

LONG LIFE LEARNING – THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES AND TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract: We evolve more each day towards a universe in which the social world is described-prescribed by television, and Communication and Information Technology add new dimensions to the cultural world. The Internet is growing day-by-day into the arbiter of access to cultural existence. These complex communication systems deploy huge capitals, sophisticated technical equipment, massive human resources and reach billions of people - conferring them a vital position in the social, political and economic mechanisms of any society. The penetration and assertion speed of a piece of innovation, leading to social change and modernization, depends on the communication channels of a society. New open, social and participatory media clearly have significant potential to transform learning and teaching. They offer learners and teachers a plethora of ways to communicate and collaborate; to connect with a distributed network of peers, and to find and manipulate information. In addition there are now a significant range of free educational resources and tools.

Key-words: learner-centered curriculum, distributed/ shared resources, virtual facilities, and asynchronous teaching/ learning

1. EUROPE 2020 – A EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

„Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. In a changing world, we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Concretely, the Union has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas. Concrete actions at EU and national levels underpin the strategy” said José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, at march 2011.

Europe 2020 strategy is based on international and national policies to develop a knowledge - based society in the European states. „A knowledge-based society is an innovative and life-long learning society, which possesses a community of scholars, researchers, engineers, technicians, research networks, and firms engaged in research and in production of high-technology goods and service provision. It forms a national innovation-production system, which is integrated into international networks of knowledge production, diffusion, utilization, and protection. Its communication and information technological tools make vast amounts of human knowledge easily accessible. Knowledge is used to empower and enrich people culturally and materially, and to build a sustainable society.”

(<http://www.sciforum.hu>)

In a knowledge-based society exists some important elements which make difference:

1) All forms of knowledge (scientific, embedded; practical or theoretical, linearly/hierarchically organized or organized in network structures) are communicated in new ways;

2) As the use and misuse of knowledge has a greater impact than ever before, equal access to knowledge by the population is vital;

3) Information accessibility should not be a new form of social inequality;

4) Closing the growing gap between developed and developing countries must be a top political priority—no one can be left behind;

5) As knowledge cannot be understood without culture, research on the interface between vernacular and scientific knowledge must be developed;

6) Access to knowledge should be considered as a right and should be protected from short-term industrial interests limiting this access;

7) There must be a continuous dialogue between society and science, thus promoting scientific

literacy and enhancing the advising role of science and scholarship;

8) Scientific discourse should stop being gender-blind, barriers that prevent more women from choosing science careers and reaching top positions should be overcome;

9) The young generation's interest in science and commitment to the knowledge-led future of their countries should be stimulated by introducing innovative teaching methods, and by changing the image of the scientist, with the help of the media and through involved mentorship

The knowledge - based society represents a future society based on new type of phenomena which appears.

An European Strategy was necessary to help the Member States come out stronger from the crisis and turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion – elements for knowledge-based society.

Europe 2020 puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:

– *Smart growth*: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

– *Sustainable growth*: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.

– *Inclusive growth*: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

The Strategy is putting forward seven flagship initiatives to catalyse progress under each priority theme: "Innovation Union", "Youth on the move", "A digital agenda for Europe", "Resource efficient Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "An agenda for new skills and jobs" and "European platform against poverty". These seven flagship initiatives will commit both the EU and the Member States.

The Digital Agenda presented by the European Commission forms one of the seven pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy which sets objectives for the growth of the European Union (EU) by 2020. The Digital Agenda proposes to better exploit the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to foster innovation, economic growth and progress. Its main objective is to develop a digital single market in order to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. The Strategy proposes some actions to achieve the goal of Digital Agenda: 1) Achieving the digital single market, 2) Enhancing interoperability and standards, 3) Consolidating online trust and security, 4) Promoting fast and ultra fast Internet access for all, 5) Investing in research and innovation, 6) Enhancing digital literacy, skills and inclusion, 6) Leveraging smart use of technology for society. Implementation of the actions described above

will require a sustained level of commitment at both EU
2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY

Education and training play a key role in transforming the European Union (EU) into a world-leading knowledge-based society and economy. Since the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, political cooperation in education and training has been strengthened – first by the “Education and Training 2010” work programme, followed-up by the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training “ET 2020”. This cooperation has led to the formulation of common targets and initiatives that encompass all types of education and training and all stages in lifelong learning. They are supported by a number of funding programmes, such as the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13 and Erasmus Mundus 2009-13. Furthermore, a number of networks and agencies support action in education and training, namely the Audiovisual, Education and Culture Executive Agency and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

“Education and Training 2020” (ET 2020) is a new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training that builds on its predecessor, the “Education and Training 2010” (ET 2010) work programme.

