

The Start Treaty of Rome (1957)

This treaty established the European Economic Community (EEC). Although the six Member States acknowledged that a common VET policy would contribute to harmonious development of national economies and the common market, it was only in 1963 that the European Council laid down how it wanted to reach this common policy. They then established the *Advisory Committee for Vocational Education* (ACVT), in which the social partners obtained a special role.

Until the mid-eighties, VET policy was limited to a series of non-binding resolutions.

The *European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education* (CEDEFOP), however, was created in 1975 to promote the exchange of information and the mutual comparison of training standards.

In addition, a series of promotion programmes were launched: COMETT, ERASMUS, PETRA I and II, LINGUA, FORCE, EUROTECNET, and Helios I and II.

Treaty of Maastricht (1993)

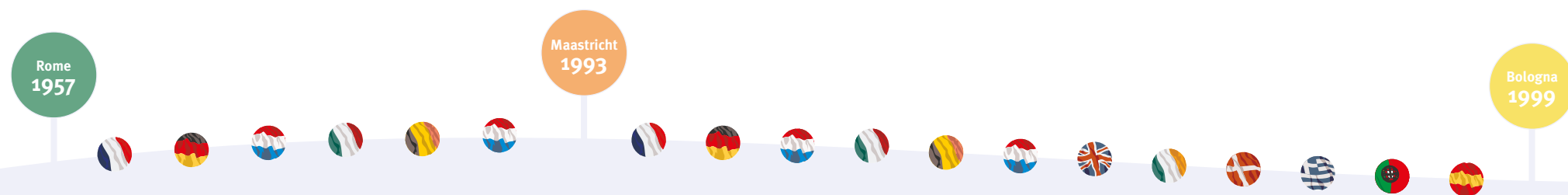
In 1993, the now twelve Member States signed the *Treaty of Maastricht*.

Concerning the policy the consequences of the Treaty was the application of the principle of subsidiarity to European VET:

This principle means that action at EU level will be taken only if it is more effective than taking it at national, regional or local level. Each Member State is still responsible for the organisation and the content of its own VET. Hence the European VET policy is of a supportive nature. The 1995 Commission White Paper: 'Teaching and learning – towards the learning society' specifies this. To turn policy into action, funds became available through the Leonardo da Vinci I (1995 – 1999) and II (2000 – 2006) programmes for VET.

The Bologna Declaration (1999)

Twenty-nine countries confirmed in Bologna their willingness to strive towards a European space for higher education. The most important undertakings are that every country commits itself to basing its higher education on the bachelor's-master's system, transparency and the start of the introduction of a system of quality assurance.



The Ambitions of Lisbon (2000)

The next important milestone was reached in Lisbon. European leaders – the EU now had fifteen Member States – expressed their ambition to make Europe the most dynamic and competitive region in the world. To achieve this requires a well-educated and highly versatile labour force. Knowledge is evolving at an increasingly rapid pace, and people must keep up with this evolution throughout their lifetimes. To reach their goals, European leaders decided to apply the open method of coordination. This approach gives more leeway to European leaders to take their own initiatives and to achieve the objectives at an unequal pace.

The open method of coordination consists of four elements:

- to formulate guidelines for medium and long-term objectives;
- to fix qualitative and quantitative indicators and benchmark topics;
- to translate common guidelines into national policy objectives;
- to assess activities periodically as a mutual learning process.

'Education and Training 2020' Work Programme

EU education and training policy has been given added impetus since the adoption of the *Lisbon Strategy* in 2000, the EU's overarching programme focusing on growth and jobs. Knowledge, and the innovation it sparks, are the EU's most valuable assets, particularly as global competition becomes more intense in all sectors.

While national governments are responsible for education and training some challenges are common to all Member States: Ageing societies, skills deficits of the workforce and global competition need joint responses and countries learning from each other.

High quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and VET are the fundament for Europe's success. Lifelong learning must become a reality across Europe. It is key to growth and jobs, as well as to allow everyone the chance to participate fully in society. EU member states and the European Commission have therefore strengthened their political cooperation. This has been done through the *Education and Training 2010* work programme launched in 2001 and its follow-up, the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training adopted by the Council in May 2009.

European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework spanning education and training systems as a whole in a lifelong learning perspective. Indeed, lifelong learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – whether formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels: from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, VET and adult learning. Specifically, the framework should address the following four strategic objectives:

- **Strategic objective 1:** Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- **Strategic objective 2:** Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- **Strategic objective 3:** Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- **Strategic objective 4:** Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Lisbon
2000



The Copenhagen process (2002 –) for VET

The start

In October 2001 in Bruges, the Directors-General in charge of VET in the EU Member States started a bottom-up process, analogous to the Bologna process for higher education, in order to bring about more intense joint action. Subsequently, thirty-one countries and the European Commission signed a declaration in Copenhagen in November 2002 containing a strategy to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of European VET in order to achieve the Lisbon objectives.

