

THE COPENHAGEN DECLARATION

of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET)

29 & 30 NOVEMBER 2002

Actions before the Copenhagen declaration:

1. The Bologna declaration on higher education – June 1999 – introduction of a new enhanced European cooperation. **Bologna Process**
2. The **Lisbon** European Council – **March 2000** – recognition of the important role of education as an integral part of economic and social policies., setting of the strategic objective for the European Union to become **the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy**.
3. The Stockholm European Council – March 2001 – concrete future objectives of education and training systems: identification of new areas for joint actions at European level in order to achieve the goals set at the Lisbon European Council.
4. The **Barcelona** European Council – **March 2002** – endorsement of the work programme on the follow-up of the objectives report calling for **European education and training to become a world quality reference by 2010**.
Bologna process adapted to the field of vocational education and training (transparency of diplomas and qualifications).
5. European Council Resolution – **12 November 2002** – on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (in response to the Barcelona mandate).

Main priorities to be pursued through enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (VET)

The Copenhagen Process was launched as a European strategy to improve the overall performance, quality and attractiveness of VET in Europe. Voluntary and principally developed through bottom-up cooperation. it has different dimensions: a political process, a process to develop common tools, a process that fosters mutual learning, a process that takes the stakeholders on board. The cooperation should be based on the target 2010, so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners.

1. European dimension in vocational education and training:

- improving closer cooperation in order to facilitate and promote mobility,
- development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and other trans-national initiatives.

2. Transparency, information and guidance:

- increasing transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework,
- strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in order to support occupational and geographical mobility.

3. Recognition of competencies and qualifications:

- investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification and common measures, including **credit transfer system** for vocational education and training),
- increasing support to the development of competences and qualifications at sectoral level,
- developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries.

4. Quality assurance:

- exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality,
- giving attention to the learning needs of teachers and trainers within all forms of vocational education and training.

Subsequent events:

1. The Maastricht Communiqué – 14 December 2004 Ministerial Follow-up Meeting

Challenges in order to meet the Lisbon objectives to make European education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010 and lifelong training a concrete reality for all):

- enhancing the image and attractiveness of the vocational route for employers and individuals,
- achieving high levels of quality and innovation in VET systems,
- linking VET with the labour market requirements,
- meeting the needs of low-skilled and disadvantaged groups

The national level: strengthening the contribution of VET systems, institutions, enterprises and social partners to the achievement of the Lisbon goals

- to promote the use of common instruments, references and principles to support the reform and development of VET systems and practices,
- to improve public and private investment in VET,
- to use the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund to support the development of VET, they should support the key role of education and training in promoting economic development and social cohesion,
- to develop VET systems permitting to meet specific needs of people or groups at risk of labour market and social exclusion,
- to develop and to implement open learning approaches, enabling people to define individual pathways,
- to increase relevance and quality of VET through the systematic involvement of all key partners,
- to develop learning-conducive environments in training institutions and at the workplace,
- to promote the continuing competence development of teachers and trainers in VET, reflecting their specific learning needs.

The European level: developing transparency, quality and mutual trust to facilitate a genuine European labour market:

- to consolidate priorities of the Copenhagen process and to implement concrete results,
- to develop an open and flexible European qualifications framework, founded on transparency and mutual trust,
- to develop and to implement the European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET), in order to allow learners to build upon the achievements resulting from their learning pathways when moving between learning systems,
- to examine specific learning needs and changing role of vocational teachers and trainers,
- to improve the scope, precision and reliability of VET statistics in order to enable evaluation of progress in making VET efficient, effective and attractive.

2. **The Helsinki Communiqué – 5 December 2006** Ministerial Follow-up Meeting

Europe needs investments in vocational education and training: the Copenhagen process should deliver reforms.

Reviewed priorities of the Copenhagen process

- More attention should be paid by participating countries to the image, status and attractiveness of VET. In improving the attractiveness and quality of VET, more emphasis should be placed on good governance of VET systems and providers in delivering the VET agenda.
- The development of common European tools should be continued in order to pave the way towards a European area of VET and to support the competitiveness of the European labour market. The aim should be for the agreed tools to be in place by 2010, including developing and testing a European Credit System for VET (ECVET), cooperation on quality improvement by using the European Network of Quality Assurance for VET (ENQA-VET), developing and testing a European Qualifications Framework (EQF), further developing EUROPASS as a single European framework for transparency.
- A more systematic approach is needed to strengthen mutual learning, cooperative work and the sharing of experience and know-how. Adequate and consistent data and indicators are the key to understanding what is happening in VET, to strengthening mutual learning, to support research and to laying the foundations for evidence-based training policy.
- The success of the Copenhagen process relies on the active involvement of all stakeholders in the field of VET, including in particular the social partners at European and national level, sectoral organisations and VET providers.

*Source: European Union
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