

## **LIFE LONG LEARNING STRATEGY**

*"When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people"* Chinese proverb.

*"He who learns but does not think is lost, he who thinks but does not learn is in great danger."* Confucius.

### **Setting:**

The Lisbon Strategy aims to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world. This is a huge challenge ó there will have to be huge economic and social changes in order to arrive at the desired knowledge-based society. In order to face the challenge of globalisation and incessantly changing market conditions, it is imperative that our work force has the ability to continuously train and adapt itself to new conditions. Our economies also need to be able to reinvent themselves and adapt to remain competitive in a rapidly changing and increasingly challenging global economy. In addition, due to changes to family structures and demography, labour shortages and competence gaps risk limiting the capacity of the EU for further growth. 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 (the "[open method of co-ordination](#)") This entails each member state having their own policies on education and training, with the EU fostering their increased cooperation and providing a general framework of ideas and goals.

*Benefits:* Developing a coordinated strategy for employment and removing barriers that prevent people from entering the labour market and limit progression within it, but not just employment, also personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship, increased opportunities for communication and travel. A recent OECD report shows that learning and investment in human capital is associated not just with increased GDP, but also with greater civic participation, higher reported well-being and lower criminality.

*Risks:* Higher levels of inequality (eg digital divide) depending on social conditions and fair access to education. The Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises the right to education. Social exclusion and marginalisation. The seeds of inequality start early in life with participation in initial education a key factor.

There is a danger present here, but also a huge opportunity.

### **What is life long learning ?**

*"All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspective."*

In order to achieve the realisation of this knowledge-based economy/society, the EU proposes a life long learning framework, which puts emphasis on learning from pre-school to post-

retirement. This is paralleled in the various sub-programme actions of the Life Long Learning Programme ó Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig.

Key features of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy

- Lifelong learning should be viewed as an overarching concept covering all systems (formal, non-formal) and levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult, continuing) of education and training.
- A lifelong learning strategy should be an overall framework for education and training policies containing a strategic overview and a coherent set of priorities and the necessary allocation of resources for targeted policy measures. It should be evidence-based.
- A lifelong learning strategy should include flexible learning pathways and effective transition points between all systems and levels of education and training in order to avoid dead-ends.
- Lifelong learning strategies should build on partnerships with all relevant stakeholders (including policy makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society) and must include the necessary implementation and dissemination arrangements.

It also emphasises three things:

- a) the centrality of the learner
- b) the importance of equal opportunities
- c) the quality and relevance of learning opportunities

Clear message is that traditional systems must be transformed to become much more open and flexible so that learners can have their own independent learning pathways, suitable to their needs, so that they can genuinely take advantage of equal opportunities throughout their lives.

Clear need for the formal sector to recognise and value non-formal and informal learning. This is where the EQF comes in so that parallels can be drawn between educational attainment in different countries and so that informal and non-formal learning can be classified. This is a huge challenge, but an important one as the skills of each individual are not merely reflected in a formal qualification but also extend to many other skills that have been acquired in that person's lifetime and education.

I would also say that other priorities for learning are: ICT and e-learning, addressing the impact of LLL on learning facilitators, such as teachers, adult educators, trainers and guidance workers. Need to also focus on needs of employers, in particular needs of SMEs and teaching of new basic skills such as entrepreneurship, science and technology.

**Policy Objectives**

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES IN SCHOOLS, HIGHER EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT EDUCATION**

### **3.1 Elements to be reported on for all levels (schools, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning):**

- 3.1.1 governance and leadership of education and training institutions (eg organisational and administrative reforms, autonomy and accountability measures, public/private initiatives),
- 3.1.2 stimulating private investment from enterprises, households and individuals,
- 3.1.3 widening access, and improving equity of participation, treatment and outcomes, especially for disadvantaged learners (e.g. migrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled),
- 3.1.4 measures to address gender aspects in education and training,
- 3.1.5 the use of learning outcome based approaches for the definition and design of education and training objectives, standards and curricula, and their relevance to the needs of society and the economy,
- 3.1.6 quality assurance systems,
- 3.1.7 developing learning partnerships with stakeholders (policy-makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society).

