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Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission Working
Paper

IMPLEMENTING LIFELONG LEARNING
FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN A EUROPE OF KNOWLEDGE

A Citizens' Europe through lifelong learning

At the close of the European Year of Lifelong Learning, the European Council confirmed that *"the principles underpinning a strategy for lifelong learning are derived from the fundamental aim of education and training to serve individual, cultural, social and economic well-being and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens."*¹

In 21st century Europe, lifelong learning must thus become an individual right and a collective responsibility. Implementing lifelong learning is now as important a social goal as was the introduction of universal basic education at the turn of the last century. It is the best chance we have for building a Citizens' Europe, as well as being the obvious educational answer to the demands of a knowledge-based economy. **Our aim is to build a Europe in which everyone has the opportunity to develop their potential to the full, to feel that they can contribute and that they belong.** The Amsterdam Treaties explicitly affirm these key elements of the European approach to social progress.²

The knowledge economy is rapidly evolving locally, regionally and globally. Accelerating flows of information and knowledge are affecting every facet of society – not simply the worlds of business, commerce, trade, finance, employment and work process, but equally the worlds of education/training, culture, human communication, health and medicine, the environment and governance itself. More than ever before, access to information and knowledge, together with the motivation and skills to use these resources intelligently on behalf of oneself and the community as a whole, are becoming the key to citizens' overall quality of life. Our chances of building a truly inclusive society are dependent, in the final instance, upon the will and energy of those who live here - but citizens, too, must be able to rely upon the polity's determination and capacity to offer open and equal access to those resources.

In the policy context of the European Employment Strategy, the Commission and the Member States have defined lifelong learning as *"all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence."* **Implementing lifelong learning demands the development of a culture of learning at individual and institutional levels, in all spheres of public and private life.** Lifelong learning for active citizenship is therefore a holistic endeavour. It entails enabling and encouraging citizens of all ages and circumstances continuously to renew their social, cultural and vocational resources, so that they remain well-prepared for multi-faceted participation in a democratic and inclusive society. All citizens, without exception, should have equal

¹ Council Resolution 97/C 7/02, 20.12.96.

² The Preamble to the European Community Treaty affirms that the signatories are determined "to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" and "to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating". Article 3 provides for Community action, inter alia, to "strengthen economic and social cohesion" and to "contribute to education and training of quality and to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States", including in all cases the "aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women". Articles 17-22 establish citizenship of the Union as a complement to national citizenship; Articles 149-151 provide for Community action in education, training and culture by supporting and supplementing Member State action, with a particular emphasis on developing the European dimension, facilitating access and adaptation, and respecting cultural diversity against the background of a common European heritage of history, values and culture.

opportunities to adjust to the demands of social and economic change and to participate in the shaping of Europe's future.

This approach to lifelong learning encompasses the demands posed for employability, entrepreneurship and competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy and the information society, but it takes a further step forward by setting these demands within the broader framework of the pursuit of a democratic, humanitarian and peaceful Europe within its own borders and vis-à-vis the world as a whole.

There is a strong consensus at all levels and amongst all actors on the need to implement lifelong learning in Europe. Many Member States are developing the necessary policy and action strategies; frequently, the Social Partners take an active interest both in policy debate and as training providers. The Portuguese Presidency has delivered a strong message underlining the importance of realising a Europe of Knowledge for all citizens and the need to create a European lifelong learning area.³

This document calls on all those involved to join forces in the interests of implementing lifelong learning for active citizenship in Europe as a societal project of the highest order.

