

**"Improving competences for the 21st Century:
an Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools"
Communication of the European Commission, 3 July 2008**

Citizens' Summary

The purpose of the Communication is to outline how European cooperation can most effectively support Member States' efforts to adapt their school education systems to meet the expectations of learners themselves, society and the labour market.

What is the problem?

The challenge facing the EU is to strengthen the reform of school systems so that every young person can develop his or her full potential, through improved access and opportunities, to become an active participant in the emerging knowledge economy, and to reinforce social solidarity.

Most Member States now have strategies for lifelong learning in which they recognise the crucial role of school education in preparing young people for lifelong learning, the world of work and diverse societies. Progress towards European benchmarks (reducing early school leaving and the number of poor readers, increasing the completion rate of upper secondary education) is, however, slow, and the key targets will not be achieved by 2010.

Why at EU level? The proposal/solution

Member States are responsible for the organisation and content of education and training. Europe's diverse school systems, founded upon shared values, contain a host of innovative and excellent practices. We should make better use of this diversity.

The Communication identifies key areas in which change, sometimes radical change, will need to be made if Europe's schools are to equip young people fully for life in this century.

Policy areas and emerging issues are presented under three broad headings:

- (1) A competence-based approach in education and training
- (2) High quality learning for every student
- (3) Teachers and school staff.

These are fields in which cooperation between Member States should be launched or intensified in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination.