



Plateforme européenne de la société civile pour l'éducation tout au long de la vie
European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL)


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Twelve years after: a call for a renewed Memorandum on Lifelong Learning

« As the whole world is for all humankind a school, from the beginning until the end of times, the age of each man is its school, from the cradle to the grave. » (John Amos Comenius)

Lifelong learning has been acknowledged for the last decade as an essential component of the overarching Growth Strategy for the EU (in the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and more importantly in the Europe 2020 Strategy (2010-2020)). In 2000 the European Commission issued a [Memorandum on Lifelong Learning](#) to initiate a broad consultation on the topic, and a year later the Communication "[Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality](#)". Those texts formed the basis and the general principles for reinforced political cooperation in education and training within the open method of coordination under the "Education and Training 2010" work programme. Twelve years later, the paradigm has changed in times of the current economic crisis. The "[Education and Training 2020](#)" strategic framework has been built upon the pessimistic assessment that only one of the ET2010 benchmarks has been reached¹. In a dismal period where austerity and employability are the leading principles, EUCIS-LLL would like to assess, more than a decade after the Memorandum, what should be done to make the ET2020 a success. In line with the [Joint Progress Report 2012](#), EUCIS-LLL believes that Member States should make more effort to attain the targets set within the Education and Training 2020 strategy. It is crucial to invest in lifelong learning but this investment should not purely be focused on the technical acquisition of skills; the ET2020 has to be better aligned with Europe 2020 but it has not been designed exclusively to reach employability. The Memorandum had expressed a more holistic vision of lifelong learning and it is our duty to preserve it.

 This call for a renewed Memorandum is a message from civil society to remind that lifelong learning is still a structuring element for competitive knowledge societies but also and above all for personal fulfilment, social cohesion and active citizenship².

Lifelong learning is key to Europe 2020

"Lifelong learning [is] an all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an on-going basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence" (A Memorandum on LLL, 2000)

"Education and training have now emerged as the latest means for tackling the employment problem. It may be surprising that the realisation of the role they can play has come so late and that it has taken an economic recession to bring it about. Yet it is unfair to expect education and training alone to make up for every failure: education and training cannot solve the employment problem on their own". This is not an abstract of a recent document issued by the European Commission but of the [White Paper](#) "Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society" published in 1995. On the eve of the European Year of Lifelong Learning and already from the seventies onwards, **the humanist utopia of lifelong education turned into an economic and realistic contribution to employment and growth in times of crisis** (oil crisis, recessions of the nineties and the beginning of the millennium). That is why the working definition of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning is the one adopted for the European Employment Strategy (1997) and why the Education and Training 2020 should be better linked to Europe 2020, in a conception of education close to the human capital theory (Gary Becker) as "*the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being*"³. **The balance between lifelong learning as a private activity and as a public good is fragile** and the definition is subject to great variations according to the socio-economical context. Education and training today are therefore rightly put at the top of the agenda as key elements of Europe's recovery, and lifelong learning even more so since individuals have to adapt to constant changes in the skills demand. To get 75% of the working age population into work by 2020, Europe 2020

¹ "[Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training: indicators and benchmarks 2010/2011](#)", Commission staff working document

² Read EUCIS-LLL's position paper "[Austerity measures, lifelong learning and social cohesion](#)"

³ « [The well-being of nations. The role of human and social capital: education and skills](#) », Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, 2001




flagship initiative “Agenda for new skills and jobs” aims at equipping people with the right skills (**Memorandum, key message 1**), forecast by [CEDEFOP](#). The OECD also launched its own [Skills Strategy](#) in May 2012 and the European Commission foresees by the end of the year a new communication on skills that were the first key message of the Memorandum.

