



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 30 June 2014**  
**Your comments must reach us by that date**

## **REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES**

### **CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

### **EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND YOUTH**

**If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>**

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Steven Murray	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	X
Name of Organisation (if applicable): Ecorys UK	
Address: Albert House, Quay Place, 92-93 Edward Street, Birmingham, West Midlands, B1 2RA	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's '[Contact Us](#)' page.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUESTIONS**

### **General Issues**

1 Does EU action, as opposed to national government action, in the areas of education and vocational training generally benefit or disadvantage the UK? Can you point us to any published evidence or analysis in support of your view?

EU action in the areas of education and vocational training has several benefits for the UK.

The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 (LLP) provided over £600m for the higher education, vocational education, adult education and schools sectors in the UK.

EU activity provides a valuable mechanism for cooperation and exchange between participating countries. Deliberations at the European level have directly contributed to the development of the following voluntary initiatives that have improved the consistency and overall quality of education and training in Europe:

- **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).** ECTS helps make higher education comparable across Europe, facilitating the recognition of studies and allowing for the transfer of learning experiences between different institutions.  
See: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm)
- **European Credits in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).** ECVET supports the validation and recognition of work-related skills and knowledge acquired in different countries and systems. This increases the compatibility of European VET systems and supports learner and employee mobility between different countries and learning environments.  
See: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en.htm)
- **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET; previously EQARF).** EQAVET is a voluntary system that helps EU countries promote and monitor the continuous improvement of their vocational education and training systems on the basis of commonly agreed

references. It also makes it easier skills and competencies acquired by learners in different countries and learning environments to be accepted and recognised abroad.

See: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/eqavet\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/eqavet_en.htm)

- **The EPAL** multilingual open membership community is a tool to help adult learning professionals to work together to improve the quality and provision of adult learning in Europe.

See: <http://ec.europa.eu/epal/en/home-page>

The LLP also provided funding for cooperation and learning in areas of common interest. For example, Key Action 1 of the Transversal programme supported setting standards and collecting comparable sector statistics as well as in providing comparative studies and evidence for further policy development.<sup>1</sup>

2 Are there any specific EU activities in the areas of education and training that you consider particularly beneficial or particularly disadvantageous to the UK?

Comments:

Practical training and work placements are key elements in enhancing graduates' employability. Data from both European comparative studies and national reports show that students who participated in practical training before graduation are more likely to find jobs than their counterparts without relevant work experience.<sup>2</sup> EU student mobility programmes such as the Life-long Learning and Erasmus+ programmes contribute significantly to mobility for UK students.

Research for the British Council among employers found that organisations valued intercultural skills for the benefit they bring to keeping teams running efficiently, building trust with clients and developing relationships with new clients. These benefits also carry significant monetary value to employers and employees with these skills are of significant benefit to employers.<sup>3</sup>

Research among Erasmus mobility students has found that almost all consider that study abroad has enhanced their employability. They also rate their foreign language skills and ability to work in an intercultural environment much higher than their counterparts with no study abroad. Finally, they felt that studying abroad helps widen individual career opportunities by enlarging networks, improving knowledge of foreign languages and boosting self-confidence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Policy and Management Institute (2011), Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, pp53-54.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014), Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability 2014. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p69.

<sup>3</sup> British Council, Culture at Work (2013), p12.

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2012), ESN survey 2011 – Exchange, Employment and Added Value <http://bit.ly/1kXutdM>

In **2011-12 the Erasmus strand of LLP supported 13, 662 students to study or work abroad** who received an average monthly grant of €385 to help with the costs.<sup>5</sup>

Examples,

- **Southern Regional College**, (Portadown, NI) used Leonardo da Vinci funding to take students and staff on their furniture design course to Norway to see how the world's leading mass producers of furniture operate. The trip enhanced the learning experience by introducing students to real-world large-scale application of their course content that they would not otherwise have experienced.<sup>6</sup>
- Kirstyn MacFarlane, a student of Law at the University of Kent, spent a year studying at the University of Bologna with the support of **Erasmus mobility funding**. Kirstyn reported: "I learnt so many new skills, but most importantly I feel that my confidence and self-belief have improved and I have learnt to embrace change and even instigate it. I vastly improved my organisational skills and ...the Erasmus year gave me a European perspective on our own legal system and the ability to understand laws and legal reasoning within other countries, especially those based on Roman law."<sup>7</sup>

3 Do you think the EU, as opposed to national government, should do more or less in relation to education and training? If so, where and why?