### **3.2 Schools**

#### **In addition to the points set out in section 3.1, the following should be covered:**

- 3.2.1 increasing investment in and strengthening pre-primary education,
- 3.2.2 modernising school curricula and assessment arrangements (inter alia to address learning outcomes and the attainment of key competences),
- 3.2.3 addressing the specific learning / training needs of teachers (including pre-primary) to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society,
- 3.2.4 measures to reduce early school leaving, to increase rates of completion of upper secondary education, to reduce the proportion of low-achieving 15 year olds in literacy, and to increase the take-up of mathematics, science and technology subjects (EU benchmarks).

### **3.3 Higher education**

**This part of the national report serves also as the progress report on modernising universities. Reporting on Bologna reform is led by Eurydice and is the subject of the Bologna stocktaking exercise, so is not the subject of this report.**

#### **In addition to the points set out in section 3.1, the following should be covered:**

- 3.3.1 measures to reinforce the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation,
- 3.3.2 any participation targets and measures to achieve them,
- 3.3.3 measures to increase excellence,

3.3.4 measures to increase the number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology (EU benchmark).

#### 3.4 Vocational education and training and adult learning

**In addition to the points set out in section 3.1, the following should be covered:**

3.4.1 measures to improve the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and of adult education,

3.4.2 measures to reinforce the link between VET and labour market needs including early identification of skills needs, improving the relevance of curricula and qualifications,

3.4.3 opening up pathways to further and higher education,

3.4.4 addressing the specific learning / training needs of vocational and adult teachers and trainers to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society,

3.4.5 measures which reinforce social partner involvement in training, in particular sectoral approaches to skills and qualifications,

3.4.6 enhancing access and opportunities for learning among the disadvantaged, and alternative pathways, including for early school leavers,

3.4.7 measures to increase the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning, and to reinforce key competences among adult learners and older people whether employed or not (EU benchmark).

#### The Leonardo da Vinci Programme

With the Leonardo programme, as I will show, we have aimed for during LDV II and continue to aim for the creation of new training methods and courses. Our multilateral projects have created many innovative approaches to vocational training and through the Transfer of Innovation projects in the new LLP, we will transfer and adapt these innovations to different countries and different sectors.

The promotion of E-learning, blended learning and ICT has also been a priority of the Leonardo programme and we have yet to understand fully the affects of these new methods on the learner. But the potential is enormous for a number of reasons:

- Opportunities for distance learning
- Learning can be more tailored to the individual's needs
- Possibilities for continuous vocational training at the workplace, also beneficial for SMEs
- Opportunities for new economic growth and training in rural areas.

The other important action of the LDV programme is the mobility action, by which young trainees and workers as well as professional trainers in the VET field, can undertake work placements in other countries with a view to enhancing their skills to integrate better into the

labour market, as well developing other soft skills such as improving their language competences and personal development that often comes when faced with a new environment and way of doing things.

### **European Area of Lifelong Learning**

The objectives of a European Area of Lifelong Learning must be both to empower citizens to meet the challenges of the knowledge based society, moving freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries in pursuit of learning.

But Member States are fully responsible for the content and organisation of their own education and training systems. It is not the EU' role to harmonise laws and regulations in these fields.

Apart from the new LLL programme, there are other instruments for funding lifelong learning: The European Social Fund, The European Regional Development Fund and the Framework Programmes of DG Research.

### **5 Key Benchmarks by 2010**

- Reading literacy: at least 20% fewer low-achieving 15 year olds than in 2000
- Upper-secondary completion: at least 85% of 22 year olds
- Maths, science, technology: at least 15% more graduates than in 2000 and better gender balance
- Lifelong learning participation : at least 12.5% of 25-64 year olds
- Early school leaving : no more than 10%