

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE WORLD OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK

Education and training need to be adapted and linked more closely to the world of work. The New Skills for New Jobs initiative is helping Member States work together on these issues of common concern. Europeans also need to be able to access education and training throughout their working lives in order to upgrade existing skills or acquire new ones whenever required. This applies not only to job-specific skills but also to those skills needed to function effectively in a working environment and for an active life in society, for example, to be able to solve problems or work successfully in a team.

To help put this into practice, the EU has developed the European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, which defines the eight key competences that everyone should have to thrive in a knowledge society, and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which defines qualifications on the basis of learning outcomes and makes them more readable across the EU.

The EU supports the cooperation between national governments to modernise their higher education systems (the Bologna Process), and the Copenhagen Process which aims to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training. To strengthen links between the different actors, the EU encourages dialogue between business and education and training providers through projects such as the University-Business Forum. The European Social Fund (ESF) and the Lifelong Learning Programme are also used to finance projects across Member States to improve access to and the relevance of education and training.

Key messages

Upgrading, adapting and widening the skills portfolio of individuals to create and fill the jobs of tomorrow is one of the greatest challenges facing Europe today. Everyone needs to step up and be more ambitious for their futures – individuals, private and public employers, the education sector and governments at all levels. Improving people's skills (2) is a real 'win, win' for all – for the economy, for society, for employers and, of course, for individuals themselves.

In every single EU country, unemployment rates systematically vary with qualification levels. The employment rate for those with high skill levels across the EU as a whole is approximately 85 %, for medium skill levels 70 % and for low skill levels it stands at 50 %. And yet, it is an inconvenient truth that, despite progress in recent years, much of Europe is still not sufficiently skilled. Nearly one third of Europe's population aged 25-64 – around 77 million people – have no, or low, formal qualifications and only one quarter have high level qualifications. Those with low qualifications are much less likely to upgrade their skills and follow lifelong learning.

Another major challenge is to ensure that people have the right skills. This is not just a question of short-term employability, but of our capacity to adapt to and shape the jobs of tomorrow. During the last decade education and training systems in Europe have become more relevant and responsive to the needs of society; but labour market mismatches still exist and create the painful and wasteful situation of both skill shortages and skill gaps co-existing with unemployment: an economic and social exclusion.

We can, we must, do better. Increased global competition means that European countries will no longer be able to compete on cost and price, but need to produce higher quality and more innovative products and services, delivered by higher skilled people. Encouraging creativity and entrepreneurship throughout the learning process is fundamental for future growth. The crisis, and the recovery from it, is also accelerating the pace of economic restructuring, with a lasting structural effect on the volume and types of skills needed.

Future demographic trends will add further pressure to tackle this challenge. Fewer and fewer young people will graduate from schools and universities, and the only growth of the labour force is likely to be amongst those aged over 50. The numbers of over-65s in relation to those aged 15-64 will increase from 26 % in 2008 to 38 % by 2030. Clearly, with an increasing old-age dependency ratio, those in work also need to become more productive in order to support those outside the labour market.

These challenges, and opportunities, come at a time of serious fiscal restraint facing most, if not all, Member States as well as the EU itself. This requires explicit and sensible choices about priorities for public funding of education and training. We must strongly encourage individuals and employers to invest more heavily in their skills development, not only to secure the best 'value for money' but to reap the benefits of people's potential.

Our Vision for 2020

We want to see a Europe where citizens have more and better skills. Where people as well as organisations are able to make better informed choices about which education or training to invest in, depending on which jobs they have, would like to develop in, or apply for. Where education and training systems propose innovative and equitable approaches such as flexible learning pathways, and focus on developing essential skills as well as intellectual and job-specific skills. http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

Inclusive Growth – A High-Employment Economy Delivering Economic, Social And Territorial Cohesion

Inclusive growth means:

- raising Europe's employment rate – **more and better jobs**, especially for women, young people and older workers
- helping people of all ages anticipate and manage change through **investment in skills & training**
- **modernising** labour markets and welfare systems
- ensuring the **benefits of growth reach all** parts of the EU

EU target for inclusive growth include:

- 1. **75% employment rate for women and men aged 20-64** by 2020– achieved by getting more people into work, especially women, the young, older and low-skilled people and legal migrants
- 2. better educational attainment – in particular:
 - **reducing school drop-out rates below 10%**
 - at least **40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education** (or equivalent)
- 3. at least **20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion**

How will the EU boost inclusive growth?

