

Høring om EU-kommissionens udkast til meddelelse om handlingsplan for voksnes læring

Dear Sir/Dear Madam,

As promised in our letter of 30 March last, we send you herewith the first draft of the Action Plan on Adult learning, which will take the form of a Communication of the Commission.

We would appreciate very much if you would give us your general comments and to answer the following questions:

- Do you have any comments on the process followed?
- What needs to be strengthened in your opinion in the structure of the Action Plan or more precisely in the policy, governance or delivery?
- Are there proposed actions that you would like to change or new items you wish to suggest?
- What is missing in the approach?

If possible, we would like to receive your opinions through your LLL agency or directly from the participating members in your sounding board, by 22 May at the latest.

We are at your disposal for any further questions you may have.

Your sincerely,

Marijke Dashorst

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Communication Action Plan on Adult learning

It's never too late to late to learn, or It is a good time to learn
(Working title)

1. Introduction

In 2000 the European Council in Lisbon set the strategic goal for Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge- based society in the world by 2010. A key element of the agenda proposed in Lisbon was the promotion of employability and social inclusion through investment in citizens' knowledge and competence at all stages of their lives.

The Commission's 2001 Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*¹ again stressed the importance of lifelong learning for all European citizens. One of the main messages was: *that traditional systems must be transformed to become much more open and flexible, so that learners can have individual pathways, suitable to their needs and interests, and thus genuinely take advantage of equal opportunities throughout their lives.*

The Commission's 2006 Communication on Adult learning: *It is never too late to learn*² in highlights the importance of adult learning as a key component of lifelong learning. The Communication underscored the dual roles of adult learning – for improving competence (human capital) and for developing citizenship (social capital) and how both roles are interconnected.

1.2 The context

The need for a high quality and accessible adult learning system is no longer a point of discussion, given the challenges Europe has to meet in the coming years:

- decreasing the labour shortages due to demographic changes³, minimising the number of early school leavers⁴ and maintaining a highly skilled, well-trained labour force.
- Reducing the consistent problem of poverty and social exclusion among marginalised groups

Only by meeting these challenges can Europe aim to play her role in the global economy and establish a stable society.

This Communication builds on the overall and five key messages⁵ of the Communication on adult learning: *It is never too late to learn.*

It aims also to reinforce the Maastricht Communiqué⁶ in relation to:

offering all Europeans, whether they are young people, older workers, unemployed or disadvantaged, the qualifications and competences they need to be fully integrated into the emerging knowledge based society, contributing to more and better jobs.

It proposes actions to increase participation, to improve the quality of adult learning and to strengthen and support the need for an efficient and effective adult learning system, integrated in the lifelong learning strategies of the Member States.

¹ European Commission Communication: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a reality

² European Commission Communication: It is never too late to learn

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⁵ Overall message: the call for an efficient adult learning system in the Member States and the five messages: Increasing the participation in adult learning and making it more equitable; foster a culture of quality; implement systems for validation and recognition; sufficient investment in education and training of migrants older people; improve the quality and comparability of data on adult learning.

⁶ 14 December 2004

1.3 The process

This Communication is the result of wide-ranging consultation following the publication of the Communication on adult learning: *It is never too late to learn*. During the first half of 2007 the Commission consulted Member States through four regional meetings (in Finland, Germany, Slovenia and Portugal) of representatives of the ministries for education and employment, the social partners and NGOs for adult learning.

As part of each regional meeting and based on the key messages of the Communication on adult learning: *It is never too late to learn*, the host country presented good examples of practice to participants:

- what are the results of an integrated stakeholders approach;
- how to achieve the basic skills for low skilled workers;
- how policies and actions for increasing participation in adult learning are been developed;
- the way implementation of the system of recognition and validation of non-formal learning is been laid down.

In effect, this sharing of practice formed the first action of the current Action Plan.

The Commission also used the so-called informal “national sounding boards” in Member States to get additional feedback on the Action Plan from policy makers, social partners and NGOs in formal and non-formal adult learning.

The Commission was supported in drafting the Action Plan by a group of experts made up of representatives from the Member States that hosted the regional meetings, the social partners and international bodies as UNESCO.

1.4 What is adult learning?

During the regional meetings it emerged that, due to a perceived overlap of objectives in relation to employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment, There was sometimes a lack of clarity about the relationship between lifelong learning and adult learning. Accordingly, in the interests of clarity and as a basis for the proposed actions, this Action Plan restates the following definitions already employed elsewhere by the Commission:

Lifelong learning is from the cradle to the grave and is *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.*

It includes the full range of learning, formal, non-formal and informal⁷

Adult learning includes *all forms of learning undertaken by adults after having left initial education and training* however far this process may have gone (e.g., including tertiary education)

2. Structure of the Action Plan

This Action Plan is based on the Communication on adult learning: *It is never too late to learn* and focuses on shared responsibilities at different levels: European Commission level and Member State and the stakeholders in adult learning, also on both levels. In fact it means

⁷ European Commission Communication: Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality

that partnership is a condition sine qua non for improving the quality of the adult learning and widening access.

