EU law through the work of the European Commission, Council of Ministers, or the European Parliament.

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Soft Law

Quasi-legal instruments which do not have any legally binding force, or which the binding force is somewhat "weaker" than the binding force of traditional law, often contrasted with soft law by being referred to as "hard law". Term applied to EU measures, such as guidelines, declarations and opinions. Can have strong political impact in practice. Used when no agreement can be found between Member States or when the EU lacks competence to produce hard law.

Stability and Growth Pact

The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) is a rule-based framework for the coordination of national fiscal policies in the European Union. It was established to safeguard sound public finances, based on the principle that economic policies are a matter of shared concern for all Member States.

Tertiary Attainment

Population aged 30-34 years that was successfully completed university or university-like (tertiary-level) education with an education level ISCED 1997 (International Standard Classification of Education) of 5-6. In the framework of EU cooperation: measured by an indicator as a Europe 2020 strategy's headline target. Target: at least 40% by 2020.

Thematic Working Group

In the field of education, ET2020 Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) have just undergone a revision after the Council's request in February 2013. Their new mandate focuses on implementing the ET2020 agenda and building tighter links with the European Semester, and their number has been reduced to match key policy challenges.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

1/ identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;

2/ documentation to maker visible the individual's experiences;

3/ a formal assessment of these experiences; and 4/ certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a practical or full qualification.

White paper

Sets out concrete proposals for action by the Commission in a specific area.

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