



Education and Culture DG

15/12/2009
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**Consultation on the future “EU 2020” strategy
(commission working document COM(2009) 647 final)**

**Answer to the consultation from EUNEC, the European Network of
Education Councils**

1 What is EUNEC ?

EUNEC stands for the European network of education councils. Education councils are national or regional bodies providing national and regional ministers and governments with policy advice on innovation in education policies. All education councils are platforms for consultation and policy advice of governments with the emerging demands of society towards education. A lot of education councils involve close concertation with stakeholders both from the educational field as from social partners. Some education councils are more expert oriented.

Because of their role as strategic advisory bodies education councils play a major role as an interface between national, international and regional policies.

2 Inclusive and coherent strategies for all education sectors

The executive committee of EUNEC welcomes the recognition of the impact of education, research, innovation and creativity on the development of societies. Putting this as a first policy line for cooperation between member states in the post Lisbon strategy, is a major political signal towards the European Council and the national governments. Secondly the emphasis on inclusiveness and the social policies is reinforced.

For the education sector the document raising the following objectives

- The general level of basic skills acquisition
- The prevention of early school leaving
- The need for stronger emphasis on vulnerable group, equity and social cohesion.
- The innovation of universities.

EUNEC stresses the need for **an overall approach for the renewal of education systems**. From that perspective it is desirable to consider stimuli and reform of the global lifelong learning pathways. We regret that the document does not mention the impact of early childhood education, of lifelong learning and the achievements within the Copenhagen process. In that perspective the need for sufficient and highly qualified teachers should be part of the education policy of the EU. EUNEC welcomes new stimuli given to inclusive education policies for vulnerable learners. This was the overall perspective of all statements of EUNEC.

EUNEC supports the strategy for an inclusive and coherent strategy integrating LLL, the Bologna process, the objectives-process and the Copenhagen process to assist member states to achieve the Lisbon goals.

3 Respect for the emancipatory and humanistic approach of education

EUNEC wants to stress that, besides the economic and societal impact of education, education has an own mission, namely the development of youngsters and adults in a broad emancipatory and humanistic perspective. The concept of “Bildung” should not be subordinated to the economic and social benefits of education and training. Critical thinking, creativity and artistic development, social competences and civic competences are crucial in every pedagogic concept.

Education and training must indeed create the conditions to enable the young, the men and the women, to develop and enrich their personality, as well as to assume their integration in society in a critical and creative way. Education and training are responsible for offering to all, the necessary tools for an active participation to life in the society. They must also contribute to the social integration of the users by assuring their social and economic independence, by pursuing an objective of equal opportunities for all, but also in respecting the specific needs of the individuals and in acknowledgment of what they are. Consequently, access to employment is therefore a mission of education and training, but it is one among others.

EUNEC wishes all the missions of education and training to be taken into account sufficiently, on the national as well as on the European level. It is advisable, for example, when the words “human capital” are used, to include all the aspects linked to this concept, such as skills acquisition, personal development, capacity of integration in the active life, well being. The individual must remain the master of his own capital and not simply become a pawn in the economic game. This broader concept of ‘human capital’ comes nearer to the concept of ‘social capital’ in which one wishes to enable individuals to co-ordinate their actions with others towards common goals.

The role of the cultural and creative sector within the Lisbon strategy is still largely ignored within the ambitious programs for renewal of European societies. Arts and culture should never be considered

as marginal in terms of economic contribution. The development of tools to measure the contribution of arts and cultural development to the development of societies should be considered.

4 EU 2020 must be based on close collaboration with educational and social stakeholders

The sense of ownership is important in thinking on innovation: the whole education sector should be involved in setting up an innovation strategy from the conceptualisation to implementation and evaluation

Research on transformational leadership in non profit organizations (such as schools but also hospitals, social services where the interaction between a professional and a student/client constitutes the core of the “production”) teaches us that change in professional behavior depends on a paradigm shift within an organization. This shift leads to a new constructed perception/vision shared by all (or most) members of the organization. This vision consists of a coherent set of shared values, convictions and attitudes. It offers a sound basis for setting up rules, standards and examples of good practice at the working place. The paradigm stands for the cognitive dimension of the culture of the organization and forms a blue print for (new forms of) interaction.

Eunec is convinced that successful renewal cannot be done at a policy level only. In education policies platforms such as education councils show interesting models of involvement of stakeholders in the conceptualisation and the implementation and evaluation of education policies.

5 Implementation as the result of a participatory decision making process at national level and at European level

Initiating effective change in school and classroom practice needs therefore a balanced innovation strategy paying attention to the micro, meso and macro level. The necessity for a sense of ownership at school level implies that changes cannot be realized on an exclusively top-down basis.

Educational change balances between societal demands and the educational needs of the learners. This calls for decision making on a participative basis. Within the global lines put forward by the decision makers, schools should be entitled to color the innovation to the needs of their learners. Educational change is not an aim in itself. Education is not a world apart but one of the main sectors in society. Therefore, educational change is in most cases initiated by a relevant social, economic or political demand and should be an adequate and sustainable response to these needs. On the other hand, education is a service for learners and has to fit to their educational needs. In that respect there might be a contrast between the needs of society and the demands of the learners. This implies a participative decision making process where learners are involved in formulating the common aims.

Secondly, schools should have the right to adapt the global framework for change to the needs of their students.

