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**Trans-regional cooperation in Lifelong Learning among education stakeholders
– teacher trade unions, school student unions and education employer
representatives –
Project Results
Joint Guidelines**

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Introduction

For more than a decade education stakeholders in Europe have paid considerable attention to Lifelong Learning (LLL) in parallel with new initiatives from the European Commission and the Member States with the aim to improve lifelong learning in the European education systems and to develop explicit lifelong learning strategies. However, the *2008 Joint Council/Commission Report on the implementation of the Education & Training 2010 work programme*¹ concluded that the actual implementation of LLL remains a challenge. As a result, three major stakeholders in Education, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) representing the European teachers, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), initiated a project in 2009 with the aim to create an overall coherent framework for the implementation of the diverse National Lifelong Learning Strategies (NLLLS) of the Member States. These three major stakeholders represent people with different backgrounds as regards age range and interests. A continuous trans-regional cooperation to work on LLL was suggested to assist a more efficient and sustainable implementation of lifelong learning strategies. Moreover the project aimed to ensure that not only national governments, but also other education stakeholders, such as teachers, students and employers, fully participate in developing the EU and national priorities towards lifelong learning. The CoRegLLL project aimed at promoting ownership of these priorities amongst all stakeholders involved to make them a commitment shared by all.

Background

With the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda² and the Education and Training 2020 programme³, lifelong learning has been put on the EU agenda as an essential component. The European Union and its citizens have to meet the new challenges of a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world. A major priority of the EU is therefore to reinforce the contribution of education and training to the goals set out in the EU 2020 strategy, hereunder the 2020 Benchmarks, especially ensuring access to lifelong learning and re-skilling and up-skilling in accordance with the "New skills for new jobs" policy.

¹ Joint Council/Commission Report on the implementation of the Education & Training 2010 work programme, Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation"(2008), http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1532_en.htm.

² Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions, 23-24 March 2000, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm.

³ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\):EN:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01):EN:NOT).



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Since 2006 lifelong learning has been supported by the European Reference Framework (ERF) on key competences. This framework is designed to help the Member States to prepare all their young people for life in a changing world, and to ensure that all adults are offered the means to up-date their skills and to profit from the social and economic benefits of the knowledge society. The ERF describes the eight key competences as crucial to learn in initial education and training. However, it is recognised that further work is needed for the translation of key competences into practice as well as further development of existing and new key competences.

Aim

Regarding the overall EU policy the primary aim of the three stakeholders involved with this particular project has been to create a set of practical joint guidelines. These could be the basis for further trans-regional cooperation in the continuous work of implementing national lifelong learning strategies and the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning as an overall education policy of the EU. The three project partners present the joint guidelines as the outcome of the EU-funded project and aim to identify critical factors for a successful implementation of lifelong-learning strategies, including perspectives on specific initiatives, ideas and recommendations for future development. The joint guidelines are based on the contribution of ETUCE, EFEE and OBESSU members participating in the project workshops and the project advisory group.

Furthermore, the joint guidelines address all stakeholders within education who wish to be involved in enhancing the implementation of national lifelong learning strategies within an overall coherent framework of the EU. To achieve this appropriate implementation means need to be found in accordance with the different national education systems.

The joint guidelines are presented in three sections representing the three objectives of this joint project:

1. The development of trans-regional cooperation and exchange of experiences between teacher unions, school student organisations, employers in education and national governments on the implementation of coherent and comprehensive national LLL strategies.
2. The generation of common understanding of the national LLL strategies among the above mentioned stakeholders and the creation of better coherence and involvement in the implementation of these strategies at national level.



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3. The assessment of how general school education contributes to the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning (as agreed in the European Reference Framework) and the identification of how to improve school education contribution to enhance people's capacity for lifelong learning (acquisition of key competences, flexible learning pathways and lifelong guidance).

Methodology

The joint guidelines are the result of regional workshops (Malta, 14 June 2010 and Cyprus, 4 October 2010), where members from the ETUCE, the OBESSU and the EFEE discussed the three main project objectives in depth. At the workshops experts within the field of LLL and practitioners presented their experiences and the challenges they face as regards the implementation of LLL strategies. The presentations also included reports from different peer-learning studies on LLL and key competences.

The purpose of the workshops was to share ideas and best practices on the topic; most essentially the aim was to establish a basis for future cooperation of stakeholders at trans-regional level. The regional workshop engaged the participants from the ETUCE, the OBESSU and the EFEE to discuss in detail the three objectives mentioned above to establish a joint set of guidelines on the comprehensive and coherent implementation of national LLL strategies. The project implementation and the development of the joint guidelines were guided by an expert panel, the project advisory group, comprising three members of each project partner organisation.

The joint guidelines will be published together with five best practice examples on the implementation of national LLL strategies in a project brochure in three languages, English, French and German. The brochure aims to facilitate the dissemination of the project outcome to all stakeholders within education at European, national and local level and to enhance the use of the joint guidelines and the implementation of national LLL strategies in Europe.

In the following the joint guidelines will be outlined according to the three project objectives.



