



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

**Translating European guidelines into  
regional policies**

**Keynote speech**

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A very good morning to you all, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Cedefop

Let me begin my remarks with a quote,

*'The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.'*

Many of you will recognise that quote as coming from the Lisbon European Council conclusions of March 2000.

Looking back that strategic goal looks even more ambitious than it did in the year 2000. And very few expect Europe to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world over the next 15 months.

However, that passage comes from a section in the Lisbon conclusions headed, 'the way forward'. And indeed that remains the case.

The strategy agreed at Lisbon remains the way forward, not least because a cornerstone of that strategy is lifelong learning. Europe's future growth and the well being of its citizens depend' <sup>(1)</sup> on raising overall skill levels.

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<sup>(1)</sup> See footnote 1.

I should like to quote a little more.

‘Implementation of the strategic goal will be facilitated by... a new open method of coordination. This...involves:

- fixing guidelines for the Union
- establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks’

And, please note,

- ‘translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences’

It is my argument that this is the point that we have reached after eight years.

We have put in place the guidelines for the Union. We have established quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks. And we will continue to improve them.

However, the challenge now lies in translating European guidelines, not so much into national policies, but to make them an integral part of regional policies.

The regional dimension at this stage is decisive, as we are move from the necessary conceptual and developmental phase of putting a policy framework in place, to the more difficult, but potentially more rewarding phase of implementation.

And without the regions, many European guidelines cannot be implemented.

I should like to take the next few minutes to outline some of the major economic and social developments taking place in Europe that emphasise the importance of skills and the lifelong learning needed to acquire them

I will then review the progress we have made since Lisbon in 2000 and some of the challenges we still face.

And, finally, I should like to consider what this means for the regions and, in particular, regional cooperation in Europe.

## **Developments in Europe**

Challenges for lifelong learning policy-makers in Europe - at all levels - are mounting.

Europe, potentially, faces a major skills problem in the near future.

According to Cedefop's skills forecast published earlier this year, over 20 million new jobs are expected to be created between 2006 and 2020 <sup>(2)</sup> in Europe <sup>(3)</sup>.

Another 85 million jobs will be available to replace people who retire or leave the labour market for other reasons.

Although more jobs and job opportunities are forecast, the working population will fall by around six million.

Consequently, there is strong evidence of increasing needs for, and even shortages of, people with adequate levels of qualification in many areas.

The employment rate target of 70 % by 2010 set by the European Council at Lisbon in 2000, although ambitious, could prove to be far too low for 2020.

In just over a decade an employment rate of around 74 % may be required to avoid a shortage in the workforce due to different occupational structures and potential skill gaps.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Cedefop. *Future skill needs in Europe - Focus on 2020*. Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2008.  
Available from Internet:  
[www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/publication\\_details.asp?pub\\_id=498](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=498)

<sup>(3)</sup> ) Forecast covers all EU Member States (except Bulgaria and Romania) plus Norway and Switzerland

Most additional jobs over the period 2006-20 will require high-level qualifications. However, more than half of job openings (new jobs plus jobs open to replace people leaving the labour market) are expected to require medium-level qualifications.

Many of these jobs will require vocational qualifications, not general education or academic ones. Further, the skill requirements of many existing jobs are will change and are likely to increase.

European social trends <sup>(4)</sup> also emphasise the importance of skills and lifelong learning.

Increased life expectancy and declining birth rates bring longer working lives.

A more mobile younger generation require linguistic and cultural skills.

Climate change and increasing pressure on natural resources bring the need for innovation and new 'green' jobs.

Imigrants and a steady increase in second-generation learners with a migrant background <sup>(5)</sup> need the right skills to integrate successfully.

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<sup>(4)</sup> *European Commission, Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe, Communication COM (2007) 726 final 20.11.07*

<sup>(5)</sup> *European Commission, A common immigration policy for Europe: principles, actions and tools. Communication COM (2008) 359 final. SEC (2008) 2026, 2027*

## Progress to date

The good news is that, supported by European policy for lifelong learning <sup>(6)</sup>, the EU, its Member States and the social partners are working more closely than ever before to modernise education and training and create a European working and learning area.

They are focussed on questions of how to increase and improve vocational learning throughout life. And European policy has led to significant results for lifelong learning.

European principles and guidelines supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning, policy coordination mechanisms for lifelong guidance and the framework for quality assurance have been agreed.

European tools such as Europass, the European credit transfer in vocational education and training, and the European qualifications framework – which has also encouraged development of sectoral and national qualification frameworks - are changing the character of lifelong learning, not least by stimulating the shift to learning outcomes

This is a major shift. Traditionally, it has been learning inputs, the questions of when, where and

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<sup>(6)</sup> Council of the European Union. *2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Education & training 2010 work programme – ‘Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation’* (2008/C 86/01) 5.4.2008.

how learning takes place, that have decided the nature, significance and level of qualifications. However, emphasis is moving to learning outcomes, namely what a learner knows, understands or is able to do, at the end of any kind of learning sequence.

Learning outcomes acknowledges valuable and relevant learning takes place in different settings, including school, work, during leisure time and abroad.

