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Q: Should the EU keep getting involved in this area?

A: Fundamental problems with Education and Training – UK provides lots of graduates but poor when it comes to individuals with basic skills

- Other countries do better at vocational training
- Lots to learn from other EU countries and they could also learn from us (cannot disadvantage to get together)
- The UK could do bilaterals instead but for smaller Member States – EU is useful
- Do not agree that this disadvantages UK – strengthens UK
- EU action is a really good complement to what the UK is doing

Q: Compare OMC and OECD?

- OMC formalises analysis and reporting
- CSRs – additional layer to identify weaknesses

Q: Is there a value to EU action in this area other than what the OECD does?

A: Yes – it is an organisation telling the UK it has to do something

- CSRs – UK was compliant during Blair government – now EU seen as dictatorial and more formalised than OECD

Q: Can EU take action against countries

A: UK hasn't set targets – nothing done!

- More active form of governance than OECD, quality of documents is the same but OMC requires more of Member States than OECD – requires them to respond but if they do not then it's a grey area
- Concern that EU it is becoming conditional
- The problem is that the whole governance process changes to reflect problem
- CSRs are now monitored more and in future there will be some type of conditionality where 'good students' (Member States) get access to funds
- CSRs have only become more serious in the last couple of years – under Lisbon the Commission did not follow up on CSRs but it is doing so now
- Difficulty in isolating influence of OMC – have other factors like OECD/ bilaterals

Q: Ideas for reform?

A: Number of factors – not enough evidence to assess impact. The evidence base is weak so it is hard to link causality

Q: How visible is the OMC to senior stakeholders?

A: The OMC is not very visible. The reality is closed doors - Brussels talking to Brussels. It does not trickle down well at government level

Q: Is this by design or product of system?

A: Do not think it is designed intentionally but government process is way too fast – 10-12 months is not how government usually works

- CSRs – informal process where governments are involved should be highlighted
- CSRs – Commission has become more prescriptive – less room for Member States to negotiate but this is a good thing
- All changes are in response to a crisis and governance process under Lisbon did not work – Member States were still doing their own thing and there were structural problems in Education and Training
- If the process of EU integration is to work then Member States need to engage with reform at all levels
- EU has serious structural problems – CSRs are a good idea if followed up and now they are.
- UK unusual because it is not in the Euro Zone and UK is always trying to opt out – always has exceptions and this will not change

Q: Education Council?

A: Not improved – low ministerial attendance – but this is the same for lots of other areas

- Employment and Education relationship – general consensus is that a crucial part of increasing employment and prosperity is by investing in Education and Training
- UK has signed up to this active labour market policy – Education and Training important due to this relationship
- If current government feels Education and Training should not be within remit then it should specify what policy would be and how to improve employment without focusing on Education and Training
- Treaty is clear and Commission is not overstepping its mark.
- Mobility programmes work well but does not benefit UK students so much because of poor language skills