



# **The Bordeaux Communiqué**

## **on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training**

**Communiqué of the European Ministers for vocational education and training,  
the European social partners and the European Commission,  
meeting in Bordeaux on 26 November 2008  
to review the priorities and strategies of the  
Copenhagen process**

## **I – FROM COPENHAGEN TO BORDEAUX: A CREATIVE, EFFICIENT AND DYNAMIC PROCESS**

When the Lisbon Strategy was launched in March 2000, the Heads of State or Government set 2010 as the deadline for achieving its objectives.

2010 also marks the end date for the “Education and Training 2010” work programme, of which the Copenhagen process is an important component. The next two years, 2009–2010, will therefore be an opportunity to assess and reflect on the future of the Strategy and of the Education and Training programme.

The cooperation process launched in Copenhagen in 2002 has proved effective. It contributes to the success of the economic and social dimensions of the Lisbon Strategy. It has contributed to create a more positive and more dynamic image of VET, while preserving the wealth of the diversity of systems.

From Copenhagen to Maastricht, Helsinki and Bordeaux, a European VET area is being built, based on transparency and mutual trust.

### ***Ambitious priorities have allowed the creation of key instruments at European level***

The creation of key tools for transparency and recognition of knowledge, skills and competence, as well as for the quality of systems constitutes the most significant political contribution of the Copenhagen process: the common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, Europass, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the future European Credit system for VET (ECVET) and the future European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) These tools are implemented by the participating countries on a voluntary basis in the framework of their national legislation.

Furthermore, updated working methods — creation of European networks, national consultations, pilot projects, best practice exchanges — have helped to promote awareness among stakeholders and to promote the use of common tools.

### ***The process has led to substantial changes in national policies***

#### **In the countries participating in the process**

The European instruments support the modernisation of systems and the transparency of qualifications, and further the development of mobility.

Countries’ current priorities for VET reflect continuity in their work at national level within the framework of the objectives adopted in Maastricht and then in Helsinki. They also correspond to the areas in which countries report most progress.

In particular, joint efforts to develop a **European Qualifications Framework (EQF) based on learning outcomes are having a significant catalytic effect**: the EQF appears to be substantially contributing to the implementation of national qualifications frameworks; the principles on which it is based have significant consequences on the organisation of systems and are applied to all sectors and levels of education and training. The emphasis has clearly shifted to learning outcomes as regards knowledge, skills and competence.

Legal and administrative frameworks are being set up and methodologies developed for **validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes**. Such validation is regarded as linked to the implementation of national qualifications frameworks.

**As regards the future ECVET credit system**, countries are ready to explore the means required to implement it. The expected effect is further development of intra-European mobility, more significant development of individualised career paths, better recognition of informal and non-formal learning, better transparency and mutual trust between education systems.

The creation of the EQF and ECVET is leading to increased interest in qualifications processes and learning outcomes, as well as the development of mutual trust.

**The attention given to quality** in national political priorities goes hand-in-hand with growing attention to enhancing the competence of teachers and trainers, the attractiveness of their jobs and their status.

**Guidance structures** are being reinforced, with emphasis on quality, on guidance services taking into account at-risk groups, and on coordination mechanisms that provide lifelong guidance.

**In general, preventive and remedial measures lie at the heart of the strategies designed to improve access to lifelong learning, through new and more flexible learning pathways.**

#### **And in third countries**

Work carried out through the Copenhagen process provides important help for the modernisation of VET systems and for reforms — actively supported by the ETF — in countries concerned by enlargement and the European neighbourhood policy. There have been initiatives covering, for example, the first steps towards the creation of national qualification frameworks, quality assurance approaches and tools, solutions to promote efficiency and equity, or approaches aimed at increasing the involvement of social partners.

### ***2008-2010: Implement, give time, and ensure coherence***

The results set out above demonstrate that all countries have committed themselves to a process of modernising their VET systems linked to the implementation of the European tools. Joint methodologies should support these efforts.

Synergies and networks to exchange best practices and conduct pilot projects as well as a consolidated process constitute priorities for all the countries.

Furthermore, given the economic and social challenges, a new strategic vision is necessary for the Copenhagen process in the coming years.

## II – THE EUROPE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING MUST RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION

Europe's response to globalisation is embodied in the Lisbon Strategy, which promotes a society and an economy founded on knowledge and innovation.

**“Providing high-quality education and investing more and more effectively in human capital and creativity throughout people's lives are crucial conditions for Europe's success in a globalised world”** (European Council, 13-14 March 2008).

