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## *From coal to knowledge: A history of the VET policies in the European Union*

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*Del carbón al conocimiento: Una historia  
de las políticas de FP en la Unión Europea*

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DOI: 10.5944/reec.29.2017.17532

Recibido: **7 de noviembre de 2016**

Aceptado: **16 de abril de 2017**

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## **Abstract**

The Treaty of Paris (ECSC, 1951) funded in 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community. This first step was followed by the Treaty of Rome, that created in 1957 the European Economic Community. This Treaty states that the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their people is an essential objective. In 1963 the Council proposes 10 principles for implementing a common vocational training policy. One of the results of these principles is creation in 1975 of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – Cedefop. In 1978, the Committee of Education decides to create the network for information and documentation on European education Eurydice and 1984 was the foundation year of the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres, NARICs. In the late 80s, European actions begin to foster transnational mobilities. In 1987, the Council of the European Communities adopted the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, ERASMUS and during the years from 1988 to 1994 the programmes PETRA, EUROTECNET and FORCE promoted the European cooperation in vocational education and training. LEONARDO I and II were the successors of these programmes from 1995 to 2006. LEONARDO was included in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) in the period 2007-2013 and has ended up as part of the current Erasmus+ education mobility action during the period 2014-2020. As mentioned in the 2000 Lisbon Agenda and in Horizon 2020, Europe pursues the strategic objective of orienting its economy towards knowledge. This knowledge-based economy idea has an influence on the Bologna (1999) and Copenhagen (2002) Declarations. The Bologna Declaration is focused on Higher Education and has managed to transform the university studies in Europe. The Copenhagen Declaration has still not managed to minimise the differences of the VET studies in the European Union.

*Key Words:* Vocational education and training; VET; Europe; European Union; legislation; Copenhagen Declaration; EQF; EQAVET; ECVET; ECTS; Erasmus; Leonardo

## **Resumen**

El Tratado de Paris (ECSC, 1951) fundó en 1951 la Comunidad Europea del Carbón y del Acero. Este primer paso fue seguido por el Tratado de Roma, que creó en 1957 la Comunidad Económica Europea. En el Tratado se afirma que el objetivo esencial de sus esfuerzos es la mejora constante de las condiciones de vida y del trabajo de los europeos. En 1963 se redactan los 10 principios para una política común en formación profesional y una de las consecuencias es la creación, en 1975, del Centro Europeo para el Desarrollo de la Formación Profesional, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – Cedefop. A finales de los años 80, comienzan las acciones europeas que van fomentar las acciones transnacionales mediante movibilidades en formación profesional. En 1987, se adopta ERASMUS y entre los años 1988 y 1994, se PETRA, EUROTECNET y FORCE, para fomentar la formación profesional. Al terminar estos programas, se unen las acciones de movibilidades de formación profesional durante 1995 y 2006 en los programas LEONARDO. LEONARDO pasa a formar parte del Programa de Aprendizaje Permanente (PAP), en el periodo 2007-2013 y a integrarse definitivamente en el conjunto de acciones para la movilidad educativa en Erasmus+, durante el periodo actual 2014-2020. Según la propuesta del año 2000 en la Agenda de Lisboa que se ha ratificado en las propuestas para el Horizonte 2020, Europa tiene actualmente el objetivo estratégico de convertirse en una economía basada en el conocimiento. El objetivo de la Europa del conocimiento, está presente en las declaraciones para la cooperación en educación de Bologna, 1999 y Copenhagen, 2002. Los objetivos de la declaración de Copenhagen, enfocada en la formación profesional, están lejos de conseguirse, ya que actualmente existen aún muchas diferencias entre los estudios de FP ofrecidos por los países de la Unión Europea.

*Palabras clave:* Formación profesional; FP; Europa; Unión Europea; legislación; Declaración de Copenhagen; EQF; EQAVET; ECVET; ECTS; Erasmus; Leonardo

## 1. Introduction

After World War II, the countries in Europe started to work together to make war between France and Germany “not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible” (Schuman, 1950). The Schuman Declaration, 9 May 1950, warned “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it.”

The Treaty of Rome that established the European Economic Community - EEC (EEC, 1957) “determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, [...], affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their people”. Having regard to the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 128, the Council decided on 2 April 1963 (63/266) to lay down the “general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy” (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, 1963). More than half a century later, Europe still does not have a common vocational training policy. This means that the European Union has not done enough to foster a common vocational training policy and, as a consequence, the citizens are not able to benefit from it. In a period of economic crisis, the population needs work and work comes as a result of a proper education and training.

The present article describes the policies undertaken in the EEC and the European Union to foster a common vocational training policy.