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OBJECTIVE 1

Improving the contribution of school education to the achievement of key competences for lifelong learning as defined in the European Reference Framework

Member States of the EU have agreed on using the *Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council on 'Key Competences' for Lifelong Learning (2006)*⁴ as a framework for their individual systems of education. The eight key competences have the objective to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of young and adult learners and to foster personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. They are thus defined as multifunctional and transferable prerequisites for a successful life in a knowledge society.

According to the ETUCE, the OBESSU and the EFEE there are some major challenges connected with the improvement of school education's contribution to the achievement of the key competences for lifelong learning. The following outlines are recommendations, based on existing good practice, on how to address these challenges.

1. Continuous work of both practitioners and learners on the definition of lifelong learning and on the adjustment of key competences to the needs in a changing world is important so that these competences do not remain solely abstract definitions but actually become a tool to upgrade the lifelong learning strategies;
2. In a rapidly changing world knowledge, skills and attitudes defined as key competences today may not remain the key competences of tomorrow. Therefore, it is necessary to support a continuous dialogue on the identification and development of key competences among all education stakeholders;
3. The focus of learning key competences needs to be not only for the purpose of employability in the labour market. Education also has to ensure that all citizens become full and active members of society and achieve personal fulfilment in order to promote social cohesion.
4. Key competences require a combination of summative and formative assessment reflected in the school curricula⁵ that goes beyond the traditional assessment methods.

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF>.

⁵ E.g. as presented in the Draft Background Paper for the Belgian Presidency meeting for Directors-General for School Education Assessment of Key Competences (8 July 2010).



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5. To achieve real change and improvement it is important not to let assessment of key competences limit the potential within teaching and learning. Learning must not be restrained for the sake of ranking students and schools. To achieve real change and improvement education therefore needs to add to subject knowledge to include more innovative measures that add value and motivate to learn.
6. Learning to learn is one of the most essential competences to facilitate and secure a lifelong positive attitude towards learning. This includes learning what lifelong learning is about and why it is important to develop these competences. This will help to ensure students develop the skills they need to become independent learners.
7. Learning key competences must be accessible to all. According to the European Commission, inclusive high quality education starting from early childhood education is especially beneficial "Initial education and training should support the development of the[se] key competences to a level that equips all young people – including the disadvantaged – for further learning and working life".⁶
8. High quality education requires high quality teacher education. Hence systematic and structured teacher training and continuous professional development at all education levels is needed to equip teachers with the necessary skills and competences to be able to treat every student on a personalised basis. Curricula and teacher training therefore need to make sure that the individual learner is addressed at all levels of the education system. However, teachers alone cannot face the challenge. To achieve this inclusive discourse teachers have to be supported inside schools and by the whole society.
9. Education is an investment for the future. Therefore in times of economic downturn, coherent and comprehensive implementation programmes to develop and support the contribution of school education to the achievement of key competences for lifelong learning are relevant. To accomplish this and to ensure further positive development of national lifelong learning strategies, appropriate resources and funding need to be allocated to the education sector⁷.

⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *Key competences for a changing world*, COM(2009)640 final.

⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Published: 15 September 2010.



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OBJECTIVE 2

Including the needs and demands of learners and education practitioners in the National Lifelong Learning Strategies

European citizens of today live in an increasingly complex social and political world. Lifelong learning is a continuous process and should continually facilitate new learning for young and adult learners. Giving people the appropriate tools allows them not only to adapt to the ever changing labour market but also to find their own personal way in society, and thereby ensure both personal fulfilment and greater social cohesion.

1. Since high quality education at all levels is one of the central elements of a strong knowledge based economy, the EU and those concerned with the provision of education need to take changing circumstances into account. Up-to-date and relevant competences need to be developed at all stages of education.
2. Flexible pathways, i.e. enabling effective transitions between the different levels of education, are most relevant for future education systems. This concerns two transition directions: going from vocational training to higher education and/or from the educational system to the labour market and back again.
3. To ensure that education meets each individual's needs, effective guidance and counselling are required to allow each citizen to have the best overview of his/her studies, career pathways and transition possibilities to and within the education system.
4. The recognition and validation of informal and non-formal education enables people to access wider education opportunities. This can be particularly beneficial to early school leavers and to those who are disadvantaged or to hard-to-reach groups.
5. To ensure high quality education and thus the pursuit of lifelong learning it is important to consider the education practitioners' needs and experience. Existing curricula, teaching material and teaching methods may need to be revised and adapted to the new requirements in lifelong learning.
6. A positive learning environment is important to encourage learners at all ages to continue to learn throughout their lives. Therefore education practitioners - teachers and school leaders in equal measure – need to be systematically supported and continuously trained and equipped with appropriate and updated material to provide them with the necessary skills to teach LLL key competences. As the European Commission remarks in



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its Communication on Youth on the Move, “the quality of teaching is the single most important within-school factor explaining students’ performance”.⁸

7. Offering learners opportunities to enhance their practical experience and take initiatives through activities linked to the world of work, volunteering, sport and culture allows them to better understand the link between formal education and wider society. Most importantly, these occasions help learners to acquire social and civic competences that are relevant in terms of their personal development and active citizenship. Therefore more such opportunities need to be provided to learners and foreseen in curricula and assessment methods.
8. Digital competence is one of the competences young people increasingly obtain informally. As the use of information and communication technology (ICT) increasingly influences people’s lives, aspects like critical thinking in the use of new media, risk awareness and ethical and legal considerations need to be introduced into teaching and learning⁹ if full use of the potential of new technologies for enhancing innovation and creativity is to be ensured.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.



