

## **6. EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN UNION**

## 6.1 Focus on Europe

---

Diversity of European Union education system in all levels and structures between the Member states has to do with different cultures educational and professional needs and also different rates of development for each country.

For the concretisation of European educational policy they are essential the following:

Economic convergence

Alignment of titles

Equivalence

Transparency

National and European educational policy and strategy

The European Community has long been involved in the education matters, even from its very first stages. Articles No 126 and 127 of its establishing treaty, point out that “*the community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging and supplementing their action*” and “*the Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States.*”

In 1996, the EU launched the *White paper on Education and Training-teaching and learning towards the learning Society* [11]. This document analyzed the situation (of that time) in education and stated education in Europe suffered from.

The white paper states that Europe has to build the learning society as quickly as possible through radical changes. It also proposed changes and further action, setting the main guidelines for the implementation of the learning society.

*Diversity of European Union education system in all levels has to take into account cultures educational and professional needs.*

The objectives of these proposals were:

- Encouragement of new knowledge acquisition,
- Approaching of school and business,
- Fighting against social exclusion,
- Development of proficiency in three European languages
- Treatment of capital and training investment in equal basis.

We have to see if this objectives was rich and in which level, in order to redefine the target. We have to take in consideration that we have to examine and to discuss subjects like:

- What are higher education's fundamental values and how can they be reinterpreted in the current changing tides?
- How can higher education do a better job of articulating its service to society and its role beyond career preparation and the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student?
- How can higher education assess, demonstrate, and improve its results for increasingly sceptical and demanding policy makers, citizens and students?
- How can institutions find equilibrium between autonomy and responsiveness, and between themselves and the state as a partner, consumer, and regulator?
- How can institutions become sufficiently agile to adapt to the rapidly changing environment without losing their intellectual souls?

*Europe has to build the learning society as quickly as possible through radical changes.*

## 6.2 Higher Education

---

### SORBONNE

Declaration of 29 countries on May 25, 1998 was submitted. In Declaration is written that Universities and others Institutions of Higher Education can choose to be actors, rather than objects of this essential process of change. Declaration stressed the University's central role in developing European cultural dimension.

### BOLOGNA

In 1999, the European Ministers of Education, launched the Bologna Declaration. [47] This documents goes further on the concept of Learning Europe, considering it “*as irreplaceable factor for social and human growth*” and as “*an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship*”. A major role towards this target is allocated to European Universities, which should commit themselves to constructing the *European Area of Higher Education*, which should be internationally competitive and appealing.

In order to establish the European Area of Higher Education, and to promote the European system worldwide, the council of ministers, set the following objectives that should be accomplished by 2010. [51]

#### Application of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Implementation also of the “ Diploma Supplement” in order to promote European citizens employability and International competitiveness of European higher education system.

Access to postgraduate cycle requires full completion of the undergraduate one, which lasts minimum three years and is considered the degree that certifies the qualification for entry into the labour market. The postgraduate cycle leads to master and doctorate degrees.

*Formation of a common framework for higher education that will consist of two study cycles, the undergraduate and the postgraduate cycle.*

*Establishment of a system of credits-such as the ECTS as the proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility.*

Mobility of teaching staff and student should be promoted, by maximising relevant possibilities, optimising the terms and conditions and lessening the obstacles.

*Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance.*

Development of the relevant comparable criteria and methodologies

*Promotion of European dimension in higher education* with regards to specific issues like curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility, training and research.

## **LISBON**

The Lisbon European Council (March 2000), has set the target of creation a European knowledge society of European States and governments.

The European Universities (all Institutes of higher education) are considered as vital players in this process, due to the key role they have in the production (research) and transmission (education) of knowledge, but also due to their involvement in the very important matter of social cohesion and economic competitiveness. The strategic goal of becoming defined by the Heads of State and Government: “*making Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*”.

The European Universities have a long tradition and a record of academic excellence, but they do suffer from specific problems and they are going to face more challenges in the future, due to the constantly changing economic and social environment. [53]

The social environment, that is characterized by globalisation, intensive competition and rapid technology progress.

*European universities have to establish two study cycles :  
Undergraduate and Postgraduate.*

They yet remain less attractive and competitive against Universities of Europe's major partners (mainly of the U.S.A.) and they also suffer from lack of resources and funding.

The formulation of terms and conditions for the development of transnational education activities. This would help in the expansion of European higher education outside Europe on a competitive basis.

## **PRAGUE**

Two years after the Bologna Declaration, the European Ministers met in Prague. They reaffirmed their commitment to the establishment of the *European Higher Education Area* by 2010 and reviewed the status of the objectives that were set in the Bologna Declaration.

The ministers strongly encouraged educational Institutes to adopt the system of the course units and called upon existing Organizations to promote this idea. They noted that:

The two cycles system has been tackled and discussed among the member states and some had already adopted it.

What is more important in their conclusions is the point that degree programs should include different orientations, in order to accommodate different academic and labor market needs.