## 2. The Treaties of Paris (1951) and Rome (1957)

The Treaty of Paris (ECSC, 1951) founded in 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community. France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries came together to foster the movement of coal and steel and free access to sources of production. Also, a common High Authority was established to supervise the market, control the competition rules and price transparency. This treaty is the origin of the contemporary European institutions. Article 56 c) of the Treaty of Paris mentions the need for financing retraining measures to help workers acquire new skills and change their work, in case new industrial techniques decrease the demand of outdated technicians. Article 56 c) can be seen as the seed of the Lifelong Learning Programme and the knowledge-based economy of the Lisbon Agenda.

The Treaty of Rome that established the European Economic Community (EEC, 1957) “determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, resolved to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe, affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their people”.

The following articles found in the original text of the Treaty of Rome focus on vocational education and training:

Article 57.1 proposes the establishment of “directives for the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other titles”.

Article 118 empowers the Commission to promote “close cooperation between Member States in the social field, particularly in matters relating to: [...] professional training and improvement.”

Article 125 establishes that part of the funds of the *Fonds Social Européen* (European Social Funds) will be used to retrain unemployed workers.

Article 128 states “*le Conseil établit les principes généraux pour la mise en œuvre d’une politique commune de formation professionnelle qui puisse contribuer au développement harmonieux tant des économies nationales que du marché commun.*”, the Council establishes the general principles to create a vocational education common policy that can contribute to the harmonious development of the national economies and the common market.

Javier M. Valle states that articles 57, 118 and 128 demonstrate that “the European Union has had an interest in fostering Vocational Education and Training from its very beginning” [author’s translation from the original text in Spanish (Valle, 2006, p. 17) ].

### **3. The 10 principles (1963) and their consequences**

Having regard to the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 128, the Council decided on 2 April 1963 (63/266) to lay down the “general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy” (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, 1963). As mentioned by Javier M. Valle (Valle, 2006, pp. 18,19), this decision focuses on two main objectives. On the one hand, it mentions the urgent need to adapt workers’ professional qualifications to the changes in production technology. On the other hand, a common vocational training policy would contribute to the harmonious development both of the national economies and of the common market.

The ten principles of this decision are summarised as follows (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, 1963 as mentioned by Valle, 2006, pp. 18, 19):

“First principle: “A common vocational training policy means a coherent and progressive common action which entails that each Member State shall draw up programmes and shall ensure that these are put into effect [... and] must enable every person to receive adequate training, with due regard for freedom of choice of occupation, place of training and place of work.”

Second principle: “The common vocational training policy shall have the following fundamental objectives:

(a) To bring about conditions that will guarantee adequate vocational training for all;

(b) To organise in due course suitable training facilities to supply the labour forces required in the different sectors of economic activity;

(c) To broaden vocational training on the basis of a general education, to an extent sufficient to encourage the harmonious development of the personality and to meet requirements arising from technical progress, new methods of production and social and economic developments;

(d) To enable every person to acquire the technical knowledge and skill necessary to pursue a given occupation and to reach the highest possible level of training, whilst encouraging, particularly as regards young persons, intellectual and physical advancement, civic education and physical development;

(e) To avoid any harmful interruption either between completion of general education and commencement of vocational training or during the latter;

(f) To promote basic and advanced vocational training and, where appropriate, retraining, suitable for the various stages of working life;

(g) To offer to every person, according to his inclinations and capabilities, working knowledge and experience, and by means of permanent facilities for vocational advancement, the opportunity to gain promotion or to receive instruction for a new and higher level of activity;

(h) To relate closely the different forms of vocational training to the various sectors of the economy so that, on the one hand, vocational training best meets both the needs of the economy and the interests of the trainees and, on the other hand, problems presented by vocational training receive the attention which they deserve in business and professional circles everywhere.

Third principle “When the common vocational training policy is put into operation, special importance shall be attached [...] to forecasts and estimates, at both national and Community levels, of the quantitative and qualitative requirements of workers in the various productive activities [...] during his vocational training and throughout his working life”.

Fourth principle “[...] the Commission shall carry out any studies and research in the field of vocational training which will ensure attainment of a common policy, in particular with a view to promoting employment facilities and the geographical and occupational mobility of workers within the Community [...]”

Fifth principle “In order to promote a wider knowledge of all the facts and publications concerning the state and development of vocational training within the Community, and to help keep current teaching methods up to date, the Commission shall take all suitable steps to collect, distribute and exchange any useful information, literature and teaching material among the Member States. [...]”

Sixth principle “In co-operation with the Member States, the Commission shall encourage such direct exchanges of experience in the field of vocational training as are likely to enable the services responsible for vocational training and specialists in such field to acquaint themselves with and study the achievements and new developments in the other countries of the Community [...]”

Seventh principle “The suitable training of teachers and instructors, whose numbers should be increased and whose technical and teaching skills should be developed, shall be one of the basic factors of any effective vocational training policy. [...]”

