



**Plate forme européenne de la société civile pour l'éducation tout au long de la vie
European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning**

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Members:

AECEE: European Students' Forum

EAEA: European Association for Education of Adults

EAICY: European Association of Institutions of Non-Formal Education for Children and Young People

ECSWE: European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education

EFFE: European Forum for Freedom in Education

EfVET: European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

EPA: European Parents Association

ETDF: European Training and Development Federation

EUCEN: European University Continuing Education Network

EUROCLIO European Association of History Educators

EURO-WEA: European Workers Education Association

EVT/AEFP: European Vocational Training Association

FECCA: European Federation For Catholic Adult Education

FEEC: European Federation for Education and Culture

FICEMEA: International Federation of Training Centres for the Promotion of New Education

IAEC/AIVE: International Association of Educating Cities

ISCA: International Sport and Culture Association

SOLIDAR: European Platform on Social Affairs, International Solidarity and Lifelong Learning

To: Jordi Curell, Director in DG Education and Culture & Xavier Prats Monné, director of DG Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion.

**Brussels, 2 June 2010
Ref.: 10-122-01-GE**

SUBJECT: "NEW SKILLS FOR NEW JOBS: ACTION NOW", MORE FOCUS ON INCLUSION, CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION

Dear Jordi Curell and Xavier Prats Monné,

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) gathers 20 major European networks in education and training. Together, these networks represent thousands of teachers, animators, school heads, HR professionals, trainers, schools and universities. We would like to react to the report on "New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now" that was published under your lead.

EUCIS-LLL supports the overall orientation of the text and welcomes its focus on the **need to move towards implementation**. Although we support the need for excellence raised in the text, we would like to underline that this contains a risk. Those who have the lowest levels of qualifications or no qualifications at all may be left aside: people who traditionally face difficulties in the labour market as well as in constructing positive professional paths - young people, women or migrants - or those approaching retirement. **More focus should be put on the need to ensure that no one is left aside.**

Some of our members **questioned "excellence" as the only way forward for Europe**. The very value of academic qualifications and the economic return to these is increasingly being questioned (i.e. latest developments in science of learning and skills). The neglect of vocational and workplace education also needs attention. In that view, a focus on "skills utilisation", whereby we look at the skills we need to equip people with to be more productive and efficient, is the way forward. For individuals, learning should revolve around flexibility and agility, so that they can adapt to the short job tenure/high job churn cycle, which will characterise future labour markets.

In rapidly changing environments, the **notion of personal and professional paths** becomes more and more crucial. The traditional path "initial education-work-pension" is now obsolete as pathways are more and more fragmented. We observe a multiplication of jobs, a shortening of successive job lengths, a higher frequency of unsolicited periods of unemployment, a request for more mobility and flexibility within companies, changes in personal lives such as divorces, moving house, blended families, etc. Such fragmentation introduces a new element that is becoming more and more

important: how to ensure the continuity and the progression of individual paths? How to enable people to progress and even take advantage of this new situation?

Transition points and their “management” become crucial elements. The European Commission’s consultation document on the EU2020 strategy highlighted this idea of managing transition points between jobs or between jobs and training. The discussions that took place within EUCIS-LLL, led to identify three key moments at transition points:

- **Identification, evaluation and validation of prior learning as a mean to measure the progression of an individual** (validation of non formal and informal learning).
- **Formulating a project** (new job, becoming an entrepreneur, new training, new position...) **and connecting it with previous learning.**
- **Possible elaboration of a study or personal plan** allowing an individual to learn what is necessary to bridge the gap between their previous learning and those required by the new personal or professional environment they wish to access.

EUCIS-LLL outlines that this process should not focus only on academic outcomes but take into account the entire spectrum of learning - formal but also non-formal and informal.

Some of our members added that the concept of **project-based learning** around issues like entrepreneurial activity and possibly social enterprise is a key. The idea of bridging learning at work is critical to skills utilisation.

In this perspective, the **generalisation of the use of learning outcomes is crucial**. We agree with the authors of this report when they mention that learning outcomes shall become a common language between the world of education and the world of business. However, EUCIS-LLL outlines that this shall also be the case between the various sectors of education and training. One of our members also mentioned the need to consider “slow knowledge” approach of learning.

This is an ambitious goal and numerous actors raise the issue of how to **implement concrete mechanisms that are flexible enough to take into account the diversity of situations and individual paths**, at European, national and local levels.

Today, we can see that many solutions exist or could be implemented rapidly; however, they are dispersed and not coordinated. Many local initiatives are carried out without real impact. **We need clear orientations and leaders**. We also need to build a **financial model** to organise the existing means around such projects and check if new ones are available or needed.

Within the report, the approach is clearly that of anticipation, of adopting a general attitude aiming to open possible futures. We would like to point out the fact that **the notion of future is not the same for all and that degrees of anticipation are variable** between the European Commission, the Member

States, businesses with a stronger diversity between crafts, SMEs or large companies, education and training institutions and their delays for answering needs and individuals (can be the following day for the most fragile publics).

Finally, the debate is essentially focused on the relationship between educative institutions and businesses. In a perspective that gives more room for non-formal and informal learning, it is essential to **broaden the dialogue**. We need to **involve all the stakeholders that contribute to building knowledge, competences and skills**. For instance, as the European Economic and Social Committee outlined in its opinion of 17 February 2010, actors in education and training should be represented in the Sector Councils on Employment and Skills.

To conclude, we would like to highlight that this requires a greater effort on behalf of institutions and organisations but it also requires **an effort from individuals who have to acquire the basis to play a new role: learning to become the actor of their own path**, take advantage of all the situations they participated in, dialoguing with institutions on the basis of their prior learning (formal, non-formal and informal). For the future, EUCIS-LLL believes it is essential that **our societies are capable of preparing individuals for that role**.

EUCIS-LLL is about to launch a **wide consultation process** on the New Skills Agenda and will publish regular feedbacks.

I remain at your disposal should you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

Michel Feutrie,
Secretary General of EUCIS-LLL