How does the Copenhagen process work in practice?

The Copenhagen process acts at four levels:

1. Political

The process plays an essential role in emphasizing the importance of VET to political decision makers. It facilitates agreeing common European goals and objectives, discussing national models and initiatives and exchanging good examples at a European level. At national level, the process contributes to strengthening the focus on VET and has inspired national reforms.

2. Common tools

Developing common European tools and principles aimed at enhancing transparency and quality of competences and qualifications, and facilitating mobility of learners and workers. The process paves the way towards a European labour market, and a European VET area complementary to the European area for higher education.

3. Mutual learning

Supporting European cooperation and fostering mutual learning. It allows the participating countries to consider their policies in light of experience from other countries and provides a framework for working together, learning from others, sharing ideas, experiences and results.

4. Taking stakeholders on board

The process strengthens the involvement of different stakeholders and enables their contribution to common goals.

Results

Since the adoption of the Copenhagen declaration the process is reviewed every two years. In Maastricht (2004), Helsinki (2006) and Bordeaux (2008) priorities and objectives were set to guide VET policy developments for the following two years.

An overview of the most important results achieved since 2002:

- **Europass:** a single framework for transparency of qualifications and competences. [Europass in Europe](#) / [Europass in the Netherlands](#).
- The [European Qualifications Framework](#) (EQF) was adopted by the European Parliament and Council on 23 April 2008. The EQF will relate different national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. The EQF will cover all educational sectors, general and vocational, and all education sectors. Most European countries are developing

or revising their qualifications frameworks to be compatible with the EQF. In the coming years the Netherlands will implement the EQF. As of 2010 EQF will make it possible to compare qualification levels.

- In April 2008, a Commission proposal for a [Recommendations on a European credit system for VET](#) (ECVET) was adopted. This system will facilitate the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals in different learning environments or through periods of VET abroad.
- In April 2008 a Commission proposal for a Recommendation on a [European Quality Assurance Reference Framework](#) was adopted. It is designed to support Member States to promote and monitor quality improvement in VET. It provides a common basis for further development of quality principles, reference criteria and indicators.
- Council Resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of [guidance throughout life](#), which brings a coherent approach to this topic across education and training sectors at Community and national levels.
- [Council Conclusion on the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) endorse a set of common European principles to help develop confidence and trust in this rapidly emerging sector.



Copenhagen
2002

Bordeaux Communiqué 2008

The ministers of VET of the EU Member States, the EFTA/EEA and candidate countries, the European Commission and the European Social partners in November 2008 adopted the *Bordeaux Communiqué* which introduces the new objective of strengthening the links between VET and the labour market. The focus now is on consolidating the strategy, and implementing the principles and tools that have been built since 2002.

Four priority areas for future action were set:

1. Implementing the tools and schemes for promoting cooperation in the field of VET at national and European level

As stated before the Copenhagen process has created major tools for improving the transparency of qualifications and promoting mobility. Insofar as they are based on a learning-outcomes approach and entail the use of quality assurance mechanisms for mutual trust, they have significant implications for national VET systems. It is now essential to ensure they are implemented using appropriate methods and developed in a coherent manner. It is important to – develop national qualifications systems and frameworks which are in line with the *European Qualifications Framework*, – to implement the future *European Credit System for VET* (ECVET) and the *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework* (EQARF).

2. Heightening the quality and attractiveness of VET systems

Attractiveness, accessibility and quality should allow VET to play a major role in lifelong learning strategies, with a twofold objective: (i) simultaneously promoting equity, business performance, competitiveness and innovation; (ii) enabling citizens to acquire the skills they need for career development, to take up training, be an active citizen and achieve personal fulfillment. VET should promote excellence and at the same time guarantee equal opportunities.

3. Improving the links between VET and the labour market

To contribute to greater employability and employment security, to anticipate and manage transitions in the labour market, and boost business competitiveness, VET policies must be geared to labour market needs and the social partners must be involved.

This should be facilitated by:

- Continuing to develop forward-planning mechanisms, identifying potential skills gaps and shortages and responding to future needs of the economy and enterprises.

- Improving guidance and counseling (throughout life) to ease the transition from training to employment, participating actively in the *European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network*.
- Strengthening mechanisms aimed at promoting adult training, with a special focus on SMEs.
- Developing and implementing the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- Increasing the mobility of people undergoing work-related training.
- Increasing the role of higher education in VET and in enhancing labour market integration.