1. For individuals – helping people acquire **new skills**, adapt to a changing labour market and make successful career shifts: collectively – modernising **labour markets** to raise employment levels, reduce unemployment, raise labour productivity and ensuring the sustainability of our social models
2. **European platform against poverty** by ensuring **economic, social and territorial cohesion**
3. Guaranteeing respect for the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and enabling them to live in dignity and take an active part in society
4. Mobilising support to help people integrate in the communities where they live, get training and help to find a job and have access to social benefits

Why does Europe need inclusive growth?

Employment

- **Europe's workforce is shrinking** as a result of demographic change – a smaller workforce is supporting a growing number of inactive people.
- The EU has a **low overall employment rate** – 69% of working-age population (20-64) in 2009 against 70%+ in the US and Japan.
- The employment rate is particularly low for **women** (63% against 76% for men) and **older workers**, aged 55-64 (46% against 62% in the US and Japan).
- Europeans work **short hours** – 10% less than their US or Japanese counterparts.
- The **economic crisis** has brought high **youth unemployment** – over 21% – and made it harder for out-of-work people to find jobs.

Skills

- The EU has around **80 million people with low or basic skills** – benefiting less from lifelong learning than more educated people.
- By 2020, **16m more jobs will require high qualifications**, with 12m fewer jobs requiring low skill-levels.
- Acquiring and building on **new skills** is ever more important.
- **Fighting poverty**
- Even before the crisis, there were **80m people at risk of poverty**, including 19m children.
- **8% of working people** do not earn enough to make it above the poverty line.

Smart growth means improving the EU's performance in:

- **education**
- **research/innovation** (creating new products/services that generate growth and jobs and help address social challenges)
- **digital society** (using information and communication technologies)

EU targets for smart growth include:

- combined public and private **investment levels to reach 3% of EU's GDP** as well as better conditions for R&D and Innovation
- **75% employment rate for women and men aged 20-64** by 2020– achieved by getting more people into work, especially women, the young, older and low-skilled people and legal migrants
- better educational attainment – in particular: reducing **school drop-out rates below 10%** – at least **40% of 30-34-year-olds with third level education** (or equivalent)

How will the EU boost smart growth? Through 3 **flagship initiatives**:

1. [Digital agenda for Europe](#)

Creating a single digital market based on **fast/ultrafast internet** and **interoperable applications**:

- by 2013: broadband access for all
- by 2020: access for all to much higher internet speeds (30 Mbps or above)
- by 2020: 50% or more of European households with internet connections above 100 Mbps.

2. **Refocusing** R&D and innovation policy on **major challenges for our society** like climate change, energy and resource efficiency, health and demographic change - **Strengthening every link in the innovation chain**, from 'blue sky' research to commercialisation

3. Helping Youth

- helping students and trainees **study abroad**
- **equipping young people** better for the job market
- enhancing the performance/international attractiveness of Europe's **universities**
- improving all levels of education and training

Why does Europe need smart growth? (**academic excellence, equal opportunities**)

Europe's **lower growth** than its main competitors is largely due to a **productivity gap** caused in part by:

- lower levels of investment in R&D and innovation

- insufficient use of information/communications technologies
- difficult access to innovation in some sections of society

For example:

- European firms currently account for just a quarter of the €2 trillion global market for **information/communication technologies**.
- Slow implementation of **high-speed internet** affects Europe's ability to innovate, spread knowledge and distribute goods and services, and leaves rural areas isolated.

Education/training

- Some **25%** of European school children have **poor reading skills**
- Too many young people **leave education/training without qualifications**
- Numbers attaining medium-level qualifications are better, but the qualifications often **fail to match labour market needs**
- **Under a third of Europeans** aged 25-34 have a **university degree** (40% in the US, over 50% in Japan)
- **European universities rank poorly in global terms** – only 2 are in the world top 20 (see [Shanghai index \(ARWU\)](#))

Ageing populations

As Europeans live longer and have fewer children, **fewer people in work** have to support **higher numbers of pensioners**, as well as fund the rest of the welfare system. The number of over-60s is now increasing twice as fast as it did before 2007 – by some 2 million a year instead of 1 million previously. A better knowledge economy with more opportunities will **help people work longer** and relieve the strain.