Today's challenges

The need for concerted action arises because of the new challenges faced by education and training in 21st century Europe.⁴ The economic rationale is well-known; the social rationale for lifelong learning, however, is based on the need to promote a more active participation in the process of decisionmaking, an increased sharing of values, a greater appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity as a positive resource, and a higher degree of social cohesion.⁵ **Four key challenges can be distinguished:**

- the European integration process implies **changing relations between citizens, community and polity**: the challenge is to renew informed and engaged social and political participation in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and mobile Europe;
- the individualisation and flexibilisation of learning and qualification pathways in a knowledge society poses **a changing context for achieving an appropriate balance between equity and efficiency**: the challenge is to refashion an inclusive society whose intrinsic complexity undermines neither equality of opportunity nor the search for excellence and innovation;
- the exigencies of a knowledge-based economy impose **a changing context for individual employability and economic competitiveness**: the challenge is to realise higher overall levels of education and qualification, but equally within the broader framework of shifting skills and competencies profiles;
- **social and demographic changes** are recasting the interactive scripts of learning, working and family/personal projects across the course of people's lives and between women and men: the challenge is to adjust the patterns and methods of education/training and working (paid and unpaid, including in the family) to respond to and facilitate these more fluid mosaics.

³ Employment, economic reform and social cohesion - towards a Europe of innovation and knowledge, Portuguese Council Presidency document 5256/00, January 2000; and Reinforcing the role of education and training, Portuguese Presidency note 6212/00, February 2000.

⁴ White Paper Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society, DGV/DGXXII, December 1995; Accomplishing Europe through education and training, DGXXII, Luxembourg, 1997; Commission Communication Towards a Europe of Knowledge, COM(97) 563 final, 12 November 1997; Education for active citizenship, DGXXII, Luxembourg, 1998.

⁵ Discussion papers Setting targets for lifelong learning in Europe, DGV/DGXXII for the Employment and Labour Market Committee (ELC), 1999, and Lifelong learning and the Employment Strategy, DG EMPL/DG EAC for the ELC, February 2000; Commission Communication Towards a Europe for All: inclusion and participation in knowledge economies and societies, DG EMPL, February 2000; Commission Communication Community Policies in Support of Employment, DG EMPL, March 2000.

Review of Community level action

Lifelong learning has already been promoted and supported at Community level through:

- the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996;
- the implementation of the objectives of the 1995 White Paper Teaching and Learning, in particular by supporting pilot projects on new ways of assessing and validating knowledge and skills (Objective 1) and the 'second chance schools' initiative (Objective 3);
- projects and activities funded under the education, training and youth programmes 1995-1999, especially in the fields of open and distance learning, adult education and continuing vocational training;
- the Employment Guidelines reporting system within the Luxembourg Process, which now includes lifelong learning measures; the new ESF Objective 3 reflects this concern;
- the 1999-2000 CONNECT initiative, which sponsors projects designed to create synergies between the fields of education, training, culture, research and innovation within the context of promoting a Europe of Knowledge;
- the preparation of initial reports by CEDEFOP and EURYDICE on the ways in which Member State education and vocational training systems are seeking to respond to the challenge of lifelong learning.⁶

Lifelong learning is the explicit overarching rationale for the new generation of education, training and youth programmes, whereby the opportunities for synergy with cultural policy and action have been enhanced. This is reflected in concrete terms in particular by:

- the introduction of two new actions within SOCRATES to promote alternative learning pathways of all kinds for those aged 16+ (GRUNDTVIG) and to develop educational multimedia technologies and learning methods (MINERVA);
- the development of user-friendly and comprehensive information on education by means of an openly accessible Internet navigating tool (Gateway to the European Learning Area); the ultimate aim is to enable citizens to discover and enter the full world of learning opportunities;
- the high priority placed by LEONARDO on supporting projects and activities to improve the quality of and access to continuing vocational training, and to develop new approaches to accreditation and recognition of skills acquired in the workplace and outside formal training systems;
- the emphasis given in the YOUTH programme to encouraging young people's initiative, enterprise and creativity through social and community participation, and to stimulating wider recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning in a European context.
- the measures proposed in the framework programme CULTURE 2000 to increase Europeans' knowledge and awareness about their common values through teaching and dissemination of knowledge as a means to social cohesion.

⁶ CEDEFOP An age of learning: vocational training policy at European level, Thessaloniki, 2000; EURYDICE The challenge of lifelong learning for the education systems of European Union Member States, Brussels, 2000.

