

## KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNER

CEEP wishes to reiterate its full dedication and support to the strengthened cooperation between the European social partners and the European Commission, and therefore welcomes this consultation on the update of the ET 2020 strategic objectives, in full coherence with the targets for the EU 2020 strategy.

### ET 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

ET 2020 is essential as it allows the development of a medium-term vision of how we can achieve better education for Europe's future. In this regard, important discrepancies remain between national Member States and for instance while several countries have already reached the target of 40% tertiary level attainment some others still need to reach the European targets.

In CEEP, we are concerned that many Member States have reduced their education expenditures<sup>1</sup> while still trying to achieve the statistical targets. It could be interpreted as a short term vision for education's added value, as representatives for public services employers including education employers we are concerned about a possible deterioration of the quality in the long run and the general lack of awareness of the importance of education.

The European targets on education do not express enough the adequacy of the skills achieved and gross averages at EU level or at national level may hide very significant age, gender or regional differences. Thus, as the Commission recognised in its EU 2020 Stocktaking communication of May, more specific analysis as well as qualitative information are necessary to interpret how the targets have been reached and what is the actual situation in Member States.

On the same time, skills and future skills needed in the workforce are hard to estimate as depending on the region and places, the main skills needed can greatly vary overtime. It is therefore not indicated for the European Commission to focus on too precise indicators when it comes to skills but to highlight the need to continuously improving skills or the "learn to learn" skills.

### The link between ET 2020 and the EU's overall growth and jobs strategy

EU 2020 targets in the EU is mostly look upon education in the context of art 148 TFEU as a core element to better allocate labour to jobs, to foster innovation as well

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<sup>1</sup> In total, in 2011 and/or 2012, cuts in education budget were made in twenty countries/regions for which data are available. Cuts of more than 5 % were observed in Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom (Wales) and Croatia, whereas decreases between 1 and 5 % were seen in French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom – Scotland

as better productivity. ET 2020 targets are more developed and follow most of the individual life across the school systems. However they still lack an important quality dimension. Thus we believe that it is now important to look upon and analyse the quality of all education systems in the stocktaking exercise beyond the quantitative approach e.g. the PISA test scores constructed by the OECD is composite indicator between a quantitative indicator, graduation rate from tertiary education, and a qualitative indicator which allows international comparisons.

Without this qualitative dimension, it will reveal difficult to evaluate whether future graduates will be able to meet the requirements that are so crucial for future labour markets.

For CEEP it is crucial that the European Commission keeps on supporting the Member States in the development of their education policies by collecting the key information, by further developing the peer learning in the framework of the European Semester, giving education the part it should have as the essential guarantee for finding a decent job while recognising the possible impacts of fiscal consolidation on school systems in the EU.

In this regard, public services face difficult challenges, worsening since the beginning of the crisis, which impact significantly on Human Resources Management including:

- Financial challenge: public services are under constant pressure “to do more with less”.
- Demographic change and diversity: public services are increasingly required to serve ageing and more diversified citizens,
- Increasing competition: The introduction in public services of Methods of management developed in the private sector increased drastically the need for transversal skills
- The changing nature of technology and environmental concerns are changing the ways services are provided to the citizens;

In this difficult environment, public services employees need to be able to adapt to new work environments and working methods and to take responsibility for acquiring the competences and dispositions required.

### **ET 2020 future priorities**

According to the CEEP “Pulse of Public Services”<sup>2</sup> published in November 2013, “finding the workforce with the appropriate skills” is among the top three challenges identified by leaders of companies providing public services and the first challenge not linked to the effects of the crisis.

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<sup>2</sup> CEEP, Pulse of Public Services, Autumn 2013, [www.ceep.eu](http://www.ceep.eu)

There is clear need to better anticipate future skills' needs. However, in a world where change is ubiquitous, it is not possible for education and training providers or enterprises to predict accurately what specific competences will be required in the workplaces of the future. Accordingly, the emphasis has switched to the provision of key competences, and the inculcation of attitudes that provide workers with the capacity for lifelong learning so that they may be able to adapt effectively to the changing challenges and working environment.

On a broader perspective, the cost to the European Union of youth not finding work is enormous: one estimate puts the annual cost of the NEETs group (People Not in Education, Employment or Training) at €153 billion in 2011<sup>3</sup>. The implementation of the Youth Guarantee is essential in this regard, and should give birth to new mechanism of insertion at Member States level fostering new forms of coordination between schools, Public employment services and associations at the local and regional level.

The primary aim of Europe 2020 is to rejuvenate Europe's flagging economy and set it back on a growth trajectory but its social dimension is also important and the school systems are one of its key components. Therefore, we consider essential the need to focus on NEETS, those furthest from the labour market, in order to foster a growth both smart and inclusive fully taking stock of the European capabilities. Additionally, the age of retirement is going up while the actual time spent working tend to decrease due to prolonged study or difficulties to enter the labour market, therefore a comprehensive vision is also necessary.

### **Contribution of the social partners to implementing the future priorities**

Education should be addressed as a long-term policy which needs an holistic approach. There is clear evidence that states with highly involved social partnership suffer fewer problems with unemployment and NEET. Therefore, it is important to integrate social partners from the start on discussions related to the upcoming indicators, upcoming objectives and means to reach them. The proper involvement of our members at national level is also essential for the ET 2020 national reports to be proper input taking stock of what is actually happening at the National Member State level.

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<sup>3</sup> EUROFOUND, NEETs Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, 2012