At a Glance: Education and Training

EU actions in education and training aim to improve the quality of learning systems and provide greater opportunities for people at all stages of their lives. While each Member State is in charge of its own education and training system, co-ordinated action can help achieve common aims. The European Commission focuses on two aspects: firstly, co-operation with national authorities and European stakeholders on improving policies and exchanging good practice, and secondly the development and administration of funding programmes.

Policy co-operation

EU education and training policy has been given added impetus since the adoption of the [Lisbon Strategy](#) in 2000, the EU's overarching programme focusing on growth and jobs. It acknowledged that increased collaboration on education and training among the Member States and the EU institutions is essential if Europe is to become a world-leading knowledge-based economy.

This has been done through the **Education and Training 2010 work programme**, launched in 2001, and its follow-up, the [strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training \("ET 2020"\)](#) adopted by the Council in May 2009.

EU cooperation in education and training has led to a number of initiatives supporting lifelong learning which include a framework of key competences that each citizen should gain to succeed in today's knowledge society, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as well as key policy documents on higher education, the education and training of teachers, and the challenge to make Europe's education and training systems efficient as well as equitable.

The strategic framework ET 2020 includes the 'Copenhagen process' on cooperation in the area of vocational education and training. And in a wider setting, the Commission also supports the priorities of the Bologna Process, which works towards greater coherence in university-level studies and the creation of a European Higher Education Area.

Finally, the ['European Institute of Innovation and Technology'](#) (EIT) is the first European initiative to integrate fully the three

sides of the "Knowledge Triangle" (education – research - innovation) and will seek to stand out as a world-class reference model, inspiring and driving change in existing education and research institutions.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

There are a number of funding programmes that complement the European Commission's policy-related work and contribute to priorities agreed by the EU institutions and Member States. These mechanisms give financial and technical support to organisations and individuals, enabling them to run or participate in thousands of projects each year all over the European Union and beyond. The Commission is assisted in this work by the Audiovisual, Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), together with networks of national agencies and offices.

The Lifelong Learning Programme, lasting from 2007 to 2013, is the flagship European funding programme and means that, for the first time, a single framework covers all learning opportunities from childhood to old age. With a budget of €7bn, it supports projects and activities that foster exchange, co-operation and mobility across the EU, building on initiatives previously grouped under the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and eLearning programmes.

In addition, there are efforts with a wider reach. The Tempus programme, first launched in 1990, helps modernise higher education in countries surrounding the EU. Meanwhile, the Erasmus Mundus Programme, launched in 2004, opens up EU education systems to students and organisations around the world.

LEONARDO DA VINCI PROGRAMME: 15 YEARS OF EU SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The EU is celebrating the 15th anniversary of its Leonardo da Vinci programme, which helps to fund thousands of vocational education and training courses across Europe. Since 1995 the EU has helped more than 600 000 young people to go on training placements abroad. It has also funded 110 000 exchanges for trainers and more than 3 000 projects aimed at modernising the sector. Around 50% of all students in upper secondary education receive vocational education and training.

Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said: "*Vocational education and training gives students the kind of skills that are increasingly sought after on the labour market. The Leonardo da Vinci programme offers them more by helping to fund work placements abroad. This experience boosts their language abilities and other broad skills like team-working and adaptability, which makes them more employable and enhances their personal development. In the long-term this contributes to building a better-qualified workforce and to making Europe more competitive.*"

The European Commission is currently investing €240 million a year through Leonardo da Vinci to support the mobility of trainees, apprentices and trainers and the modernisation of vocational education and training in 31 countries. The programme has had a lasting impact on national reforms and on the way European initiatives are put in practice in EU countries, for example through the creation of national qualification frameworks, which are aimed at making qualifications more transparent and comparable. The programme also contributes to combating discrimination and supporting the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market by providing people with training opportunities, professional skills and a chance to build their self-confidence.