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Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009

The Magazine ³¹

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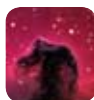
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Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009



Foreword

Innovation and creativity have always been at the heart of the European story. The Renaissance, Enlightenment, exploration of the world and industrial revolution – all these decisive steps in European history relied on the willingness of Europeans to take a fresh look, to attack a new challenge. The European Union is in itself testament to the creative genius of the founding fathers.

A unique system of governance and its achievements over 50 years are proof of the ability to reinvent itself to face new challenges. The single market, the euro, enlargement – these are all examples where Europe has remained true to its fundamental values of solidarity and social justice, but where it has found new answers and new ways to adapt.

Europe today has as much need as ever of innovation and creativity. We face a set of challenges of unprecedented scale and complexity: far-reaching challenges such as steering our European society into a more sustainable future, addressing such many-layered issues as climate change, energy security, migration and an ageing population.

We need to harness our creativity and innovate to find the right answers.

Globalisation has created a new context for Europe, asking new questions and sparking new opportunities. The Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs is our key platform to adapt our economies and our societies to the challenges and developments of our globalising world.

The growth and jobs strategy has promoted the need for an innovation-friendly environment where knowledge is converted into innovative products and services. But it has also made clear that innovation is not just for the few. The modern economy, with its emphasis on adding value by better use of knowledge, works best when everyone can broaden their creative skills. If the potential for innovation and creativity is unlocked, it benefits people facing up to change in

a more fluid economy, opens up new ideas to meet the needs of a changing world and allows us all to make the most of our cultural diversity.

The European Commission and the European Union are committed to promoting innovation and creativity. 2008 saw the launch of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, which will further reinforce the triangle of education, research and innovation and help our companies to remain competitive in increasingly global markets.

I am, therefore, delighted that in 2009, the European Year of Creativity and Innovation will offer a particular focus, raising public awareness, spreading information about good practices, stimulating research and promoting policy debate and change. By combining action at European, national, regional and local levels, and by involving all key stakeholders, we can release our continent's creative energy and show how Europe remains the cradle of new ideas. Creativity and innovation are the drivers for the Europe of tomorrow. Let's use this year to show what is possible.

José Manuel BARROSO,
President of the European Commission



INFORMAL LEARNING

a **territory** to be discovered

Interview with Commissioner Ján Figel'

We used to think that creativity is the privilege of those few who had a good education, and that creative thoughts turn more or less automatically into innovations. European history would seem to support this view. Now Ján Figel', the European Commissioner responsible for education, training, culture and youth, tells "The Magazine" what he thinks, and what he expects from the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

Creative talents are born, and nature has a much bigger role in creativity than nurture. Do you see any reason to modify this common wisdom?

It is true that our genetic inheritance may help some of us to be an outstanding talent in one or other domains of life. But life has many domains, and a person who is not clever at playing the violin, can still be an outstanding engineer, and vice versa. And there is more: although we are genetically determined, the culture around us – this specific and wonderfully rich gift of humanity – can modify our natural disposition. By changing our habits, we change ourselves. In fact, this observation is not new, as the history of education proves. I would place the stress on how we educate, how we change habits – not only those of our children but of our adult fellow citizens as well.



One could say that European education systems were very efficient in the past, and we are really proud of our primary education, which is open to all, and many of our universities that have produced great talents. What should we change?

Of course, we must preserve everything that has proven to be effective, and we must continue offering schooling for every child. But it is not enough to offer the possibility of learning. We have to retain students until they acquire enough of the skills that will help them to find a job in a rapidly evolving labour market.

Each child is different, and has different needs. Some of them can learn easily and alone, others need guidance and help. I am not convinced by a simple division between 'good' and 'bad' students; rather, there are students who, for one reason or another, have been able to find and develop their talents, and there are those who have not been so fortunate. Creativity is not a privilege. Creativity is there in all of us, and it is a huge responsibility for all institutions dealing with education not to discourage creative behaviour. Let's identify the special gift in everybody, and let's build careers on that.

We need a new approach: instead of focusing only on the process of teaching, we should put the emphasis on the outcomes of that process. In order to produce outcomes that both the student and the outside world will value, we need to focus on each student's special needs.



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Our economy is based on knowledge and high skill levels – more and more specialised knowledge, and ever-higher quality skills. Education, therefore, has to satisfy the increased demands for specialisation in the market. That is why I emphasise cooperation between schools and the economy at large.

This connection is important for another reason too – creative thoughts do not turn themselves automatically into innovations. They will contribute to our quality of life only if we pave the way for them, for example by cooperation between schools, research institutions and enterprises. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), for example, should become an excellent example of success in this respect.

There may be sudden changes in the market: what was sought after yesterday could be superfluous tomorrow. Is the market a good judge?

Like it or not, we live in a market economy, and competition is a basic feature of markets. No doubt, Europe needs a competitive economy, but it should at the same time be a sustainable, viable one that does not destroy social cohesion!

There are constant changes in the economy, and we are also expected to change. To quote an old wise saying: Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis – “Times change, and we change in them”. We cannot stop time and change, but we can control our responses to them. In this context, therefore, we need to develop our skills and competences so that we can meet those challenges.

No doubt it is important for all to be able to communicate in their mother tongue, and learning another language brings proven benefits too. Knowledge of basic mathematics, science and technology (including digital technologies) are now indispensable in our world. But what is most important is the competence of learning how to learn, and this should be taught at an early age in school.

While language, mathematics and science can be taught in the classroom, the other key competences, such as learning to learn, social and civic competences, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship or cultural expression, are usually best acquired in the family or in the wider community. Learning does not end with graduation, it is practically lifelong and life-wide. We have to be aware of this fact, and plan our education and training systems in a way that counts with extracurricular learning.

Do you mean that the education of key competences is not the task of the school system alone?

Exactly. Schools are still very important, but what happens outside the classroom is similarly important. Schools are primarily responsible for so-called formal learning, but they also provide non-formal and informal learning as well. The family, the workplace and places where people spend their free time are also havens for informal learning. Everyone learns from family members, relatives, friends or acquaintances, and they make use of that knowledge later.



How can the Year of Creativity & Innovation contribute to that exploration?

The main function of European thematic years is to raise public awareness around a theme. I hope that raised awareness will result in public debates on how we can foster creativity and innovation, not only in educational institutions, but also in economic life and society. I would like all stakeholders to make their voice heard throughout the Year and at the conferences that we plan to hold. And not only there, but also in the media and in all public fora.

I have another expectation as well. The European Commission constantly underlines the importance of investing in education and culture. It will continue to be a top priority for the Commission in the future too. But when people invest in something, they want to see what the returns will be. In the area of education, we have trouble showing what those returns are, because of a lack of statistics and relevant hard data. So, we will be working hard to develop statistical data gathering systems in education, especially in the area of informal learning, to show that it is really worth investing in knowledge.

These are ambitious goals. Do you think that one year will be enough to complete it?

Clearly, one European Year is not enough! There is so much to do. After evaluating the results of the Year, we have to fine-tune our policies to channel creative forces into our social and economic life. But I am quite sure that the Year will give an impetus to the process of forging an EU-wide 'culture of learning', which will be a defining characteristic of the knowledge-based European society of the future.



Creativity and innovation at the heart of the **struggle** for **THE FUTURE OF EUROPE.**

THE CHALLENGE TO BE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE

When we think of creators and innovators we tend to think of rare individuals touched by genius – artists and inventors, designers and entrepreneurs, people who blaze a trail on behalf of, but separate from the rest of us.

There are two things wrong with this view. Firstly, it reflects only a partial vision of what constitutes innovation. Many of the most important innovations come, not from the work of lonely scientists or artists, but from the way people make creative use of social processes to come up with new ways of doing things. Think of how politicians produced vital innovations from the rubble of postwar Europe: eager to make a break with the disastrous past, this generation created both national systems of public social protection and a European Union, an innovative form of governance still unique in the world. These initiatives changed Europe for the better and irreversibly, just as much as the most startling technological breakthroughs.

Secondly, the idea that creativity is like lightning which strikes only rarely and haphazardly is misleading. It is possible to build creative attitudes and to foster an environment conducive to innovation. Public policies can be used to ensure that original thinking is encouraged and valued; that good ideas will be heard, tested and given the chance to become reality; and that citizens can be persuaded to be open to the arrival of innovation and change in their lives.

Everything we know about the future makes us think that Europe must, more than ever, become a society which lives on its creative and innovative abilities and which is open to change. While we cannot predict the future with precision, we know some of the most important factors which will shape the Europe we live in.

We can be certain, for example, of demographic ageing. We know that young people will be in short supply so the numbers arriving on the labour force will diminish. At the same time, caring services for the expanded population of older people will be more than ever needed. This squeeze in human resources will pose major challenges for a Europe which attaches importance both to high standards of living and to high standards of social care.

We can also be certain that climate change and the need to move to a low carbon economy will profoundly shape economic and social life, the way we produce and earn a living and the way we live.

We can expect the pace of technological change to continue and probably to increase. New products over recent years have largely been driven by the application of ICTs. This will continue while the influence of newer tools, such as nanotechnologies, will add to the effect.

Finally, we can expect – notwithstanding the current economic downturn – an increasingly globalised economic order with an ever stronger presence from the emerging economies, one in which Europe cannot simply take its place as a world leader for granted.

How can Europe respond to these future challenges?

Europe has already chosen the strategy it will pursue in the face of these challenges – the Heads of State and Government declared at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 their collective intention for Europe “*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*”.



A knowledge economy is one in which knowledge replaces labour, land or natural resources – all of which will be increasingly scarce in Europe's future – as the most important factor of production. The key to our future success is knowledge and its effective use: as the means both to create wealth and to solve new (sustainability) and old (poverty and social exclusion) societal challenges. Through the application of knowledge, demographic ageing becomes manageable and climate change can be an opportunity as much as a challenge. Technological change and globalisation can provide new platforms for earning new wealth.

This is the path to which Europe has committed itself. How is it to get there? The key factors will be the success or failure of the policies which lie within the domain of this Directorate-General, education and training. The key objectives which we have been promoting for years will become, more than ever, central to the task. Europe needs to achieve high-quality education to provide its citizens with the skills needed for success in the knowledge labour market. It needs to give them the intercultural competences which will allow them to perform and succeed in different situations, to be mobile within Europe and across the world. It needs to allow them to be life long learners, updating their knowledge as knowledge itself becomes updated. And it needs to provide all this equitably, to all Europeans, in order to ensure that meeting one part of the Lisbon objective – the creation of a knowledge economy – does not happen at the expense of the equally important final element – greater social cohesion.

Education and training must be at the heart of our plans

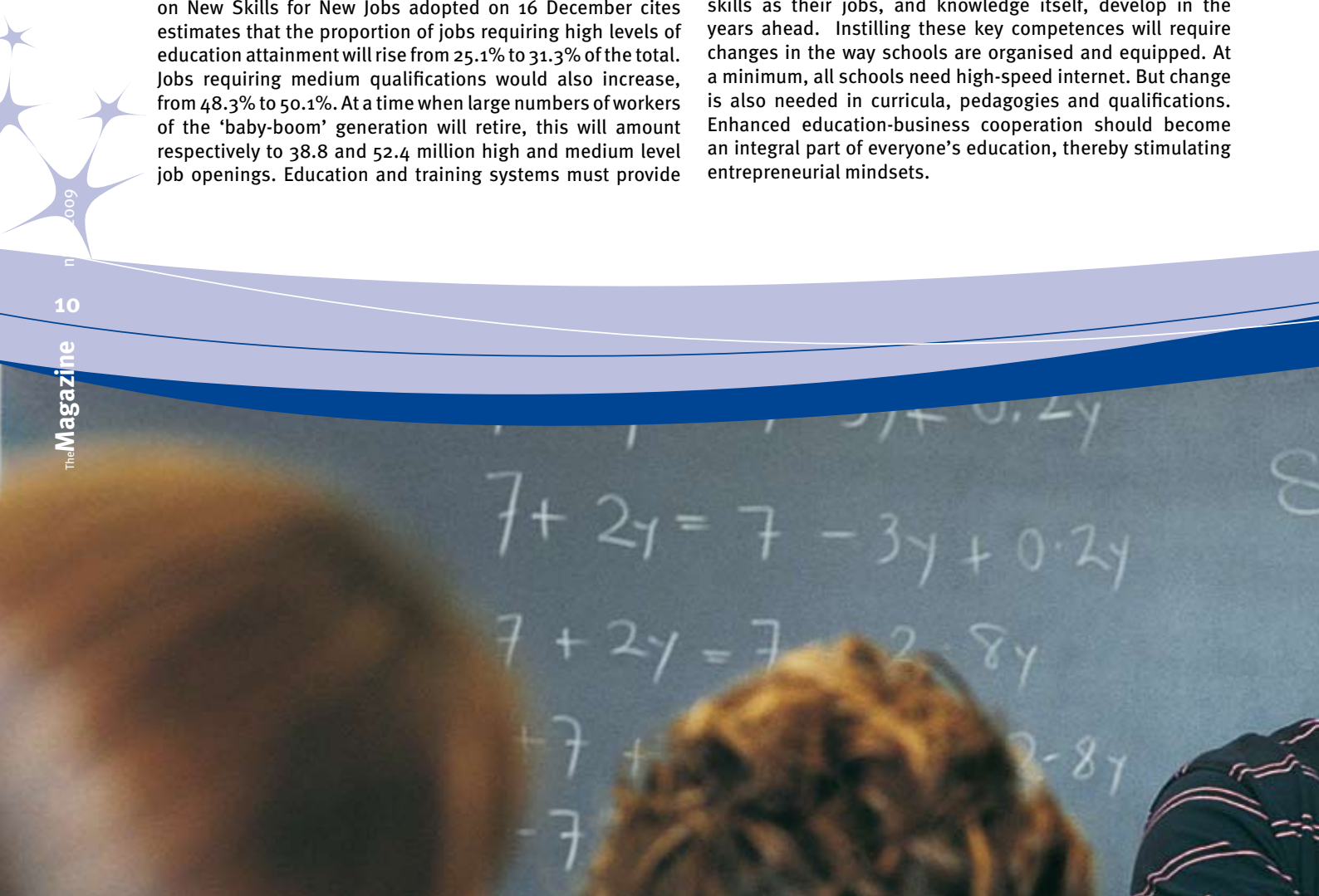
The scale of the transformation which Europe must manage as it moves towards higher knowledge-intensity is substantial, even if we focus only on the next decade. The Communication on New Skills for New Jobs adopted on 16 December cites estimates that the proportion of jobs requiring high levels of education attainment will rise from 25.1% to 31.3% of the total. Jobs requiring medium qualifications would also increase, from 48.3% to 50.1%. At a time when large numbers of workers of the 'baby-boom' generation will retire, this will amount respectively to 38.8 and 52.4 million high and medium level job openings. Education and training systems must provide

the vast bulk of the young people who possess these skills. Migration cannot be expected to play more than a part.

At the same time, the share of jobs requiring low levels of education attainment will decline from 26.2% to 18.5%, despite 10 million job openings. Again, the implication for education and training systems is clear. People who leave education with low qualifications currently face a heightened risk of unemployment and poor labour market success. With fewer job opportunities in a knowledge economy, the risk of precariousness and exclusion for those who fail in school will only be further increased.