Mobility is of the utmost importance and should be supported by the ECTS credit system, which along with common quality assurance procedures will enhance the compatibility, attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education.

The Council of the Ministers also stressed the importance of the European dimension of higher education, by introducing joint courses, modules and curricula with "European" content that would lead to joint degrees.

*"Sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"* was the message of the Prime Ministers for Europe.

Apart from the objectives of the Bologna declaration, some other aspects were also discussed, as follows:

The development of the European dimension of higher education, mainly through active and effective collaboration between the countries but also between Universities and other educational Institutions, will be priority.

The collaboration aims at fighting common problems but also the search for common strategic and relevant targets.

The vital role of quality assurance was recognized in both ensuring high education quality and also on comparability of qualifications across Europe. They stressed the necessity of the adoption of National Quality Assurance standards and urged educational Institutes in the open dialogue on this subject. European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education was considered as the central point, which in collaboration with states and institutes from both member countries and non-members would establish a common framework for quality assurance.

The ministers accepted the active involvement of higher education Institutes and also of their students in the development of the *European Higher Education Area*, stressing out that quality should be the main feature of it and by this way, enhancing its attractiveness (readability, comparability). Attractiveness would also be promoted by the common framework of qualifications, certification and accreditation mechanisms and by increased information efforts

An aspect that came under consideration was that of *Lifelong learning*, which was recognized as an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. Lifelong strategies were assessed as essential in order to increase European economy competitiveness, the use of new technologies and the fight against social exclusion. The ministers also accepted applications from future member states in taking place in the Bologna process and EU programs.

*The quality should be the main feature of it and by this way, enhancing its attractiveness.*

## **From PRAGUE to BERLIN**

In November 2001, DG Education and Culture of the European Commission released a working document called “*From Prague to Berlin the EU Contribution*”.

There were putted 10 concrete measures, which could be implemented from the academic year 2003 – 2004.

These measures are following:

1. A wide scale introduction of the Diploma Supplement, increasing substantially the understanding and recognition of degrees at all levels. Synergies with similar documents in vocational training will be sought.
1. Abroad pilot scheme to test, building on the ECTS experience, a European Credit Accumulation System for Lifelong learning, enabling citizens to accumulate credits gained through formal, non-formal and in-formal learning.
2. The Socrates-Erasmus Student Charter. A one page leaflet or card stating clearly the rights and obligations of mobile students (no tuition fees, full academic recognition etc.).
3. The creation of models of European Virtual Universities, in order to offer citizens access to a Europe-wide course offer and provide incentives to combine physical and virtual mobility.
4. A special action to promote “quality culture” within universities, “bottom-up”, in co-operation with the European University Association (EUA). This pilot scheme would help universities to introduce internal quality assurance mechanisms, improve their quality levels and being better prepared for external evaluations.
5. A pilot Scheme on European Higher Education Quality Evaluation in order to experience what European transnational evaluation would mean on a voluntary basis, covering regulated professions (such as medical doctors) and non-regulated professions (such as business managers).

*Lifelong strategies are assessed as essential.*



6. Define and support European Masters and Doctoral Courses. Well define European degrees can contribute to the quality and visibility of European Higher Education. The Commission would support the development and launch of a series of new European Masters and joint Doctoral courses, the latter together with DG Research.
7. A Data-base (Portal) on job and learning opportunities set up together with DG Employment, would help citizens find their way in the European education offer.
8. Other measures will be identified in Action Plan following the “Communication to the European parliament the Council on strengthening co-operation with third countries in the field of higher education countries.

Apart from the specific measures above, the Commission gives an overall support to the Bologna process through Monitoring/ Reports/ Seminars.

*Necessity is to follow measures and reach the quality  
of higher education in Europe.*

### 6.3 e-Learning

---

Among the goals that were set in the Lisbon European Council, was the need to exploit the advantage of new economy and of the Internet. The heads of States and Governments, urged the commission to build “ *a comprehensive e-Europe Action Plan using an open method of co-ordination based on the benchmarking of national initiatives*”, combined with the Commission’s recent e-Europe initiative as well as its Communication “*Strategies for jobs in the Information society*”. [54,50]

In the framework of *e-Europe Action Plan*, the Commission introduced a new initiative in March 2000, named *e-Learning*. [49]

The communication document on e-Learning, admits that although European citizens are amongst the best educated in the world, there are still disadvantages that should be overcome (the soon as possible), in order to remain competitive against United States.

Formal (schools, Universities) and non-formal (vocational, in-company) training still lack technological resources, mainly meaning computers.

There is a significant lack of ICT specialists and generally qualified staff. European teachers that are capable of using new technologies and effectively incorporate them into their work practice are a minority, even in the most advanced European countries.

There is no connection between the new technology industry and education. Consequently European production of multimedia educational services is very small.

The telecommunication tariffs remain expensive in Europe, which poses a major obstacle in the wide spreading of new technologies. Lower cost should be provided for educational purposes.