Eighth principle “The common vocational training policy must, in particular, be so framed as to enable levels of training to be harmonised progressively. [...] The Member States and the Commission shall encourage the holding of European competitions and examinations.”

Ninth principle “In order to contribute to the achievement of an overall balance between the supply of and demand for labour within the Community [...]”

Tenth principle “[...] particular attention shall be given to the special problems concerning specific sectors of activity or specific categories of persons; special measures may be taken in this respect.”



Taking into account the fourth principle, the Council of the European Economic Community created the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training - ACVT, (63/688/EEC) (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, 1963 B). This Committee included two representatives of the Government, two representatives of trade unions and two representatives of employers' organisations of each Member State and would meet, at least, twice a year. As mentioned by Javier M. Valle (Valle, 2006, pp. 19,20), the Rules of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training were modified (68/189/EEC) in 1968 (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1968). In order to adapt the size of the ACVT to a European Union of 25 Member States, the 26 February 2004 (2004/223/EC) new rules were set (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2004). These new rules establish, among others, that the Committee "shall consist of three members for each Member State, there being one representative for each interest group of national governments, trade unions and employers' organisations." and "The term of office of members shall be three years."

In 1964, the Commission drafted an Action programme on common vocational training policy. It was divided into two parts, agriculture and other fields of work. The defined objective of the common action was to establish a system offering 'all young people of the Community, and when necessary adults, an appropriate opportunity for training', (ASCE, BAC 6/1977, 679. *Projet de programme d'action en matière de politique commune de formation professionnelle* [Draft action programme on a common vocational training policy], 1964 as mentioned by Petrinini, 2002). This Programme was meant to be an intermediate stage between the 10 principles and the tangible proposals that the Commission would be presenting to the Council or Member States (Petrini, 2002, p. 31).

In 1966 the Commission made on 18 July 1966 a Recommendation to the Member States about professional guidance (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 1966). This recommendation mentions that professional guidance in the Member States had not been sufficiently developed. Hence they should foster the guidance activities, assigning resources and increasing the collaboration between the States. In April 1970, Luxembourg hosted the first tripartite conference that included members of the unions, employers' associations, the Commission and the Labour Ministers of the Six. "On that occasion many delegates put forward the idea of creating a standing committee on employment, and this was set up a few months later. In this context the launching of a European social policy, with the inclusion of vocational training, became an obvious topic of debate within the European Community" (Varsori, 2004, p. 85).

In 1971 the Council adopted at its 162<sup>nd</sup> session, held on 26 July 1971, the General guidelines for drawing up a Community programme on vocational training (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1971). It was also in 1971 that the EEC started to take education as a whole into account. The Commission entitled Altiero Spinelli to report about the situation of education in Europe and his group of experts produced the documents *Bilan et perspective de factivité du groupe enseignement et éducation* and *Memorandum pour une action communautaire dans le domaine de la culture that described the actions taken by the EEC until that moment* (Valle, 2006, p. 31).

In 1972 the Commission assigned Henri Janne the task of formulating a proposal with ideas for a future action programme (Valle, 2006, p. 31). The report *Pour une politique communautaire de l'éducation - For a Community policy on education - created with the information provided by 34 experts from different countries, stated "Education is*

*already a recognized responsibility in the framework of Community policy*” (Janne, 1973, p. 49) and “The vast majority of our interlocutors believe that the field of permanent education should be the priority one for Community intervention” (Janne, 1973, p. 54).

Some conclusions of the Janne Report were:

“(i) It is advisable scrupulously to respect national structures and traditions where education is concerned, but to promote a necessary harmonization by means of permanent concerted action at all levels and through more and more educational exchanges. [...] [...] the Community must make appropriate arrangements to stimulate exchanges of teachers, pupils and students. With regard to young people the solution of the problem of the equivalence of degrees and diplomas constitutes a prerequisite”, (page 53).

As a result of the influence of the work carried out by Spinelli and Janne the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, decide the Resolution of 6 June 1974 on cooperation in the field of education. In point IV it establishes “In order to foster action in the fields mentioned under point II, an Education Committee shall be set up, composed of representatives of the Member States and of the Commission.” The 1976 Action Programme that focused on the guidelines of this 1974 resolution and the creation of the Education Committee proved to be decisive in the following years (Valle, 2006, p. 40).

During the 60s and beginning of the 70s the Economic and Social Committees (ESC) studied and informed about the situation of vocational training in Europe. The ESC worked with determination with the issue of vocational training at a time when, in the early 1960s, both the Council and the Commission were focused on other European matters. In 1973, the ESC prepared its “Study of the training and vocational training systems in the European Communities”. This report requested the creation of a European institute for the scientific study of vocational training (Dundovich, 2002, p. 46), the future Cedefop.