Thus our education and training systems must bring about the upskilling of the European population as a whole. We need to be clear what upskilling means. We should not think of it in static, current terms. The higher skilled professions of the future often do not exist at the moment, so how can we expect education and training systems to provide in precise terms the skills which workforces will need? It seems to be an irresolvable challenge, but in truth it is not. We can break down into components what the education system should be providing to prepare for tomorrow's labour market.

It should provide the transversal key competences which will be ever more important in the future – communication skills, digital competences which match the pace of change in ICTs (including media literacy), the cultural awareness and language skills needed to be mobile across Europe and worldwide, and a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. A good share of the population needs to be highly competent in maths, science and technological skills. Everyone needs a sufficiently good education in these disciplines to allow a good public understanding of the political issues and choices which scientific progress poses. Above all, people should leave initial education with learning-to-learn skills, and the ability and willingness to keep learning new and specific skills as their jobs, and knowledge itself, develop in the years ahead. Instilling these key competences will require changes in the way schools are organised and equipped. At a minimum, all schools need high-speed internet. But change is also needed in curricula, pedagogies and qualifications. Enhanced education-business cooperation should become an integral part of everyone's education, thereby stimulating entrepreneurial mindsets.



A creative and innovative European population

A European population which is well educated in this new way will be open and receptive to creativity and will regard innovation with enthusiasm, not fear. People will be in constant search of new and better ways to do their jobs and will feel free to exchange ideas about how to do so. They will be open to change in the workplace and to change in the wider world. If such an education can be provided to all and not just to elites, then the process of introducing change can be more democratic and open, not one which stirs fear and suspicion among much of the population. That is the first challenge for Europe's education and training systems.

The second challenge is to provide the future creators and innovators. Universities must provide the highest level of education in the sciences and in the new frontier disciplines as they emerge. But segmented learning, even to the highest level should not be the aim. High technical skills should be combined with the skills to ensure a fully functioning and realistic knowledge triangle – education-research-innovation – which will bring good ideas to reality. And excellent education in specific disciplines should encompass also multi-disciplinarity and the ability to transfer innovations from one branch of knowledge and apply them in another.

Conclusion

The agenda for the future is complex. While it is possible in an article like this to outline how important creativity and innovation are to Europe's future, it is more difficult to see how in practice we should move forward. We now have two initiatives on the European policy table which aim to start the reflection on how to do so.

On 16 December, the Commission in a communication "**An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training**" sets out a framework for policy cooperation between the Commission and the Member States on how to modernise education systems for the future needs of society. It proposes that this cooperation be built around four strategic challenges. One of these should be "*how to enhance innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training*". Through dialogue and exchange, education policy makers can start to map out what is needed and learn from good practice as they emerge in the different systems over the years ahead.

The European Year of Creativity and Innovation, which is the main focus of this issue of the magazine, will be the occasion for a similar debate in a wider, public framework.

We are only now waking up to the importance that creativity and innovation play in our lives and the even greater part they must play in the future. By the end of the 2009 Year, I hope that we can be clearer and more precise about what it is that we need to change, what we need to build and where we need to reflect further. As I said at the outset, the founding fathers of Europe were, in their way, great creators and innovators who have profoundly marked our continent. It is fitting that the European structures they set in motion should now be providing the framework for reflection about the next generation of innovations which lie ahead.



Odile Quintin,
Director -General for education and culture

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'O. Quintin'.





New Skills for New Jobs: NEED FOR A REVOLUTION

The Commission has just unveiled an initiative – New Skills for New Jobs – to help us anticipate the skills needed for the jobs of the future. It will identify the right skills mixes so that we can train and prepare people for the new jobs that will come along.

In a rapidly changing economic and social environment, policy makers and practitioners need to be able to identify and respond promptly to new and changing skills and jobs requirements. Such decisions should depend on reliable anticipative information provided by research.

Crystal ball?

Nobody is able to predict precisely what the future will hold, but everyone has to prepare and plan in order to avoid any undesirable outcomes and to make the most of the opportunities they face. The sum of these individual plans and choices will influence the future path taken by Europe as a whole. These need to be guided by robust labour market information, including a forward-looking element. The key question, therefore, is not whether an attempt should be made to anticipate the future, but rather how to go about it.

Rather than relying on luck, or upon individuals' own, possibly ill-informed, judgements, there is a case for the EU providing such information as a public good, based on the application of transparent, systematic and scientific methods.

No single approach has the monopoly on 'truth'. Nor can one method provide a full and complete picture of the future. Qualitative and quantitative assessments are needed. The "New Skills for New Jobs" initiative aims to pool existing resources and provides a comprehensive picture of the future, allowing a variety of tools to inform and support each other.

As an example, the first assessment of skills needs presented in the Communication and detailed in the Staff Working Document is not only based on the quantitative projections produced by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), using econometric techniques and large data bases, but also qualitative analysis, involving stakeholders and employers at the sectoral level through interviews, focus groups and shared diagnoses on scenarios. Cedefop and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) have worked on such foresight methodologies, which enable the examination of new drivers of change and evaluation of their consequences, leading to a more qualitative assessment of skills needs.

Many Member States currently carry out such activities. However, the national approaches are very heterogeneous, in terms of methods, scopes and institutional framework. Development of common tools and methodologies will ensure better comparability. Given the increasing interdependency of European labour markets and the growth in cross border mobility, the case for a pan-European assessment of skills needs has strengthened.

What do we already know from the forecasts?

Forecasting does not aim to provide an exact picture of the future, but it can give an indication of general trends and highlight the need for particular responses. For public authorities, education and training providers, companies, workers and students, forecasting and anticipation can provide timely warnings of future labour market imbalances and skills shortages, and contribute to the design of efficient employment, education and training policies.





Future of jobs and skills: black, green, grey or rose-colored scenarios?

The severity of the financial crisis and its economic spill-over adds an extraordinary degree of unpredictability about the future of the world economy, and makes pessimistic scenarios more probable, at least in the short-term.

At the sectoral level, the picture is more nuanced. Primary sector and traditional manufacturing industries are diminishing, while services are still expanding and new sectors emerging. As an example, efforts to mitigate and tackle climate change and environmental degradation, such as the pollution of water, land and air, can create a new 'green economy', with millions of new jobs across the world. The market for environmental products and services is projected to double. Environmental concerns do not only imply the growth of new green sectors. They also require the development of new competencies in more traditional sectors like agriculture, transport and construction. As a consequence, education and training systems should be ready to develop new programmes for emerging new professions, and new skills should be taught as part of changing job profiles within existing professions.

Across all sectors and occupations, the nature of work is already changing. Technological change and new work organisations, involving team work, job rotation and multitasking, have a considerable impact on the demand for skills. We expect significant numbers of high skilled jobs to be created in Europe over the next decade or so, and skills requirements will also be higher in jobs at the intermediate or low level of the employment ladder. Between 2006 and 2020 the percentage of total jobs which require high qualification levels will rise from 25.1% to 31.3% according to Cedefop projections. Up to 2020, 17.7 million net new jobs will be created in high skilled non-manual occupations, such as administrative, marketing, logistics and sales managers, IT systems administrators, teaching professionals and technicians.

Further exploration of skills shifts in specific sectors and occupations with qualitative methods can provide a deep understanding of the crucial skills required for labour market success. There is now a growing demand from businesses for transversal key competences, such as problem solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, linguistic skills, entrepreneurship and more generally, 'non-routine skills'. The 2009 Year of Creativity and Innovation will emphasise the importance of such transversal skills.

There is still a need to acquire professional expertise and knowledge, but training in a specific field of knowledge also acts as the carrier for building other, more general, skills. Later in the life cycle, these transversal and transferable skills can be a valuable asset in the event of reconversion after restructuring and displacement.

A general trend towards a demand for a broader portfolio of skills is perceptible across sectors. In knowledge intensive and growing sectors such as nanotechnology and biomedical healthcare, there will be an even greater demand for scientists skilled in more than just one area or research field. In addition, as the number of companies that develop and manufacture nanotechnology and biotechnology products in cooperation with research institutes grows, demand for qualified personnel in both R&D and business increases. In the same vein, software professionals have to develop skills in public relations. In more traditional sectors such as automobiles, commerce or tourism, existing jobs will tend to change in terms of the skills and competences required. For example, in the automotive sector, the emerging technology and evolution of demand, from greater diversity, urbanisation and pressure from energy prices, will increase the need for skills in design, marketing and research.

Deep exploration of skills requirements in the tourism sector found that in order to face the increasing competition in world tourism and keep its position as a favourite destination, it is crucial for Europe to respond to general trends, such as customised holidays, language and educational holidays. The trend towards customised holidays requires highly interdisciplinary knowledge and 'multiskilling' for those working in the sector. This involves knowledge of foreign languages, skills to identify opportunities for cross-promotion and cross-selling, customer handling services and communication skills.



A majority of jobs could be more interesting, while providing better working conditions in the future. However, working life may not be a bed of roses. Creation of a significant number of jobs with bad working conditions in the service sector is not to be excluded. The changing sector and occupational structure may lead to some job polarisation with employment growth at the higher and lower levels and the demand for jobs in the medium level occupational layer becoming somewhat thinner. European evidence tends to confirm the increasing demand for non routine tasks at the low and higher levels of the jobs ladder, while routine task jobs, normally found in the middle of the wage distribution, have decreased. As routine jobs die away and creative tasks grow, people with only very basic skills will struggle to find satisfactory employment.

What about forecasts on the supply side, that is to say learners and workers, in a non-economist way of speaking? The workforce becomes more and more skilled as the younger cohorts with a higher level of education enter the labour market, but this very slow revolution will not be sufficient to answer labour market needs. We also know that 70% of the workforce in 2020 will already be working and the workforce is getting older. This is the 'grey' revolution, which requires a constant effort to train and retrain adults and allow them to adapt in a rapidly changing environment.

Mismatches between skills supply and labour market demand are expected, and current imbalances already exist. Europe is confronted with high rates of unemployment for low skilled workers in some countries (10.9% overall, but more than 15% in Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland in 2007), young people (15.5% for 15-24 year olds in 2007) and non-EU nationals (14.7% in the euro area), alongside persistent labour market shortages of some skills groups, such as those involved in teacher training and education, engineering and manufacturing, and health and welfare qualifications. Furthermore, unemployment rates vary significantly by geographical region, suggesting a lack of cross-regional labour market mobility.

For those who have a job, there is still a risk of more qualitative skills mismatches. Recently, 52.3% of workers stated that their skills levels matched their job, while 13.1% expressed the need for further training and 34.6% said that they could cope with more demanding duties. Mismatches are higher for people with only upper secondary education than for those with the highest educational levels and the incidence of job mismatches differs according to the field of studies. However, a non-negligible part of skills mismatches is a transitory phenomenon, in particular for young graduates who accept jobs that do not match their educational level, but give useful work experience. Nevertheless, underutilisation of education remains a persistent phenomenon for migrants in some countries. As a result, labour markets tend to make inefficient use of the potential of migration to contribute to filling skills gaps.

These mismatches are likely to both continue and change in character as a consequence of the key trends described above. Labour demand and skills needs are changing both quantitatively and qualitatively, as are labour and skills supply. This situation both increases the need for anticipatory mechanisms so that education and training policies and active labour market measures can be well informed and heightens the challenges of creating valid forecasts.

Policy makers need to imagine the day after tomorrow, the future, but should decide today to already prepare for tomorrow. That is why the updated strategic framework on European cooperation will firmly set strategic objectives for education and training systems, as well as immediate priorities.



Skills revolution: not a luxury, a need

Upgrading and updating skills are not just a luxury for the high-tech professionals who have to cope directly with technological changes. All levels of education are concerned. We should tackle early school leaving, but also drop outs and failures in the first years at university, because graduates from higher education will be more and more in demand by employers. Adult training is all the more important as younger cohorts shrink. As a consequence, universities should participate in adult training. They should be opened to a wider public from different backgrounds. Commitment to life long learning in higher education is all the more necessary.

Raising skills is a prerequisite, but training and education systems should also provide the adequate skills to better match labour market needs and to prepare for an active role in the society of tomorrow, without speaking here of personal wellbeing, which is as important, if not more so, as economic goals.

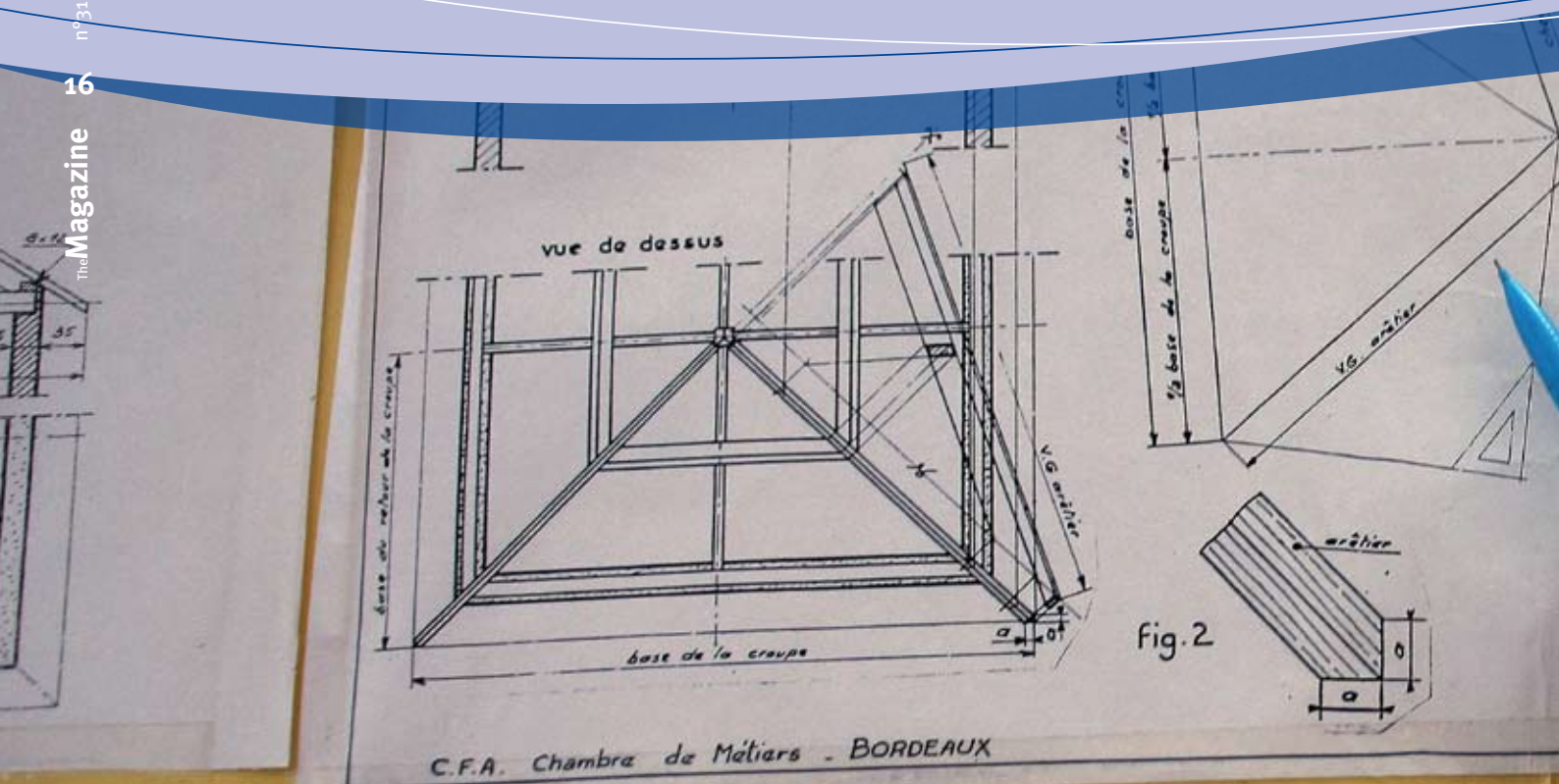
We must give everyone the skills to continue learning throughout their life, adapting and prospering with the changes that will occur. Key competences and transversal skills should be adequately covered in curricula.

