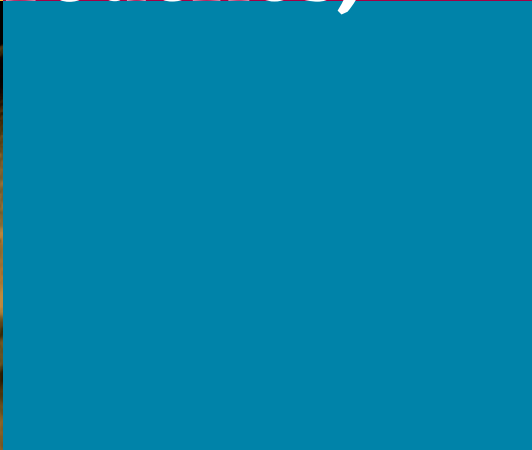




New Approaches,



New Skills



for Social Inclusion



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Foreword

There is nothing more important at the present time than the development of opportunities to enable people of all ages and from all backgrounds to contribute to the socio-economic development of Europe. Following the global economic crisis, and in the light of the rapid growth of the emerging economies, Europe has to differentiate itself by the provision of human capital at the highest level, contributing innovative ideas and creating new ways of doing business.

Yet too many people across Europe have skills which barely equip them for today's workforce, let alone that of tomorrow. They run the risk of being socially excluded, disenfranchised from employment and suffering from low living standards and poor health and wellbeing.

Social inclusion and social mobility depends on people, regardless of their age, having the right skills and competences, opportunities to use and develop them both to gain confidence and self-esteem personally and at work in order to contribute to a better society as well as improve competitiveness and productivity. Many of the emerging skills have yet to be defined, and many will rely on new media and technologies in the early stages of development.

Social inclusion and social mobility also depends on the individual's ability to transfer those skills and competences to new situations and to be able to communicate in a way which suits individual circumstances and aspirations.

We are delighted, therefore, to launch the Association of Colleges and MBO Raad project New Approaches, New Skills for Social Inclusion. The two organisations have put together an innovative programme which, although focusing on raising awareness about each other's responses to common issues, is intended to add to the body of knowledge and understanding on how to tackle social inclusion in Europe.

This document supports the formal launch of the project, and gives a snapshot of the current position with respect to social inclusion and what the project intends to do. The project can be followed through <http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/aoc-create/aoc-create-projects/index.cfm>. We are very excited by the programme of activity, the launch, forthcoming seminars and hope that you are too.



Chris Morecroft
President, Association of
Colleges



Jan van Zijl
Chairman, MBO Raad

The policy context

The launch of 'New Approaches, New Skills for Social Inclusion' is the starting point for a flagship European project, funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13. Delivered jointly by the Association of Colleges (AoC) and MBO Raad, the project is designed to develop innovative strategies to encourage vocational education and training (VET) providers across different European countries to work together to engage and involve groups at risk of social exclusion.

What is the project setting out to achieve?

The project links together the key drivers of social and educational policy into a single agenda to support those who are educationally disadvantaged within Europe. It aims to bring together like-minded organisations across the nations that wish to address this agenda and help to determine the future shape of jobs and skills across Europe. In so doing it will:

- illustrate best practice in vocational education and training on which to build new partnerships, communities and networks;
- bring new partners together who may not have worked in Europe before;
- recognise the varying scales and contexts within which VET operates;
- recognise the role of social media as a key driver in skills development.

The project will also evidence ideas and initiatives to inform and drive forward current EU priorities including:

- equipping young people and adults for 21st century life;
- promoting youth mobility;
- finding ways to address youth and adult unemployment, focused on new jobs;
- exploring schemes such as 'Youth on the Move' to facilitate mobility by providing benefits for young people across Europe as VET 'alumni';
- exploring proposals for a 'European Skills Passport' to increase transparency of competence acquired through both formal and informal learning;
- reviewing formal and informal learning accreditation opportunities, making the most of flexibility of national and European qualification frameworks.

By the end of the project we expect to have developed:

- a new framework for developing transnational cooperative projects focusing on social mobility;
- plans for a number of future projects involving national partners in several European countries;
- much greater awareness in England and the Netherlands of the opportunities and benefits of working collaboratively across European nations;
- a greater understanding of European policy and how it addresses skills development as a means to improve social mobility and inclusion.



What do we mean by social inclusion and social mobility?

Social inclusion and social mobility depend on people, regardless of their age, having the right skills and competences and the opportunities to use and develop them both to gain confidence and self-esteem. This improves health and wellbeing and enables them to contribute to a better society as well as to improve competitiveness and productivity.