Comments:

The EU can usefully add value to national activities in education and training where there is a clear benefit from co-ordinated action at a higher level than Member State level. There is likely to be efficiency gains from co-ordinated co-operation facilitated by the EU institutions than by bi-lateral arrangements between individual states.

For example, EU activities aimed at supporting the recognition of qualifications, learning and training abroad are more efficient than each Member State making multiple bi-lateral arrangements with each other. In addition, co-ordinated action at EU level with third partner countries is more efficient than at Member State level.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The EU Budget in my Country – United Kingdom. <http://t.co/uGKYE6AuZK>

<sup>6</sup> Lifelong Learning Programme in Action (2008), p10. <http://bit.ly/1joALi2>

<sup>7</sup> Lifelong Learning Programme in Action (2008), p12. <http://bit.ly/1joALi2>

<sup>8</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2014), Automatic Recognition of Full Degrees. <http://bit.ly/1nB6lrl>

4 What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on education and training in your sector and how?

Comments:

EU activities in employment and culture are also relevant to education and training.

5 What challenges or opportunities are there for the UK in further EU action on education?

Comments:

EU action in education and training provides the UK an opportunity to become a market leader in education and training provision. A single European education area with recognition of higher education and vocational education and training across Europe means that high-calibre students can be attracted from across the continent.

Organisational and professional partnerships with and learning from peers in other Member States can help strengthen teaching and research, enriching studies by providing an international dimension to teaching and learning.

Example,

- The **University of Sheffield** has found that incoming **Erasmus** students add to the teaching and learning environment by contributing to the class what they have learned in their home countries. Academic staff found this a very valuable and stimulating input. Teaching mobility and training visits for staff adds further to creating a global dimension to the teaching, research and other activities at the University.<sup>9</sup>

One challenge for the UK is to take full advantage of the opportunities available through EU activities through making the European (or international) dimension

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<sup>9</sup> Lifelong Learning Programme in Action (2008), p12. <http://bit.ly/1joALi2>

more central to UK education and training. This includes at national level with policy-makers taking an active lead as well as at institutional level. We recognise that there is a debate over the nature of the UK's relationship with the EU but for now, there are opportunities for the UK in EU education and training activities. While these opportunities exist, the UK should aim to derive maximum benefit from them.

6 What international bodies or arrangements other than the EU are important to education and training in the UK? How does your experience of dealing with them compare with the EU's activity in this sphere?

Comments:

Links to partner countries outside of the EU are important to the UK, especially where there are existing cultural and linguistic links. The new Erasmus+ programme responds to the need to make the EU more outward looking by making all countries eligible to participate in some Actions under Erasmus+ (under certain circumstances).

### The Programmes

7 For the specific programmes which are funded and managed via the EU (such as Erasmus or Leonardo), what are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national responsibility and funding for these activities?

Comments:

There is a strong efficiency case for coordination at a European level. A single central EU management (supported by input and oversight by Member States) is likely to be more efficient than 28 separate national initiatives at country level.

While responsibility for the Erasmus+ Programme ultimately rests with the EU, Member States do play a significant and important role in designing and managing the programme. At EU level, Member States cooperate with the Commission to monitor and report on the performance and results of the Programme<sup>10</sup> and to ensure complementarity with other EU programmes and actions.<sup>11</sup> Member States were all actively involved with the decision to establish the Erasmus+ programme and in the setting of the EU budget through their membership of the Council of the European Union.

The nature of the activities – transnational cooperation, individual mobility and exchange of good practice – makes it appropriate that they are coordinated at EU level. This provides a stable source of ring-fenced funding for these activities that allow longer term planning by participating institutions.