It is equally important that we ensure our young people have job specific skills. Dialogue and partnerships between universities, training providers and businesses are useful to develop adequate curricula. In this respect, the 2009 Year of Creativity and Innovation will promote partnerships between education, research and business to boost innovation and a knowledge-based economy.

Roadmap: concrete tools for better match of skills and jobs

To anticipate and match new jobs and skills requirements, the New Skills for New Jobs initiative contains concrete proposals under four headings.

Firstly, the initiative will strengthen the Union's ability to forecast and anticipate skills and job needs, by harnessing the resources and expertise of Eurofound and Cedefop. Updated quantitative projections of skills and labour supply and demand will be published every two years starting in 2010, along with ad hoc early warnings of potential labour market imbalances. The use of employers' opinions as an alternative to these quantitative methods is now being debated. If we want to know what employers' skills needs will be, why not ask them? The possibility of an employers' survey tool and qualitative studies on the skills needs of businesses will be explored. However, past experience suggests that employers are not very good at anticipating their future skills needs. Indeed, employers can feel either too concerned by their own company and local constraints, or find difficulties in analysing the key factors, both backwards and forwards, to describe possible options, their likely strategies and occupational consequences.

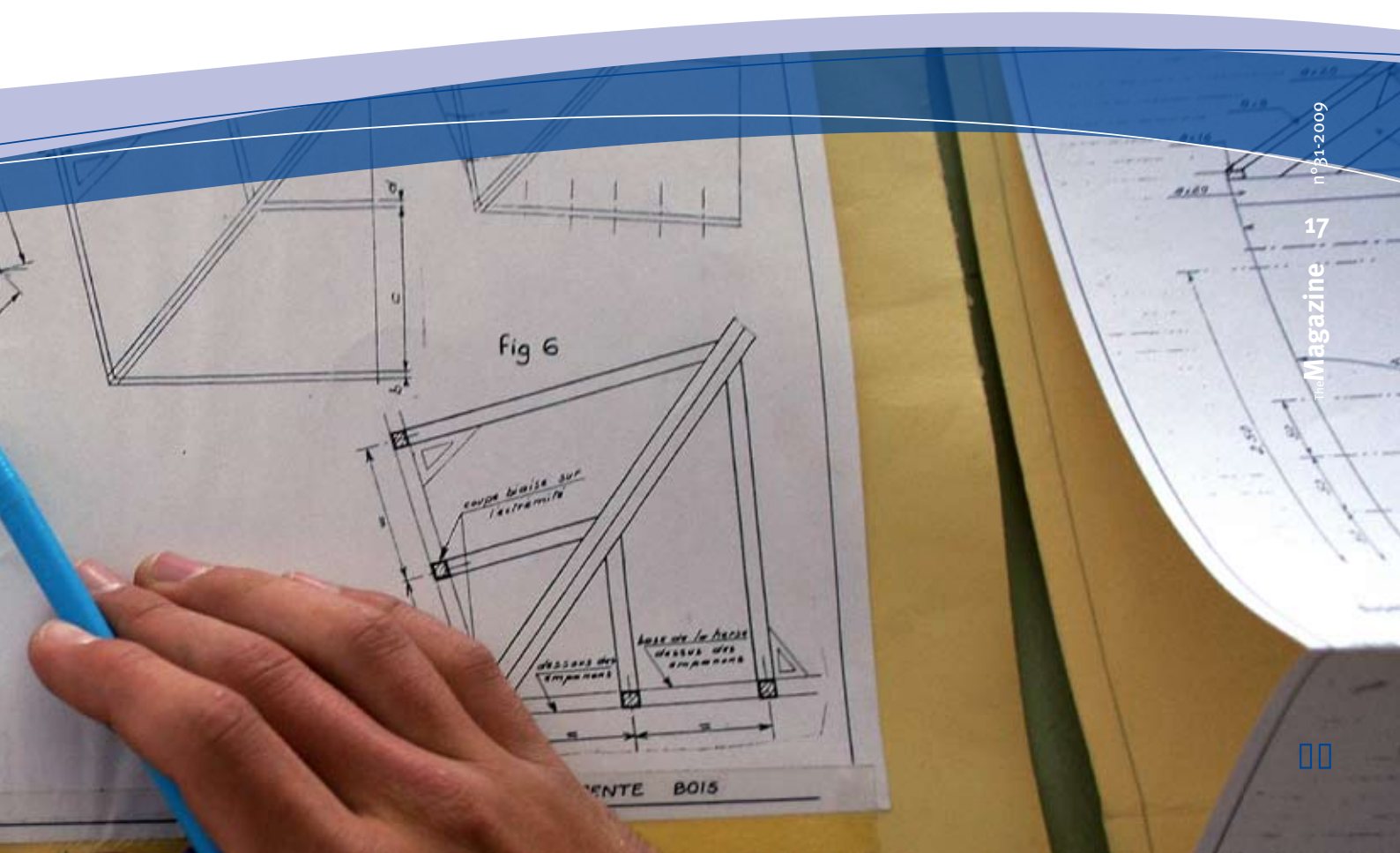


This justifies the need to organise collective discussions, where consensual positions can be expected, based on clear arguments. Foresight analysis at the sectoral level, involving all stakeholders and experts, helps to assess future skills requirements. The comprehensive results for 16 sectors, covering 75% of total EU jobs in the private sector, will be available in mid 2009, providing a full picture of labour demand and its implications for restructuring, based on a common foresight methodology. This could be the first step towards the establishment of “sector councils on employment and skills” at European level, to collect information available in Member States and to distribute recommendations drawn from exchanges between stakeholders. The “Tuning Education Structure in Europe” will also help to share information and compare the views of students, academics and employers about current skills achievements and future requirements.

The second strand of initiatives should address skills mismatches. We envisage creating a user friendly, transparent online service for citizens, providing qualitative information on occupations, skills, learning and training opportunities across the EU. This will take the form of a clear geographic representation of the job offers matched to a user’s profile, and future projections of occupations and skills with feedback on why jobs and skills do not match up and advice on possible solutions. The service will gather job matching, geographic display and learning perspectives together in one ‘shop’. Based on existing instruments such as EURES and PLOTEUS, its name could be “Match and Map”. In addition, the Commission will organise an annual “Partnership for skills and employment” event to recognise the most innovative partnerships matching skills supply and demand.

Thirdly, this initiative will deepen international cooperation to anticipate and match supply and demand. Trends in other parts of the world will affect the skills and employment requirements in Europe. Policy dialogue and cooperation with our neighbours and other continents can help us to face current and future challenges.

Last but not least, the New Skills for New Jobs initiative places the need for the skills upgrading of Europe’s population at the centre of the EU’s strategy for growth and jobs by drawing on the Union’s resources. In brief, existing EU policies, financial possibilities and concrete developments such as the European Qualification Framework will support the New Skills for New Jobs initiative.



GOOD PRACTICES

in creative & innovative projects

Citizens Panels : empowering the public

Imagine that you, as an average citizen in a European country, had the opportunity to debate and formulate recommendations on topics that would be fed directly into European policy making. This real bottom-up approach may sound utopian, but it is becoming possible through the new innovative measure of Citizens Panels.

Citizens Panels are an innovative methodology with the potential to encourage public participation in important transnational issues. They are projects where randomly selected ordinary citizens from different demographic, social and professional backgrounds are invited to collaborate and discuss common European issues both locally and at an EU level.

The bottom-up approach is ensured by a common methodology. The project promoter selects the participants, provides them with accurate information and sees to it that the different sensitivities about an issue are represented. The discussions also need to be skilfully moderated. After debating with local and regional decision makers on the subject, the recommendations are distributed at a European level. The European Commission is a partner for the organisations involved. As such, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture will ensure that appropriate follow up and feed back will be provided to all projects.

Citizens Panels embrace creativity and innovation as they produce outcomes that are of value to the European democratic system by using new methodology for citizen participation. More specifically, six of the 18 Citizens Panels that have been recently selected explicitly address the issue of creativity and innovation.

One interesting example of a Citizens Panel is the “New Democratic Toolbox for New Institutions”, run by the European non-profit organisation European Citizen Action Service. The focus of the project is to create an innovative ‘democratic toolbox’ by developing guidelines for a consolidated methodology for European-scale Citizens Panels and citizen involvement. Activities are taking place in Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Latvia, where the opinions and recommendations from the citizens participating in the exercise will constitute the ‘democratic toolbox’. This will then be presented to the new European Parliament and the new Commission which will both take up office later this year.

Another innovative Citizens Panel is led by the network “Integrating Ireland – The Immigrant Network”. This aims to promote a good model of immigrant integration for a fair and inclusive society. This is done by using national and regional panels that include various activities such as training, debate and discussion. The project wants to empower young people to participate in the decision making process on the future of Europe and to facilitate intercultural dialogue and active citizenship. It includes advisory groups and regional and national panels in Ireland, Germany, the United Kingdom, Latvia and Portugal. A European intercultural dialogue meeting will take place in Ireland to highlight and share experiences and best practices and to adopt recommendations for regional, national and European action on integration and the fight against discrimination.

These two examples of Citizens Panels include not only a learning aspect since they increase an individual’s ability and creativity, but they also promote policy debate and combine European, national, regional and local action. They create



Creativity and Innovation
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synergies and help to focus policy debate on specific issues. All of this is in line with the objectives of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

Culture unzips European creativity

All over Europe the word 'creativity' is buzzing. It is increasingly referred to as a critical element to boost innovation in Europe, to improve our economic performance and at the same time contribute to more sustainable development.

Indeed, creative people spur economic development. It is their knowledge, adaptability and creativity that make the difference. Policy makers can encourage this by stimulating creative areas to develop. The creative economy has proven to be one way to boost the growth potential of cities and regions. However, a key question remains: how to unzip European creativity?

This is all the more urgent as creativity and technology become inextricably linked and the multi-faceted process of innovation becomes ever more difficult to grasp.

Against this background, it, therefore, does not come as a surprise that an increasing number of cities, regions and even countries in Europe are developing creative strategies, where culture and cultural industries are used as ways to unzip creative potential.

Europe is witnessing a growth of creative districts, where cultural activities are clustered together with businesses, research centres and universities, involving more and more

people and generating work and wealth. Throughout Europe, there are scores of examples of initiatives linking art with creativity and innovation. A great many of these improve the competitive potential of regions and cities.

One example is based in the Netherlands. The "Young Designers and Industry" initiative connects young designers (often recently graduated) to the complex design challenges society faces. By doing this, it fosters design projects combining economic, social and cultural elements which promote creativity in the wider economy. Another example can be seen in Portugal, where a specialised incubator has been set up within the Fundação de Serralves, an internationally recognised institution promoting contemporary art. It aims to stimulate and support entrepreneurial initiatives in the creative industries by bridging the gaps between creative people/artists and the business world, in a broad spectrum of areas that range from music production to web TV, multi-media design for spaces, contemporary art restoration, 'didactic clothing', jewellery or the development of multi-disciplinary workshops for children.

This growing importance of creativity and its close link with culture is also recognised by the European Union in the European agenda for culture which the European Commission published in May 2007. Promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs is seen as one of three policy objectives shared by all stakeholders (the European institutions, Member States and civil society) together with the promotion of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and the strengthening of culture as a vital element in EU international relations.

The EU Heads of State and Government have underlined the potential of cultural industries in boosting creativity and innovation in Europe. The way these industries contribute to Europe's economic strength and our competitive power will be a focus of the 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation.



The European Commission stimulates the mobility of artists and their works as well as intercultural dialogue, and thus the positive and dynamic links between culture, creativity and innovation through its 2007-2013 Culture Programme.

These projects cover a range of activities. European artists and academics working in interactive media art will explore the interface between art, technology, science and society in the "European mobile lab for interactive media artists". The International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation brings art into schools in order to stimulate the creativity of young children and release their potential through its MUS-E programme. The EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture highlights excellent examples of architectural creativity for works less than two years old. The first ever European Union Literary Prize will be awarded in 2009, highlighting the creative quality and diversity of European literature.

The European Capitals of Europe, partly funded through the Culture Programme, is one of Europe's major annual cultural events, showcasing the continent's enormous cultural wealth and developing creative projects to trigger local development and social inclusion. In this context, creative industry projects often emphasise the importance of creativity for sustainable development. Vilnius (Lithuania) and Linz (Austria), the two 2009 European Capitals of Culture, will clearly play the creativity card throughout the Year, to the great delight of their many visitors.

What emerges from such showcase projects is that the creative 'buzz' is regenerating cities and regions. But what also emerges is that to be truly successful, a great deal of planning and research is needed to tailor policies to meet acknowledged needs. When well planned, culture not only unzips creativity, it zips cultural entrepreneurs together. These creative clusters help to stabilise and revitalise areas by involving people from all walks in life in the best culture has to offer.

Innovation & Creativity in Education

LEARNING THROUGH ANIMATION

Changing the role of teachers by producing and using enriched animated lessons.

Over the last decade, computer assisted animation has developed totally new ways of expression and communication, especially in the fields of film, cartoons, advertising and homepages. Youngsters spend hours with computer-generated pictures. They gather information, find amusement and construct their identity around the new media. Schools in Europe should reflect this reality.

The project intends to help encourage wider use of computer-assisted animation in elementary schools in Europe. The technology has huge didactic potential, but is still remarkably unexploited. Based on experience, the new techniques are extremely suitable as a way for children and youngsters to learn.

The project will develop, test and produce a training manual for teachers in elementary schools and students in teacher training colleges. The main result (currently being developed) will be a self-training programme and a manual on the technical potential of teaching with animated programmes. Several animated lessons, made by video recordings during the project workshops, will be tested and assessed with trainers and pupils in the pilot schools.



The main aim is to optimise the use and effectiveness of animated programmes and challenge the traditional teaching methods used in schools. This will have a multidimensional benefit: for teachers training pupils with learning difficulties, the social cohesion of pupils, increasing acceptance of computer-based technology as a didactic tool, and integration of this method into the curricula of teacher training

PRODUCING ONLINE OPEN LEARNING SYSTEMS (POOLS)

This project has helped to ensure that new ICT and video technologies can be accessed, developed and applied to teaching and that teachers themselves can develop their own content.

The products developed help teachers make good use of the latest technological advances for the benefit of their students such as Hot Potatoes, Web Page Text Blender (an innovative product not funded through POOLS but offered as a useful complement to it), podcasting and blogs.

The project has created a number of new products which effectively respond to the existing problem of underutilisation of eLearning technologies within lesser-taught languages. For example, it has built a valuable library of new digital teaching materials for teachers. It has also developed user friendly tools to help teachers make the best use of technology in their language teaching methods and instructions on how to develop materials from scratch. As such, the project increases the capacity of teachers of lesser taught languages to use innovative approaches.