4. Strengthening European cooperation arrangements

This should be facilitated by – improving European cooperation arrangements in the field of VET, – strengthen linkages between VET, school education, higher education and adult training, and – consolidating exchanges and cooperation with third countries and international organisations such as the OECD, the Council of Europe, the ILO and UNESCO.

Bordeaux
2008



Table **Timeline - priorities within the Copenhagen process**

	<u>Copenhagen Declaration 2002</u>	<u>Maastricht Communiqué 2004</u>	<u>Helsinki Communiqué 2006</u>	<u>Bordeaux Communiqué 2008</u>
Transparency & common tools to facilitate European mobility	Increasing transparency of VET by integrating instruments such as EUROPASS	Consolidating the Copenhagen process and facilitating the implementation of the concrete results	Development and implementation of common tools for VET	Implementing the tools and schemes for promoting cooperation in the field of VET at national and European level
	Developing common principles towards a uniform certification system	Developing a European Qualifications Framework		
	Developing common principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning	Developing and implementing the European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET)		
European co-operation in VET	Strengthening the European dimension in VET		Strengthening mutual learning	Improving the links between VET and the labour market
	Promoting European dimension in the screening and career guidance in Member States		Taking all stakeholders on board	Strengthening European cooperation arrangements
Attractiveness & Quality	Promoting the development of skills and qualifications at sectoral level	Examining the specific learning needs and changing role of vocational teachers and trainers	Policy focused on improving the attractiveness and quality of VET	Heightening the quality and attractiveness of VET systems
	To pay more attention to the learning needs of teachers and trainers			
	Promoting co-operation in the area of quality assurance systems and methods	Improving statistical information in order to enable evaluation of progress in making VET efficient, effective and attractive		

Next Follow-Up Meeting **Bruges 2010**

The next Ministerial follow-up meeting will be held in Bruges, Belgium in 2010. The aim will be to evaluate implementation of the Copenhagen process and to reflect on its strategic direction beyond 2010, in the context of the future strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training.

Dutch Policy Developments **Internationalisation agenda for VET 2008 – 2011**

This internationalisation agenda for secondary vocational training (MBO) sets out ‘where we are now’ and ‘where we want to be’ by setting out the perspective in the short and the mid-long term. This has been fleshed out at three levels (national, European and global) on the basis of four primary goals.

These are:

- A stronger international orientation of MBO (in the qualification structure and the curriculum), both
- through ‘internationalisation@home’ and through foreign contacts.
- The promoting of incoming and outgoing mobility (due to better use of European and national incentive programmes).
- Continuing cooperation in Europe (with for the coming period the emphasis on the implementation of instruments developed in an EU context).
- Improving the image of Dutch VET in Europe and abroad.



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Websites providing more information about Europe

General	
Ministry of Education, culture and Science	www.minocw.nl
European Commission	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc60_en.htm
Cedefop European Centre for the Development of VET	http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/default.asp
CINOP	www.cinop.nl
Programmes	
Lifelong Learning Programme 2007 – 2013	http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html www.na-ill.nl (Dutch)
Leonardo da Vinci The Netherlands	www.leonardodavinci.nl
Policy	
Dutch policy developments: Internationalisation agenda for VET 2008-2011	http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/A00502_i.pdf
Summaries of the Union's legislation	http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/index_en.htm
Education and training 2020' work programme	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm
VET	http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm
Copenhagen Declaration 2002	http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc125_en.pdf
The Copenhagen process (2002 –) for VET	http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm
Maastricht Communiqué 2004	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/maastricht_en.pdf http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2004:390:0006:0020:EN:PDF

Helsinki Communiqué 2006	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/helsinki_en.pdf
Bordeaux Communiqué 2008	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bordeaux_en.pdf
Valuing learning outside formal education and training	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc52_en.htm
Guidance throughout life	http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/104236.pdf
Instruments	
Europass	http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu http://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexuriserv/lexuriserv.do?uri=oj:l:2004:390:0006:0020:en:pdf www.europass.nl (Dutch)
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=oj:c:2008:111:0001:0007:en:pdf
European Quality Assurance Reference Framework	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm
Recommendations on a European credit system for VET (ECVET)	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc50_en.htm
The European Quality Assurance Reference framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF)	http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm
Search engine for VET in Europe	http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/
Young People's page on Europe	www.go-europe.nl (Dutch)
Info about work placements during VET	www.workplacement.nl (Dutch)