



Education and Training 2020 Stocktaking

Assessment of the current state of play

The ET2020 strategy was adopted in the European Council conclusions of May 2009¹ as a framework for European cooperation in education and training. It established four strategic areas for this cooperation up to 2020, as follows:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

In parallel, the Europe 2020 strategy² was adopted in 2010 as a comprehensive framework for Europe to emerge stronger from the crisis. In the area of education Europe 2020 set two targets:

- Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%
- Having at least 40% of 30-34 year olds completing third level education

It is BUSINESSEUROPE's view that ET2020 was adopted without enough involvement of social partners in shaping the strategy. This has meant that insufficient focus was put on the skills needs that companies have and how effective investments in education and training can contribute more and increase productivity. At the same time, Europe 2020 concentrates too much on qualifications and not enough on learning outcomes. This is particularly the case in relation to the second target on participation in third level education.

2014 Review

BUSINESSEUROPE is in the process of gathering members' input for preparing a response to the Europe 2020 consultation.

As regards ET2020, national social partners have not had the possibility to review, and give input to, the national reports. Their involvement in the stocktaking exercise and defining the priorities for the second half of the strategy could have been strengthened if this would have been the case.

Our overall assessment is that the existence of two parallel strategies is a complicating factor. However, this may be justified by the fact that ET2020 focuses on challenges that are specific to education and training systems.

¹ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?jsessionid=P7b1TGQL7Tt1pVPGch79g25cRBzLv0VbhKGn4GgHQ31zV6cZDJDn!-192786421?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?jsessionid=P7b1TGQL7Tt1pVPGch79g25cRBzLv0VbhKGn4GgHQ31zV6cZDJDn!-192786421?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01))

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

The ET2020 stocktaking should feed into the Europe 2020 consultation and vice-versa in order to ensure that the two strategies complement each other. There should not be a separate formal consultation launched for ET2020.

Looking ahead

Better alignment of the needs of labour markets and education and training systems should be the guiding principle for the next five year period. Within this there needs to be a focus on learning outcomes and employability in education and training systems at all levels. This would facilitate the transparency and recognition of qualifications, enhance quality and foster mobility in Europe.

There needs to be a better concentration of efforts in the area of education and training and this could be achieved through streamlining existing initiatives. There has already been some progress in this respect as concerns a reduction in, and a more targeted focus of, the ET2020 technical working groups, but more could be done. For instance, consideration should be given to the feasibility of merging ET2020 and the Europe 2020 strategy, for example by rolling ET2020 into the Europe 2020 strategy.

ET2020 should set targeted short-term deliverables that support the implementation of education and training country specific recommendations (CSRs) under the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy. In reinforcing the link between ET2020 and Europe 2020 the European semester process can be used as the way to initiate reforms to education and training systems at the national level. A good example of this from the 2013 cycle of CSRs is the issuing of recommendations to sixteen Member States to develop or strengthen their apprenticeship systems. A stronger role for dual-learning apprenticeship systems will help to address the twin objectives of facilitating the transition from education to employment, thus raising the employment rate towards the Europe 2020 target, and in meeting companies' skills needs.

The involvement of national social partners will also be strengthened through their involvement in implementing actions, in line with national industrial relations practices, and through their respective procedures for contributing to the semester process. This will help to achieve more concrete results than the open method of coordination (OMC). Nevertheless, the OMC has an important role to play and there are some priority issues that would benefit from greater exchanges between Member States and around which short-term deliverables should be oriented.

Employers' priorities

- Anticipation of skills needs

The Commission and CEDEFOP should organise an exchange of best practice on how the short-term anticipation of skills needs can be improved in order to encourage mutual learning between Member States and/or regions.

- STEM skills

The Commission should develop a policy framework that will promote STEM subjects and encourage Member States to learn from each other on how to increase the number and improve the quality of STEM graduates in conjunction with companies' skills needs.

- Entrepreneurship education

In line with the new Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, Member States should set up entrepreneurship courses as part of school curricula and in secondary and tertiary education, be it general education or vocational education and training. Exchanges between Member States, notably involving education ministries and social partners, could provide valuable knowledge on how to achieve this.

- Governance of education systems

There needs to be a higher level of cooperation between the private sector and education institutions. Companies, employers' organisations, and where appropriate social partners need to be involved in the design of curricula across all levels of education and particularly secondary and tertiary.

- E-skills

A coherent EU strategy for digital learning and open educational resources should be mainstreamed across all education and training sectors. This would favour a more efficient use of resources, both public and private, and could make a significant contribution to broadening participation in education and training.