Excellent use is made of the website to put the 'transparency principle' into practice. This acts as a useful conduit to report and discuss progress both between partners and between participants. The project blog was of particular use here.

Peer review of other partners' work helped keep the project fresh and ideas flowing.

The products developed have the potential to transfer technological innovations in language teaching to the teaching of lesser taught languages. It is particularly promising, for example, that the Romanian partner has begun the process of national accreditation for the teacher training modules developed during the project.

BUILDING BRIDGES

The aim of the project was to encourage female farmers who are active in their respective agricultural communities to become mentors for their counterparts in each participating country.

The women received training, mostly online, for example on motivational methods for self-empowerment and fostering of entrepreneurial spirit; the organisation and management of meetings; development of networks for female farmers; and advice on how such women could gain more influence either through further education or by being more active in the farming community.

The project produced five learning modules in five languages. These are accessible through an online classroom in the project website (www.building-bridges.is) and a framework and handbook for creating sustainable networks of women in farming.

During the project, female farmers visited different partner countries, got to know each other and shared experiences and innovations. This mobility will continue after the project ends. Three TOI proposals building on the results of the project were in process for the 2008 call.



Innovation and creativity in youth policy

Through its Youth in Action programme, the European Union every year supports thousands of projects designed to promote the active participation of young people in society and to offer them the rich experience of non formal apprenticeships. Numerous projects demonstrate real creativity, whether in what they produce at the end or the processes they establish, as can be seen from the two innovative schemes presented below. They were selected from among those presented to specifically promote innovation and quality (action 4.4 of the programme).

EURO EXCLUDED YOUTH

Organisation:
Mission Locale de Marseille - France

This project was submitted by the Mission locale de Marseille, a local public body. It involves four partners from France, Spain, Hungary and Germany. Conventional methods of vocational training have failed to give a significant impetus to the professional inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities living in suburban areas. So, the project aims to explore, assess and disseminate best practices on alternative methods of education in order to boost these individuals' professional development.

These success stories will be made available through an online database. The alternative methods basically consist of an individual approach and foster personal coaching in order to make young people aware of their own abilities and skills, allowing them to acquire autonomy. Solutions promoting support for innovative business development will also be examined as will the introduction of information desks in the areas where young people with fewer opportunities live.

Furthermore, the project will prepare the way for the development of a European network of alternative practices for the social and professional inclusion of disadvantaged young people.



This should secure its sustainability. The partnership will also work on a lobbying strategy to attract attention from European institutions to the relevance of these methodologies for policy making on youth, employment, education, and non formal education issues. Finally, the project should lead to further European cooperation on the recognition and appreciation of non-formal skills

ORGANISATION: REGIONE VENETO - ITALY

This project, submitted by the Youth Department of the Veneto Region, involves a strong partnership between 11 organisations from Italy (2), Spain (2), United Kingdom (3), Sweden (2) and Greece (2). It is based on an innovative approach and aims to bring together professionals from public bodies and youth NGOs to develop collaborative ventures.

These include implementing concrete activities with young people, exchanging good practices and developing long term cooperation in the context of non formal education. To this end, the project will organise youth contests on how to improve the quality of life of young people living in suburban areas.

Young people with fewer opportunities will be invited to submit projects addressing this theme and be given the opportunity to attend training sessions on youth work and project implementation. The initiative encompasses various activities such as local press conferences to draw attention to the project, a preparatory meeting in Venice, a thematic seminar in Liverpool to prepare the contest, the launch of a call for tender, and establishment of help desks to provide assistance to potential applicants. There will be one project per participating country.

This project fosters cooperation between the NGO sector and public bodies. It should have an impact on policy making and give a new impetus to non formal education. The plan to make known the results of the project will associate the EU through its Executive Education and Culture Agency, which should receive a list of suggestions for future proposals based on the experience received.





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European Year 2009

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

The Year was inaugurated twice – for the media on the 5th of December and then, officially and politically, in Prague on the 7th of January.

Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009



The media launch was not for the faint-hearted: an avalanche of peas and beans on stage, pieces of smashed cabbage everywhere and all the orchestra's instruments cooked up in a soup for the audience to taste. The Vienna Vegetable Orchestra put on a show to be remembered for its novelty and creativity. Played on instruments made solely of vegetables, this inaugural concert also marked the official handover from the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 to its successor of 2009.

The concert was preceded by a press conference, where Commissioner Jan Figel was accompanied by EYCI ambassadors Edward de Bono, Karlheinz Brandenburg and Jordi Savall. They all said that Europeans must better exploit their creative potential in order to live better and compete in a globalised world.

The official launch in Prague was organised by the Czech EU Presidency, together with the European Commission. In a solemn ceremony in the National Theatre in Prague, Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso stressed the importance of focusing on creativity and innovation precisely during a serious economic slowdown.

A well-attended conference was organised in the historical premises of the Czech Senate in Prague, addressed by Commissioner Figel and the Czech ministers for Education and for Culture, Ondrej Liska and Roman Jehlicka. Nine Ambassadors of the Year attended the event; in a separate meeting they produced a set of recommendations to the EU governments, which became a good starting point of a year-long debate that should lead to the drafting of a strong political manifesto.

The main thread of the debate was stressing the necessity for investment in education and skills as a top priority. For EU institutions and governments. It would be a fundamental mistake to cut research and development and spending on education in the context of the current crisis, stressed the ambassadors, according to whom creativity and innovation

are tools to tackle Europe's challenges, which include the move to the knowledge society, demographic ageing, globalisation and climate change.

All documentation from these meetings can be accessed at:
• <http://create2009.europa.eu/>

EYCI – a long list of events

Dozens of events and activities linked to the EYCI are in preparation at European, national or regional level. Here are some of the more visible ones:

FEBRUARY:

► **DEBATE** : CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AND THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

MARCH

► CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION ABOUT BEST CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE PROJECTS FINANCED THROUGH EU PROGRAMMES

► **DEBATE** : EDUCATION FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

APRIL

► ORBIS PICTUS EXHIBITION

► YOUNG TALENTS FROM EU REGIONS PRESENTING THE RESULTS OF THEIR WORK

MAY

► FIRST EUROPEAN SME WEEK

► CREATIVE ITALIAN SCHOOLS COMPETITION

► **DEBATE** : CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Details about all these and dozens of other events:

• <http://create2009.europa.eu/>





The Ambassadors

The Ambassadors of the Year are high-profile figures who are committed to, and share, the aims of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. The Ambassadors lend their support to making the Year a success.

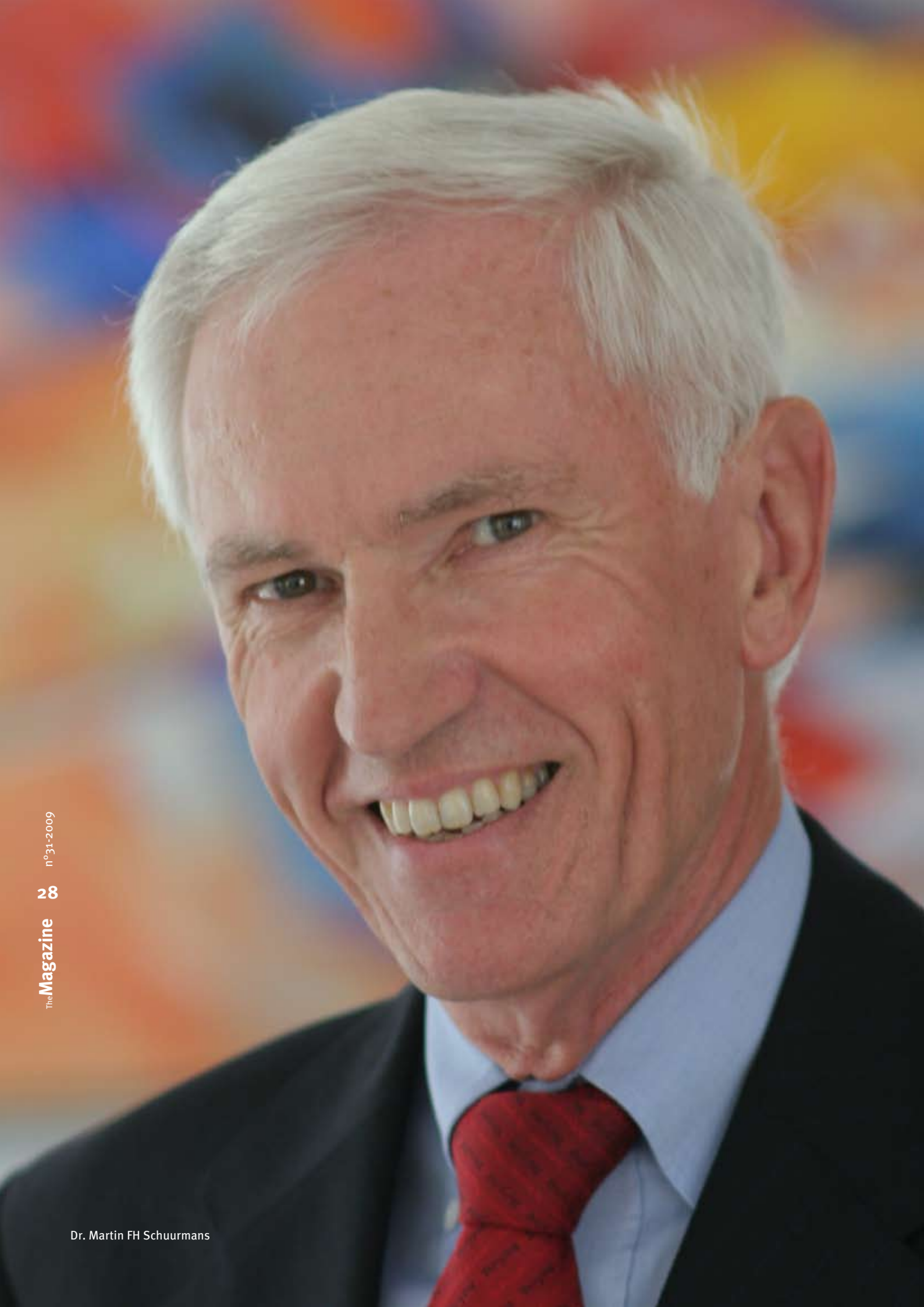
The official EU ambassadors of the Year are:

- **Ferran Adrià Acosta (ES)**, *creative chef*
- **Esko Aho (FIN)**, *executive vice-president, Nokia*
- **Karlheinz Brandenburg (DE)**,
professor, researcher in information and communication technology
- **Jean-Philippe Courtois (FR)**, *president, Microsoft International*
- **Edward de Bono (MT)**,
author and international speaker on creativity and lateral thinking
- **Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker (BE)**, *dance choreographer*
- **Ján Ďurovčík (SK)**, *dance choreographer*
- **Richard Florida (US, CA)**, *author, professor, economist*
- **Jack Martin Händler (SK)**, *conductor*
- **Antonín Holý (CZ)**, *professor, chemist*
- **Remment Lucas Koolhaas (NL)**,
professor, architect, urban planner
- **Damini Kumar (IE)**, *designer and inventor*
- **Dominique Langevin (FR)**, *professor, physicist*
- **Rita Levi-Montalcini (IT)**, *Nobel laureate professor, neurologist*
- **Áron Losonczy (HU)**, *architect and inventor*
- **Bengt-Åke Lundvall (DK)**, *professor, researcher on innovation*
- **Javier Mariscal (ES)**, *designer*
- **Radu Mihăileanu (FR, RO)**, *film director*
- **Blanka Říhová (CZ)**, *professor, microbiologist*
- **Ken Robinson (UK)**, *professor, author on creativity and innovation*
- **Ernő Rubik (HU)**, *professor, architect, designer*
- **Jordi Savall i Bernadet (ES)**, *musician, professor*
- **Erik Spiekermann (DE)**, *professor, typography designer*
- **Philippe Starck (FR)**, *creator, artistic director, designer*
- **Christine Van Broeckhoven (BE)**,
professor, molecular geneticist
- **Harriet Wallberg-Henriksson (SE)**,
professor, president, Karolinska Institutet



Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009





Dr. Martin FH Schuurmans



The EIT : taking the NEXT STEP

Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009



More than ever, Europe needs excellence and innovation. This is why I am convinced that the European Institute of Innovation and Technology is a very timely and necessary initiative.

The reason is straightforward. If Europe does not manage to pull its forces together and significantly boost its innovation capacity within the next two decades, emerging international players will leave us standing on the sidelines in the global economy. The problem in Europe is not a lack of research or inventions, but a lack of implementation towards new business. All the elements of innovation are there, but we need to put them together and create a powerful and dynamic engine out of the individual parts.

This is precisely where the EIT comes in. It is not simply another institute or programme or a funding agency for that matter, but we are taking the next step. It is a blueprint for enhancing the stakeholders' innovation capacity. The EIT is to explore new innovative relationships between excellence in education, technology, research, business and entrepreneurship. This will be done through the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) – highly integrated partnerships of excellent players in their respective fields, from Europe and beyond.

These KICs should have a unique impact on the creation of new business opportunities, new jobs and new bright talent such as entrepreneurial people working across stakeholder boundaries.

Entrepreneurial people

We want Europe to be a stimulating place for world class researchers, technologists, educators, business people, and entrepreneurs. We need talented young academics from Europe and abroad, flexible, mobile and eager to innovate. With the KICs, we can create incentives that will attract bright minds and skilled people for a true 'brain gain': bringing

together top class teams; fostering the right conditions for ideas to be turned into new business opportunities; providing inspirational education beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries; and offering an EIT label for degrees and diplomas.

In order to achieve this, we need nothing more or less than a change in mindsets. Too often, new ideas are inhibited by rigid structures. Too often, the flow of knowledge is blocked by the boundaries of disciplines or sectors.

This is why the EIT offers a novel approach at a European level. It is worth highlighting three features.

Through its KICs, the EIT will stimulate work and study in an integrated way. Students, researchers, technologists and entrepreneurs will interact across disciplines and across distances. This high level of interaction will also mean that a KIC cannot be a simple network spread thinly across Europe. Resources will need to be concentrated in a small number of 'colocation centres' that will be able to play a predominant role within the structure of a KIC.

Another strong point of the EIT concept is its educational component. So far, education has often been neglected in innovation partnerships. However, it is a crucial factor for a successful and sustainable culture of innovation. We need to educate entrepreneurial young people who have the skills and knowledge to make the best out of their ideas and talents. The EIT Governing Board has made this aspect a particular focus in its reflections on the creation of the KICs.

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And finally business drive and entrepreneurship including the creation of spin-offs, start-ups and SMEs will be part of the KIC thus emphasising new business and job creation.

Challenges ahead

These aims are certainly ambitious – but not unrealistic. One of the strong points of the KIC concept is that it builds on excellence. Partners within a KIC can draw upon the wealth of their collective experience and expertise in order to explore and find their optimal structure and operating methods.

The EIT Governing Board will set the strategic conditions to reach these objectives. It will establish a strategic innovation agenda, and is set for a sustainable mobilisation of additional funding. The establishment of the EIT Foundation is a priority action in this area.

The year 2009 will be marked by a number of pioneering decisions for the EIT, most notably the selection of the first two to three KICs. The vision is clear: we want the EIT to be recognised as a key driver of sustainable European economic growth and competitiveness by stimulating world-leading innovation.