Social mobility also depends on the individual's ability to transfer those skills and competences to new situations and to be able to communicate in a way which suits individual circumstances and aspirations.

Social exclusion is a term used across Europe. It refers to the range of difficulties that act as barriers to life opportunities and prevent people from participating fully in society. These may include economic poverty, poor health, disability, poor education or skills and treatment which is discriminatory or inequitable.

What is the European context?

The Europe 2020 Strategy is designed to enable the EU to grow out of the global economic crisis and prepare the EU economy for the next decade. The three key drivers for growth are: smart growth (fostering knowledge, innovation, education and digital society), sustainable growth (making production more resource efficient while boosting competitiveness) and inclusive growth (raising participation in the labour market, the acquisition of skills and the fight against poverty).

Progress towards these objectives will be measured against five EU-level targets, which Member States are expected to translate into national targets:

- 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed;
- the '20/20/20' climate/energy targets should be met;
- fewer than 10% should leave school early; 40%+ of young people should have a degree or diploma;
- twenty million fewer people should be at risk of poverty.

The Europe 2020 agenda consists of a series of flagship initiatives, the responsibility for which will be exercised by the EU, Member States and local/regional authorities:

- Innovation - re-focussing R&D and innovation to turn inventions into product;
- Youth on the move - enhancing the quality and international attractiveness of Europe's post-compulsory system, including higher education, by promoting mobility of students and young professionals. It will support the more than six million young people in the EU who leave education with lower level qualifications, may be unemployed and who are more often dependent on benefits;
- Contribute to building and modernising lifelong learning systems to develop the key skills, competencies and learning outcomes of individuals, in line with labour market needs including through formal and informal activities;
- Promote the performance and attractiveness of Europe's higher education to ensure it is competitive and well-placed internationally;
- Encourage the transnational mobility of young people so that by 2020 all young people in Europe have the possibility of spending a part of their education abroad;
- Improve the employment prospects of young people by launching a youth employment framework outlining priorities for action at national and EU level;



- Deliver sustainable economic and social benefits from a Digital Single Market based on ultra-fast internet, with all Europeans having access by 2013;
- Support the shift towards a resource-efficient and low carbon economy based on the 2020 targets in terms of energy production, efficiency and consumption;
- Help EU industry to be competitive post-economic crisis, promoting entrepreneurship and developing new skills, creating millions of new jobs;
- Create the conditions for modernising labour markets, raising employment levels, ensuring sustainability and analysing and predicting which skills will be required in tomorrow's labour markets thus adapting education and training so that workers gain the skills required;
- Ensure economic, social and national cohesion by helping the poor and socially excluded and enabling them to play an active part in society.

New Approaches, New Skills for Social Inclusion addresses all these key priorities in various measures.

We also recognise that in a global marketplace, instant communication through social media is vital not only for individuals but also for companies. Teachers have, therefore, to understand the global communication dynamic and be competent in using emerging media and technologies to be credible with young people and to raise their aspirations, embracing a new pedagogy as facilitators in a global learning environment.

Our target group

Research shows that new and higher levels of skills will be needed for the jobs of tomorrow. The economic crisis and structural factors like globalisation, technological change, ageing populations and the shift to a low carbon economy are contributing to rapid change in European labour markets. Shortages of skills in some sectors already co-exist with high unemployment at or above 10% across most of the EU. The workforce is aging, requiring replacement skills.

To provide job opportunities for all and to create a more competitive and sustainable economy, Europe needs a highly skilled workforce able to meet current and future challenges. To ensure this, it is vital that we invest in the right skills and improve matching of jobs with these skills in the EU by effectively anticipating future trends.

The target group for our project is organisations working with vulnerable young people and adults. The target group does not fit readily into regular learning systems, as many of them have negative school experiences. Their motivation is to reach personal goals to improve daily life instead of gaining a qualification as an entrance ticket to the labour market. Education is, therefore, a lifelong process aimed at increasing quality of life. Outcomes of these programmes are not defined in terms of cognitive learning gains or employment but, more broadly, in terms of social inclusion.

For social inclusion to be an outcome of education, the right balance has to be found between the individual and their environment (interactionism) to encourage productive change in behaviour to increase social inclusion. In addition, the balance between emotionality and functionality (based on the socio-emotional selectivity theory) also has to be taken into account, especially for older adults. Older people focus more on the emotional rewards of social interaction than on gaining knowledge and may join adult education programmes in order to increase contacts with others to cope with loneliness (emotional perspective) or, for example, to increase their knowledge about using the internet (functional perspective).

