



AGORA Conference

A bridge to the future: European VET policy 2002 -10

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Introduction to Commissioner's Vassiliou video address

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Speaking points

- It is a pleasure for me to be here at the agora conference. Commissioner Vassiliou would have liked to be here as well to welcome participants but unfortunately, due to other commitments, she is not able to be with us in person. However, she is sending us a few words by video message that we will see in a minute.
- Indeed, for Commissioner Vassiliou, Cedefop has a vital role to play in the Copenhagen process supporting the European Commission but also Member States and stakeholders. As she has stated in several occasions, Commissioner Vassiliou appreciates greatly the professionalism of Cedefop and the way, it inspires policy makers to go further in their efforts to improve employability in Europe.
- I am not going to extend myself as you are going to have a very intense day of presentations and discussions. But, I would like to share with you a personal reflection. My duties as director for lifelong learning horizontal policy issues and 2020 strategy are very diverse and require a strong sense for coordination and communication and a sense for making links between fields that otherwise would develop in individual silos. Additionally, the tasks assigned to the European

Commission in all fields are increasing and, on the other hand, resources remain stable. In other words, we have to attempt a "mission impossible". Luckily for me, I have the support and the input of two remarkable EU agencies: Cedefop and the European Training Foundation.

- It is through these two agencies that we are apprised of what is going on in VET in Member States and in the Neighbourhood of the EU. Both agencies provide us with invaluable data, analysis and platforms for peer learning and networking.
- The Agora conferences are a perfect example of the work of an EU agency, providing input, stimulating debate and policy development, accompanying the EU institutions, Member States and social partners in their exchanges of ideas and helping the "mission impossible" to become a reality.
- Not only this, both Cedefop and ETF have learnt to develop their expertise along the years to respond to a changing society and changing political framework, developing new areas of expertise and supporting us not only in VET but also in related issues such as skills forecasting, labour market analysis, career guidance, entrepreneurial learning, qualifications frameworks, mobility of learners etc.
- Cedefop forecast is a pillar of our analysis on skills needs and has helped the European Commission to present its communication and to continue working on policy proposals to reduce the skills mismatch in Europe. We are, of course, looking forward to the next update of the forecast and the lessons that can be drawn from it.
- Cedefop has been actively involved in the conceptualisation, development and implementation of the EQF from the very beginning. This work has been done in close cooperation with the Commission and in a continuous dialogue with member states and the social partners.
- Outside the EU, ETF, whose director is participating in the discussions today, is nurturing a process similar to Copenhagen process but in the countries outside the EU. The results of a study accomplished last year are a perfect example of support for evidenced-based policy making that will encourage neighbouring countries of the

Union to engage in reforms vital for their economies and their social stability. The unrest in the countries of the South Mediterranean show clearly to what extent investment in human capital development is as crucial as ever. Luckily, they and us, the European institutions, can count on the expertise of the ETF to accompany them in a route of socioeconomic development.

- The work of ETF on qualifications frameworks and skills development is a perfect example of the complementarity of both agencies. Synergy and peer learning is the key word in the cooperation between Cedefop and ETF and the cooperation of both agencies with DG EAC.
- From my side, I just want to wish you a good agora and I am looking forward to reading about the conclusions of this day. I am sure that it will provide inspiration for the next years to come.