Dr. Schuurmans
Chairman of the EIT Governing board



Dr. Schuurmans is a former Executive Vice President, Philips Research / Philips Medical systems (PMS). He is co-founder of the Sino-Dutch Biomedical School of Information Engineering (BMIE) in Shenyang, China, and Chairman of BMIE's International Advisory Board.

European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

Innovation is the key to sustainable growth and competitiveness. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is set to promote innovation through new models of collaboration within the knowledge triangle of higher education, research and business.

The 18 Governing Board members are:

Prof. João Caraça, Prof. Manuel Castells, Dr. Bertrand Collomb, Prof. Giovanni Colombo (Executive Committee), Dr. Ellen de Brabander, Dr. Anders Flodström (Executive Committee), Dr. Daria Gołębiewska-Tataj (Executive Committee), Prof. Wolfgang Herrmann, Prof. Julia King, Mr. Morten Loktu, Dr. Karen Maex, Dr. Bálint Magyar, Dr. Erna Möller, Dr. Yrjö Neuvo (Executive Committee), Dr. Martin Schuurmans (Chairman of the Board), Dr. Peter Tropschuh, Mr. Linnar Viik, Dr. Alexander Ullrich von Gabain





EIT's key milestones in 2008

► 11 March 08:

EIT Regulation is adopted.

► 18 June 08:

EU Member States decide unanimously that the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) will have its headquarters in Budapest.

► 30 July 08:

The EIT's first Governing Board is officially appointed following a selection process launched in February 2008. The 18-strong Board provides a collective balance of expertise and experience from the worlds of higher education, research, business and innovation in Europe.

► 15 September 08:

The EIT marks the launch of its activities in Budapest with the first meeting of the Governing Board and unanimously elects Dr. Martin Schuurmans as its chairman.

Next steps

► 2009:

EIT seminars to further the dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.

► Spring 2009:

Call for proposals for the KICs.

► End of 2009:

Selection of the first KICs.

► Beginning of 2010:

Launch of the first KICs.



European Institute of
Innovation & Technology



Design as a tool for innovation

BEYOND THE MYTHS ABOUT DESIGN.

Do you think that design is only about the appearance of products, fashion and cool furniture? Think again. Companies, academics and policy makers alike are increasingly recognising design as a tool for innovation, competitiveness and sustainability. For the European Year 2009, the European Commission is having a close look at design and its potential as a bridge between creativity and innovation. What then is design?

Design myths...

No single, commonly agreed definition of the word 'design' exists. So, a number of images or 'myths' about its nature prevail. True or false? Judge for yourself.

Myth 1: The purpose of design is aesthetics.

It is true that the designer deals with the external appearance of products, but that is not all. In short, design is about putting users at the centre to ensure their needs are best met. It is a holistic approach which allows a range of considerations beyond aesthetics to be taken into account, including functionality, usability, sustainability, cost and intangibles such as brand.

Myth 2: Only objects can be designed.

Many designers work in manufacturing firms, dealing with products and packaging. But design can also be applied to services – private and public – as well as to systems, as in the case of urban planning. A service designer may look at how a patient experiences being taken to an emergency department or how bank customers react when visiting their local branch. Urban designers examine, for example, how elderly or disabled people experience a visit to the town centre, or how to avoid the uncontrolled growth of shanty towns.

Myth 3: Design aims to make products more exclusive.

Design can be used by companies to give products an appearance or functionality which customers are willing to pay a bonus for, or to weave in – together with branding and marketing – considerations of an intangible nature related to user aspirations and image. It thus contributes to creating unique competitive advantages that help companies move away from pure price competition. However, design can also be used to create products and services that are cheaper to make, transport and use, and better adapted, for instance, for developing countries. Well known examples of innovative, cost saving designs are the Tata Nano people's car and IKEA's flatpacks. Many designers see their role as creating 'design for all' products and services that everyone can access and use.

Myth 4: Design is an activity which only concerns designers.

Design activities are often performed by designers, whether in-house or external consultants. In the last 15 to 20 years, however, there has been a trend towards the use of design as a strategic, cross-functional and multi-disciplinary activity which stretches across a number of processes in a company, from research and engineering to customer relations,





marketing and management. This implies a broader role for the designer, linking the other functions and ensuring that the customer is always in focus. Design activities can also be 'silent'. For example, in service companies the person undertaking design work may be called something else.

Myth 5: Design is for big companies only.

It is true that many of the best known cases of innovative design leading to market dominance come from the world of multinationals, such as Nokia's mobile communication devices and Apple's iPod. Nevertheless, plenty of examples exist of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) that have used design successfully. Without knowing it, most companies use design in one way or another, but SMEs are less likely to use it consciously or strategically. Research shows that obstacles to better use of design by SMEs include risk aversion and lack of resources, experience and support. Nevertheless, design is often put forward as an innovation activity for SMEs and low tech companies, as the initial investment may be smaller than for other forms of research and development.

Myth 6: A design has no value unless protected.

An innovative design can be protected in Europe at a national or Community level. The system of the Community design was created in 2003 and is operated by the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM) in Alicante. In reality, many firms do not register their designs as the protection offered is relatively weak compared to other forms of intellectual property guarantees. Short product life cycles for consumer goods such as fashion items and the fact that minor modifications suffice to create an entirely new design also limit the use of design registration. Protected or not, a design can still be of considerable commercial value.

Myth 7: The design debate should be left with the arts and culture community, and not be confused with business.

Design is generally considered an important part of the creative and cultural sector, and of Europe's heritage. Moreover, design has the potential to weave into products aesthetic and cultural aspects and allusions, such as those linked to traditions, values and life style. On the other hand, design is also a business activity, aiming to improve sales, customer satisfaction and profitability for the company in which it is applied.

Beyond the myths...

In short, design is the activity of conceiving and developing a plan for a product, service or system that ensures the best interface with user needs. It is generally performed by any organisation, whether in manufacturing or services, public or private, although not always recognised as such. It allows a range of aspects to be taken into account – aesthetic, ergonomic, environmental, cultural and cost – just to mention a few, and as such is increasingly considered a strategic activity for user centred innovation, differentiation and competitiveness.

As design is a driver of innovation, the Innovation Policy Unit of the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry is currently looking into the potential of design, and at what can be done at a national and EU level to ensure its optimal use.

Several questions arise, such as:

- What is the nature of the relationship between design and innovation?
- What is the economic impact of the use of design by companies on their performance, and on local, regional and national economies?
- What do Member States and other countries do to support the use of design?

What is the relationship between design and innovation?

The varying interpretations of design and its broad nature make it difficult to capture in innovation statistics. Relatively little comparable data across countries exist on, for instance, the number of designers or the use of design by companies. The statistical manuals most commonly used for innovation purposes – the OECD Frascati and Oslo Manuals – treat design either as part of research and development, or of product or marketing innovation. This means that it gets 'hidden' under other labels. Some design activities are not covered by either manual and hence not measured at all.

Nevertheless, design is often considered as the bridge between technology and the user since it has the potential to make technological inventions appealing and user friendly. As such, it can make or break a market entry. As it transforms ideas and creativity into innovation, it is of particular relevance to the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.



What is the economic impact of design?

A substantial body of evidence on the economic impact of design has been building up over the last two decades, as interest in the topic has grown slowly, but steadily across the globe.

The result of micro-economic research on the relationship between design and company performance is rather conclusive: the use of design has a positive impact on performance measured in terms of profitability, share price, growth and employment. Examples over the past decade include the following:

- A UK survey showed that a portfolio of publicly listed design-led companies increased by 41% over a five year period, while the market index gained only 14%;
- A Belgian survey for the Ministry of Economy analysed the evolution of business performance in different sectors and concluded that a strong interest in design improves company profitability, solvency and liquidity;
- A Danish study for the National Agency for Enterprise and Housing on 1,000 Danish companies showed a strong relationship between the use of design and increased sales, exports and job creation.

In addition to this, several national surveys show that companies perceive design as beneficial to performance: 32% of Swedish companies consider that design has a high impact on sales; and 81% of Spanish companies, 75% of Norwegian companies and 42% of UK companies say that design has an impact on profits. One third of Polish companies reports that design has a positive impact on sales, market share, new market development and competitiveness.

How do Member States and other countries support use of design?

There is a history of design support in many European countries and regions. While early design promotion mainly consisted of awareness raising among local consumers and industry, and international promotion of the image of a country, recent design policies tend to be more ambitious and to emphasise design as a strategic tool for economic progress, improved competitiveness and job creation. National initiatives frequently also promote design with broader societal

benefits, stressing inclusiveness, accessibility, welfare and environmental sustainability.

The support to design varies greatly between Member States and regions. The experience gained by the more advanced countries in this area could be taken advantage of at a European level, to the benefit of all. Countries in other parts of the world, such as India and South Korea, have realised the benefits of design and formulated national design policies.

European Commission initiatives in design domain

Günter Verheugen, the European Commissioner responsible for enterprise and industry policy, met representatives from the design sector in January 2008 to examine the role of design in European competitiveness. As the discussion touched upon globalisation, it was agreed that Europe must maintain its position as the most competitive region in the world as far as design is concerned. Design is a European strength and competitive advantage, but like every asset, it needs to be looked after.

The topic of design is not new to the European Commission. Relevant initiatives and activities that the Commission has either launched or supported include the Community design of 2003, the eco-design directive for energy-using products of 2005, "design for all" as a principle in the public procurement directive of 2004, the SEE design project disseminating good practice on design support for SMEs (ended in 2007), the DME award rewarding European excellence in design management and the fight against counterfeiting and piracy.

It is time to go one step further and make design part of European innovation policy. The Commission is, therefore, planning a public consultation on the basis of a document on design for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

This article is an appetiser. For those of you who wish to read more about design, recent publications supported by the Commission include a study on design as a tool for innovation by the European INNO-GRIPS project and a report on national and regional policies for design and creativity by the TrendChart project. Both documents are available at the PRO INNO Europe website (www.proinno-europe.eu).

Creativity is innovation's PRIME SOURCE

Interview with Commissioner and Vice-President Günter Verheugen
on the European Year of Creativity and Innovation

Günter Verheugen is the European Commission Vice-President in charge of enterprise and industry policy. This includes innovation. The Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry has been actively involved from the outset in the preparations for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. It is currently preparing a number of important activities for the Year.

Mr Vice-president, why a European Year of Creativity and Innovation?

Creativity is often associated solely with artists and fine arts in peoples' minds, whereas innovation is often thought to be about technological progress only in manufacturing. The European Year of Creativity and Innovation allows us to take a wider view and to look at these concepts from different angles at a time when it is most needed from an economic and societal point of view. It is therefore a timely and important event.

Let me explain in a bit more detail. Creativity, in addition to being a characteristic of artists, is a human trait common to all of us, and a process which can be learnt and encouraged. It is the generation of new ideas. Innovation is about exploiting new ideas to create value, whether in manufacturing or services, in the private or public sphere. As such, innovation is a key driver of growth. Creativity is innovation's prime source.

The challenges that Europe and other parts of the world are facing today are tremendous – climate change, poverty, globalisation and the current economic slowdown – just to mention a few. Tackling these complex challenges will require new knowledge as well as new approaches to combine existing knowledge and find holistic solutions. Innovation relies on scientific and technical skills as well as on problem solving abilities, critical thinking, experimentation, risk taking, openness to change and team work. These are creative skills.

So – in short – the European Year of Creativity and Innovation is important as it highlights the human aspect of innovation and the potential in all of us to contribute to prosperity and well-being in Europe.

How does the European Year of Creativity and Innovation fit with the EU's overall innovation strategy?

The European Commission outlined its broad-based innovation strategy for Europe in September 2006. It is broad-based in several ways. Firstly, it aims to mainstream innovation into other policy areas, such as education, cohesion policy and state aid. Secondly, it stresses the importance of all forms of innovation, including organisational and service innovation. The broad-based innovation strategy is a step away from the exclusive reliance on technology push towards a more demand-driven approach to innovation policy. As such it represents great progress compared to earlier approaches.

The latest European Innovation Scoreboard published in February 2008 shows that Europe continues to improve its relative innovation performance compared to the US and Japan, for instance, and that there is a process of convergence within the EU. Some Member States continue to have a very strong performance as world innovation leaders. Meanwhile, the large majority of European countries are catching up the leaders. This is encouraging and offers further evidence that the structural reforms launched under the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs and the broad-based innovation strategy are working.

There are signs that progress in the EU is slowing down. To maintain the positive trend, further efforts are therefore needed at EU and Member State level to identify new drivers of innovation and new ways of encouraging innovation. Let me try to illustrate this. A lot of political attention has been paid to research and development (R&D) as a key driver of innovation. R&D is undoubtedly a very important creative activity, contributing to the creation of new knowledge and



progress, but it cannot explain innovation on its own. In Europe, service activities account for around 70% of gross value added. Many service sector companies do not have an R&D department, but as global competition intensifies, they are bound to innovate to stay competitive.

Even when we look across all sectors, it raises similar questions. Analysis of data from the Innobarometer 2007 survey shows that more than 50% of innovative firms innovate without carrying out R&D. Compared to firms that do R&D, these 'non-R&D innovators' are generally smaller, active in low tech sectors and located in countries with relatively poor innovation capabilities. Nevertheless, they are growing at the same rate as their R&D performing counterparts. They engage in other creative activities to bring innovative products and services to the market.

This is evidence that different drivers of innovation exist that deserve our full attention. Europe needs to encourage entrepreneurship, networking and complementary models of innovation, especially for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) for whom setting up an in-house R&D department may seem too big an investment. This is particularly true in the current economic situation, where companies may find it more difficult than before to find external financing.

What are your expectations for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation?

In addition to raising awareness among the public, I hope that the Year will influence the policy debate and encourage cooperation between policy makers and enterprises on how to harness the creative potential of humans for economic and societal purposes. I also hope it will contribute to making people feel more positive about innovation.

What concrete actions is the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry planning for 2009 in the context of this European Year?

A number of important events will be organised under the European Year's banner, such as the Patinnova conference that the Commission is organising together with the European Patents Office, the SME week and the European Tourism Forum. Although these are regular events, they address different themes each year. Creativity and innovation will be the focus in 2009. Also, a number of relevant partner organisations, such as business associations, are currently planning events that will contribute to the Year.

Design as a tool for user-centred innovation is an important topic that the Commission will address in 2009 with the publication of a staff working document and an online consultation. Several projects will be launched with particular relevance to the Year, such as regional Innovation Weeks and Innovation Information Days for SMEs. The latter is an initiative in cooperation with the Enterprise Europe Network. We also plan to publish and distribute a handbook for SMEs on how to foster creativity and innovation. And there is more in the pipeline...



STRENGTHENING INNOVATION



Designating 2009 as the European Year of Creativity and Innovation is both timely and significant. Timely, by providing an occasion to promote the role of creativity and innovation in the changing dynamics of the post-2010 decade and significant, by giving an opportunity to reflect on the ongoing efforts to foster a more innovation friendly climate to meet the goals of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, the EU's blueprint for competitiveness and sustainable growth.

In this context, the role of cohesion policy to strengthen innovation and creativity cannot be underestimated. This article looks at the contribution of this policy from three angles: how it channels considerable investment for developing innovation and research; improves capacity within the regions to develop favourable conditions for innovation; and finally stimulates innovative and creative approaches to governance.

