

IMPLEMENTATION OF ET2020



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Position paper on the implementation of European
framework for cooperation in education and training
(ET2020)



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Implementation of ET2020

POSITION PAPER ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ET2020)

Adopted in 2009, the ET2020 strategy¹ sets the framework for cooperation in education and training at the EU level. 2014 is a crucial year for the strategy, as it is under mid-term review halfway through its implementation. This coincides with changes in the two key European institutions – the EU has a new European Parliament since May, and a new Commission in office since November.

So far the strategy put emphasis on improving education and training to meet the requirements of the labour market in an increasingly changing society. However, relevant and quality education and training is key not only for successful and sustainable employment, but also, and more importantly, for full participation in all spheres of society and for ensuring a decent life.

Telecentre Europe (TE) believes that education and training should not be looked at from a purely economic prism. Only comprehensive strategies combining inclusion, up-skilling, flexible learning paths, civic engagement and cross-sectorial cooperation can ensure that education and training correspond to the differing needs of all citizens – for employment, lifelong learning, personal development, civic or social participation.

This position paper discusses the following aspects of the implementation of ET2020:

- **Non-formal education and training has to be recognised in its own right**
- **Existing terminology on non-formal education, training and learning needs to be revisited**
- **Non-formal education and training is key enabler of lifelong learning**
- **More university ICT graduates, but also digital skills needed for the labour market**
- **New non-formal ICT educators' profiles need to be recognised**
- **Not just 'innovation', but 'inclusive innovation' in education**

Non-formal education and training has to be recognised in its own right

Civil society organisations working directly with citizens in their local communities are best equipped to respond to local realities and learners' needs. Their role as providers on non-formal education and training opportunities is largely recognised, but in many cases non-formal education and training is mainly used with regards to youth². During the Education, Training and Youth Forum 2014 the Director-General for Education and Culture Mr. Xavier Prats Monné mentioned non-formal learning only in the context of youth work³. At other occasions non-formal learning is considered as part of adult learning, but is not equal to it because adult learning covers all educational sectors. Both interpretations of non-formal learning entail inevitable limitations, because it cannot be constrained to one age group.

¹ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/%3bELX_SESSIONID=KvkCJwzVvBd6cp3npylJ1Cqh0NL9hOrQLfhpplmQMFBnXGjHnNpJ%212008228018?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528%2801%29

² Council of Europe Mini-compendium on non-formal education: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/PR_material/2012_Compndium_Non-Formal_Education_text_en.pdf

³ See video at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/events/2014/1006-ety-forum_en.htm at 34:20min.

This makes it difficult for civil organisations providing non-formal education and training to a variety of end users to position themselves against policy priorities and initiatives, including funding programmes.

In order to exploit their full potential, non-formal education and training (happening outside the formal education system) has to be recognised and mainstreamed as a separate education and training field throughout lifelong learning.

Non-formal education, training and learning – revisiting the terminology

There still are different, and sometimes controversial definitions. For example, Youthpass and Europass respectively define non-formal learning as:

[...] purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be temporary, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldomly structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways.⁴

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.

In addition to this, CEDEFOP defines formal learning as:

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (such as in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification. Learning that occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.⁵

This suggests that training happening in training centres which are not necessarily schools or universities, as long as it is based on a concrete curricula and leads to certification, is more likely be considered as formal education and training. However, this is contradictory with the definitions of formal and non-formal learning given by the EU Council of Ministers of Education in their Recommendations on validation, as it restricts formal learning to general education (schools), initial vocational training (colleges) and higher education (universities).

*[...] **formal learning** means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education;*

*[...] **non-formal learning** means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very*

⁴ Source: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/for/youth-initiatives/learn/information/non-formal-learning/>

⁵ Source: CEDEFOP 2008 <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary>

*common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public;*⁶

TE calls for revisiting this terminology and recognising non-formal learning as a stand-alone education and training sector relevant for all age groups, and for mainstreaming it as a separate strand and priority in EU strategies and funding programmes, based on the definition given in the Council Recommendations on validation.

Non-formal education and training is key enabler of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning heavily relies on training providers from the non-formal education field. Telecentres play a key role in providing LLL opportunities in digital literacy.

Validation of skills acquired in non-formal education and training is an important part of every lifelong learning strategy, because it is the key to make participation in LLL count, for example for employment purposes, continuing education, or increasing self-esteem. Indeed, validated and recognised competences mean increased employability and self-confidence. To be recognised, competences need to be referred to a comparable standard – a digital competence frameworks.

Telecentre Europe is advocating for the promotion of a unique common EC digital competence framework that is easily applicable by non-formal training providers and recognisable in job contexts where digital knowledge is required but not at ICT practitioner level. This has already happened with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – e.g. it is widely applied by language training providers and every employer knows what to expect from a job candidate who speaks at B2 or C1 level. Such a framework should be EC's Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DIGCOMP), but an EC clarification is needed regarding its co-existence and complementarity with another EC framework with similar scope, the e-Competence Framework for end-users.