 **As the skills mismatch is a constant challenge to take up for Europe and its workers of all ages in order to adapt to a labour market in perpetual change, investing in people is indeed, once again, the cleverest way out of the crisis.**

Lifelong learning is so much more

“Learning opens the door to building a satisfying and productive life, quite apart from a person’s employment status and prospects.” (A Memorandum on LLL, 2000)

Putting lifelong learning at the front of the stage is a wise decision. Make it carry the whole burden of Europeans’ employability is chimeric, as the 1995 White Paper already stated long before the Memorandum: *“To examine education and training in the context of employment does not mean reducing them simply to a means of obtaining qualifications. The essential aim of education and training has always been personal development and the successful integration of Europeans into society”*. Indeed, education and training as well as **lifelong learning strategies cannot be narrowed to uncertain predictions of what the labour market will need tomorrow**. Investing in our citizens means seeing the whole picture – and “learning to do” is only one of the four pillars Jacques Delors was recommending (along with “learning to know, learning to live together and learning to be”) in another fundamental text: [“Learning: the treasure within”](#) (UNESCO, 1996). All the publications mentioned above reflect the need **to think broader and consider that personal development, active citizenship⁴ and social inclusion⁵ are as important as employability** - eight out of ten citizens supported this integrated approach according to the Eurobarometer [“Lifelong Learning: the citizens’ view”](#) led by CEDEFOP and DG EAC in 2003. The Memorandum stated for that matter *“two equally important aims for lifelong learning: promoting active citizenship and promoting employability”*. In a way, **Employability is only the top of the iceberg when it comes to active participation of individuals** in democratic, social and economic life, to what they can bring to our knowledge societies – and this contribution is part of the bigger picture of each citizen’s personal fulfilment. In the same line, the Memorandum expresses that *“employability is obviously a key outcome of successful learning, but **social inclusion rests on more than having a paid job**”*. By valuing all types of learning (be it formal, informal or non-formal), developing innovative teaching methods and many more beneficial strategies and positive measures, **European action has ensured during the past decade that the balance between individual well-being and the common good was maintained**; the 1995 White Paper was saying *“much is asked from [school] because it has so much to offer”*.

 **This is no time to narrow the political focus on technical skills while the Union needs the full potential of its citizens to be back on track. The European Commission repeatedly assures that active citizenship, social inclusion and personal fulfilment are fully compatible with and equal to employability. This needs also to be repeatedly proved.**

Lifelong learning for whom?

“Individual motivation to learn and a variety of learning opportunities are the ultimate keys to implementing lifelong learning successfully.” (A Memorandum on LLL, 2000)

Adopting a holistic vision when it comes to lifelong learning therefore means, in the Memorandum, enabling each individual to achieve all his/her potentialities⁶; in other words, **fostering a learner-centred approach** rather than a labour market-centred one. One can hear in many circles today that **a paradigm shift is occurring towards a focus on learning outcomes**, defined by the European Commission as *“a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a learning process”*⁷. The European framework for (eight) key competences for lifelong learning, translated in national education schemes, has been without a doubt the successful initiative of the past decade to formalise those outcomes. Yet let us not forget that **the key competences are not only technical expectations**. For instance, the “sense of initiative and entrepreneurship” has been turned in France into “autonomy and initiative”⁸ as entrepreneurship is too much correlated to the labour market. Initially though, the word also means “entrepreneurship of the self” as personal fulfilment. “Learning to learn”, in the same way, is about identifying one’s own needs and available opportunities and engage into a learning process. It is about motivation – and here comes an aspect of lifelong learning that has been neglected during the past years, meaning **the positive attitude, without which no skills will be acquired**; the Memorandum says *“people will only*

⁴ See EUCIS-LLL [10 key points](#) on active citizenship and lifelong learning, 2009

⁵ See EUCIS-LLL [publication](#) on social inclusion in education and training, 2011


⁶ See the work of Fundación Botín on [Responsible Education](#)

⁷ « [Using learning outcomes. European Qualifications Framework Series : Note 4](#) », EQF, LLP and CEDEFOP, 2011