### *Major challenges must be tackled*

Youth unemployment has remained persistently high (15.5% in 2007).

Young people's attainment level: despite the progress made, the number of young people leaving school with only lower secondary education (14.8% in 2007) is still much higher than the 10% target set for 2010.

Adults' low level of qualification: 78 million Europeans of working age (25-64) have low qualification levels. There are still too few adults taking part in learning activities. Training supply is particularly limited for older workers and low-qualified people, and for those working in small and medium-sized enterprises. This is a major concern given that small and medium-sized enterprises form the backbone of the economy and are the main sources of job creation.

### *The main trends: structural changes which will have consequences for the labour market and training systems <sup>(1)</sup>*

The European Union faces new challenges both within and outside its borders, the extent of which was not yet apparent in 2000.

The crisis spreading to the whole economy will have consequences for employment: unemployment rates will probably rise. In this context, it is particularly important to encourage the investment in VET.

Global competition is increasing, with growing numbers of emerging economic powers (e.g. Brazil, Russia, India and China — BRIC).

Demographic change, especially the ageing population, future skills needs and persistent inequalities, require strong policies to address these challenges.

Rapid technological progress, new information technologies, the challenges posed by climate change and the need for sustainable development require anticipation of skills needs and permanent adaptation of workers' skills through VET.

So there could be skills gaps in Europe, for the period leading up to 2020, reinforced by consequences of the EU's enlargement. More than 20 million jobs could be created between 2006 and 2020 in the EU-25, despite the loss of more than 3 million jobs in the primary sector and

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(1) BUSINESS EUROPE, CEEP, CES, UEAPME, *Key challenges facing European labour markets. A joint analysis of European social partners*. 2007.

nearly 0.8 million jobs in industry. Almost three quarters of the jobs are expected to be in the services sector. The replacement of those leaving the labour market should account for 85 million jobs, whereas, during the same period, the working population will fall by around 6 million <sup>(2)</sup>. Furthermore, vigilance is required to avoid brain drain, with the necessary measures being taken to prevent it.

### ***A new strategic vision is necessary for European VET policies***

VET is at the crossroads of economic, social and employment policies. VET should promote excellence and at the same time guarantee equal opportunities. It plays a key role in producing the skills Europe will need. Closely linked with general education and higher education, VET is essential for implementing lifelong learning strategies. The future strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training could play an important role in this context.

VET constitutes an investment that should:

#### **Take into account the objectives of social cohesion, equity and active citizenship**

This aim implies the acquisition of key competences, not least social skills, foreign language skills, being open to other cultures, entrepreneurship. VET should offer individualised career paths in order to integrate those who have left their studies or training prematurely, and those outside the mainstream of society. Pupils and adults in difficulty should have easy access to guidance and counselling services, tailored to their needs.

#### **Promote competitiveness and innovation**

##### ***Match the needs for high-level qualifications***

In 2020, almost 31.5% of European jobs will require tertiary level qualifications, and 50% of European jobs will require upper secondary or post-secondary levels (particularly vocational qualifications). The number of jobs requiring low or no qualifications will fall — they will only represent about 18.5% in 2020.

Between 2006 and 2020, the labour market will need twice as many people with medium-level qualifications than with high-level qualifications to replace those who retire or leave the labour market for other reasons.

The level of qualifications required is likely to increase in all occupations, including those that traditionally involve generally simple and routine tasks <sup>(2)</sup>.

This means that vocational education and higher education must be linked and excellence promoted, while at the same time avoiding exclusion.

***Reacting to labour market needs: this means developing the tools to anticipate skill needs*** — as well as labour shortages — and to make an inventory of new types of jobs at European and national levels; it is crucial for Europe to have a medium-term vision of the skills needed to be

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<sup>(2)</sup> Cedefop, *Future skill needs in Europe — Focus on 2020*. Luxembourg: Publications office, 2008. The study covered 25 EU Member States (not Bulgaria and Romania), plus Norway and Switzerland.  
[http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/publication\\_details.asp?pub\\_id=509](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=509).

competitive in a globalised labour market. It will be necessary to take into account the demand arising from the need to replace people who retire.

*Anticipate the rapid pace of qualifications becoming obsolete*, by creating a bridge between school education and work-place training, by promoting alternance training, developing adult training in companies and in higher education institutions.

*Develop creativity and foster the capacity to innovate.*

### **Make the concept of lifelong learning and mobility a reality**

*Bridges should be built* between general education, vocational training and higher education; individualised pathways should be developed, connecting initial and continuing training, valuing all forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal.