The actions proposed are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in relation to the goals of employability, active citizenship and personal fulfilment and with a particular focus on the specific target groups as low-skilled workers, migrants and older people.

In defining the building blocks the assumption is that adult learning systems comprise a set of key elements that are strongly interconnected. These elements are the *policy* adopted to meet the needs and demands of the society and the economy; the *governance* structures including the quality, efficiency and accountability of the adult learning system and the *delivery* including learning activities, learning supports and recognition of learning outcomes which address the motivation and learning needs of the learners in the context of the needs and demands of the society and the economy.

2.1 Policy

The need for basic skills and key competences and for on-going up-skilling is scarcely a topic of debate at European level or Member States level. The contribution of education and training is widely recognised but the quality, efficiency⁸ and effectiveness of the education and training systems are not always in evidence.

In particular the weakness of adult learning is, that in comparison to the other areas of learning, its contribution and benefits are not clear and the development of adult learning opportunities is not keeping pace with the needs of individuals and society. A key reason for this lack of progress is the fragmentation of responsibility across many stakeholders and limited investment in adult learning by these stakeholders.

This Communication calls for co-operation and a shared responsibility between the different stakeholders at European, national, regional and local levels. The Communication *Making a Europe Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*⁹ characterised partnership between stakeholders as *the key building block* of lifelong learning:

- There is a recognised need for *public authorities* to intervene to guarantee learning opportunities to enable unemployed adults or those at risk of unemployment to achieve at least the basic skills. As well as up- skilling the labour force such interventions serve as educational redistribution and social equity measures and promote social inclusion. In addition, there is a need for public authorities to invest in adult learning for active citizenship. In a constantly changing and increasingly diverse Europe, education and training play a key role in acquiring and building upon values which help Europe to become more inclusive. This includes investment in language training, civic education, cultural expression and assessment, recognition and validation of competences.
- *Employers* are responsible for up-skilling their workforce and for providing work-based training opportunities with a special focus on retaining people in the workforce and supporting them to remain motivated and flexible in their job.
- *Individuals* have a responsibility to invest resources in their own learning for reasons of employability and personal fulfilment.

⁸ European Commission Communication: Efficiency and equity, 2006

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In summary, all stakeholders need to work in partnership and to increase their investment in adult learning.

This Action plan call on Member States to create the right for adults who left school, without any formal qualification to restart/continue their basic education at any time throughout their lives with adequate financial support.

2.2. Governance

In 2002 the European Council in Barcelona set the objective of making European education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010.¹⁰ There is no doubt that good quality provision can result in higher investment and participation in adult learning.

Public authorities have a crucial role to play in this respect, through establishment of legislation, establishing regulatory frameworks, setting quality standards, certifying adherence to these standards and making information available to service users on provider performance against explicit indicators.

In the interests of effectiveness and consumer rights public authorities also have a role to play even where the majority of adult learning opportunities are privately provided and financed.

Good governance produces effective adult learning provision which results in quality learning outcomes for learners and good returns on investment for all stakeholders.

Good governance in adult learning providers is characterised by the centrality of the adult learner; efficient administration systems, professional staffing, strong monitoring and evaluation systems within national frameworks and good relations with other educational areas.

To achieve good governance there is a need for planned and systematic actions at all levels and within all elements of structured learning, formal and non-formal, to improve accountability and transparency and to provide adequate confidence that adult learning provision will meet the requirements of all stakeholders, especially the adult learners.

The Communication call on the Member States to invest in a planned and systematic approach will serve to maximise the efforts of all stakeholders so as to achieve the best possible outcome for the adult learner and the best possible return on investment for all stakeholders

2.3. Delivery

The key challenge for Member States in adult learning is to increase demand; to fit into the needs of the adult learner and to supply high quality answers. Responses to this challenge must be multifaceted with a wide range of interconnected actions to overcome the multi-dimensional barriers to participation including:

- placing the learner at the centre of concern. Information and guidance should be brought closer to learner through community-based and workplace-based services that are free for low-skilled individuals and tailored to meet specific needs. The availability of high quality information and guidance should be secured.
- bringing learning closer to learners in their communities and workplaces through local learning centres, workplace learning, e-learning. Differentiated learning opportunities

¹⁰ Points 43 and 44 in the European Council conclusions, Barcelona 15 and 16 March 2002.

that respond to diversity through differentiated provision according to people's specific needs should be offered.

- establishing mechanisms to recognise the adult's prior learning, wherever, whenever and however achieved, so as to enable access and/or the award of partial or full qualifications. National standards for learning outcomes should be established and qualifications should be related to each other.
- providing flexible access to assessment and qualification; providing transfer and progression opportunities
- putting in place demand-led financial mechanisms (for e.g., individual learning accounts, tax measures) to address financial constraints and to motivate individuals (the demand side) to commit to learning on a full-time or part-time basis.

This Communication call on Member States to give the legal right to adults to have their learning outcomes, wherever acquired, recognised, validated and valued for the labour market or for the purpose of further education and training within existing or planned national qualification

3. Priority actions

The key challenge for this Action plan is to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in adult learning for reasons of employability, social inclusion and/or personal development.

