

## **Education and Training 2010 Diverse systems, shared goals**



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The Union must 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 (European Council, Lisbon, March 2000).

To achieve this ambitious goal, Heads of States and Government asked for "not only a radical transformation of the European economy, but also a challenging programme for the modernisation of social welfare and education systems". In 2002, they went on to say that by 2010, Europe should be the world leader in terms of the quality of its education and training systems.

Making this happen will mean a fundamental transformation of education and training throughout Europe. This process of change will be carried out in each country according to national contexts and traditions and will be driven forward by cooperation between Member States at European level, through the sharing of experiences, working towards common goals and learning from what works best elsewhere.

To ensure their contribution to the Lisbon strategy, Ministers of Education adopted in 2001 a **report on the future objectives of education and training systems** agreeing for the first time on shared objectives to be achieved by 2010. A year later, the Education Council and the Commission endorsed a **10-year work programme** to be implemented through the open method of coordination. Approved by the European Council, these agreements constitute the new and coherent Community strategic framework of co-operation in the fields of education and training.

Ministers of education agreed on three major goals to be achieved by 2010 for the benefit of the citizens and the EU as a whole:

- to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems;
- to ensure that they are accessible to all;
- to open up education and training to the wider world.

To achieve these ambitious but realistic goals, they agreed on thirteen specific objectives covering the various types and levels of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) aimed at making a reality of lifelong learning. Systems have to improve on all fronts: teacher training; basic skills; integration of Information and Communication Technologies; efficiency of investments; language learning; lifelong guidance; flexibility of the systems to make learning accessible to all, mobility, citizenship education, etc.

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**Working Groups** have each been working over the course of the last two years on one or more objectives of the work programme. Gathering experts from 31 European countries as well as stakeholders and interested EU and international organisations, their role is to support the implementation of the objectives for education and training systems at national level through exchanges of "good practices", study visits, peer reviews, etc. With the support of the **Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks** set up by the Commission in 2002, indicators and benchmarks are being developed to monitor progress.

"Education and Training 2010" integrates all actions in the fields of education and training at European level, including vocational education and training (the "**Copenhagen process**"). As well, the **Bologna process**, initiated in 1999 is crucial in the development of the European Higher Education Area. Both contribute actively to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives and are therefore closely linked to the "Education and Training 2010" work programme.

The European Commission adopted on 11 November 2003 a **Communication** presenting an interim evaluation of the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010" programme since Lisbon. This Communication calls for accelerated reforms in the years to come and a stronger political commitment to achieve the Lisbon goals. It constitutes the Commission's contribution to the **joint report** which the Education Council and the Commission submitted to the 2004 Spring European Council.

A key priority for the Commission now is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which the Commission formally published as a Staff Working Document on 8 July 2005.

The objective of the planned **EQF** is to facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens, by linking qualifications systems at the national and sectoral levels and enabling them to relate to each other. The EQF will therefore act as a translation device and will be one of the principal European mechanisms intended to facilitate citizen mobility for work and study, alongside for example, Erasmus, the European Credit Transfer System and Europass.