## 4. Cedefop

On 10 February 1975 the Council of Ministers announced the creation of a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – Cedefop (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1975). Initially its seat would be West Berlin. The Board would consist of nine representatives of the Governments, three of the Commission, six of the unions and six of the employers (Guasconi, 2002, p. 57).

Article 2 of (337/75/EEC) mentions (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1975):

- “1. The aim of the centre shall be to assist the Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational training and of in-service training. [...]
2. The main tasks of the centre shall be: — to compile selected documentation [...]; — to contribute to the development and coordination of research [...]; — to disseminate all useful documentation [...]; — to encourage and support any initiative likely to facilitate a concerted approach to vocational training problems. [...]; — to provide a forum for all those concerned.
3. In its activities the centre shall take into account the links which exist between vocational training and the other branches of education.”

At a meeting of the Management Board, held in July 1976, it was stated that ‘the Centre should not duplicate work already being done nor attempt to formulate national policy’ and that ‘the Centre should not give undue priority to harmonisation but pay regard to the nature and differences which do exist in the various countries’ (Cedefop – Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Management Board – Berlin, 8 July 1976. Cedefop Archives, as mentioned by Varsori, 2004, p, 90).

The Centre’s main objectives were:

- “(a) the publication of a bulletin;
- (b) ‘to collect and process documentation and disseminate existing information’;
- (c) to launch studies on subjects such as ‘youth unemployment, especially in relation to the transition from school to work’ [...]” (Cedefop. Working programme 1977. Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Management Board – Berlin, 15-16 November 1976. Cedefop Archives, as mentioned by Varsori, 2004, p, 90).

In 1994 the Cedefop moved to Thessaloniki (Greece). Germany was about to host the future Central European Bank, and at that time Greece had no European organisation or institution within its territory. To foster a political equilibrium, the Council thought it was convenient to transfer the Cedefop to Greece. Cedefop’s budget was significantly increased (by approximately 48 %) to ECU 16.5 million in 1995, settling at about ECU 14.5 million during the subsequent years. There was also an increase in the number of Cedefop staff members to 79 (Varsori, 2004, p. 95).

**Table 1. EU Institutions. Source:** Table created with the information provided by “How the European Union works” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION, 2012).

<b>INSTITUTIONS OR TERM</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>European Parliament</b>	Represents the EU's citizens and is directly elected by them
<b>European Council</b>	Consists of the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States
<b>Council</b>	Represents the governments of the EU Member States and is formed by one minister from each Member State. If, for example, the Council is to discuss environmental issues, the meeting will be attended by the environment minister from each EU Member State and is known as the “Environment Council”
<b>European Commission</b>	Represents the interests of the EU as a whole and is formed by a college of Commissioners, one from each Member State.  In many areas it is the driving force within the EU's institutional system: it proposes legislation, policies and programmes of action and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council. It also represents the Union to the outside world with the exception of the common foreign and security policy.
<b>European Economic and Social Committee</b>	Represents civil society groups such as employers, trade unions and social interest groups
<b>Committee of the Regions</b>	Ensures that the voice of local and regional government is heard.  The Council and the Commission must consult the CoR on matters that concern local and regional government, such as regional policy, the environment, education and transport.
<b>European Central Bank</b>	Manages the euro and euro area monetary policy. The members are the euro area national central banks



The European Council defines the general political direction and priorities of the EU but it does not exercise legislative functions. Generally, it is the European Commission that proposes new laws and it is the European Parliament and Council that adopt them. The Member States and the Commission then implement them.

In addition to the Commission–Council–Parliament triangle, there are a number of advisory bodies that must be consulted when proposed legislation involves their area of interest. Even if their advice is not taken, this contributes to the democratic oversight of EU legislation by ensuring that it is subject to the widest scrutiny.

These bodies are the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. In addition, other institutions and bodies may be consulted when a proposal falls within their area of interest or expertise. For example, the European Central Bank would expect to be consulted on proposals concerning economic or financial matters.

**Table 2.** *EU Types of legislation.* **Source:** Table created with the information provided by “How the European Union works” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION, 2012).

TYPES OF LEGISLATION	DESCRIPTION
<b>Regulation</b>	A regulation is a law that is applicable and binding in all Member States directly. It does not need to be passed into national law by the Member States although national laws may need to be changed to avoid conflicting with the regulation.
<b>Directive</b>	A directive is a law that binds the Member States, or a group of Member States, to achieve a particular objective. Usually, directives must be transposed into national law to become effective. Significantly, a directive specifies the result to be achieved: it is up to the Member States individually to decide how this is done.
<b>Decision</b>	A decision can be addressed to Member States, groups of people, or even individuals. It is binding in its entirety. Decisions are used, for example, to rule on proposed mergers between companies.
<b>Recommendations</b>	Recommendations and opinions have no binding force.

## 5. From the creation of the Cedefop (1975) to the Lisbon Agenda (2000)

The resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, of 9 February 1976 comprised the first action programme in the field of education (COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, 1976).

This resolution for the first action programme in education mentioned, among others:

- “[...] 3. It is necessary to improve mutual understanding of the various educational systems in the Community and to ensure continuous comparison of policies, experience and ideas in the Member States.
- [...] 8. It is necessary to increase and improve the circulation of information between those responsible for education and those receiving it at all levels.
- [...] 16. To increase the possibilities for the academic recognition of diplomas and study periods and studies carried out, [...]”

As part of this action programme, the Committee of Education decides to create the network for information and documentation on European education Eurydice in January 1978. Eurydice officially started to work on 16 September 1980 (Valle, 2006, p. 61). The information of the different European education systems can now (2016) be found in the EURYPEDIA database, situated in the website of EURYDICE. 1984 was the foundation year of the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres, NARICs. This network is responsible for recognition activities of certificates and degrees across Europe. It collaborates with the Council of Europe, UNESCO and with the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education- ENQA.

On 15 June 1987 the Council of the European Communities adopted the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, ERASMUS (87/327/EEC). Article 4 mentions “The funds estimated as necessary for the execution of the ERASMUS programme during the period 1 July 1987 to 30 June 1990 amount to 85 million ECU.” During 1988 and 1991 the Council ran the PETRA action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life.

This action programme intended to:

“Article 1 [...] ensure, as called for by the European Council, that all young people in the Community who so wish receive one year’s, or if possible two or more years’, vocational training in addition to their full-time compulsory education. [...]

(a) raise the standards and quality of vocational training within the Community and stimulate improvements in vocational training for young people and their preparation for adult and working life and for continuing training;

(b) diversify the provision of vocational training so as to offer choice for young people with different levels of ability, leading to recognized vocational training qualifications;

(c) enhance the capacity of vocational training systems to adapt to rapid economic, technological and social change;

(d) add a Community dimension to both the supply of, and demand for, vocational qualifications on the labour market, taking account of the need to promote comparability of these qualifications between the Member States of the Community. [...]” (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1987).

Between 1988 and 1991 the Community invested 40 million ECU. The programme reached around 75,000 youngsters, 10,000 trainers and 70 training institutions. The success of this programme was repeated with PETRA II (1992-1994), increasing the budget, and assigning 40 million ECUs (as for the whole PETRA I) to spend during the last year of PETRA II, 1994. During this second period, quality, European dimension and ICT were included as aims of the programme (Valle, 2006, p. 63).

EUROTECNET was the 1990-1994 programme “to promote innovation in the fields of basic and also of continuing vocational training with a view to taking account of current and future technological changes and their impact on employment, work and necessary qualifications and skills” (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1989). The budget of 9.2 million ECU generated the distribution of 70,000 publications in the nine languages of the Member States, 64 workshops and seminars and 286 projects

(Valle, 2006, p. 81). FORCE was, during 1991 and 1994, the action Programme for the development of continuing vocational training in the European Community (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1990). During this programme, 83.4 million ECU financed 720 projects (Valle, 2006, p. 83). During the final years of EUROTENET and FORCE, the Council and the Commission decided they should join both programmes. LEONARDO DA VINCI was implemented to integrate the previous Community action programmes in the vocational training field (COMETT, Eurotechnet, FORCE, PETRA, LINGUA) into a single programme (CORDIS, 1994).

The Maastricht Treaty on European Union establishes in Article 126 education as an aim for the Community action. VET actions are described in Article 127:

“1. The Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organization of vocational training.

2. Community action shall aim to:

- facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining;
- improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market;
- facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people;
- stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms;
- develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.

3. The Community and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organizations in the sphere of vocational training.

4. The council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189c and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, shall adopt measures to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States.”

The effect of the Maastricht Treaty (COUNCIL AND COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, 1992) and the creation of the Single Market was the start of global unified programmes for education; SOCRATES for general education and LEONARDO, for vocational education and training. Both programmes ran simultaneously and were active during 1995-1999, first period and 2000-2006, second period. The Council adopted in December 1994 the action programme LEONARDO DA VINCI for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy (Decision 94/819/EC of 6 December 1994) and assigned a total budget of 620 million ECU to the programme (Valle, 2006, p. 220) for the period 1 January 1995 to 31 December 1999. The Council Decision 99/382 26 April 1999 established the continuation of the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme for the period 2000 to 2006 1999, assigning a budget of 1150 million ECU (Valle, 2006, p. 220). Another outcome of the Maastricht Treaty was the European Training Foundation, ETF. Functioning since 1994, it was created to help

transition and developing countries through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy (ETF, 2016).

The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, signalled the start of a new European area of higher education. The declaration mentions:

“[...] Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens' employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

[...] Establishment of a system of credits - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by receiving Universities concerned.

Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:

- for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services

- for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights. [...]”. (EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, 1999)

The Bologna Declaration has also had influence on VET as several countries offer studies that are part of the European area of higher education.

## **6. The knowledge-based economy, Lisbon Agenda (2000)**

On 23-24 March 2000 in Lisbon the European Council held a special meeting to agree a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy during the coming decade. The presidency conclusions stated (Fontaine, 2000) “The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.” This strategic goal defines a new future for Europe, a goal that has drastically drifted from the initial aim of facilitating the movement of coal and steel and free access to sources of production, defined in 1951 in the Treaty of Paris.

“The Copenhagen Declaration”, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, by the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, was focused on enhancing European cooperation in vocational education and training. The main priorities expressed in this declaration are clearly biased by the Lisbon Agenda:

“European dimension

- Strengthening the European dimension in vocational education and training [..]

Transparency, information and guidance

- Increasing transparency in vocational education and training [..]
- Strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, [..]

Recognition of competences and qualifications

- Investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted [..]

- Increasing support to the development of competences and qualifications at sectoral level [..]”. (EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2002).

The Copenhagen Declaration targets on VET with similar objectives to those expressed by the Bologna Declaration in 1999 for the European area of Higher Education and is the origin of the so called “Copenhagen Process”.

“The Copenhagen Process during the period 2002-2010, has been a work method integrated in the Lisbon strategy that has efficiently contributed to link the national and European policies in VET and to develop a global strategy in the EU in this area. Besides, due to the participation of the candidate countries, the process has supported the enlargement of the European Union (from 15 to 25 Member States in 2004 and from 25 to 27 in 2007).” [author’s translation based on the text in Spanish by (Psifidou, 2014, p. 358).

The Maastricht Communiqué from 2004 develops the priorities of the Copenhagen Process and points out:

“The necessary reforms and investment should be focused particularly on:

- the image and attractiveness of the vocational route for employers and individuals, in order to increase participation in VET.

- achieving high levels of quality and innovation in VET systems in order to benefit all learners and make European VET globally competitive.

- linking VET with the labour market requirements of the knowledge economy for a highly skilled workforce, and especially, due to the strong impact of demographic change, the upgrading and competence development of older workers.

- the needs of low-skilled (about 80 million persons aged between 25-64 years in the EU) and disadvantaged groups for the purpose of achieving social cohesion and increasing labour market participation.” (MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF 32 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2004).



Also during 2004 the Europass was created. Decision No 2241/2004/EC “establishes a single Community framework for achieving the transparency of qualifications and competences by means of the creation of a personal, coordinated portfolio of documents, to be known as ‘Europass’, which citizens can use on a voluntary basis to better communicate and present their qualifications and competences throughout Europe”.

The Europass documents are:

“Article 5 Europass-CV. The Europass-CV shall provide citizens with the opportunity to present in a clear and comprehensive way information on all their qualifications and competences. [..]

Article 6 Europass-Mobility. The Europass-Mobility shall record periods of learning attended by its holders in countries other than their own. [..]

Article 7 Europass-Diploma Supplement. The Europass-Diploma Supplement shall provide information on its holder’s educational achievements at higher education level. [..]

Article 8 Europass-Language Portfolio. The Europass-Language Portfolio shall provide citizens with the opportunity to present their language skills. [..]

Article 9 Europass-Certificate Supplement. The Europass-Certificate Supplement shall describe the competences and qualifications corresponding to a vocational training certificate. [..]” (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, 2004).

The European Parliament and the Council passed on 7 September 2005 the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, mainly in the area of medicine and engineering. This Directive “establishes rules according to which a Member State which makes access to or pursuit of a regulated profession in its territory contingent upon possession of specific professional qualifications (..) shall recognise professional qualifications obtained in one or more other Member States (..) and which allow the holder of the said qualifications to pursue the same profession there, for access to and pursuit of that profession” (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, 2005).

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) was designed to enable European citizens, at any stage of their life, to take part in learning experiences, education and training across Europe. It ran from 2007-2013 with a budget of nearly €7 billion (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2013).

The LLP was divided in four main sub-programmes:

- Comenius for schools
- Erasmus for higher education
- Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training
- Grundtvig for adult education

The programme also included the “Jean Monnet” actions, designed to stimulate teaching, reflection, and debate on European integration. The Leonardo da Vinci LLP sub-programme funded practical projects in the field of vocational education and training. Initiatives ranged from those providing work-related training to individuals, to

larger cooperation efforts (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2013). In 2008 the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions produced the Communication from the - New Skills for New Jobs - Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs {SEC(2008) 3058} “to enhance human capital and employability by upgrading skills. But upgrading skills is not enough: ensuring a better match between the supply of skills and labour market demand is just as necessary” (COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, 2008).

The Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework, EQF, for life-long learning was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2008) on 23 April 2008. An EQF Advisory Group (AG) was created and National Coordination Points (NCPs) were set up in Member States to implement the EQF. On 18 June 2009 the European Parliament and the Council produced the Recommendation on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, 2009a).

The same day, the European Parliament and the Council also set the Recommendation to create a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, ECVET, that intends “to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification.” (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, 2009b). ECVET covers the Basic and Intermediate VET, ECTS covers Higher Education VET studies and together they cover the full range of VET qualifications.

The Helsinki Communiqué of 5 December 2006 and the Bordeaux Communiqué of 26 November 2008 reviewed the priorities and strategies of the Copenhagen process and in 2010 the Bruges Communiqué, taking into account the results of Copenhagen Process, provided a global vision for vocational education and training for the decade 2011-2020 (EUROPEAN MINISTERS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010).

## 7. Europe 2020 Strategy

EU policy during the present decade, 2011-2020, is marked by the 2008 financial crisis and the aim to develop the knowledge-based economy defined in the Lisbon Agenda. Education focuses on key competences that include ‘traditional’ skills such as communication in one’s mother tongue, foreign languages, digital skills, literacy, and basic skills in maths and science, as well as horizontal skills such as learning to learn, social and civic responsibility, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and creativity.

Vocational Education and Training is going to play a key role in achieving results during the present decade: training of youth, retraining of adults and development of new skills for future jobs, VET is the engine that enables the transformations. The Copenhagen Process forms an integral part of the “Education and Training 2020”, ET2020 strategic framework. On 23 November 2010 the Commission communicated to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions the “Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment” that will help reach the employment target for

2020: 75 % of the working-age population (20-64 years) in work, and focuses on four key priorities:

- “- First, better functioning labour markets [..].
- Second, a more skilled workforce, capable of contributing and adjusting to technological change with new patterns of work organisation.[..]
- Third, better job quality and working conditions [..].
- Fourth, stronger policies to promote job creation and demand for labour [..]. “(EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010).

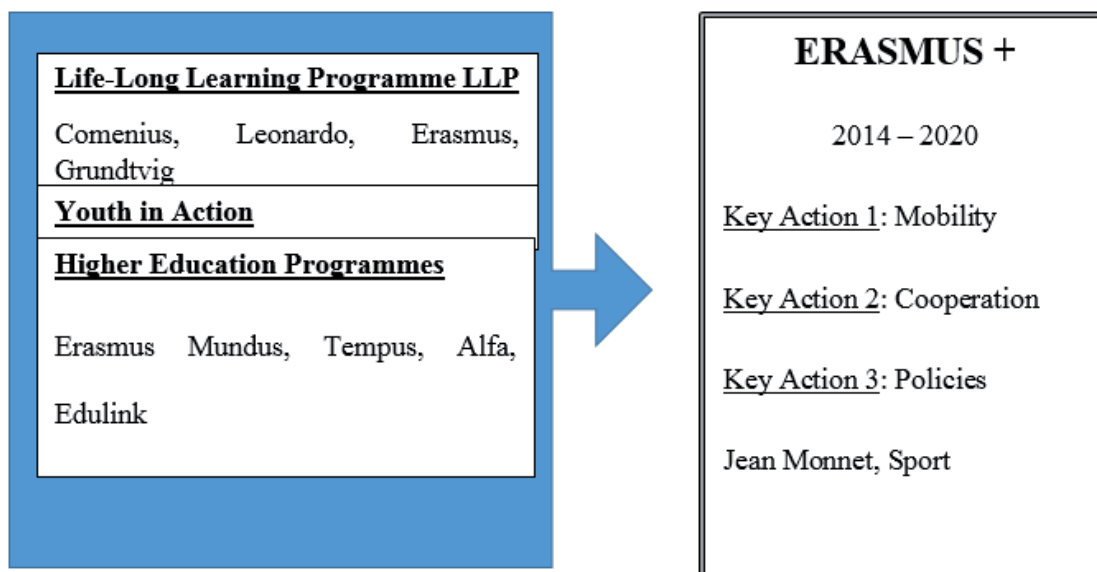
This Agenda is a continuation of the 2008 “New Skills for New Jobs” initiative. It fosters the creation of European Sector Skills Councils designed to anticipate the need for skills in specific sectors more effectively and achieve a better match between skills and labour market needs.

In 2011 the Single Market Act proposed twelve levers to boost growth and strengthen confidence, for a future “Working together to create new growth”. The levers were Access to finance for SMEs, Mobility for citizens, Intellectual property rights, Consumer empowerment, Services, Networks, The digital single market, Social entrepreneurship, Taxation, Social cohesion, Business environment and Public procurement (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, 2011). Single Market Act I developed the Key action “Revise system for the recognition of professional qualifications” that includes the creation of the European Skills Passport. Single Market Act II, 3 October 2012, developed the aims of its predecessor and, among others, in its Key action 5 urged to “Develop the EURES portal into a true European job placement and recruitment tool.”

