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Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

Modernising vocational education and training systems is very difficult.

In the unlikely event of Hollywood making Cedefop's report, 'A bridge to the future' a film or TV series, it is clear that the report would certainly not be a blockbuster.

Neither Cedefop's report, nor the Copenhagen process is a roller coaster ride of death-defying action. (Unless you are preparing the ministerial meetings – then it is!)

But the Copenhagen process could be a good soap opera; characterised by the trials, tribulations and occasional triumphs of everyday life.

Cedefop's report is 168 pages from cover to cover. Some would say that that is too long.

But the report does not, and really it cannot, do justice to the countless discussions, endless meetings and the enormous time and effort that has been put into the modernisation of training by experts from participating countries, the European Commission, social partners, as well as Cedefop and the European Training Foundation.

As a result of this collective effort, European cooperation in training has never been stronger or deeper.

When the Copenhagen process was launched in 2002, it called for instruments to support understanding of qualifications and to support quality.

However, the scope, range and, perhaps most importantly, the influence of the European instruments on national systems was not foreseen.

That we have made so much progress, on the basis of voluntary cooperation, is a tribute to the openness, patience and commitment of those experts who have worked behind the scenes.

It is also a tribute to the European Commissioners and ministers responsible for training in the participating countries who have been willing to and consistent in giving to their experts the strong political support that is essential to maintaining the momentum to modernise training in Europe.

The period 2002 to 2010 can be seen, in some ways, as a time when the training world looked inwardly at itself and, by agreeing shared priorities and developing new ideas and concepts, began a process of fundamental change.

The next phase will see the training world looking outward as new concepts and changes are implemented and interact much more closely with the labour market.

As I said at the beginning modernising training is complex. And it has already been said that the road ahead will be difficult.

The common European instruments and principles have the potential to support lifelong learning by making education and training systems more flexible and encourage job and geographical mobility.

But, individually, they cannot change existing practice.

All of the different European instruments and principles need not only to be integrated with one another, but also rooted in overall European and national strategies on training, lifelong learning and skill development if they are to have a value for learners and the labour market.

For the European instruments to succeed:

- learning outcomes need to be applied consistently;
- national qualifications frameworks have to combine flexibility with specificity;
- relations need to be clarified between the learning-input based Bologna process for higher education and the learning-outcome based Copenhagen process.
- Systems to validate non-formal and informal learning need to incorporate key skills and theory.

Consequently, not only do the internal interests of the training world need to be reconciled, but they also need to be reconciled with broader interests on the labour market. This will not be easy.

Another major task is to clarify what we mean by making training 'attractive'.

The report shows that countries have worked to make training comprehensive and inclusive; able to meet the needs of the best and brightest students, as well as those people at risk of social exclusion.

But it is difficult to say if changes made by countries have made VET more 'attractive'. The data are unclear.

There are more young people in vocational training now than in 2002. But proportion of young people in vocational training as a proportion of the total number of students in upper-secondary education fell between 2002 and 2010 from around 60% to around 50%.

There do not appear to be readily identifiable reasons for this trend. The situation also varies across countries.

All countries have worked to make it easier for vocational training students to go on to university. But this has not prevented the overall fall in the proportion of vocational training students.

As if these issues are not difficult enough, training reform is taking place against the background of financial constraint in both the public and private sector.

Countries and enterprises already invest large sums in education and training.

But the indications are that over the period 2002 to 2008, the period before the economic crisis, investment in training by governments, enterprises, or individuals was stagnant.

There has to be concern that even the combination of an ageing workforce, the need for 'green' skills, the trend towards more skill intensive jobs and even an economic boom from 2002 to 2008 did not lead to more investment in training.

There was a substantial increase in public spending on training in response to economic crisis which did help to stave off higher unemployment. But this increase was temporary stimulus measure, not a strategic shift.

The likely scale of future budget cuts in some countries will bring tough choices over where it is best to invest limited resources for training.

The economic downturn may apply the brakes to reform as short-term emergencies crowd out long-term changes. Alternatively, it may act as a catalyst and speed up work that has already started and force through change that, in easier times, could be put off.

The scale of the task can sometimes seem daunting. Soap operas are sometimes a bit depressing, but more often than not, things work out.

The next episodes of the Copenhagen process, with the script set out in the Bruges communiqué, promise some interesting stories no doubt full of plotting, intrigue and passion.

But, although as Secretary of State László Csomba pointed out in his remarks, our economic starting point, compared to the year 2000 and the nature of our tasks are more difficult, I am confident that things will work out.

Cedefop and the European Training Foundation will, in the framework of their mandates, continue to seek and provide the evidence to enable the technical experts and policy-makers to make informed decisions.

But to establish modern training systems, we will need the combination of technical expertise and political commitment and vision, supported by the flexibility and willingness to find solutions that have been such a part of European cooperation in training to date.

Thank you