*Workers, learners' and teachers' mobility, from one system to another, from one country to another should be promoted in VET systems.* Citizens should be able to accumulate and transfer learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal or informal contexts so that those learning outcomes can be recognised thanks to the implementation of European tools for transparency and recognition of qualifications.

*Quality assurance mechanisms could contribute to the modernisation of VET systems and mutual trust.*

These mechanisms rely among other things on tailored and up-to-date initial and continuing training for trainers and teachers.

*Social partners should be involved at all levels.*

*The principle of shared responsibility between the State, social partners, local actors and citizens requires the participation of all these stakeholders in VET policies.*

*Appropriate public and private resources should be mobilised, including European funds.*

### **III – STAY FOCUSED AND GIVE A NEW IMPETUS**

In the light of the current challenges facing Europe and the results of the process so far, it is clear that the priorities and guidelines established since 2002 are still relevant, but renewed impetus is needed.

This leads us to consider:

#### ***Four proposed priority areas for future action***

- 1. Implementing the tools and schemes for promoting cooperation in the field of vocational education and training (VET) at national and European level**
- 2. Heightening the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training systems**
- 3. Improving the links between VET and the labour market**
- 4. Strengthening European cooperation arrangements**

## **1. IMPLEMENTING THE TOOLS AND SCHEMES FOR PROMOTING COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) AT NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL**

*The process has created major tools for improving the transparency of qualifications and promoting mobility. Insofar as they are based on a learning-outcomes approach and entail the use of quality assurance mechanisms for mutual trust, they have significant implications for national VET systems.*

*It is now essential to ensure they are implemented using appropriate methods and developed in a coherent manner.*

It is important to:

1. Develop national qualifications systems and frameworks based on learning outcomes, in line with the European Qualifications Framework;
2. Implement the future European Credit System for VET (ECVET), together with the future European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF), in order to strengthen mutual trust;
3. With this in mind, the following should be developed:
  - pilot projects, appropriate methods and support tools;
  - principles and tools for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes, combined with the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, the European Qualifications Framework and the ECVET system.

*These could include lasting European networks to implement the EQF and ECVET, for example on the basis of a sectoral approach;*

- quality assurance instruments.

*This could concern, in particular, procedures aiming to apply Community tools;*

- consistency between the various tools.

*Pilot projects could be used, in particular to ensure coherence between ECTS and ECVET, in a lifelong learning perspective.*



## **2. HEIGHTENING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS**

*Attractiveness, accessibility and quality should allow VET to play a major role in lifelong learning strategies, with a twofold objective: (i) simultaneously promoting equity, business performance, competitiveness and innovation; (ii) enabling citizens to acquire the skills they need for career development, to take up training, be an active citizen and achieve personal fulfilment. VET should promote excellence and at the same time guarantee equal opportunities.*

This should be facilitated by:

### ***Promoting the attractiveness of VET to all target groups***

1. Promoting VET among pupils, parents, adults (whether employed, unemployed, or inactive) and enterprises, e.g. by continuing to organise skills competitions such as Euroskills;
2. Ensuring non-discriminatory access to and participation in VET and taking into account the needs of people or groups at risk of exclusion — in particular early school leavers, low-skilled and disadvantaged people.

*In this context:*

- *Acquisition of key competences is a prerequisite for VET (implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning);*
  - *Partnerships should be encouraged between schools, players at local level and the business community;*
  - *The interest and involvement in VET of men and women in sectors where they are underrepresented should be supported;*
3. Facilitating access to information, lifelong guidance and counselling services through successful implementation of the Council Resolution on better integrating guidance in lifelong learning strategies adopted 21 November 2008.

*Action should be taken to promote guidance systems which help young people and adults to cope better with transitions, within education and training and all along their career paths;*

4. Facilitate paths enabling people to progress from one level of qualification to another by strengthening links between general education, VET, higher education and adult learning;

### ***Promoting the excellence and quality of VET systems***

5. Developing quality assurance mechanisms by promoting the future EQARF recommendation; participating actively in the European Network on Quality Assurance in VET with a view to developing common tools, as well as supporting the implementation of the EQF by promoting mutual trust;

6. Increasing investment in the initial and continuing training of those involved in vocational education and training: teachers, trainers, tutors, guidance officers;
7. Basing VET policies on reliable evidence supported by rigorous research and data, and improving the statistical systems and data concerning VET;
8. Developing national qualifications systems and frameworks based on learning outcomes which can guarantee high quality whilst ensuring compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework;
9. Promoting innovation and creativity in VET and implementing the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on promoting creativity and innovation through education and training;
10. Developing language learning and adapting it to the specific characteristics of vocational education and training;
11. Improving the permeability and continuity of learning paths between VET, general education and higher education.

