

EAEA comments on the Updated strategic framework

March 2009

EAEA welcomes the updated strategic framework and agrees with many of its recommendations and strategies. There are welcome proposals in the paper such as the suggestion to raise the benchmark for participation of adults to 15% from 12.5% and the reference to a greater involvement of stakeholders and social and civil society partners in the policy dialogue and in implementation. In order to improve the paper, we would nevertheless make the following suggestions:

One weakness in the paper is the lack of consideration of how the **current economic crisis** could impact upon individuals and groups for years to come and the role that education and training could play to enable people to adapt to new labour market and social conditions such as greater levels of unemployment and lower incomes and the threats to **social cohesion**. One suggestion could be that the Commission and member states investigate how learning opportunities could prepare those most at risk of long term unemployment to meet new challenges both in the work place and in their personal lives. Benchmarks could be set in relation to the % of unemployed people participating in education (incl. non-formal learning) and training.

An additional point that deserves to be seen as a challenge is sustainable development and climate change, to which education and learning can contribute.

In order to succeed with the ambitions in the Lisbon strategy there is an **urgent need for national systems for life-long learning**. Member states differ in many ways and there will of course be many different solutions on how to make life-long-learning a reality. But it is a fact that each member state must have a politically legitimate system which enables the ambitions of life-long-learning. On page 8 the commission writes; "To provide high quality outcomes on a sustainable basis, the governance of education and training systems must also be addressed." This is, for example, a part of the text that could be developed and where the discussion could be extended. We would like to take this opportunity to point out the fact (according to many different studies, for example by OECD) that countries that have a **publicly financed system** for life-long-learning also are countries that have achieved more in life-long-learning.

Another comment concerns the fact that most of the benchmarks that the Council set for 2010 will not be reached. The Commission expresses its concern regarding the development and underline the importance of further actions from the member states. Some **analyses** on the **possible causes to the failures** would have been very useful. When lacking information about the causes it is uncertain and problematic to continue with the same methods, priorities and actions as before.

A further weakness relates to the fact that some sections put an emphasis on children only. One example appears in the sections on equity and active citizenship. The only benchmarks relate to children (pre-primary) and early school leavers. The same is true for migrants. The paper emphasises the need to improve the educational attainments of children. There is little mention of the educational needs of adult migrants.

Building on the work of CEDEFOP on new skills, we suggest a high-level group including representatives from Civil Society and Adult Education that will explore the social and personal skills and competences for the future.

EAEA would also like to express its concern that adult education and especially non-formal education and learning might be neglected in the implementation of the EQF on member state level. We therefore ask the

European Commission to ensure an adequate role of adult education and AE providers in the development and implementation of the EQF in the member states.

For a future initiative we also propose to open the GRUNDTVIG programme to the countries of the European Neighbourhood Programme and beyond.

Finally, we recommend that the important work on the implementation of the five key actions of the Action Plan on Adult Learning and Education^[1] be continued.

^[1] COM(2007) 558