⁸ « [Recommandations pour le socle commun](#) », Haut Conseil de l’Education, 2006




plan for consistent learning activities throughout their lives if they want to learn". One has to remind that **the shift towards learning outcomes is less on the results than on the learning process itself**: lifelong learning policies shall therefore aim to "raise the demand for learning as well as the supply" (Memorandum), provide incentives for the learner but also tailored learning opportunities (**key message 6**). There comes the real learning-centred approach: whatever way you learn, the outcomes will be valued (**lifewide learning, key message 4**). This cannot be said however without highlighting two other essential requirements: equality first, as tailored opportunities mean adapting to the needs of each individual disregarding their age, sex, socio-economic background, etc; This seems to have been forgotten in the Commission's [draft proposal](#) for the next funding programme "Erasmus for all" 2014-2020; the European Parliament obviously thinks the actual text is clearly not designed "for all" and has downplayed some educational sectors like adult education, while the Memorandum was recommending to "build an inclusive society which offers equal opportunities for access to quality". This brings us to the second point: valuing a lifewide approach to learning initiates the debate on **quality**; European policy-making has made consistent effort on recognition of non-formal and informal learning⁹ and, in general, **quality of teaching and all types of learning opportunities**; further steps shall be initiated in the next decade **to ensure that each European citizen can find an appropriate pathway towards knowledge**.

 *The paradigm shift towards learning outcomes shall not lose its essence, and especially not in the proposed "Erasmus for all": it means valuing skills and competences acquired through all types of learning thanks to equal tailored opportunities ensuring quality education.*

Making a European area of Lifelong Learning a reality

"Not only [...] current investment levels are regarded as too low to ensure the replenishment of the skills pool, but [...] it is necessary to re-think what counts as investment altogether."

This was true twelve years ago and this is still true today. **The political emphasis made on education and training shall be concretised by appropriate, sustainable and equitable financial resources (key message 2)**; in this way, the proposed budget increase for the next funding programme "Erasmus for all" is a step forward. What to invest in? The priority is the implementation of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies to modernise education and training systems and ensure individualised pathways for learners. To assess efforts made into this direction, European targets and benchmarks have been set in the framework of ET2020. However, building on the failure of the majority of ET2010 and on what has been said above, **new horizons should be reached, considering a holistic vision of the learner and broader objectives for lifelong learning**. This also means **measuring progress in lifelong learning in innovative ways, like focusing on well-being**¹⁰. It all comes to **social innovation in teaching, learning and guidance (key message 3 and 5)** that is key to moving towards the vision of the Memorandum to make a European area of lifelong learning a reality; this innovation comes mostly from grassroots initiatives¹¹, and that is why **bridges between educational sectors and actors** are recommended by the Memorandum ("*gradual osmosis between structures of provision*") since this is the only way to make these initiatives visible through a continuous exchange of best practices, and ensure the **systemic impact** that is so important today for European policy-makers. Preserving this bottom-up innovation also means making real a cross-sectorial **partnership approach with civil society but also all key stakeholders for better multilevel governance**. "*Work in close concertation with each other*" should not be left engraved in the Memorandum without concrete steps towards a genuine dialogue in education and training. This means first recognise the European added value of civil society organisations and **ensure a sustainable support and simplified administrative procedures** for them; this also means **formalising a structured dialogue** with regular consultation mechanisms.

 *Social innovation from grassroots projects is key to achieve coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and renew the tools to measure progress in their implementation; that is why civil society organisations deserve a sustainable support and a genuine structured dialogue in education and training in the proposed "Erasmus for all".*

This call for a renewed Memorandum from EUCIS-LLL aims to come back to the spirit of the beginning of the millennium. Lifelong Learning was then seen as an essential instrument for employment and growth but equally as a vector of social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. It is today justifiably set as a top European priority to recover from the crisis but it seems that the humanist values have been lost in the race against the skills mismatch. For knowledge societies and fulfilled individuals, let us be ambitious and see the big picture in the next decade.

⁹ See EUCIS-LLL [general report](#) of its public hearing and [Magazine](#) on this topic

¹⁰ See for instance the work of the [Bertelsmann Foundation](#) based on Jacques Delors' work

¹¹ See the conclusions of [EUCIS-LLL public hearing](#) on the topic

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) gathers 31 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers. www.eucis-lll.eu