Innovation and cohesion policy in context

To consider the role of innovation among the priorities of European cohesion policy, it is important to recall the policy's fundamental aim: to promote economic and social cohesion by reducing disparities between the levels of development of various regions. This has always been its primary task.

Through the trinity of funding mechanisms – the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) operating in close liaison with the European Social Fund (ESF) (together generally referred to as the EU's structural funds) and the Cohesion Fund – the EU's cohesion policy invests in hundreds of thousands of projects across Europe's regions to achieve this end. Within this, support for innovation has always been a prevailing feature.

However, in recent years, the regional development context has changed radically. Regional economic and social disparities have widened significantly with the enlargement of the EU. Over the same period, competition on a global scale has continued to intensify. Globalisation has provided new opportunities for European regions, but it also requires adjustment to the ensuing structural changes.

The importance of innovation in improving the performance of the European economy has been recognised since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy back in 2000. To address, in particular, these growing economic and social disparities and challenges linked to globalisation, the strategy was relaunched in 2005, setting out a more streamlined bid to place growth, jobs and competitiveness at the top of the EU's agenda and spelling out “boosting knowledge and innovation” as a central objective.

It is undoubtedly a laudable ambition, but to achieve and deliver action, concrete support from an equally bold, and indeed, inventive mobilisation of resources, is required. Although levels of support for innovation had been significant during the 2000-2006 funding programme, it was clear that they needed to be stepped up.

Robust response from new cohesion policy: investing in innovation

In response, the new cohesion policy for 2007-2013 has undergone significant reform creating, in effect, an investment fund to support the objectives of the Lisbon agenda – the EU's top policy priority. The new approach is based on an explicit strategic focus aimed at promoting the drivers that make up the knowledge economy: research, innovation, the information society, a more skilled and qualified workforce and business development.

With a budget of €347 billion – a significant increase since the early days – the new cohesion policy programmes are expected to deliver €230 billion in investment in these key areas of the Lisbon Strategy, with some €86 billion specifically directed towards innovation related activities. As innovation is critical to achieve and maintain a competitive



advantage in global markets, this massive investment by cohesion policy has the capacity to transform the economies of European regions, including the most disadvantaged, and the EU as a whole.

Leading role for regions in fostering innovation

With sustainable economic growth increasingly related to the capacity of regional economies to change and innovate, Europe's regions are indeed a central player. Creating an environment that encourages research, development and innovation is of the highest priority for European regions and the regional level provides the ideal platform from which to foster innovation and growth. As the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, has said: "It is increasingly evident that growth strategies run from the centre are not sufficient anymore: to be effective, they must be integrated with tailored local and regional strategies."

It should be noted, however, that research and innovation activity tends to be highly concentrated. Such concentration risks exacerbating existing social and economic disparities and also undermining Europe's economic performance vis-à-vis its global competitors. Across the EU, 86 regions, with a population of 123 million, have an innovative performance below the EU average.

Reducing this innovation deficit across EU regions is, and must be, a key priority. With more than a third of the EU's budget, cohesion policy can make a significant contribution to bolster this much needed investment in research, technological development and innovation, and, crucially, to reduce the innovation deficit.

Shifting investment patterns

How is this working in practice? The answer lies to a large extent in the way the policy was reformed. Member States now have to allocate, or ' earmark', more of the available resources

to investments which generate the highest impact in terms of the growth and jobs agenda. This new strategic approach represents a departure from previous programming rounds and is a major shift in investment patterns.

And it is working. Member States and regions have changed their approach markedly and now focus far more on identifying and supporting the key drivers of a competitive economy. As is clear from the figures above, in the new 2007-2013 cohesion policy programmes, innovation has been recognised as a policy priority as never before. Investment in innovation (RTD, entrepreneurship support, ICT and human resources) in this current period will triple compared to previous allocations.

Closely related are the efforts under the programmes to develop knowledge based service economies by investing in ICT education and training, online services to businesses and citizens, and a widely available broadband infrastructure. Overall, cohesion policy investment in ICT related activity – €15.3 billion has been pledged – is set to double compared with the previous period.

Tangible commitment to innovation

As a key part of the modernisation agenda, the new generation of programmes is moving away from classic grant schemes and is supported by new forms of financial engineering and cooperation instruments, which are designed to facilitate good practice exchange and to foster innovative networks. A stronger focus is also placed on stimulating the business environment and promoting innovative clusters, rather than providing direct aid to companies.

In practical terms, this translates into a more visible commitment on the ground in support for business and innovation. For example, cohesion policy can provide the financial backing and technical assistance to harness closer cooperation between universities and business. It can encourage entrepreneurship, improve access to, and use of, ICT, and underpin this commitment by further improving on-the-job skills and adaptability of the work force.



Innovation in approach

However, in this pioneering approach to fostering innovation, the commitment from cohesion policy is far more than a system of distributing cheques. Innovation is also about doing different things and doing them differently. The very design of cohesion policy and its underlying principles of partnership, evaluation, transparency and participation have also stimulated innovative and creative approaches to governance, in all aspects of regional planning and policy development.

In promoting partnerships as a key element of good governance and encouraging an integrated approach to development to improve the overall impact of sectoral policies, the added value of cohesion policy goes well beyond the sheer size of investment.

Innovation in cooperation

Modern economies depend on information networks. Cohesion policy also seeks to promote cooperation, supporting a vast network across the public and private sectors to exchange experience and good practice, and to develop new opportunities. New initiatives include Regions for Economic Change, now an integral part of cohesion policy. This is designed to spur further exchange of experience in support of the Lisbon Strategy and innovation. The initiative introduces new ways to energise regional and urban networks, working closely with the Commission, to have innovative ideas tested and rapidly disseminated into the regional policy programmes.

Coupled to this, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy awards annual innovation prizes, the RegioStars. The objective is to identify good practice in regional development and to highlight original and innovative projects which could be attractive and inspiring to other regions.

Finally the EU's Open Days, organised by the European Commission's DG Regional Policy and the Committee of the Regions in early October provide an excellent forum for regions and cities to swap successful ideas on how to boost growth and jobs. Open Days is now firmly established as the headline event in the EU's regional policy calendar. The 2008 edition included "Innovating Regions" as one of the four main themes. Numerous seminars and events demonstrated hands-on the benefits of working in partnership with hundreds of regions from across the EU, each coming with their own experiences, and keen to share ideas and chart new and innovative ways of harnessing European investment. Innovation will again be at the centre of the agenda of the 2009 edition.

In conclusion

The considerable increase in resources now allocated towards innovation demonstrates that this new generation of structural fund programmes under EU cohesion policy are responding to the challenges we face. Of course, and even more so in view of the current difficulties engulfing economies across the globe, more can always be done. But this major boost to innovation is a solid starting point to ensure that the EU's resources are properly harnessed to implement the Lisbon Strategy.

In its unique partnership approach, its support for experimentation and its role in improving the management of major public investment programmes, the commitment from cohesion policy to support creativity and innovation goes far beyond funding.





Innovation in FARMING

Since the wheel was invented, farmers have always used innovation and creativity to improve yields and increase productivity. In the 20th century, the world embraced a green revolution with massive public investment in agricultural research. This led to dramatic yield increases. Modern plant breeding and the development of fertilizers and pesticides fuelled these advances.

New techniques and varieties helped us to triple maize production in the 27 EU Member States between 1963 and 2006. Over the same period, wheat yields rose by 164%. Europe benefited a great deal, but so too did farmers all over the world, especially in developing countries. It is widely acknowledged that the green revolution gave farmers the capacity to feed a world with a booming population.

Now, the question of who will feed the world is back at the top of the agenda. With the UN estimating a global population of nine billion people by 2050, the need to produce more food is evident. But this time around, kicking off a second green revolution faces a twofold challenge. On the one hand, farmers should produce more, but at the same time they should do so with less water, greenhouse gas emissions, fertilizers and pesticides. To sum up: with less negative impact on the environment.

The European Union is determined to help farmers put innovation and technological developments to work for their benefit. The EU's rural development policy, which is an integral part of the Common Agricultural Policy, is already helping farmers improve their environmental record through innovative projects.

One example is the introduction of GSM technology to ensure water saving in Spanish irrigation systems. Some European countries require significant amounts of water for irrigation. Without water, farming in these areas would simply not survive. However, the problem is that traditional irrigation systems are inefficient and waste too much water.

As part of rural development policy, the EU has contributed financially to developing an integrated irrigation management technology platform. In this new system, irrigation terminals are fitted with a control unit connected to the system by GSM/GPRS, SMS or remote connection technology. This means that a farmer can activate or programme irrigation from his mobile

phone. The system provides information on evaporation and on the amount of useful water in the soil, as well as statistics and irrigation history. It automatically connects to the bank to invoice the amount of water used. In other words, farmers have full knowledge of the condition of their land and they can turn the water on and off to ensure minimum waste due to evaporation.

Water saving technology is a step in the right direction, but much more is needed. The challenges are vast and time is scarce. That is why the EU has decided to channel more than €3 billion into helping farmers tackle the challenges of climate change, water management, renewable energy, biodiversity, and to increase support for innovation in these four sectors. In addition, Member States will cofinance the measures that will be available between 2009 and 2013.

In concrete terms, this would mean more money to invest in modernising and improving energy efficiency on the farm. Modern farming techniques such as precision-controlled farm machinery which is linked to a GPS system will also get a boost. When using such technology, all the farmer has to do is turn the tractor at the end of the field – the computer calculates, and infrared sensors control, how much fertilizer is applied. This will reduce the amount of fertilizers used in the fields in Europe and lead to a reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases.

In general, the EU is focusing a lot of effort on putting innovation and technology to work for the production of greener energy in Europe. The EU's rural development policy also supports investments in biogas technologies. These can put a brake on methane emissions from European livestock production and deliver greener and cleaner energy to European consumers.



Creativity and innovation in EDUCATION

By Ernesto Villalba

In the psychological development that enables us to harness our creative potential, basic education has a crucial role. Ernesto Villalba, scientist at the European Commission's Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning in Ispra, Italy, shares his views with readers on how education could better contribute to this process.

Creativity is often obvious in young children, but it may be harder to find in older children and adults because their creative potential has been suppressed by a society that encourages intellectual conformity

R. J. Sternberg

Sternberg's quote expresses what many people feel when seeing a kid playing: children are much more creative than adults. It seems as if in the process of growing, some of the innocence and capacity to experiment and be creative that we all have is suppressed by a society that encourages intellectual conformity. Especially 'guilty' are educational systems that are conceived to transfer knowledge from one generation to another, and not to create knowledge in a truly original way. What is it in our societies and our educational systems that seems to be killing creativity? What type of educational system do we need that will enhance creativity?

Coping with 'uncertainty' is an essential characteristic of modern life. It is difficult to predict what the world will look like in 20 years time and what the main challenges will be. **However, as Sir Ken Robinson has pointed out**, we are educating children for that uncertain future. Commissioner Figel, like Sir Ken, recently expressed this in the following way:

The major future challenges in the education field are how to reform our learning systems to prepare our young people "for jobs that do not exist yet, using technologies that have not been invented yet, in order to solve problems that haven't even been identified yet".

The European Union has expressed on several occasions the importance of lifelong learning for Europe to create more and better jobs and become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. Europe is making efforts to improve the strength of the 'knowledge triangle' formed by higher education, innovation and research, for example with the establishment of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. But there is a need to support the knowledge triangle in a lifelong learning context, 'from cradle to grave'. Hence, education is usually seen as a pre-condition for innovation to occur. Innovation requires a well educated workforce ready to participate in the innovation process as creators and entrepreneurs, and as customers that demand, test, improve and use these innovations. Underlying these interconnections of the knowledge triangle is creativity – the necessary fuel to put forward innovative products and to produce original research.

New skills demands for 21st century

Lifelong learning is a necessity for all citizens in a world ruled by uncertainty. Compulsory education is meant to provide competences that will serve as the basis for working life and further learning. The European recommendation on key competences presents eight:

- 1) Communication in the mother tongue;
- 2) Communication in foreign languages;
- 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- 4) Digital competence;
- 5) Learning to learn;
- 6) Social and civic competences;
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression.



All are considered equally important. A number of themes cut across all: “critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking, and constructive management of feelings”.

This cross-cutting importance of creativity and of non-traditional competences is in line with Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences. This theory emphasises the existence of other types of intelligence not related to traditional logical-mathematical skills. An increasing number of people and institutions are advocating a necessary change in educational systems towards learning more appropriate skills for the new demands of the labour market. The key aspect is again creativity. However, what is essential that cuts across these different competences, subjects or intelligences?

That thing called ‘creativity’

Creativity is a difficult and complex construct to define. There are a lot of unresolved problems about creativity and its nature. However, there seems to be a certain consensus among the research community on some specific characteristics of creativity. It always involves something ‘new’ that has some type of ‘value’ in terms of usefulness. The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) in the UK defined creativity with four main characteristics. (1) It involves imagination, the process of generating something original. (2) It is purposeful, it is imagination put into action towards an end. (3) It produces something original in relation to one’s own previous work, a peer group or anyone’s previous output. (4) Finally, it has value in respect of the objective it was applied for. Creativity involves the generation of ideas, their evaluation and deciding which is the most adequate.

Another common characteristic usually expressed in the literature is that everybody has creative potential. In the ‘democratic’ understanding of creativity, it is seen as something intrinsic to the human being. In a similar way, creativity extends to all that we do. As stated above, there are different intelligences or talents, and each of us might be more or less creative in different domains.

There is some consensus that creativity requires a certain amount of knowledge in the subject. It also seems clear that for creativity to occur, it is necessary to devote an important amount of work to the problem one is trying to solve. In this regard, creativity seems to flourish better in an environment where intrinsic motivation is enhanced.

Through scientific understanding of creativity, it is possible to learn more about how it works and can be developed. These are valuable lessons for our educational systems that necessarily have to enhance creativity. But what would a school system that promotes creativity look like? What would be its essential characteristics? How could we promote it in our daily practices?

Is education killing creativity?

There is growing discontent with the educational system because it is not meeting the demands of the knowledge society. Several voices propose that the system emphasise logical-mathematical skills, but scorn other types of talents such as dancing, music or painting. There is increasing agreement that educational systems have to change to adapt to the new demands of the 21st century; but change is slow and difficult. A recent comparative study of 23 educational systems in America, Europe, Asia and Africa found that the most common pedagogical practices involved students filling out worksheets, working at the same pace and sequence, and answering tests

Educational systems that enhance creativity and innovation will have to be different from now. Curriculum changes are starting to occur and emphasis on creativity and non-traditional skills are becoming more prominent. The place of schools in the local and global community will also have to change. In order for creativity and innovation to flourish, schools and students will have to connect with their local surroundings while becoming global players. This requires a clear vision and leadership that is able to collaborate with other institutions. School organisation also needs to provide incentives, tools and time for knowledge sharing and creativity among school staff. Schools have to become learning organisations.



This requires increasing professionalisation of teachers and school staff. Teachers, like any professional, must become lifelong learners, with a good amount of subject knowledge and a variety of pedagogical tools that can be deployed to promote creativity. They have to become more of a mentor rather than a 'transmitter' of knowledge, helping each student to fulfill their creative and learning potential. As in the case of knowledge-intensive companies, teachers will have to collaborate with each other and work in inter-disciplinary teams.