All these steps combined mean that Europe, very gradually, like a huge oil tanker slowly turning to take a new direction, is building education and training systems that make access to learning at various levels easier both within and between Member States.

Europe is slowly building education and training systems that make learning pathways more transparent, open and flexible, that support progression in learning and transfers between different learning contexts.

Systems that combine formal, non-formal and informal learning. Systems that make learning accessible throughout life.

In short, Europe is building systems of lifelong learning.

## Challenges

However, although progress is substantial it is slow. And major challenges remain.

Europe's workforce is ageing and less skilled than those of its major competitors.

From 2009, the European workforce will have more people aged over 54 than young people aged 15 to 24.

Employment rates for women remain below the EU target of 60 % by 2010. One in every six young people leaves school with only lower-secondary education.

Those under 25 looking for a job are three times more likely to be unemployed than those aged between 25 and 64. Unemployment rates for those with migrant backgrounds tend to be higher than the average.

Non-EU nationals remain underrepresented in jobs appropriate to their level of qualification <sup>(7)</sup>. Overall, not enough adults participate in continuing training and adult learning <sup>(8)</sup> and the number is falling <sup>(9)</sup>.

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<sup>(7)</sup> *Where immigrant students succeed – A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003* (OECD 2006) and *Employment report* (2005).

<sup>(8)</sup> See footnote 7.

<sup>(9)</sup> Do we have a reference that will let us say this????????????????????

Even if the EU benchmark<sup>(10)</sup> is reached, the number of adults participating in lifelong learning by 2010 will be low. And according to Cedefop's analysis of training in enterprises, which we will disseminate next year, there has been no significant improvement in recent years.

## **Where do regions fit in?**

Given the challenges we face, the focus now and beyond 2010 is on developing and implementing existing policies<sup>(11)</sup>.

We have the framework in place. We must know make it work

With the end of the 2000-10 Lisbon strategy and Education and training 2010 work programme, their successors must provide for a European lifelong learning policy that can set and achieve world class standards. And it must have a role for the regions.

So where do the regions fit in?

I would argue that the role of regions lies in implementation through the translation of European guidelines into regional policies.

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<sup>(10)</sup> 12.5 % of the adult working population aged 25-64 participating in training some time in the four weeks prior to being asked the question as part of the labour force survey.

<sup>(11)</sup> See footnote 10.

It is not a new role. Lifelong learning remains the way forward. What changes is the nature of European cooperation between the regions.

Although the regions have very different powers, ranging from full autonomy in Catalonia and the French community in Belgium to competences shared with the state in regions like Rhone-Alpes and Malpolska, nevertheless

There is a strategic convergence underway between European and regional lifelong learning policies.

Consequently, if regional and European policies do not match, they should do.

This does not mean we do everything the same way. The European level is supporting the regions taking into account their differences.

This strategic convergence means that although the priorities of regions in lifelong learning vary, whatever the priority may be there is a European policy underpinning it.

Is your priority lifelong guidance? There are common European principles agreed in 2004.

Is your priority mobility? There is Europass and credit transfer systems for university and vocational education.

Is your priority quality assurance for training and training providers? There is a common quality assurance framework – and more work is underway to improve it.

Is your priority better statistics, indicators and benchmarks? We're working on it.

Awareness of these tools and principles is reasonably high among regions some regions will actively involved in discussions at national level and in pilot projects at European level.

However, despite their relevance their use by the regions is not so widespread.

Part of this is explained by the fact that common European tools and principles are relatively new. They take time to be understood and accepted.

Part is explained by the different powers and competences of the regions and the relationship with central government

However, as I have already pointed out, irrespective of a region's powers or priorities, there are at least some issues of direct relevance to the regions' lifelong learning policies.

The Europass website, for example, has had more than a million visitors since its launch in February 2005, so it must be of interest to someone.

It is because of this strategic convergence and relevance that European cooperation must step up a level.

Regional cooperation has now gone beyond being simply the member of a network or participation in a pilot project working on issues of specific interest.

It is no longer a case of pilot projects developing innovation and trying to transfer the ideas into the mainstream. Now the mainstream is one huge pilot project.

Our ambitions have subtly, but significantly changed and regional cooperation now needs to think strategically.

Just as European cooperation has supported national policies, so to it can strengthen regional policies

Shared European objectives common principles, guidelines, recommendations and instruments, can provide a focus for regional cooperation in Europe and stimulate ideas and innovation.

Whether the focus of that cooperation is a selected part of the European policy framework, or its whole, is for the network and its regions to decide.

Implementation is the difficult part, but where experience of others can provide new insights.

And peer and mutual learning, where experts familiar with challenges at regional level cooperate for to develop strategy and implement lifelong learning policies, can help drive developments in the regions.

The title of this address in your programme is: What can we expect from the European level to develop lifelong learning policies? And how can the implementation be stimulated?

What to expect from Europe are more proposals recommendations, conclusions, common tools and principles. There will also be resources – the lifelong learning programme, the European social fund, but for the most part it you can expect nothing but more hard work, toil and sweat.

The stimulation for implementation must come from you.

Thank you for listening.