Steps forward

Developing indicators and benchmarking for lifelong learning

There is an urgent need for valid, reliable and comparable information on lifelong learning as a basis for developing benchmarking. Currently, we are largely restricted to comparing participation rates in formal education and initial vocational training. Work is currently under way to improve this situation in the following manner:

- the Commission's "**European report on quality of education**" (building on the work of the Working Committee on Quality Indicators with representatives of 26 countries), will be presented to the Council meeting on 8 June 2000 and to the Ministers of Education meeting in Bucharest in June 2000. At the Bucharest conference, the Commission will propose an enlarged mandate for the Working Committee on Quality Indicators. In line with the new "rolling agenda" working procedures agreed by the Education Council in November 1999, the proposed mandate would cover the establishment of a limited number of indicators and benchmarks on the quality of education and training in a LLL perspective;
- an expert group to **develop indicators and set targets for** education, training and lifelong learning within the terms of **the Luxembourg Process** Employment Guidelines;
- a **Task Force on Measuring Lifelong Learning** has been established by EUROSTAT, which will work towards developing comparable indicators which cover a broader remit, in line with the holistic approach to lifelong learning taken in this discussion document.

Once appropriate indicators have been developed and agreed between all concerned, **it would be useful to consider the potential for a benchmarking approach** to lifelong learning as a holistic endeavour. The common objectives upon which such an approach could be based would then be able to assess and promote progress towards putting a European Area for Lifelong Learning into practice. The rolling agenda would provide an appropriate framework for such an exercise.

A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning

The manifold current efforts to implement lifelong learning derive from differing policy domains and reflect the diversity of education and training practices in the European Union. They highlight different aspects (employability, quality of education), focus on different members of the lifelong learning family (formal school system, vocational training providers) and have different formats (surveys, working groups, statistical exercises, internet based structures).

The time is right to lend renewed and coordinated impulse at Community level. Member States themselves have common interests in making progress on the implementation of lifelong learning: there is broad agreement that there is a need, across the board, to rethink the ways in which education and training are provided and used. Individual and institutional actors at all levels of the community and polity have shared responsibilities to participate actively in that implementation. National authorities, for their part, should prepare for a new role in assuring quality and providing mediation in what will increasingly be a complex field of education and training provision and participation, in a Europe made up of multiple social, cultural and economic interest groups.

With these considerations in mind and in view of the need to co-ordinate and streamline the current initiatives at European and national level, the Commission proposes, by the end of the current year, to draw up a Memorandum provisionally entitled Implementing Lifelong Learning for Active Citizenship in a Europe of Knowledge. Its purpose will be to act as the principal reference point for the subsequent development of a comprehensive European lifelong learning strategy.

As the Memorandum is prepared, the Commission intends to inform and consult the relevant institutional actors at Community level, especially as far as proposals for new modalities of dialogue and exchange on lifelong learning are concerned. The Memorandum will be formally presented to the Education Council; the Directorate General for Education and Culture will also organise a launching conference to discuss the Memorandum and its implications for developing a European Area for Lifelong Learning. In broad terms, the Memorandum should comprise:

- a **conceptual framework for a comprehensive European LLL strategy** which embraces both Member State and Community levels, and which brings education and training into mutual coherence. On the basis of this conceptual framework, areas where MS need to develop their policies and areas for further action at Community level should be identified. The result of this should feed back into the Community programmes and initiatives.
- outcomes of ongoing ‘stocktaking exercises’ of **Community action in favour of LLL to date**. These should identify where further Community action is needed and explore the prospects for setting concrete targets to achieve through the programmes.
- a concise **overview of current LLL policies and practices in the Member States** and in comparable parts of the world with a view to identifying the main challenges for Europe.
- **proposals for** ways to identify lifelong learning practice and policies in the Member States, with a view to **improving practice on concrete aspects of lifelong learning** (for example: provision and access; participation and achievement; recognition and accreditation). This approach should build on progress made in establishing indicators for measuring and benchmarking lifelong learning policies and practices at Member State level. The proposals put forward by the Portuguese Presidency will serve as a helpful impulse in this respect.

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