Such a change in a teacher's role can only be achieved with the support of school structures and leadership that allow them time for preparation, exchange of ideas and team work as well as teacher's training and professional development programmes that prepare them in this way. Last but not least, assessment needs to be rethought. If the educational system is truly to promote creativity, assessment will, of necessity, have to value creativity. This is sometimes clear in early stages of education, but usually decreases the more we advance through the system. It is necessary for evaluations to include creativity among their criteria. Creativity has to be promoted and given importance, not only rhetorically, but in practice.

All these different changes cannot occur from one day to the next. They will require time and tremendous efforts from policy makers, educators, institutions and citizens in Europe. Change can start from individual teachers trying to alter their usual traditional practices, from school principals reorganising their schools, or from a local museum connecting itself to the school in its neighbourhood. The European Year of Creativity and Innovation is an occasion to start a public debate, which hopefully will lead to change and will raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation for Europe.

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Interesting links:

http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html

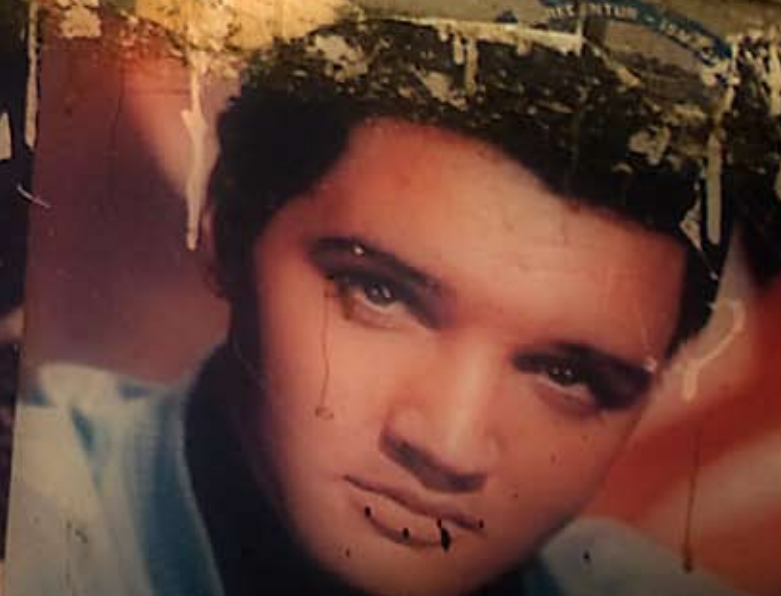




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the Magazine 58 n° 31-2004





TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY

2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

Creativity and Innovation
European Year 2009



Starting with its European launch conference in Ljubljana in January, the Year went from strength to strength with a host of national and European activities. The opening event, attended by over 500 participants, was also an opportunity for Slovenia to turn the spotlight on successful intercultural dialogue initiatives in its own neighbourhood. Short films screened at the conference are now available for all to watch on the official homepage of the European Year¹

The inaugural event included the first presentation of the study **“Sharing Diversity: National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in Europe”**. Conducted by ERICarts research institute on behalf of the European Commission, this analyses different approaches to intercultural dialogue. Good practices are highlighted and the report² concludes with 50 recommendations to regional, national and European policy makers and grassroots activists.

As well as an intensive awareness-raising campaign, the Year was an occasion for policy reflection on intercultural dialogue. The Slovenian Presidency took the initiative of drawing up political conclusions on intercultural competences which can be built upon at both European and national levels. These call for a horizontal, long-term vision on intercultural dialogue, involving not just culture, but ranging across other policy fields. The aim is to integrate and enhance the relevant initiatives into culture, education, youth and audiovisual policy.

The European Year provided new impetus in external relations. During the French EU Presidency, discussions between Member States focused on the external dimension of intercultural dialogue, underlining its contribution to relations between Member States and the rest of the world. This was one of the themes discussed at the conference organised in November by the French Presidency and the European Commission, **“New perspectives for intercultural dialogue in Europe”**. Over 600 participants took stock of recent achievements and looked ahead to new perspectives. The themes ranged across intercultural education, the role and responsibilities of the media, social cohesion and integration, Europe in the wider world, and the arts.

Intercultural dialogue remains a priority in several EU programmes, not only in the field of culture but also in lifelong learning, youth, citizenship, employment and social affairs, the integration of immigrants, development and external relations. These provide financial support to thousands of projects across Europe and beyond. More than 100 cooperation projects supported in 2008 by the Culture Programme specifically addressed intercultural dialogue, and received grants of over €33 million. Related cooperation projects and networks selected for support by the Lifelong Learning Programme in 2008 were given over €11 million in funding. Thousands of smaller scale mobility actions, including Comenius school partnerships, Erasmus student mobility, Grundtvig training courses for adult educators and Leonardo da Vinci grants for mobility of trainees, all make a direct and practical contribution to fostering intercultural dialogue – and will continue to do so well beyond 2008.

European institutions and pan-European flagship projects

The 2008 European Year involved close cooperation between the European Commission and other EU institutions, national coordinating bodies in each Member State and civil society organisations.

The European Parliament gave a special focus to the Year through two thematic events (Arab and Africa weeks) and various debates. The Committee of the Regions held a **“Forum on intercultural dialogue at the heart of Europe’s cities and regions”**, and organised a photo competition and a summer university, while the Economic and Social Committee hosted conferences, such as **“The European Way to Integration:**

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Intercultural Dialogue and Mutual Respect”, “Organised Civil Society as an Engine for Intercultural Dialogue” and “Immigrant Literature: Writing in Adopted Languages”.

In all, there were seven co-funded pan-European projects. These were a hive of activity throughout the Year, with many reaching a climax in the autumn. **The StrangerFestival**, coordinated by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), was the biggest event for young video-makers in Europe. Through a series of workshops, young people produced videos on topics such as religion, discrimination, dreams and identity. A DVD with selected videos and other pedagogical tools will be distributed to 20,000 schools in Europe.

The **AlterEgo** project, coordinated by the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) had the ambition of involving 22 EU countries through an extensive network of national partnerships. The internet platform gave young people the opportunity to search for their “double”, or AlterEgo, through a collaborative art project.

Cultures from around the block, coordinated by the Multicultural Centre in Prague, took a local community approach to intercultural dialogue. Supported by professional artists and media makers, children from different social backgrounds produced photographs, films and audio recordings. The project website aims to become an online source for articles, studies and reports on urban issues and the documentary film “Your Street – My Street” produced by the project will be shown, among others, at the Mediterranean Movies Festival in Brussels.

The above projects worked mainly with teenagers. One targeted at primary school children from seven EU countries and coordinated by the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation was **iyouwe SHARE THE WORLD**. The children are guided by storytellers, visual artists, dancers or musicians to recapture a common imaginary world and share it as widely as possible. The unifying theme of the tales is the Cosmogony of the World. A closing event and concert took place at the Cirque Royal in Brussels in December 2008.

Behind the original project name **Tatapume** (“Let’s talk” in Greek) lies an original idea for a radio campaign for intercultural dialogue: radio therapy against stereotypes. In 70 radio broadcasts the project depicted Europe’s migratory history from a new perspective, via a linguistic, philological approach. The broadcasts covered topics from identity, culture, and food to finance and commerce. The broadcasts were accompanied by a bibliography and short scientific paper.

A complementary approach to migration was chosen by the project **“Meeting the Other, Borders, identity and cultures”**. The association Babelmed conceived a European editorial project to put the emphasis on contemporary cultural expressions resulting from migrations and collective research on intercultural dialogue to fight intercommunity tensions was published by the Institute for Research, Training and Action on Migration (IRFAM).

Last but not least, the **Diversidad** project led by the European Music Office shed yet another light through hip-hop, on the myriad of ways to think and live intercultural dialogue. This

established a digital platform for musical exchange, where artists and citizens created new songs together. A hip-hop single was produced and a three-day event organised on urban culture in Vienna during the EURO 2008.

National projects

As well as the European flagship projects, each Member State received EU support for a national project reaching out to as many citizens as possible. They are too numerous to list here, but the two below give a flavour.

Malta implemented one of the most creative campaigns of the Year: **“Five”**, using the five senses. If you have ever wondered what the sense of taste has to do with intercultural dialogue, visit a Maltese supermarket, where the action Taste a Shared Culture was a hit with customers. They could browse through information cards and boards next to various products and experiment with recipes distributed every season. Presenting gastronomic treats in a recipe collection is one way of showing new ideas on how to enjoy diversity.

The exhibition **“The Other”** in Budapest was based on the famous work by Claude Lévi-Strauss published in 1952 under the title “Race and History”, in which the author sets out to deconstruct racial and ethnic prejudices and refute the ideology of racism. The ideas are still as relevant as ever to the key questions of today’s societies. The exhibition narrated the history of the “encounter with the other” from a uniquely European perspective.

Civil society behind the Year

Civil society’s commitment to intercultural dialogue was one of the pillars of the Year. The most outstanding result of this involvement was the creation of the Platform for Intercultural Europe, which gathered associations experienced in intercultural dialogue from fields as diverse as arts and culture, education, the fight against racism, youth and social work. The platform was created by the joint initiative between Culture Action Europe (ex-European Forum for the Arts and Heritage) and the European Cultural Foundation and now counts over 200 participants. It is a recognised partner in the ongoing structured dialogue between the EU Commission and the cultural sector.

Through open consultation and discussion, the Platform has developed the **Rainbow Paper** of practice-based recommendations for policy makers. This sets out five steps to make interculturalism the new norm and proposes five recommendations: educating, building capacity by organisations, monitoring for sustained policies, mobilising across boundaries, and resourcing of intercultural dialogue. The paper is available for endorsement by all individuals and organisations.

Civil society at large was essential to the Year’s success. Over 1,000 organisations signed up as “Partners of the Year” and hundreds of organisations requested use of its logo, hosting events under this banner. Cultural and other networks







ensured a strong take up of the Year's objectives through their role as multipliers. A striking example in this field was the Arts Festivals' Declaration supporting Intercultural Dialogue. By signing, festival organisers expressed their commitment to promote the aims and messages of the Year through their events.

Other highlights

Most activities were organised by Member States and civil society, but a series of seven Commission-organised "Brussels Debates" proved a popular forum for sharing ideas on policy and practice. Each was held in partnership with an expert association in the field, such as the European Network Against Racism, the International Federation of Journalists and the European Policy Centre. Debates covered migration and integration, role of the artist in intercultural dialogue, interreligious dialogue and active citizenship, and the real meaning of intercultural dialogue in the workplace. "Spring Day for Europe", an initiative launched by the European Commission, aimed to raise young people's awareness of the EU through an online electronic platform and related events. It had the theme "bridging cultures through dialogue".

The European Year photo competition "**Cultures on my street**" was an outstanding example of reaching out to a wide public. More than 2,000 entries were submitted by Europe's residents in response to the invitation to capture their vision of intercultural dialogue where it happens most often: in their neighbourhoods, and private or public spaces, where people meet, exchange ideas, play, laugh, learn and work together. A professional jury selected three winners, while a fourth was chosen by the public.

And the winners were...



· Joseph Smith from Malta with "Village Cobbler" (1st prize),



· Nikolaj Lund from Denmark with "Open Minds" (2nd prize),



· Jérôme Clair from France with "Isolé du jeu" (3rd prize),



· Simon Vansteenwinckel from Belgium with "Fairy Tales 1" ("the Public's Favourite")

The Special Olympics initiative "Football in the Park – Football for Diversity" brought together Special Olympics athletes, young talents of RSC Anderlecht, Members of the European Parliament and staff of the European Commission. Also in the sports field, the European Commission, UEFA and FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe) launched the 2008-2009 football season with a joint TV spot of football fans "together in diversity". This will be aired during the half-time break throughout the entire season's televised UEFA Champions League football games.

The Year benefited from the profiles of its "European Ambassadors". Famous names such as Paolo Coelho, Jordi Savall and Abd Al Malik lent their support to intercultural dialogue. Seven of the ambassadors participated in another high point of the Year in Brussels, the European Festival of Intercultural Dialogue, organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the Flagey Arts Centre, during which more than 2,000 people enjoyed concerts, workshops, film screenings and debates during the two-day festival.

The 2008 Year may have drawn to a close, but the dialogue is far from over.

... www.dialogue2008.eu

... http://ec.europa.eu/culture/key-documents/doc1351_en.htm

... www.strangerfestival.com

... www.alterego-europe.eu

... www.europeancity.cz

... www.iyouwesharetheworld.eu

... www.tatapume.org

... www.babelmedfestival.net

... www.myspace.com/diversidadexperience

... www.rainbowpaper.labforculture.org





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European youth voice

ASPIRATIONS & CONCERNS

Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009

European Youth Week 2008 provided a platform for young Europeans to voice their opinions about the future challenges they face and will help to feed into the major consultation the Commission has launched as part of its preparation for a proposal on a new youth cooperation framework. Held between 2 and 9 November in all 31 countries participating in the Youth in Action programme, this was the fourth edition of European Youth Weeks, which were initiated in 2003 and are now organised at regular 18 month intervals.

Sounding out the aspirations of young Europeans about their future may have topped the agenda of European Youth Week 2008, but the event also offered an opportunity to mark the 20th anniversary of the implementation of EU programmes for young people. These were born in 1988 with what was then the Youth for Europe programme. In the meantime, European youth programmes have grown considerably, both in scope and financial resources. More than 1.6 million young people and youth workers have actively participated in youth exchanges, voluntary work, training and other activities

Compared with its predecessors, European Youth Week 2008 saw a marked increase in the number of national events and activities. Thanks mainly to the efforts of the agencies of the Youth in Action programme, cooperation with National Youth Councils, Eurodesk and other stakeholders, some 500 activities were organised before and during the first week of November. This high level of national activity ensured a much enhanced visibility for the Week throughout Europe. DG EAC is keen not only to consolidate this achievement, but also to build on it for future events.

As in previous editions, the 2008 exercise included activities in Brussels for some 200 young participants. These included a half day session hosted by the European Parliament and offered an opportunity for an open and frank exchange of views between MEPs and the young participants.

Structured dialogue: not a new sighting of the Loch Ness monster

Now in its second year, the structured dialogue between EU institutions and young people consists of national, regional and local debates organised around thematic cycles. In 2008, two themes were chosen: "Intercultural Dialogue" to coincide with the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, and "Future challenges for young people", which gives youth the opportunity to make proposals for the next decade of European youth policy cooperation.

Structured dialogue is consistently used in several EU policy areas. But its emergence as a cross-cutting strategy for ensuring the influence of young people on relevant policy-making may not have been entirely evident so far. At a meeting in Brussels before the summer break, this caused one national representative to liken it to the Loch Ness monster: everyone knows it exists, but nobody has actually seen it!

European Youth Week 2008 may have laid such comparisons to rest since it provided the vehicle for highly -visible structured dialogue, both nationally and at the European level, on the future challenges facing young Europeans. This was at a crucial time, for a new European youth cooperation framework will be established in 2009, with a Council resolution due to be adopted during the Swedish presidency in the latter half of the year.

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The structured dialogue conducted in the period leading up to, and during, the European Youth Week thus enabled young people to voice their aspirations and pinpoint the areas where they feel European action is required to complement national youth policies.

