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ROADMAP

Title of the initiative:

"A new impetus for European cooperation on vocational education and training: 2010-2020"

Lead DG/contact person: DG EAC

Expected date of adoption of the initiative (month/year): May/2010

Initial IA screening & planning of further work

A. Context and problem definition

What is the political context of the initiative? How does this initiative relate to past and possible future initiatives, and to other EU policies?

The role of education and training in coping with the current and future challenges is widely acknowledged and highlighted in the new Europe 2020 Strategy. In particular, development of knowledge, skills and competences through education and training are crucial to the Europe 2020 objectives of smart and inclusive growth.

The political context of the planned initiative is the upcoming review of the Copenhagen process on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training which was launched in November 2002 by the Copenhagen Declaration.¹ The process was reviewed by Ministers in charge of vocational education and training (VET) in Maastricht (2004), in Helsinki (2006) and in Bordeaux (2008). At each of these meetings priorities and objectives were adopted to guide VET policy development for the two following years, without a formal Commission contribution. The Bordeaux Communiqué called for the next Ministerial follow-up meeting to be held in Bruges in 2010 to evaluate the implementation of the Copenhagen process and to reflect on its strategic direction beyond 2010, establishing a long-term vision for VET up to the year 2020.

The significance of this review of the Copenhagen process and the Commission contribution to it is increased also by fact that it comes in a crucial period of defining the broader EU strategic policy objectives for the next decade, as well as provides specific priorities in the field of Education and Training policy cooperation for the period 2010-2020. The Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020") has already been approved in May 2009, and the Copenhagen process is the VET pillar of this strategy.

The proposed initiative should be built upon the Europe 2020 Strategy² and clearly linked to the objectives of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training – ET2020³, as well as to the New Skills for New Jobs initiative⁴.

What are the main problems identified?

Despite the success of the Copenhagen process since its launch in 2002, there are many problems and concerns common to the VET systems in Europe which should be addressed and further developed at the

¹ More details on the Copenhagen process can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm

² COM (2010) 2020

³ OJ C 119/2, 28.5.2009

⁴ COM(2008) 868

European level in close cooperation with Member States and European Social Partners. Even with the current economic crisis and rising unemployment rates, Europe is facing a serious lack of a skilled labour force. The problem will become more acute with decreasing numbers of VET graduates in the coming decades linked to the demographic changes in Europe. Similarly, the VET systems are not responsive enough to the constantly changing needs of the labour market and do not always provide the young people in initial VET as well as adults and working population in continuing VET with the up-to-date skills and competences. Member States are currently reforming their E&T systems with the aim to provide and update skills of people throughout their whole life, but if lifelong learning is to become a reality, VET systems must improve in terms of quality, attractiveness and access to all, including groups of risk and so to play an important role in terms of equity and social inclusion.

In order to provide a response to the current problems and future challenges linked to ageing societies, future skills needs, technological and climate changes, the Copenhagen process needs a new impetus and long-term vision of vocational education and training for the next decade 2010-2020. This will be done mainly through the Bruges review of the Copenhagen process and the Council Conclusions on the future of European cooperation in VET for the period 2010-2020 to be adopted in the second half of 2010 under the Belgian presidency.

The planned Commission initiative could be an opportunity to make a contribution which would be consistent with the Europe 2020 Strategy, New Skills for New Jobs initiative and in particular with the new strategic framework for co-operation between EU Member States to reform their education and training system (ET2020 strategic framework) adopted in May 2009.

Is EU action justified on grounds of subsidiarity?
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EU vocational education and training policy has a legal base in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 166:

"The Union shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training."

As explained above, the planned initiative should be seen as Commission contribution to the debate on the future of European VET policy and should be considered as an input to the review of the Copenhagen process. The two proposals for adoption by the Member States and European Social Partners will be the Bruges Communiqué and the Council Conclusions on the future of European cooperation in VET for the period 2010-2020 in the second half of 2010. The problems and challenges of VET systems in Europe are common to the Member States and solving them through joint mutually consistent and supporting efforts would contribute to a more efficient functioning of European labour market, to more growth and jobs.

B. Objectives of EU initiative

What are the main policy objectives?

The general objectives of the planned initiative are:

- to support the implementation of the future Copenhagen process on European cooperation;
- to support the implementation of the ET2020 strategic framework ;
- to support the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Specific objectives are:

- to provide a vision of VET policy in Europe up to 2020 embedded into the priorities of Europe 2020 Strategy, ET 2020 strategic framework and New Skills for New Jobs initiative and
- to provide a timely contribution to the debate on the future cooperation in VET in Europe to be concluded by the Bruges Communiqué and the Council Conclusions on the future of European cooperation in VET for the period 2010-2020.

Does the objective imply developing EU policy in new areas or of strategic importance?

This initiative will contribute to the existing policy framework of European cooperation in VET and the review of the Copenhagen process.

C. Options

What are the policy options? What legislative or 'soft law' instruments could be considered? Would any legislative initiatives go beyond the routine up-date of existing legislation?

Option 1 – The first option would be to take no action and to continue with the current set-up. It means that the Commission would not take any supplementary action to the review of the Copenhagen process during Belgian presidency in the second half of 2010.

Option 2 – Communication of the Commission which would present a Commission vision of VET in Europe up to 2020, a view on the priorities in VET cooperation embedded into the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy and ET2020 strategic framework. This communication would foster and contribute to the debate on the future cooperation which will be done by the review of Copenhagen process during the Belgian presidency and will result in the adoption of the Bruges Communiqué and the Council Conclusions on the future of European cooperation in VET for the period 2010-2020.