The policy context

England

In November 2010 Skills for Sustainable Growth proposed sweeping reforms of the skills system. It focused on creating a fairer society for economic and social reasons to enable the unemployed to access the right skills for sustainable work and for employers to find skilled labour to help their businesses succeed.

There will be a number of structural changes which will include more regulation of awarding organisations designing and developing qualifications, rather than accreditation of individual national qualifications. This should increase flexibility within the system with opportunities for locally based qualifications to fill gaps in the market.

In February 2011 the Wolf Review of Vocational Education in England was published and is likely to shake up vocational education for young people. It recognises that high quality vocational qualifications offer a valued and legitimate path to both higher education and employment but identifies variations in quality and suggests that only those vocational qualifications which add real value to young people's education should be recognised going forward.

A new social mobility strategy *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers* (April 2011) focuses on combatting child poverty and ensuring that middle as well as low income families can progress based on merit rather than money or influence.

The Marmot Review (2010) - *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* - focused primarily on reducing health inequalities in England, identifying that this would require action in six main policy areas:

- giving every child the best start in life;
- enabling all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives;
- creating fair employment and work for all;
- ensuring a healthy standard of living for all;
- creating and sustaining healthy and sustainable places and communities;
- strengthening the role and impact of ill health prevention.

This emphasises the policy relationship between social mobility, education, employment and health in England.

The Netherlands

The Dutch government aims to ensure that every citizen has the necessary skills and education to enable them to successfully participate in the labour-market. This includes the use of specially designed work based learning programmes.

In the Netherlands education for vulnerable adults and young people consists of five 'pillars'.

Law of budget for participation: Aimed at integration, re-integration and adult education and consists of three laws and associated policy aiming at increasing participation of vulnerable adults and young people:

- projects for re-integration. With the unemployment rate growing, specific attention is needed to stop cumulative growth of unemployment. Budget is reserved for helping vulnerable adults to find a proper job on the labour market. Most of it is used for special re-integration;
- special programmes of integration (including an exam) for new migrants;
- courses designed to improve social inclusion in daily life.



Law of societal development (Wmo): Aimed at supporting vulnerable citizens and liveability in communities, the goal is for people to become or remain self-reliant and participate in our society. It includes a wide-ranging movement from the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) to enable people in neighbourhoods to join in “working and living together”.

Special secondary school for adults and youngsters: Aimed at gaining starting qualification(s) for the labour market. Not every youngster is able to gain a qualification for the labour market at high school or university. Some experience problems in daily life blocking their learning process and preventing achievement of a ‘ticket for their future’. In the Netherlands it is possible to learn for formal certificates after failing the leaving exam in secondary school. The six levels of General Adult Education are also being integrated in the Dutch National Qualification Framework (NLQF). Besides this opportunity the Dutch government subsidises several forms of special education that lead to starting qualification(s) for the labour market. This includes specialised schools for individual professions or combinations of secondary schooling and VET. Through these initiatives the government is increasing learner opportunities to gain a VET or secondary school qualification.

Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET): Aimed at gaining skills and qualifications to improve attitude at work or for employability. Special funding for the employer makes it possible to join several courses as an employee; all employers are obliged to ensure education and training for their employees. Employers organise sessions in their company and/or outside the office. CVET is one of the biggest parts of adult education in the Netherlands and is seen as human resource development.

Secondary Vocational Education and Training (MBO): MBO programmes are offered according to the work-based system (approximately 35%) or according to the school-based system (approximately 65%). Both learning pathways offer programmes on four different levels, ranging from the assisting level (level 1) to the mid-management level (level 4) with qualification profiles that are drawn up by branch commissions representing the social partners and the world of education and training. Several Regional Institutions of Education are able to organise combinations of adult and vocational education. In this way they can offer specialised programmes for vulnerable adults and young people.

The Dutch Ministry for Education has introduced Action Plan Youth Unemployment. A part of this plan is the School Ex programme, which focuses on how vocational education institutes can contribute to combating youth unemployment. The target group of School Ex consists of graduates in vocational education. Due to the economic crisis, students from the lower vocational levels (1 and 2) have a greater risk of unemployment when entering the labour market after getting their diploma.

The School Ex programme stimulates graduates in vocational education to study an extra year after their diploma, both to prevent them from being unemployed and to increase their chances in the labour market. Furthermore, it aims itself at graduates who have already decided not to continue studying.



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