Such debates were organised in most European countries and in many cases were extremely wide-ranging. In Slovakia, some 45,000 young people were involved in the exercise; in Poland debates were held in 16 major cities; a large number of events took place in Greece, many of them by local youth councils; and structured dialogue debates occurred throughout Germany and Hungary. It was particularly encouraging to see widespread debates in many of the new Member States, where the very concept of youth policies is a relatively new phenomenon, and where EU youth activity and programmes have served as an inspiration for the development of new structures and activities.

The national organisers are making the results of the structured dialogue debates available to the Commission for analysis. They will compliment the conclusions from the 200 young people who participated in the Brussels activities. These, too, will be closely studied, and the Commission will take them into account when formulating its policy proposals.

Before the Commission's proposal for a new youth cooperation framework is adopted – it is scheduled for spring 2009 – DG EAC will also have at its disposal the outcome of an online consultation launched in September, and feedback from detailed consultations with national governments, youth councils, the European Youth Forum and other stakeholders.

Be the future. Be Europe.

This was the bold claim on a huge banner that welcomed the 200 young Europeans who participated in the Brussels activities organised by the European Commission, in cooperation with the European Parliament, the European Youth Forum and other stakeholders. Measuring 32 metres in height, the banner was erected on the Commission's Berlaymont headquarters, highlighting European Youth Week 2008 to the occupants and visitors in the European quarter. For five days, young Europeans engaged in activities ranging from workshops and political debates to an awards ceremony.

The latter, the European Youth Celebrations, was expertly staged by the Belgian French-speaking National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme in the restored splendour of the Halles de Schaerbeek in central Brussels. What was

being celebrated? Two things: outstanding intercultural youth projects from each of the 31 countries in the programme, which had been selected following nominations from the national agencies in seven of the programme's subactions, and the 20th anniversary of EU youth programmes.

Led by Commissioner Ján Figel' and other dignitaries, the 500 guests witnessed an evening of exhilarating entertainment provided by young performers, who themselves had participated in EU youth programmes. A jury composed of representatives from EU institutions had the unenviable task of selecting one winner in each of the seven categories. At the end of the festivities, a video on 20 years of EU youth programmes was screened as a timely reminder that over two decades, more than 1.6 million young Europeans have participated in these programmes, and gained new skills and competences from this invaluable intercultural experience. Fittingly, the ceremony was listed as a contribution from youth to the 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Before participating in the awards ceremony, the young representatives of the Youth in Action projects had been immersed in workshops managed by the SALTO-Participation Resource Centre in Brussels. Their testimonies featured in a video screened at the European Youth Celebrations and were summarised as part of the final conclusions drawn up by all the young participants.

What conclusions did youth draw on future challenges?

These conclusions were the fruit of the hard labour of some 120 young people nominated by national youth councils and the European Youth Forum, who, as part of the structured dialogue with young people, had debated their aspirations in five workshops. They were drawn up by a team of rapporteurs from each workshop. Their conclusions are wide ranging and inspiring.

The participants highlighted several issues as policy priorities, including the need to remove the remaining legal and bureaucratic obstacles preventing young people from fully participation in society and making it difficult for them to become involved in voluntary work. They proposed that 2011 should be designated the European Year of Volunteering and called for the introduction of a Europe-wide 'V-card', to give more recognition to volunteers.



In tackling wellbeing through employment, entrepreneurship and social inclusion in the long term, the participants asked the EU to set youth as its main target. Youth should be considered as a resource for creativity and innovation, rather than a cheap part of the labour force. They also recalled that high quality education is vitally important for young people in Europe.

In the area of human rights, equality and anti-discrimination, the participants stated that the EU should endeavour to prevent discrimination for whatever reason, in every area of life, as defined in Article 21 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. In their final conclusions, they also recommended improving the impact, visibility and transparency of the Youth in Action programme by simplifying its application and reporting procedures.

Political debate

Before adopting their final conclusions, the young participants had an open debate in the European Parliament where they exchanged views with two separate panels of MEPs: the first on the future challenges for young people and their participation in the democratic process, the second on intercultural dialogue. Later, following a final plenary session, the conclusions were presented to a full session of the Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

The closing session in Brussels was devoted to a political debate between the young participants, Commissioner Figel', the deputy chairwoman of the European Parliament's Committee on Education and Culture, Helga Trüpel, and the European Youth Forum President, Bettina Schwarzmayr. Based on the final conclusions from three days of debate, this was a clear demonstration of the viability and role of the structured dialogue with young people.

Looking forward to 2010

It has always been DG EAC's intention that European Youth Weeks should be the flagship event of European youth policies and programmes. The 2008 edition enjoyed a higher profile and more visibility than its predecessors, mainly due to the large number of national events and activities. These consisted of a welcome mix of exhibitions, competitions, structured dialogue debates, entertainment and activities to promote the Youth in Action programme.

European Youth Weeks were also conceived to provide an opportunity for young people to express themselves and have a platform where their concerns and aspirations for Europe could be heard and noted. Given the timing of this year's event, just months before the Commission adopts its proposal for a new European youth cooperation framework, that platform could not have been more topical - and young people throughout Europe made the best use of it.

It is up to readers of **The Magazine** to make their own judgment about the reliability of the reported sightings of the Loch Ness monster, and indeed on the identity of the perceived creature. But following European Youth Week 2008, it will be difficult for anyone to argue that the structured dialogue with young people is either invisible or mythical.

It is now up to the Commission to analyse and study the outcomes of the national debates, the conclusions drawn by the young participants in the Brussels activities, and input from other consultations and ensure that, whenever possible, these are reflected in its new proposal. Once this has been tabled, the structured dialogue will enter a new phase, as the proposal is debated before a political decision is taken towards the end of the year. So, the structured dialogue is alive and kicking, and all the players involved will need to see that it remains a permanent and vital feature of European youth policies, allowing young people to make a real contribution to the development and conception of policies, which directly affect them.

The fifth edition of the European Youth Week is scheduled for the first half of 2010, during the Spanish EU Presidency.

For more information on the Youth programme, go to :

► <http://ec.europa.eu/youth>

(A full list of the youth projects awarded and celebrated at the ceremony is available from the website www.youthweek.eu, which also features footage from the event and the video on 20 years of EU youth programmes).





Commissioner Figel' attends PARALYMPIC GAMES 2008

Creativity
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European Year 2009



During this year's Paralympic Games, Commissioner Ján Figel' paid a three-day visit to Beijing. He attended, in the presence of Chinese President Hu Jintao and several Heads of State and Government, the opening ceremony in the National Olympic Stadium, commonly known to the world as the "bird's nest". As with the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games, the paralympic event was a model of organisation, with the impressive artistic involvement of many handicapped people, and enthusiastically followed by the capacity 90,000 crowd.

The motto of this year's Games was "Transcendence, Equality and Integration". It reflects the values promoted by the paralympic movement, which can be regarded among the most positive contributions sport can offer to society. Indeed, sport provides people with disabilities a great opportunity to develop their personal talents and helps them to achieve rehabilitation and social integration. "It is very important for the spirit of fairness, of togetherness, of promotion of important human values. It's not only events, it's not only competition, but also a festival of humanity and solidarity," Commissioner Figel' said at the end of his three-day visit.

The Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games were by far the biggest event in the history of paralympics, which were born in 1948 in the UK. Top level sports for people with disabilities have today reached such impressive standards that they feature elements of high performance sports. This tendency first emerged at the paralympics in 1988 in Seoul. The paralympics in Sidney in 2000 made clear that top level disabled and non-disabled sports are becoming increasingly similar. The large number of world records in Sydney illustrated the level of commitment and training of today's paralympic athletes.

More than 7,000 athletes from 148 countries competed in a total of 471 events in 21 different sporting disciplines in Beijing. The games saw a total of 279 new world records set and 339 paralympic records broken. As with the Olympic Games one month earlier, China demonstrated its dominance by winning 211 medals, of which 89 were gold. The UK ranked second with 102 medals (42 gold). Overall, 35 European

countries, among them 25 EU Member States, climbed onto the paralympic podium in Beijing.

Special EU support

The EU has a special responsibility towards the paralympics since the movement was born in Europe six decades ago. Disabled people have been participating in sport for over 100 years. At the beginning of the 19th century, members of the medical profession discovered the value of sporting activity for rehabilitation. After the Second World War, when the number of military and civilian casualties was extremely high, sport for the physically disabled came to play an increasingly important role. The Stoke Mandeville Games, the first competition for wheelchair athletes, were founded on the opening day of the Olympic Games in London on 28 July 1948.

The games have helped significantly to boost the awareness of the situation of handicapped people and their need for social integration. The Commission is determined to advance these principles in a concrete and visible way. The main EU initiative to coordinate efforts to improve the life of disabled people is the European Disability Strategy, whose ultimate objective is to promote equality of opportunity and the rights of all people with disabilities. These principles are implemented through the European Disability Action Plan. This ensures an effective follow up to the 2003 European Year of People with Disabilities and provides a valuable framework for ensuring continuous dialogue with the main stakeholders and assessing progress towards targeted initiatives.





These principles have also been addressed and promoted by the Commission's July 2007 White Paper on Sport. This recognises the important contribution sport offers to economic and social cohesion and the creation of more integrated societies. It particularly recommends that all residents should have access to sport and that the specific needs and situations of under-represented groups should be addressed, especially by taking account of the special role that sport can play for people with disabilities.

In its White Paper, the Commission encourages Member States, local authorities and sporting organisations to ensure sport venues and ancillary facilities accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. In addition, specific criteria should be adopted to provide equal access to sport for all pupils, especially children with disabilities.

The Commission recommends promoting the training of monitors, volunteers and host staff of clubs and organisations in welcoming people with disabilities. Moreover, in its consultations with sport stakeholders, the Commission maintains a special dialogue with representatives of sportspeople with disabilities.

The Paralympic Games provided the Commissioner with a good opportunity to meet several key players in this sector. They included the President of the International Paralympic Movement Sir Philip Craven, the President of the European Paralympic Committee (EPC) Enrique Sánchez-Guijo, the UN Special Envoy for Sport and Development Willi Lemke and various presidents of national paralympic committees. Commissioner Figel' also had a meeting with German Federal President Horst Köhler, an active and dedicated personality in the paralympic movement.

During the event, Commissioner Figel' signed a joint declaration with Mr Sánchez-Guijo. This celebrates the financial assistance the Commission gives the European Paralympic Committee through the Europe for Citizens Programme. This support comes as recognition of the importance of sport, and in particular of the paralympic ideals, in strengthening social

integration and supporting the active involvement of all citizens in the process of European integration.

The EPC president described the Beijing Declaration as a testimony to the high profile held by paralympic sport in the EU. The European Paralympic Committee, part of the global paralympic movement, is responsible for developing disability sports in Europe. The two-year grant it received from the EU has helped it to establish a fully fledged office in Vienna.

"As we all know from our own experience, sport plays a central role in ensuring a favourable opening for the development of individual talent. Sport is a formidable tool to empower individuals through self-determination. Sport is also a major vehicle for the rehabilitation and social integration of disabled people," Commissioner Figel' said at the signing ceremony. He added: "The values promoted by the paralympic movement help to enhance the positive contribution offered by sport to European society. The paralympic ideals can, therefore, reinforce the action of the European Union in the field of equal opportunities for all."

For more information on:
➤ <http://ec.europa.eu/sport>

LATEST NEWS



31 December 2008 Taizé European meeting in Brussels EU-Info Meeting Point

The European Commission closed the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue by welcoming more than 3000 visitors to the EU-Info Meeting Point in the Berlaymont on 30-31 December 2008. Young people from all over Europe and beyond had come to Brussels to take part in the 31st European Meeting organised by the Taizé community as part of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" to which the Taizé community has been inviting people to take part for over 30 years. The EU-Info Meeting Point was an integral part of one of the 19 workshops proposed to the participants of the European meeting - "Information about the European Union, visit to the European district of Brussels". Participants were guided around the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament, with the main highlight the visit to the EU-Info Meeting Point. Two films, "One day at the Berlaymont" and another about Youth Week were projected continuously for the visitors, who received brochures on the Youth programme and other various gifts. The next Taizé European meeting will be held from December 28th 2009 to January 1st 2010 in Poland, in the city of Poznań.

16 December 2008 Modernising Europe's education and training systems

The Commission has outlined its strategic vision for the cooperation between EU Member States on the reform of their education and training systems for the years to come. It argues that common challenges, such as skills deficits, ageing societies and foreign competition need joint responses, and that some goals will be easier to achieve if countries learn from each other. In this proposal the Commission identifies both immediate priorities for 2009-10 and long-term challenges, and suggests improved tools to meet them. These include a review of the current European targets to measure the progress made by education and training systems in Europe. The Commission proposes to review these benchmarks, which include for instance school drop-outs, reading levels of 15-year olds and adult learners, and to consider new benchmarks in more key areas such as tertiary education attainment, employability and student mobility.

2 December 2008 New European Union prize for literature

The European Commission has launched a new EU prize for emerging talents in contemporary fiction. This prize wants to put the spotlight on the creativity and diverse wealth of Europe's contemporary literature, to promote more circulation of literature within Europe and to encourage greater interest in literary works from other countries. Organised by the European Booksellers Federation (EBF), the European Writers' Council (EWC) and the Federation of European Publishers (FEP), the first edition of the Prize will be awarded in autumn 2009. There will also be an award to a well-known European personality in literature to take on the role of 'European Ambassador of Literature' for a one-year period.

26 November 2008 European Ministers decide on closer cooperation in vocational education and training

Meeting in Bordeaux, European Ministers, the European Commission and the European Social Partners agreed on priorities of cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) in 2008-2010. In their joint Communiqué they pledged to consolidate their common work by implementing the principles and tools agreed so far and added the new objective of stronger links between education systems and the labour market. Representatives of 31 countries first met in 2002 in the Danish capital to discuss ways of cooperating. Since then the Copenhagen process is up for review every two years. Leuven in Belgium will be the host for the next meeting – in 2010.



4 November 2008 Comenius Regio launched

Regional authorities in Europe with a role in school education will be able to receive support to set up partnerships with other European regions with the aim of collaborating on any topic of common interest. Comenius Regio is a new action under the Lifelong Learning Programme. It promotes joint activities to improve educational options for school-aged children. In a Comenius Regio Partnership regional authorities from at least two European countries will team up with schools and other relevant partners from their region or municipality, such as youth clubs, museums or libraries. The first successful applicants will be selected by summer 2009.



September 2008-May 2009 Different languages, one goal - TV spot promotes tolerance to football viewers

The European Commission, UEFA and the Football Against Racism in Europe network have launched a joint TV spot highlighting tolerance and the role of languages as bridges between people. The spot shows three groups of football fans caught up in the excitement of a match: regardless of their cultural backgrounds, origins or languages, they all share their love of football and react in the same way in different authentic settings. Millions of TV viewers across Europe and beyond have already seen the spot which was aired during half-time breaks throughout the entire season's televised UEFA Champions League football games.

17-19 November 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 closed with a commitment to promoting intercultural dialogue in the future

Over 600 participants from across Europe and beyond participated in the closing conference of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 entitled "New Perspectives for Intercultural Dialogue in Europe". The event at the Centre Pompidou in Paris was organised by the French Presidency of the European Union and the European Commission and featured keynote speakers from the French Government and the Commission. One of the highlights of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, this conference provided an overview of the many projects undertaken. Participants discussed how to best put into practice the lessons learned throughout the European Year both through policy and projects in order to promote intercultural dialogue in the long term.



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