### 3. IMPROVING THE LINKS BETWEEN VET AND THE LABOUR MARKET

*To contribute to greater employability and employment security, to anticipate and manage transitions in the labour market, and boost business competitiveness, VET policies must be geared to labour market needs and the social partners must be involved.*

This should be facilitated by:

1. Continuing to develop forward-planning mechanisms, aimed at focusing on jobs and skills at national level and across Europe, identifying potential skills gaps and shortages and responding to the future skills and competence needs (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) of the economy and enterprises, particularly SMEs, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008 and with the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on new skills for new jobs;
2. Ensuring that the social partners and economic stakeholders are properly involved in defining and implementing VET policies;
3. Improving guidance and counselling services to ease the transition from training to employment, and thus contribute to the objectives set out in the Council Resolution of 28 May 2004 on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe <sup>(3)</sup>; participating actively in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network;
4. Strengthening the mechanisms, including those of a financial nature (both public and private), aimed at promoting adult training — in particular in the workplace, with a special focus on SMEs — in order to contribute to better career opportunities and business competitiveness. In this respect, the measures outlined in the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning should be implemented;
5. Developing and implementing the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes;
6. Increasing the mobility of people undergoing work-related training, by strengthening the existing Community programmes in support of mobility, in particular for apprentices. The Council conclusions on youth mobility, adopted 21 November 2008, should contribute to this process;
7. Increasing the role of higher education in vocational education and training and in enhancing labour market integration.

*It is particularly important to encourage the development of continuing vocational training for adults in higher education institutions, taking into account the Charter of European universities for lifelong learning.*

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<sup>(3)</sup> Doc. 9286/04.

#### 4. STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS

*The aim will be to: (i) consolidate the efficiency and specific nature of the Copenhagen process within the future strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training, while ensuring the link between VET and general and higher education policies, and to (ii) further develop cooperation with third countries and international organisations.*

This should be facilitated by:

1. Improving European cooperation arrangements in the field of VET, in particular by increasing the efficiency of peer learning activities and capitalising on their results in terms of national policies.

*Within the framework of the open method of coordination, it is particularly important to generalise bottom-up practices and enhance involvement of the different stakeholders in designing and implementing the tools;*

2. Ensuring the integration and visibility of VET among the priorities of the future strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training, while ensuring a proper link between VET and general education, higher education and adult learning policies; strengthening links with European policies on multilingualism and young people.

*In this context, it will be important to:*

- *develop links between the Copenhagen process and the Bologna process;*
  - *reinforce the visibility of the Copenhagen process, as a contribution to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives;*
- 3 Consolidating exchanges and cooperation with third countries and international organisations, such as the OECD, the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organisation and Unesco in particular. The right of participation of all Member States in this work should be ensured.

## **IV – IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING**

The implementation of the measures set out in the above four areas, with regard to the priorities of the Copenhagen process for the period 2008–2010, should be supported by means of:

- appropriate public and private funding, using relevant EU resources such as the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund and loans from the European Investment Bank to support reforms at national level in accordance with Member States' priorities, and the Lifelong Learning Programme to support the effective implementation of Community tools;
- continuation of work focused on improving the scope, comparability and reliability of VET statistics, in close collaboration with Eurostat, the OECD, Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF), and the development of a more explicit VET component within the coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks. The right of participation of all Member States in this work should be ensured;
- further developing activities on the anticipation of skills needs and skills mismatches, in close collaboration with Cedefop, ETF and Eurofound;
- information exchange with third countries, in particular with the countries covered by the enlargement policy as well as the European neighbourhood policy.

Cooperation in such work should be inclusive and involve all Member States, the Commission, candidate countries, EFTA/EEA countries and the social partners.

Cedefop and the European Training Foundation will continue to support the Commission, in particular by monitoring and reporting on progress in implementation.

Special attention should be paid to progress on VET in the reports on the future strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training and on the national Lisbon reform programmes.

### ***Next follow-up meeting***

The next Ministerial follow-up meeting will be held in Bruges, Belgium in 2010. The aim will be to evaluate implementation of the Copenhagen process and to reflect on its strategic direction beyond 2010, in the context of the future strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training.