8 Can you point to evidence which shows that language learning has improved through participation in the programmes?

Comments:

We are not aware of the availability of any data on this subject.

However, data will be collected as part of the Erasmus+ Programme. Mobility participants in Erasmus+ will be required to complete a pre- and post-mobility online language test. The results of the initial test will be used to provide appropriate support to students on their mobility placement, thereby improving the provision of targeted language learning.

The post-mobility test will allow the assessment of progress made in the foreign language.

9 How would you describe the costs and benefits to your organisation of participating in the programmes?

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<sup>10</sup> OJEU (2013), Regulation (EU) No. 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus'. Article 21:1.

<sup>11</sup> OJEU (2013), Regulation (EU) No. 1288/2013, Article 25.

#### Comments:

EU funding is distributed following competitive application processes and successful grant recipients are subject to monitoring, reporting and audit requirements. These are necessary to ensure the fair and effective distribution of public funds and that they are spent appropriately. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a degree of administration in order to participate in EU funding programmes.

The EU recognises that unnecessary administrative burdens are a barrier to participation and increase the costs of participation. In the new Erasmus+ programme, application procedures and requirements have been simplified to reduce this burden.

- The use of unit costs for project management reduces the administrative burden on participants;
- A single electronic application form has reduced administration and improved the accessibility of the Programme;
- New light-touch monitoring requirements for grants with a value of <€60,000 have reduced the administrative burden for participants and introduced an appropriate element of proportionality to monitoring.

In 2005 the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) was established to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of EU programme management. The second interim evaluation of the EACEA found that there had been clear progress in the efficient management of programmes and improving services to applicants and beneficiaries and in the streamlining of application and selection processes in particular.<sup>12</sup>

#### Policy Coordination

10 Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

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<sup>12</sup> Ecorys UK (2013), Second Interim Evaluation of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). See: <http://bit.ly/1kRLmSs>

Comments:

The country-specific recommendations under Europe 2020 are a useful independent way of benchmarking the UK with our European peers. This process highlights areas where improvements may be required, but also which countries to look towards for good practice examples.

11 Is it appropriate that Europe 2020 focusses on early school leaving and the completion of tertiary education?

Comments:

This is an appropriate topic for EU activity, to the extent that early school leaving and ensuring that multiple progression routes exist to engage their populations in education and training is an area of common interest to the majority of EU Member States. EU activity can support the transfer of information, expertise and best practice between Member States and systems to support the development of policy solutions to the problem.

The setting of national targets in these areas is voluntary – it is for individual Member States to decide whether the targets are appropriate for them and whether to set their own targets. The UK has declined to do so in the case of early school leaving and completion of tertiary education. This is in line with the established principle of subsidiarity.

12 Has the adoption of EU education policy frameworks or Council Recommendations had any impact on your sector?

Comments:

No comments.

13 How does policy cooperation on education in the EU compare with other organisations, for example the OECD?

Comments:

No comments.

14 Can you point to examples of reform in national policy which have resulted from EU co-operation in education and training?

Comments:

The Bologna Process has resulted in the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This aims to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. It involved 47 states and several trans-national bodies including the EU.

The Richards Review of Apprenticeships draws on learning from our European neighbours (including Germany, Denmark and Switzerland) where apprenticeships are held in high regard.

15 How would you assess the costs and benefits to policy makers of participation in education policy cooperation at EU level?

Comments:

We are unable to assess the costs. But, there are benefits to the exchange of best practice, learning and policy coordination at international level.

This is recognised by the UK who participates in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and efforts to implement learning from the Swedish Free Schools movement.

## **YOUTH QUESTIONS**

### **General Issues**

16 What evidence is there that EU action in the area of Youth benefits or disadvantages the UK?

Comments:

No comments.

17 Do you think the EU should do more, or less, in relation to Youth, and why?

Comments:

No comments.

18 Do you think the EU focuses on the right aims and priorities in the Youth field?

Comments:

No comments.

19 Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

Comments:

No comments.

20 Has the adoption of the Structured Dialogue had any impact on your sector?

Comments:

No comments.