At the Barcelona European Council meeting, the “Education” Council and the Commission jointly proposed the ET 2010 work programme with [concrete future objectives of education and training systems](#):

- *Improving the quality of education and training systems*: Education and training are an excellent means of social and cultural cohesion and a considerable economic asset with a view to making Europe a more competitive and dynamic society. It is necessary to improve the quality of training for teachers and trainers and make a special effort to acquire the basic skills, which must be updated in order to keep pace with changes in the knowledge society. Literacy and numeracy also need to be improved, particularly with regard to information and communication technologies and general skills (e.g. learning to learn, teamwork, etc.). Improving the quality of facilities in schools and training institutes by making the best use of resources is a further priority, as is increasing recruitment in scientific and technical fields, such as mathematics and natural sciences, in order to ensure that Europe remains competitive in the future economy. Finally, raising the quality of education and training systems means better matching of resources and needs, and enabling schools to develop new partnerships to support their new, wider role.

- *Making access to learning easier*: The European model of social cohesion must be able to allow access for all to formal and non-formal education and training systems by making it easier to move from one part of the education system to another (e.g. from vocational education to higher education), from early childhood right through to later life. Opening up education and training systems and working to make these systems more attractive, and even adapting them to meet the needs of the various groups concerned, can play an important part in promoting active citizenship, equal opportunities and lasting social cohesion.

- *Opening education and training to the world*: This objective involves building the European education and training area through mobility and foreign language teaching on the one hand and strengthening the links with the world of work, research and civil society as a whole on the other.

The main aim of the framework (ET 2020) is to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems. These systems should better provide the means for all citizens to realise their potentials, as well as ensure sustainable economic prosperity and employability. The framework should take into consideration the whole spectrum of education and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective,

and Member State levels (including at regional level), covering all levels and contexts (including non-formal and informal learning).

Thus, the new framework has four strategic objectives:

- *making lifelong learning and mobility a reality* – progress is needed in the implementation of lifelong learning strategies, the development of national qualifications frameworks linked to the European Qualifications Framework and more flexible learning pathways. Mobility should be expanded and the European Quality Charter for Mobility should be applied;

- *improving the quality and efficiency of education and training* – all citizens need to be able to acquire key competencies and all levels of education and training need to be made more attractive and efficient;

- *promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship* – education and training should enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and competencies needed for their employability and foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Educational disadvantage should be addressed through high quality inclusive and early education;

- *enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training* – the acquisition of transversal competences by all citizens should be promoted and the functioning of the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation) should be ensured. Partnerships between enterprises and educational institutions as well as broader learning communities with civil society and other stakeholders should be promoted.

3. LIFE LONG LEARNING IN EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

To facilitate the transition to a knowledge-based society, the Commission is promoting the establishment of strategies and specific activities for lifelong learning, with a view to achieving a European area of lifelong learning. This objective is at the heart of the Lisbon Strategy, in particular the “Education and Training 2010” programme.

Europe’s future depends on the extent to which its citizens can face economic and social challenges. A European area of lifelong learning will empower citizens to move freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries in pursuit of learning. Hence, lifelong learning focuses on learning from pre-school education until after retirement (“from the cradle to the grave”) and covers all forms of education (formal, informal or non-formal).

In the context of the strategic objective set out by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, to enable the European Union (EU) to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy in the world, the guiding principle of the integrated policy cooperation framework “Education and Training 2010” is lifelong learning, in synergy with the relevant elements of youth, employment, social inclusion and research policies..

The central role of the learner, the importance of equal opportunities, quality and relevance of learning possibilities must be at the centre of the strategies to make lifelong learning a reality in Europe.

Components of a lifelong learning strategy

Successive European Councils after 2000 have emphasised the need to implement coherent and comprehensive strategies. The transformation of traditional systems is the first step towards allowing everyone access to lifelong learning. In this regard have been identified other priorities:

- Developing partnerships at all levels of public administration (national, regional and local), as well as between suppliers of educational services (schools, universities, etc.) and civil society in the broad sense (businesses, social partners, local associations, etc.);

- Identifying the needs of the learner and labour market in the context of the knowledge society (including for example the new information technologies);

- Identifying adequate resources by encouraging an increase in public and private investment and new
- Making learning more accessible, notably by multiplying local learning centres at the workplace and by facilitating learning on the job. Specific efforts are needed for persons who are disadvantaged, including the disabled, minorities and the rural community;
- Creating a learning culture to motivate (potential) learners, to increase levels of participation and to demonstrate the need for learning at all ages;
- Putting in place evaluation and quality control mechanisms. By the beginning of 2003, the Commission was to launch a prize for firms that invest in lifelong learning, in order to award and draw attention to good practices in this area.

Priorities for action of a lifelong learning strategy

As emphasised in the EU acts, in order to achieve a European area of lifelong learning, it is essential to:

- value learning. This means valuing formal diplomas and certificates, as well as non-formal and informal learning, so that all forms of learning can be recognised. This includes improving the transparency and coherence of national learning systems, preparing transnational mechanisms for accumulating qualifications for 2003, defining a common system for presenting qualifications (inspired by the European curriculum vitae) by the end of 2002 and creating diplomas and certificates that pertain to European training on a voluntary basis;
 - strengthen information, guidance and counselling services at European level. In 2002, the Commission was to launch an Internet portal on learning opportunities at European level and a European guidance forum to promote exchanges of information;
 - invest more time in learning. The Commission is inviting the European Investment Bank to support learning, preferably by creating local training centres, requesting the European investment fund to support risk capital in this area, suggesting that Member States make greater use of the European Social Fund, and committing itself to presenting a survey of tax incentives in the Member States;
 - bring learning opportunities closer to learners. This will be possible by developing local knowledge acquisition centres and by encouraging learning on the job;
 - provide everybody with basic skills;
 - support research into innovative pedagogy for teachers, instructors and mediators, while taking account of the growing role of information and communication technologies.

The European Union (EU) is reaching a significant number of its citizens directly through its education and training programmes. The general objective of the lifelong learning programme is to contribute towards the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge society in accordance with the objectives of the Lisbon strategy. By supporting and supplementing action by the Member States, it aims to foster interchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference.

The objective of the action programme in the field of lifelong learning 2007-13 is to develop and foster interchange, cooperation and mobility, so that education and training systems become a world quality reference in accordance with the Lisbon strategy. It thus contributes to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

In this respect, consistency and complementarity with EU policies condition the implementation of the action programme. It should thus help achieve the EU's

investment models;

horizontal policies by making provisions for learners with special needs and helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training. It should also promote equality between men and women, as well as awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity and multiculturalism as a means of combating racism, prejudice and xenophobia.

Implementation of the programme should ensure consistency and complementarity with the Education and Training 2010 work programme, the integrated guidelines for jobs and growth under the partnership for growth and employment and other policies, such as those in the field of culture, youth or enterprise. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training may also be involved and/or informed according to their respective areas of competence.

In order to achieve these objectives, the programme supports the following **actions**:

- mobility of people in lifelong learning;
- bilateral and multilateral partnerships;
- unilateral, national or multinational projects, including those that are designed to promote quality in education and training systems through the transnational transfer of innovation;
- multilateral networks;
- studies and reviews of policies and systems in the field of lifelong learning and their components;
- operating grants to support certain operational and administrative costs borne by institutions or associations;
- accompanying measures, i.e. other initiatives to promote the objectives of the programme;
- preparatory activities for these actions;
- the organisation of events (seminars, colloquia, meetings) to facilitate the implementation of the programme, the information, publication, awareness-raising and dissemination actions, as well as programme monitoring and evaluation.

Participation in the programme is open not just to the Member States, but also to the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries that are members of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), to the Swiss Confederation and to the EU candidate and potential candidate countries of the western Balkans in accordance with the rules and agreements governing their participation in Community programmes.