More university ICT graduates, but also digital skills needed for the labour market

Increasing the number of higher education graduates, as a stand-alone goal will not be enough to increase employability. The skills mismatch should be taken into account. Nowadays universities “generate” graduates in fields where there are already more specialists than available positions and a university degree is no longer a guarantee for decent employment. At the same time the forecast is for around 900 000 vacancies in the ICT field by 2020⁷.

To meet this challenge the EC initiated in 2013 the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs as a platform for policy-makers, business and civil society organisations to join efforts to promote ICT careers and motivate young people. Members

⁶ Source: COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)

⁷ Empirica. (2014). e-Skills for Jobs in Europe – Measuring Progress and Moving Ahead, p. 128. http://eskills-monitor2013.eu/fileadmin/monitor2013/documents/MONITOR_Final_Report.pdf

of the Grand Coalition made concrete pledges on how to achieve this and the first results are already visible and can be followed through the pledge tracker available on the GC4DJ website⁸.

While spreading the message to the grassroots level by activating local and national coalitions for digital skills and jobs, TE calls for continuing this EC-led initiative within the new Commission and further encouraging cross-sectorial cooperation at the national and European level.

In addition, awareness raising campaigns such as the e-Skills for jobs campaign might extend the use of a learning-by-doing approach and provide more opportunities for practical experiences (e.g. “ICT career day”, where young people sit aside professionals at their working places), as they are more effective in attracting young people to ICT studies and careers. ICT and digital skills are not only relevant for ICT careers in the narrow technical sense – they will be required for all kind of qualified jobs, due to their transversal nature. Increasingly job candidates without ICT university diplomas will need targeted ICT and digital literacy trainings and certifications to prove these skills, and telecentres are well positioned to meet this need. “Soft” digital competences trainings and curricula should be developed and tailored to the needs of the different target groups (young people, elderly, people with disabilities, etc.).

New non-formal ICT educators’ profiles need to be recognised

Telecentre Europe is advocating for the professionalization of the staff working in ICT learning centres like telecentres, the so-called e-Facilitator – a role with different level of recognition in the different member states. The process of full recognition and professionalization of the e-Facilitator is two-fold – on one hand the profession should be included in the national/regional professions catalogues in order to create a formal VET/higher education offer to fulfil their needs, on the other hand a relevant training curricula needs to be developed: targeted, multi-disciplinary (technological, sociological and pedagogical approaches), modular, easy-to-update. (Telecentre Europe members and partners have already created it).

Digital competence is one of the most needed key competences for citizens to live and work in contemporary European society. More and better prepared ICT educators are needed to cope with such a need. The non-formal ICT training sector can contribute better to that collective mission if their ICT educators, the so-called e-Facilitators, are endorsed by the EC as a needed kind of educator, are professionally recognised in national catalogues, are properly trained through tailored training curricula and can access to formal accreditation of their professional qualifications.

Not just ‘innovation’, but ‘inclusive innovation’ in education

While acknowledging that EU investment in new digital technologies is necessary to improve the quality of education, TE believes that infrastructure (hard and software) alone cannot ensure this. TE emphasises that modernisation should

⁸ <http://www.jinkedpolicies.eu/pledge/pledges.php>

go hand in hand with ensuring that all learners are equipped with the skills to take the most of ICT technologies. That using digital tools in learning has no point without learning the digital skills needed to take advantage of these tools.

According to the last Eurostat survey, 18% of Europe's population has never used the Internet, partly because they are lacking basic ICT skills and affordable access.

If the EU wishes to overcome this gap, there is a need for policy makers to recognize and support the role and impact of inclusion intermediary actors and digital learning providers (notably third sector and public organisations providing access and ICT trainings), who all together constitute a powerful multiplier of citizens' digital competences and a catalyser of social and economic innovation enabled by ICT.

Conclusion

Digital technologies have become an integral part of all aspects of our lives, and education, as one of the main pillars of contemporary society, is no exception. This paper is to remind that while focusing on the potential of digital technologies for improving quality and effectiveness of education, we should remember that its main function is to provide European citizens, particularly young people, with learning opportunities to acquire digital skills and competences in their whole richness (including the safe, critical and creative use of technology) and to enable them to "exploit" digital technologies adequately and effectively, both in education, work and in their everyday life.

About Telecentre Europe

Telecentre Europe is a European non-for-profit organisation (NGO) and a member based association with a central office in Brussels, Belgium.

We represent publicly funded telecentres/telecentre networks, ICT learning centres, adult education centres and libraries across Europe where children and adults can access the Internet, learn the latest digital skills and keep up to date with technology and community developments.

We coordinate a number of projects, programmes and campaigns that empower people through ICT by finding new paths to employment, community life, relevant information and staying in touch with friends and family. All our members and partners believe that Information and Communication technology has an enormous potential to combat social exclusion and poverty.

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