*E-learning is a initiative in order the European citizens are amongst the best educated in the world.*

*Digital literacy* for every European citizen was regarded as a high priority, in order to provide equal opportunities, enhance cohesion and employability and fight social exclusion.

*e-Learning* aims at the approaching of I.C.T. with education and training and it is based on efforts in four areas:

*Quality of equipment and other resources and services (training software, multimedia products).* The focus mainly on multimedia computers, stating that schools should be equipped with multimedia computers, so that the ratio of student per multimedia computer, reaches the figure 5-15 by the year 2004. Relevant actions should be adopted for the business sector and especially S.M.E.'s and also for vocational training. New technology should be used for learning purposes, shaping new teaching environments and teaching practices and also allowing the formation of new type relationship between students and teachers. Teachers should be trained in I.C.T. techniques, in order to effectively take advantage of them. Relevant actions should be adopted for vocational training.

*Development of European educational services and software.* European multimedia educational industry is weak, suffers from lack of qualified manpower and should be strengthened. Stimulation is needed, so that the gap between education and multimedia content industry is diminished, in order to promote the development of educational content multimedia applications (for all levels and forms of education and training).

*Quality standards should be established for these applications.* The matter of vocational guidance services is considered vital. The target is the strengthening of these services by the end of year 2002, so that everyone should have the opportunity to access the relevant information.

*Acceleration of networking between levels of education and training.* The target is the exchange of experience and practices, but also the exchange of educational content and material in the form of distance teaching and learning. *e-Learning* aims at the approaching of I.C.T. with education and training

*e-Learning* aims at the approaching of I.C.T. with education and training.

Interconnection of virtual learning environments and campuses, networking of various Institutes (Universities, colleges, research centres) and training or even cultural centres (libraries, museums). The relevant training should of course be provided to teachers and learners.

The following targets were set for *e-Learning*:

*Objectives relevant to infrastructure*

All schools and young people in Europe, should have access to the Internet by the end of 2001.

Creation of an educational trans-European high speed network by the end of 2001.

All pupils should have Internet and multimedia access in their classroom by the end of 2002.

*Objectives relevant to digital literacy*

Yearly increase of human resources investment per capita.

Provision of basic skills to every citizen so they can live and work in the new Information Society.

European population should become digitally literate.

*Objectives to be adopted of education and training into the knowledge-based society*

- All teachers should be provided with individual equipment and should be able to use the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2002.
- All people leaving schools should have obtained basic knowledge of computer use by end of 2003.
- Schools and training canterers should provide knowledge versatile and accessible to everybody.
- Encourage mobility (for students, teachers, trainers, researchers) by the end of year 2000.

The minorities (women, elder, disabled etc.) should be helped, in order to have access to knowledge and new technologies.

*Interconnection of virtual learning environments various institutes and training or even cultural canterers will be in priority.*

Definition of basic skills (Information technologies, foreign languages) that will be given through life-long learning are required.

The e-Learning initiative goes on by setting the framework for the implementation of the actions it contains:

There is a specific and rather tight timetable for accomplishing the targets that are set. A common benchmarking process is set (using indicators), in order to monitor the progress, the effectiveness of the actions and the dissemination of common experience and practice.

Observation mechanism of current evolutions concerning educational factors (infrastructure, services, content) in Europe as well as Japan and the USA will also be established. The results will provide source material for revision of the guidelines for employment policy in Europe. The Commission will also have to periodically edit reports of progress.

Financial support for the implementation of the e-Learning initiative is needed.

Funding by the member states of EU of relevant efforts as provision of equipment to teachers and local access centers.

Contribution of Community programs in the education area, to promote virtual education, networking, production of multimedia educational content.

Contribution of Community programs in the research area (Information Society Technologies, Targeted Socio-Economic Research, TEN-Telecom ), in order to promote the entry of young people in the use of new technologies and provide high speed Internet access for students and researchers.

Contribution of other international co-operation programs (MEDA, EUMEDIS) which have an educational aspect.

Financial support of the E.U. financial Bodies (European Investment Bank) to the European multimedia industry, in order to promote the creation of educational material.

Specific action should be taken by the Commission that will bring in contact the key players in education, training and culture:

*European Union is focusing on attractiveness (readability, comparability) of the educational systems and on the effective use on new technologies on education.*

Enhancement of school networking (European Schoolnet-EUN), in order to set up a virtual and multilingual European campus and promote cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Creation of European Gateways for educational communities.

Framework for discussion on the future design process of European education.

Establishment of observation mechanisms that will help strategy formulation and pilot projects.

Creation of training network, that will assist trainers (and other players in this sector) to use new technology for educational purpose.

Setting up of an Internet e-Learning site, based on existing content developed under other community programs, so that exchange of experience and knowledge is stimulated and assisted.

Conditioning the qualifications for use of ICT in order to enhance employability and lifelong learning

Promotion of personal fulfillment and motivation of learners to work in groups, discuss with their teachers, work in synergies etc.

*The adoption of education to the new conditions and the shift from the traditional to the modern paradigm is not yet included in its priorities.*