The actions are formed on the basis of the European Lifelong learning strategies and the European Employment Strategy.

The actions build also on strengthening the existing developments as using tools as EQF and ECVET for the purpose of adult learners

The implementation of the proposals is mainly in the hands of the Member States; however they can be supported by actions on the European level.

3.1 Actions on the policy level

Public authorities are responsible for meeting the needs of the labour market and the society and to provide the needed legislation, resources and ensuring access to learning provisions for all citizens throughout life to acquire or to update their competences.

1. European level: increasing the focus on adult learning in the European social dialogue and strengthening co-operation between the different stakeholders at European level by putting specific issues on the agenda such as migrants, older people, early school leavers; in strengthening the interconnectivity and co-operation between the different DGs in the European Commission through the establishment of a working group on adult learning.

Member States: replicating the European level actions at national, regional and local levels. Cooperation between adult learning providers, other educational areas and employers at local level should be strengthened.

2. European level: support the right for adults who left school, without any formal qualification to restart/continue their basic education at any time through their lives with adequate financial support.

Member States: offering educational and training opportunities which will effectuate this right with the support of ESF.

3. European and Member States level: the implementation of the Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning defined in the Commission Recommendation¹¹ should be of central importance. The framework sets out what are considered to be essential skills, knowledge and attitudes that every European should have to prosper in knowledge based society and economy. Among them are "social, interpersonal and civic competences to promote active citizenship.

3. European and Member States level: for a growing number of adults in retirement, adult learning must offer them opportunities to develop their role in society, further their talents and interests, update their life skills and pass on their knowledge and know-how to younger generations. The adult learning sector should investigate how it can meet the needs of this target group and open windows to them.

4. European level: development of a master plan with a clear output, including the implementation of the proposed actions and monitoring the results every two years as a part of the Joint Progress Report on Education and Training

Member States: development of a master plan, which includes a section on how the plan can be supported from the European level and the role and responsibilities of stakeholders. The result will form a part of the National Reform Programmes

5. European level: Lobby for a year of adult learning

Member States: each Member State should have an Adult Learner's festival along the lines of Adult Learners' Week.

3.2 Actions for good governance

For reasons of improving the accountability, efficiency, quality and visibility of the benefits of the adult learning area, partnership and cooperation of all stakeholders on European, national, regional and local level is needed.

1. European level: establishment of an adult learning network which will be charged with guiding the implementation of the Action Plan through a working programme.

Within the network specific working groups will work on issues such as research on adult learning, quality, analysis of adult learning needs, and professionalisation of adult learning

Member States: to participate in the European network on adult learning and the working groups through competent experts.

2. European level: development of a framework for the non-formal adult learning sector, including tools for quality assurance

Member States: development of quality assurance within agreed criteria

3. European level: Development of a glossary of definitions of adult learning terms agreed by Member States. This will form the base of Commission research on a set of core indicators to monitor the adult learning sector and support the Member States to create a data base

Member States: creating the necessary steps to be able to provide data on the core indicators and be able to deliver the data on a two- yearly base.

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4. European level: develop a professional profile of a range of guidance personnel, accompanied by a set of key competences for such personnel, needed to improve the quality of guidance to adults.

Member States: establish integrated guidance services in collaboration with other services and provide free access for low -skilled workers and disadvantaged people

5. European level: act on the recommendations of current studies such as *Adult learning professions in Europe*, to strengthen the quality of adult learning staff

Member States: give specific attention to the initial and continuing professional development of adult learning staff. Enhance the status of adult learning staff through equitable pay and terms and conditions of employment within collective labour agreements.

3.3 Actions for delivery

Removing the barriers for participation in adult learning means also that learning should be brought closer to the learner and those actions will increase the motivation to participate.

1. European level: support pilot projects on EQF and ECVET to investigate how competences wherever achieved can be recognised, validated and valued for the labour market

Member States: ensure involvement of adult learning stakeholders in the development of the national qualifications frameworks and pilots on ECVET, with a special focus on the use of the units

2. European level: support the Action Plan of the European social partners, especially in relation to individual learning accounts or other measures to facilitate participation in adult learning

Member States: establish the right of individuals to a personal/ lifelong development plan with a possible link to the individual learning account or other measures to facilitate participation in adult learning

3. European level: use European programmes for the process of development of e-learning tailored to the needs of adults

Member States: improve access to adult learning by opening up existing schools, institutes and centres at local level

4. European level: launch research on how different target groups can be reached through media and other means.

Member States: combine a range of established and innovative approaches to reach potential adult learners

4.0 Taking the adult learning agenda forward

All actors are invited to create partnerships and to take their responsibilities in taking the adult learning agenda forward by developing working programmes and to make the actions a reality on European and Member State level.

Implementation will take place through research, exchange of good practice, Peer Learning Activities, networks and working groups, European programmes and monitoring the progress in the sector by a limited number of core indicators.

5.0 Next steps

The next stages towards the implementation of the actions are the following:

- Council conclusions during the Portuguese presidency?
- Launch of the Action Plan in Slovenia during their presidency?