European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) described in (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012) is a new classification system under development by the European Commission together with stakeholders. ESCO will be multilingual, it will focus on skills and it will be published in an open format to be used by third parties’ software. This will make it a valuable building block for online job portals, career guidance tools and databases of learning opportunities. These improvements should lead to very tangible benefits for jobseekers, people seeking career changes, learners and employers.

In 2013, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships is set “to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU and to change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning through a broad partnership bringing together key stakeholders from the employment and education sectors” as mentioned in the Declaration of the European Social Partners, the European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE LITHUANIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2013).

Erasmus+ is the current European programme in charge of fostering the development of transnational programmes during the period 2014-2020 in the areas of education, training, sport and youth policies. Erasmus+ is focused on the adaptation to a fast changing world, tackling youth unemployment and preparing the workers for highly skilled jobs. Financing is awarded to eligible institutions depending on the points each project receives for its relevance, quality of the project design, quality of the project team and its impact and dissemination. Individuals cannot apply directly for a grant (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015).



**Figure 1.** Erasmus+ integration of previous European programmes. **Source:** Compiled by the author with information from (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG EDUCATION AND CULTURE, 2013).

**Note from the author.** Erasmus+ integrates former programmes like the Long Life Learning Programme, Youth in Action, and the different international Higher Education and Sport programmes.

- KEY ACTION 1 (KA1) integrates all the financing programmes that deal with the mobility in education. It includes mobility possibilities for teachers, students and staff dealing with primary, secondary, vocational, higher and adult education. Vocational education and training mobilities are part of KA1.
- KEY ACTION 2 (KA2) integrates all the financing programmes that deal with European cooperation in education. It fosters collaboration between any type of organisation dealing with education like schools, colleges, universities, NGOs, public institutions and private companies.
- KEY ACTION (KA3) offers national and transnational organisations a framework to create and modify European policies.
- JEAN MONNET aims to stimulate teaching, research and reflection in the field of European Union studies worldwide.
- SPORT focuses on creating collaborative partnerships and non-profit sport events at a European level.

## 8. Conclusion

Just after World War II the Treaty of Paris focused on the economy of coal and steel, setting guidelines to move from the primary sector economy towards a manufacturing secondary sector economy as a way of providing wealth and social stability to citizens.

During these decades we have seen how the EEC first and the EU later have been changing these aims and the efforts are nowadays placed on attaining a knowledge-based future, based on research and information technology. A future that will be reached thanks to the changes in European education in a wide sense and in vocational education and training specifically.

Until the mid-70s, the regulations passed by the European institutions mentioned the importance of VET as a catalyser to integrate low skilled citizens into the job market, but it was not until the creation of CEDEFOP in 1975 when actual effects could be noticed. This second period lasted until the establishment of the Lisbon Agenda and was characterised by the creation of organisations like the Committee of Education, EURYDICE and its European education systems database and the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARICs). During this period there were already tangible activities that focused on improving VET from a transnational point of view; PETRA, EUROTECNET and FORCE were examples of these type of programmes.

The Lisbon Agenda signalled the start of the commitment of the EU to the knowledge-based economy and from that moment actual changes have been seen that have had a direct effect on professional training. The Bologna Process changed the European Area of Higher Education and the on-going Copenhagen Process is on its way to creating a global European qualifications training framework: Directive 2005/36/EC recognises professional qualifications and EQF, EQAVET, ECVET are actions that are already having a direct effect on national policies of the Member States.

The Europe 2020 strategy aims to improve the social situation of the citizens using education and professional training as the tools to achieve a knowledge-based economy. Leonardo, the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+ have been the mobility and cooperation actions aimed at improving VET at a European level during these last years.

More than half a century after laying down the “general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy” (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, 1963) Europe still does not have a common vocational training policy. European education policies are constrained by the idea “(i) It is advisable scrupulously to respect national structures and traditions where education is concerned, but to promote a necessary harmonization by means of permanent concerted action at all levels and through more and more educational exchanges.”. This statement, that appeared in the Janne Report (Janne, 1973), and has been later repeated even in the EU legislation, is nearly an oxymoron: we should harmonize education at all levels, without changing the national structures and traditions.

The European institutions have managed to find a way out of this labyrinth. EQF, EQAVET, ECVET, ECTS and Erasmus+ are supranational frameworks that offer the Member States umbrella structures that enable international compatibility. Each State is free to establish gateways between their training systems and these frameworks. This is a top-down harmonization procedure. As it was not possible to transpose the same specific VET system into each Member State, and attain in this form the harmonization, the mentioned frameworks are ideal meeting points and every Member State is expected to arrive at some moment at these terminal stations.



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