21 What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on your sector and how?

Comments:

No comments.

22 What international bodies or arrangements are important to your sector beyond the EU?

Comments:

No comments.

23 Has the EU had an impact on young people's opportunities to have a voice in policy and decision making, or on organisations' work to involve young people in shaping services?

Comments:

No comments.

24 Has the EU had an impact on young people's social inclusion in the UK?

Comments:

No comments.

### Youth Programmes

25 What are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national funding for activities under the Youth Programme?

Comments:

Expenditure on youth services in Local Government has been subject to ongoing reductions – e.g. in England spending was reduced by 10.4% from 2011/12 to 2012/13.<sup>13</sup>

In this context, the Erasmus+ programme provides a valuable source of funding to support activities for young people and young people's services.

26 What do you think about the criteria and conditions set by the EU for applying for and receiving funding?

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<sup>13</sup> Youth Service in England: the State of the Nation (2013): <http://bit.ly/1nBm4fX>

Comments:

Certain criteria and conditions are necessary to ensure the appropriate distribution and spending of public funds and to ensure that EU funds are allocated according to the established procedures and regulations.

These procedures and regulations allow scrutiny and oversight of the funding decisions taken. Member States do have the capacity to influence these procedures and regulations through the Council of the European Union and through their MEPs in the European Parliament.

The EU recognises that application processes can be a barrier to participation in EU funding Programmes. Under Erasmus+ the applications process has been simplified to ease the burden. Some examples are included in our response to question 9.

The EU also conducts regular programme evaluations that contribute to improvements in their administration procedures.

27 What do you think about the aims and activities of Erasmus+ in comparison to the Youth in Action programme?

Comments:

No comments.

28 Any other comments?

## Comments:

As a partner in the Erasmus+ UK National Agency, Ecorys UK would welcome the opportunity to share learning from the Programme with the DfE, BIS and other government departments. We can provide information about projects and their activities, invitations to events and can help organise study visits to or from projects involved in specific areas of policy interest.

## Additional reading, references and information:

### British Council

- Culture at Work – the value of intercultural skills in the workplace (2013): <http://bit.ly/1nAy5lQ>
- Culture Means Business – How international cultural relationships contribute to increased trade and competitiveness for the UK (2013): <http://bit.ly/UyOKMU>

### European Commission & Institutions

- Evaluation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) (2013): <http://bit.ly/1p0CrIF>
- External Evaluation of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedfop) (2013): <http://bit.ly/1okVLxT>
- FP7 Marie Curie Actions Interim Evaluation (2013): <http://bit.ly/1qaJbRC>
- Second Evaluation of the Europeass – Final Report (2013): <http://bit.ly/1nAlOHT>
- Study of the impact of eTwinning on participating pupils, teachers and schools (2013): <http://bit.ly/1jomFNy>
- Study of the Impact of Comenius Centralised Actions (2013): <http://bit.ly/1kSJjSP>
- FP7 Marie Curie Life-long Training and Career Development Evaluation - Individual Fellow-ships and Co-funding Mechanism (2012): <http://bit.ly/1qaJs6V>
- Interim Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus II (2012): <http://bit.ly/1lgwAEy>
- Interim Evaluation of External Cooperation Agreements in Higher Education, Training and Youth with the US and Canada (2011): <http://bit.ly/1kv2Ljx>
- Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2011):

<http://bit.ly/1kSM9XW>

Other

- Erasmus Student Network survey (2005-2012): <http://www.esn.org/esnsurvey>
- Database of EU education and training projects: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>
- EU Leonardo da Vinci project database: <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/homepageView.htm>
- EST project database: <http://www.europeansharedtreasure.eu/index.php>

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

<b>Please acknowledge this reply.</b>	<b>X</b>
E-mail address for acknowledgement: <a href="mailto:steven.murray@uk.ecorys.uk">steven.murray@uk.ecorys.uk</a>	

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy

- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 June 2014

Send by post to:

International Education Division, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Send by e-mail to: [BalanceofCompetence.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:BalanceofCompetence.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk).