



Fourth Stakeholders' Forum on EU Cooperation in Education and Training

“Priority areas for the 2012-14 work cycle of the Strategic Framework ET 2020”

26th-27th September 2011, Brussels

KEY MESSAGES

Stakeholders are aware that the **current economic and social crisis** can have a **serious impact** on the next cycle, but they ask for **wise and effective reactions** from the decision-makers involved. In general the stakeholders do not express the need to change the strategic objectives nor their respective priorities. Three years is a far too short to reach the targets and to measure all effects in a quantitative and qualitative way. However they express some clear concerns about the way the Education and Training work programme has been implemented up to now and how the economic situation can lead to changes that can be contra-productive for successful strategies.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ET2020

There was a general concern about:

- The **lack of effective communication** between key players but also competitors on the European level: the stakeholders, the experts and the official representatives of the EU countries/Ministries of Education/Higher education (and Culture).
- The **lack of stakeholders' involvement** and contribution at the local, regional and national level and the need to enhance the opportunities for **stakeholders to meet the representatives** of the educational systems and the decision-makers in the countries in order to increase the required **system impact**.
- The **strong focus on employability as a priority** for the next cycle. There is a wish to understand the objectives for lifelong learning as much broader. In the current context it is crucial to develop employability but also social inclusion (↑ inequalities) and civic participation (↑ of xenophobic behaviours, euroscepticism, etc.).
- The **decrease of interest and emphasis on the substance of the lifelong learning (LLL) policy and strategy** in a growing number of countries: we need to create a new momentum on lifelong learning (2012 is the LLL communication 10th anniversary).
- Benchmarks are articulated in numbers: we need to complement them with **qualitative indicators** to compare and assess the situation at European and national level in order to propose short-term and long-term solutions.
- To enhance **cross-sectoral partnerships and cooperation** (at least through regular dialogue) and a better articulation between research-practice-policy.

HOW TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE?

Priority 1 - Stronger involvement of stakeholders to bring EU policies closer to citizens and vice-versa by:

1. At EU level: set up a structured dialogue for stakeholders' participation including social partners and civil society representatives: going beyond an annual Forum by including their representatives in the various experts/working groups within the open method of coordination 'ET2020';
2. At national level: compulsory consultation of stakeholders (i.e. in the preparation and follow-up of national reform programmes for each European Semester);



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3. Setting up national platforms of stakeholders (i.e. EUCIS-LLL platform but at national level) and national Forums of consultations (i.e. DG EAC Stakeholders' Forum).

Priority 2 - Greater transparency and dialogue:

1. Ensure transparency about the composition of expert groups, working groups, high level group, etc. and the relations between them;
2. Better coordination between policies/programmes/DGs to ensure greater efficiency and coherence;
3. Map relevant stakeholders' at all levels and from all sectors to ensure broader involvement and ownership;
4. Structured dialogue on the implementation of EU programmes (selection, reportage, evaluation of projects) involving the Executive Agencies and project coordinators in order to insure more effective implementation of EU funding programmes.

Priority 3 - Dissemination and transfer of information:

1. Ensuring a broader access to information in a centralised and user-friendly way;
2. Shifting the role of national agencies / info points: to have a multi-way information flow;
3. Nominate champions and set up concrete tools to translate the message.

Priority 4 – Improving the impact and measurement of progress

Participants recognise the importance of benchmarks to ensure a greater commitment of Member States and visibility of EU objectives and policies, however they invite the EU to complement 'traditional indicators' with more qualitative benchmarks (long-term and short-term / macro and micro indicators). The results can be a good starting point for national debates on lifelong learning, involving national stakeholders. By:

1. Involving stakeholders in defining indicators and in their interactive follow-up;
2. Harmonising existing indicators (social, education...) and increasing the information flow;
3. Capacity-building: how to use the indicators and what are the available indicators;
4. Use indicators to evaluate projects and identify best practice examples.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

There is a **general request for the concrete implementation** of tools and instruments, for the **involvement of stakeholders** (in a bottom-up approach) at all levels and the creation of national stakeholders' platforms to encourage **best practice sharing and peer learning**. In each working group, participants mentioned the **validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning** as a top priority. It is a recognised element of the national lifelong learning systems and their underlying structure to be used as a regular instrument for people who are creating an effective 'learning pathway'. These systems should be based on a learning outcomes approach and learner-centred systems that recognise **different ways of learning** be it formal, non-formal and informal and an effective and efficient combinations of them.

Strategic objective 1: Make lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality

Lifelong learning strategies need to be reviewed in order to provide easier and updated guidelines to Member states. More focus should be given on the **key competences framework** implementation



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with also special attention to transversal competences such as responsibility, creativity, communication, decision-making, openness, leadership, but also motivation and dedication. In all surveys for the needs in businesses, organisations and society these more general competences are mentioned as the basis for more long-term acceptance for jobs, voluntary work, community involvement et cetera.

EQF/NQF remains little understood, known and used in the countries: the EU/Member States need to translate the challenges especially for linking non-formal and informal education (diplomas, certificates, portfolio's and other proofs) by **simplifying the communication** around the process and trying to **create ownership** by involving stakeholders in the reflection and implementation at all levels.

Concerning **learning mobility** ('moving from 4% to 100%?') we need a better access to information; data on different types of mobility; develop mutual recognition and validation of learning outcomes; recognise the individual and collective dimension of mobility; develop peer-learning activities; introduce compulsory mobility where sensible (mobility windows) and develop consistent policy on the national level to stimulate mobility in all sectors and for all users. Indeed we should consider mobility in higher education but also in VET (including HVET, linked to SCHE), schools and non-formal education. It should be for learners but also for educators/trainers which means tackling financial and administrative but also cultural barriers (i.e. teacher leave).

Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

- **Learning of languages** is important for mobility and social cohesion. Non-EU languages should be better recognized (i.e. migrant languages);
- The **professional development of trainers/trainers/educators and other staff members** is key for quality of education. However, there is an enormous challenge for professionals to get leave (i.e. to participate in EU seminars/projects). We need concrete and flexible measures to empower and professionalize these professions, as part of their contracts;
- It is crucial to **include learners perspectives** and to promote **participatory governance** at organisational and institutional level and in all sectors;
- **Basic skills** in reading, mathematics and science are seen by employers as very important (demand and offer mismatch) but we also have to **go beyond** the 'basics' emphasizing **transversal competences**. Today there is a strong focus on skills while competences also include values, attitudes and knowledge;
- We need to **stimulate learners of all ages to be pro-active**, adaptable, reflective and critical ('lifelong learners');
- We need to create better **learning environments** by looking more carefully at well-being and health in education and training.

Strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

- Give more consideration to **active citizenship as a qualitative indicator** when measuring progress, etc.;
- Recognise that education and training and more particularly **non-formal education plays an important role** in developing equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;



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- Better **coordination of policies** (i.e. employment, job creation, health) to include socially disadvantaged groups (i.e. migrants) with a **consolidated way of using funding mechanisms and programmes**;
- Attention should be paid to **transitions between learning, work and life responsibilities**;
- **Improve literacy in a life-long perspective** as well as ‘**soft**’ and **vocational skills** to develop employability but also social inclusion and civic participation;
- Pay more attention to **financial barriers in the access to and success in higher education** to reach the target of having higher educated people, having in mind the personal need and the developments on the labour market, now and in the future.

Strategic objective 4: Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

- **Broaden the definition of employability** to personal development in a combination of work, study, social and civic involvement, personal affairs and formal and non-formal economic activities;
- Emphasize the need to have citizens with creative competences by better using opportunities offered by **non-formal and informal learning**;
- **A bottom up approach and the involvement of stakeholders** is needed in order to support innovation and creativity: institutions/governments have to give the opportunity to learners/educators to think in another way (i.e. innovative pedagogy, partnerships, participatory governance);
- Encourage **innovative partnerships** by developing cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation and peer learning – using good practices and recognised networks and platforms for the organisation;
- Adapt funding mechanisms to allow innovation: i.e. specific EU Programme line that would create innovative approaches through partnerships.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN 2020?

Better Education for Better Europe: «A BEBE in 2020 or in 2030?»

- Full implementation of EU tools and policies – proven to be effective, in the eyes of the stakeholders;
- Better coherence at a European level to support the national lifelong learning holistic approach/paradigm shift;
- EU to be forward thinking/looking: proposing new subjects, perspectives, etc.
- Full and effective participation of stakeholders at all levels in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of policies, using the experts in the underlying networks and platforms.

Shift to a holistic approach to learning:

- Support the implementation of lifelong learning comprehensive and coherent strategies in all Member States;



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- Recognise different ways of learning: formal, non-formal and informal and promote the use of effective combinations of those learning pathways;
- Recognition and validation systems/solutions implemented in all countries as part of agreements with employers, employees and those who are involved in a personal career planning, in the short- and long-term.

Change of paradigm in education and training:

- Learner-centred systems: change in frameworks, assessments, learning culture, etc.
- Lifelong learners: personal and social skills for life, transversal skills (learning to learn...)

Equity/Access and Quality in education and training as a top priority:

- Equal access for all citizens i.e. to learning mobility;
- Possibility to move between/inside the formal and the non-formal systems: to enable greater continuity and progression to all;
- Capacity-building and peer-learning as a key element to reform systems in a inclusive and sustainable way;
- Enhance the quality of provision as a priority in all sectors, with the possibility to cooperate to develop good practices and guidelines.