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European policy cooperation on vocational training looks ahead to concrete measures

At their informal meeting in Bruges on 7 December, European Ministers of Education entrusted Cedefop with several tasks that are related to the next phase of **policy cooperation**. These include continued **reporting** on countries progress in developing vocational education and training; help with the practical **implementation** of the common European tools and principles; continued commitment to **analysing** skill needs; and supporting the European Commission on issues such as adult education and work-based teaching and learning.

Reporting on progress in vocational education and training reforms

Much of the groundwork for the recent Bruges communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020 was laid in Cedefop's **policy report**, [A bridge to the future: European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10](#). The report analyses achievements in policy cooperation over the past eight years and outlines major challenges for the future.

Greater mobility for learners and workers

One of the major achievements of European policy cooperation has been the development of **six common European instruments and principles** to promote transparency and mobility for learning and working. These are influencing national policies in many ways. By making qualifications easier to understand, they are changing the way in which different parts of national systems – such as vocational and higher education – relate to each other.

Meeting the challenges of the rising demand for qualification

The Europe 2020 strategy sets inclusive growth, i.e. high employment and economic, social and territorial cohesion, as one of its three priorities. But for Europe to reach its 2020 employment target of 75% it must tackle structural unemployment, which particularly affects people with low levels of education.

Speaking at the meeting, Christian Lettmayr, Acting Director of Cedefop, said the Centre's **forecasts on future skill needs** conclusively show a rising demand for qualifications in all types of occupations. Despite the crisis, 80 million new job opportunities are forecast to emerge between now and 2020. Most will require medium-level vocational qualifications.



Christian Lettmayr, Acting Director of Cedefop (Source: EP)

Among young people, qualification levels are also rising, especially for women. But 14% of youngsters still leave school early, adding to the 76 million adult Europeans, a third of the workforce, who have few or no qualifications. This group will find it increasingly difficult to find

and keep a job. **A greater emphasis on adult education and lifelong guidance** is needed to cover these gaps, especially considering the rising average age of the workforce.

The Copenhagen process and its achievements

The past eight years of voluntary policy cooperation among European countries, social partners and the European Commission, known as the Copenhagen process, have led to significant progress in facing these challenges.

Meeting in Bruges, Belgium, on 7 December, Ministers of Education from 33 European countries (EU-27, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey), representatives of employers and unions and the European Commission confirmed their shared objectives for vocational education and training for 2011-2020, and agreed on an action plan centred on concrete measures and deadlines.

The Bruges Communiqué's deliverables for 2011-14 include:

- a review of incentives, rights and obligations in vocational education and training. The goal is to encourage more adults to participate in lifelong learning.
- greater cooperation with business to ensure the relevance of training
- the implementation the 2009 recommendation on quality assurance in vocational training.
- further development of vocational schools with the support of local and regional authorities

More information

1. **Briefing note: Learning to change**. A summary of the findings of the policy report in [ENGLISH](#) [FRENCH](#) [GERMAN](#) [DUTCH](#) [GREEK](#) [ITALIAN](#) [SPANISH](#)

2. **Policy Report** in full: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/17297.aspx>

3. **National reports** for each of the countries participating in the Copenhagen process:



Download [high-resolution image](#) of policy report

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About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training. www.cedefop.europa.eu