Option 3 – Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on concrete strategic objectives, priorities and measures to be defined within the review of the Copenhagen process.

Does the action proposed in the options cut across several policy areas or impact on action taken/planned by other Commission departments?

The action proposed will be based on the Europe 2020 Strategy and will be derived from the objectives of the approved ET2020 strategic framework, as well as respond to the challenges identified in the New Skills for New Jobs initiative, which is jointly co-ordinated by DG EAC and DG EMPL.

Do the options respect the proportionality principle?

Independently of the option chosen, the implementation of the measures / actions / initiatives proposed by this initiative, the reforms in the national VET systems are at the discretion of the Member States and subject of approval of MS and European Social Partners in the Bruges Communiqué and the Council Conclusions on the future of European cooperation in VET for the period 2010-2020.

D. Initial assessment of impacts

What are the significant impacts likely to result from each policy option (cf. list of impacts in the impact assessment guidelines), even if these impacts would materialise only after subsequent Commission initiatives?

Within the Copenhagen process, as the European policy framework for the cooperation in the field of

vocational education and training, it is very difficult to show evidence of casual linkage between the open method of coordination in this field and national policy outcomes in terms of quantifiable results. Therefore, no direct economic, social or environmental impacts can be attributed to the planned initiative.

Option 1 – Taking no action from the Commission side to the review of the Copenhagen process would mean to maintain the status-quo with the established mechanism of the review of European cooperation in VET. It would be however less efficient and effective in terms of reaching the specific objectives of the planned initiative, namely to provide a timely policy contribution consistent with overarching policies, such as Europe 2020 Strategy, ET2020 strategic framework and New Skills for New Jobs initiative.

Option 2 – This option could be more efficient and effective in terms of reaching the specific objectives of the initiative as it could formulate the Commission views fully in line with the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, ET2020 strategic framework and New Skills for New Jobs initiative and thus make a focused and timely contribution to the debate on the future VET cooperation in Europe which will be defined by the Bruges Communiqué and the Council Conclusions on the future of European cooperation in VET during the Belgian presidency in the second half of 2010.

Option 3 – Given the level of involvement of Member States and European Social Partners in the European cooperation in VET, this option would probably be a more efficient and effective, but also a disproportional measure to reach the objective of providing contribution to the debate on the future of the Copenhagen process where Member States, European Social Partners and the Commission are equally represented in the definition of priorities and objectives.

As a consequence of this examination, it appears that the best option is the option 2.

Could the options have impacts on the EU-Budget (above 5 Mio €) and/or should the IA also serve as the ex-ante evaluation, required by the Financial Regulation?

The proposed options would not have a significant impact on the EU-Budget.

Could the options have significant impacts on simplification/administrative burden or on relations with third countries?

No.

Who is affected?

The stakeholders involved in the current Copenhagen process (Member States, European Social Partners, candidate countries, CEDEFOP, ETF, VET providers).

E. Planning of further impact assessment work

What information and data is already available? What further information needs to be gathered? How will this be done (e.g. internally or by an external contractor) and by when? What type and level of analysis will be carried out (cf. principle of proportionate analysis)?

Considering the policy context, the objectives and scope of the proposed action, no impact assessment is needed for this initiative given that:

a) the initiative is non-legislative and its objective is not to define the policy priorities, but instead express the Commission's position which will contribute (along the positions of the Member States) to

the review for the VET policy framework;

b) the proposed action will be aligned with the objectives of the adopted Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training, impact of which was already assessed in a respective IA report.

The data already available are previous studies related to the reviews of the Copenhagen process carried out for the Commission, CEDEFOP reports on progress in the Copenhagen process, research work and studies on VET in general carried out by international organisations, such as OECD, UNESCO/UNEVOC and others.

Additionally, for some specific questions, an assistance of two expert networks managed by DG EAC - NESSE (Social sciences and education network) and EENEE (European Expert network on the Economics of Education) - will be used. These networks advise and support the Commission in the analysis of education policies and reforms and of their implications for future policy development at national and European level.

For statistical information, official data from Eurostat will be used.

Which stakeholders & experts have been/will be consulted, how and at what stage?
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In the area of VET, the Member States, European Social Partners and the Commission work together on the major stakeholders platforms which will be regularly consulted for the planned action:

1. Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT)

The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) is a tripartite advisory committee which should advise the Commission on matters related to vocational training. The ACVT is the only body in which national trade unions and employers' organisations as well as national governments are represented in interest groups. This committee forms part of the European Social Dialogue (ESD). According to the legal basis of the ACVT⁵, the Committee shall have the task of assisting the Commission in implementing a Community vocational training policy, as stipulated in the article 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

2. Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVT)

The meetings of the Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVT) provide a forum to reflect on various questions under the Copenhagen process on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET). The DGVT meetings are held every 6 months, once under each presidency of the European Union. These meetings provide a forum to present on-going policies being prepared by the Commission, as well as a platform for the host country to present national VET initiatives. The agenda is shared between the Presidency and the Commission. The meetings are attended by two Directors General from each Member State (one Director General representing school-based VET, the other representing work-based VET), one Director General from the EEA and Candidate countries (Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland, Turkey and Croatia - as observers), one representative from each of the four European Social Partners (CEEP, Business Europe, UEAPME and CES/ETUC) as well as the representatives of the two European agencies, Cedefop and European Training Foundation.

⁵ Council Decision of 2 April 1963 laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy (63/266/EEC) and Council Decision of 26 February 2004 laying down the Rules of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (2004/223/EC)