In addition, the Commission may also organise cooperation with third countries and international organisations, such as the Council of Europe or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

- The beneficiaries of the programme are:
- pupils, students, trainees and adult learners;
 - all categories of education personnel;
 - people in the labour market;
 - institutions and organisations providing learning opportunities within the programme;
 - persons and bodies responsible for systems and policies at local, regional and national level;
 - enterprises, social partners and their organisations at all levels, including trade organisations and chambers of commerce and industry;
 - bodies providing guidance, counselling and information services;
 - participants', parents' and teachers' associations;
 - research centres and bodies;
 - non-profit organisations, voluntary bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The action programme is divided into six sub-programmes, four of which are sectoral. They are all structured in the same way and address the teaching and learning needs of all participants, as well as of the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating education and training in each respective sector. All the

The following actions may be supported by the Comenius programme:

- mobility, such as exchanges of pupils and staff, school mobility, training courses for teachers, etc.;
- partnerships, such as "Comenius school partnerships" of schools for joint learning projects or "Comenius-Regio partnerships" of organisations responsible for school education, with a view to fostering inter-regional and particularly border region cooperation;
- multilateral projects on disseminating and promoting best practices, exchanging experience or developing new courses or course content;
- multilateral networks aimed at developing education, disseminating good practice and innovation, supporting partnerships and projects, as well as developing needs analysis;
- accompanying measures.

The mobility and partnership actions account for at least 80 % of the Comenius budget.

Erasmus. The Erasmus programme addresses formal higher education and vocational education and training at tertiary level, whatever the length of the course or qualification may be and including doctoral studies. Unlike the previous programmes, vocational education and training at tertiary level now falls under Erasmus instead of Leonardo da Vinci.

The following actions may be supported by the Erasmus programme:

- mobility of students (studies, training, placements), teaching staff, other staff in higher education institutions and staff of enterprises for the purposes of training or teaching, Erasmus intensive programmes organised on a multilateral basis, as well as support to the home and host institutions to ensure the quality of the mobility arrangements. Mobility actions account for at least 80 % of the budget for this programme;
- multilateral projects focusing on innovation, experimentation and the exchange of good practices;
- multilateral networks, such as "Erasmus thematic networks" run by consortia of higher education institutions and representing a discipline or a cross-disciplinary field;
- accompanying measures.

Leonardo da Vinci. The Leonardo da Vinci programme addresses vocational education and training other than that at tertiary level.

The following actions may be supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme:

actions incorporate mobility, language and new technology.

Comenius. The programme covers pre-school and school education up to the end of upper secondary education, as well as the institutions and organisations providing such education.

- mobility, including the preparation thereof;
- partnerships focusing on themes of mutual interest;
- multilateral projects, in particular those aimed at improving training systems through the transfer and development of innovation and good practice in order to adapt to national needs;
- thematic networks of experts and organisations working on specific issues related to vocational education and training;
- accompanying measures.

The mobility and partnership actions account for at least 60 % of the budget for this programme.

Grundtvig. The Grundtvig programme addresses all forms of adult education.

The following actions may be supported by the Grundtvig programme:

- mobility of individuals, including adequate preparation, supervision and support;
- "Grundtvig learning partnerships" focusing on themes of mutual interest;
- multilateral projects aimed at improving adult education systems through the development and transfer of innovation and good practice;
- "Grundtvig networks", thematic networks of experts and organisations;
- accompanying measures.

The mobility and partnership actions account for at least 55 % of the budget for the Grundtvig programme.

The transversal programme. The transversal programme mainly addresses activities that extend beyond the limits of the sectoral programmes.

It covers four key activities in the field of lifelong learning, i.e.:

- policy cooperation and innovation;
- the promotion of language learning;
- the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practices;
- the dissemination and exploitation of results of actions supported under the programme or previous programmes, and exchange of good practice.

The Jean Monnet programme. The Jean Monnet programme targets specific issues of European integration in the academic world and the support needed for institutions and associations active in education and training at European level.

This programme covers three key activities:

- the Jean Monnet action, in which institutions from third countries can also participate, accounts for at least 16 % of the budget for this programme;
- operating grants to designated institutions that pursue objectives of European interest.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The complex phenomena in modern society require more complex knowledge each day. Equally, the propagation speed and vast volume of information inhibits the receiver's capacity to interpret it in time. Thus, the current demand for analyzed and semi-prepared information. Due to new communication media, the significant reality has expanded to the "global village" and, complementary, relevant knowledge can no longer be acquired through own experiences and feelings or via direct contact with people and facts in the immediate personal environment.

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