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OBJECTIVE 3

Successfully involving all stakeholders in the implementation of the National Lifelong Learning Strategies

The Draft 2010 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme on Key Competences for a Changing World¹⁰ states that there is still much to be done to support teachers' competence development, to update assessment methods and to introduce new ways of organising learning.¹¹ The Communication points to the major challenge of ensuring that all learners benefit from innovative methodologies, including the disadvantaged and those in VET and adult learning. Working towards the successful implementation of national lifelong learning strategies requires the involvement of all stakeholders concerned in the process. The support and feeling of ownership of all those actors concerned will facilitate and promote the accomplishment of this target. This equally implies mutual respect amongst the various stakeholder groups involved.

1. To implement national lifelong learning strategies all those involved in education (policy makers at European, national and local level, schools and education institutions, employers, teachers, learners and parents) need to understand the concept of lifelong learning, the aim of the national LLL strategy and the national LLL strategy itself. Therefore access to information on national LLL strategies needs to be enhanced.
2. More and better cooperation amongst all education stakeholders at national and European level will be beneficial for the development of effective coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. At national level consultation processes that involve all those engaged in education and lifelong learning should be launched to develop and decide jointly on concrete and comprehensive national lifelong learning strategies that are supported by all actors in this field. The national social dialogue systems and collective bargaining process could be a possible forum for discussion at national level. At European level, engaging representatives from all education stakeholders in Working Groups dealing with this policy initiative would provide further support and facilitate the realisation of the target aimed for.
3. Compulsory education should propagate active participation of learners through the democratic involvement of young people in policy and strategic decision-making as full

¹⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0640:FIN:EN:PDF>.

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Published: 15 September 2010.



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and equal partners when teachers, parents and other stakeholders are involved. The aim is to ensure that all young people leave formal education having had hands-on experience of active citizenship and with both enthusiasm and the expectation to learn throughout their lives.

4. To appropriately address the specific needs and challenges of different learner groups, e.g. school students, early school leavers, people in VET, adult learners, different programmes targeting their specific needs have to be put in place.
5. To obtain the highest impact possible, the project partners underline the importance of promoting the concept of lifelong learning in partnership programmes and networks that include education policy makers at European, national and local level, education institutions, school leaders, teachers and learners.

Actions and Follow-up

1. The ETUCE, EFEE and OBESSU and their member organisations will disseminate and promote the joint guidelines amongst the relevant European, national, regional and local stakeholders through hard copies of the document and/or the respective organisations' websites and newsletters. The joint guidelines will be useful for presentations in meetings at European, national, regional and local level.
2. The project partners will review their joint guidelines within two years after their publication with the aim to evaluate their impact on teachers, education employers and learners.
3. The project partners will take account of the joint guidelines in their individual structured work programme.
4. To further support the implementation of the joint guidelines and to ensure the sustainability of the CoRegLLL project and its results, the project partners will examine the possibility of continuing the dialogue on lifelong learning among education stakeholders.



Annex

The annex to the 2006 *Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council on 'Key Competences' for Lifelong Learning* sets out the eight key competences for lifelong learning, which constitutes the European Reference Framework.¹² They include knowledge, skills and attitudes:

- **Communication in the mother tongue** is significant to enable students to express themselves and to interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions, and thereby facilitate a full membership of and an active participation in society.
- **Communication in foreign languages** is a necessity to ensure social and economic cohesion in a world of mobility, where borders are becoming more fluent and people migrate from country to country either as employees, entrepreneurs, students or jobseekers.
- **Mathematical competence** and basic competences in science and technology: The effective use and practice of basic mathematical principles and processes gradually become more essential in both labour-market relations and in everyday contexts.
- **Digital competence:** ICT skills are regarded as crucial as they gradually dominate all aspects of life. This means that the lack of the ability to use these technologies can result in a marginalisation not only in the labour market, but also in the civic society as a whole.
- **Learning to learn** is one of the most crucial competences in a knowledge based economy, as this competence creates a base for continuous learning and upgrading of skills both within and outside the formal education system.
- **Social and civic competences** comprehend the awareness of basic concepts relating to individuals, groups, work organisations, gender equality and non-discrimination, society and culture, mobility, and the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance.

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf.



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- **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship:** the knowledge society needs individuals with creative minds and the willingness and skills to take new initiatives and create new business.
- **Cultural awareness and expression** is another aspect of ensuring not only economic sustainability but also social cohesion and social fulfilment through the understanding and use of various cultural expressions.

Acronyms

CoRegLLL	Trans-regional Cooperation in Lifelong Learning (project)
EFEE	European Federation of Employers in Education
ERF	European Reference Framework
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LLL	Lifelong Learning
OBESSU	Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions
NLLLS	National Lifelong Learning Strategies
VET	Vocational Education and Training