



Department
for Education

Consultation Response Form

Consultation closing date: 30 June 2014
Your comments must reach us by that date

REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES

CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND YOUTH

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.	
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: John Mountford	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	x
Name of Organisation (if applicable): Association of Colleges	
Address: 2-5 Stedham Place London WC1A 1HU	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's '[Contact Us](#)' page.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUESTIONS

General Issues

1 Does EU action, as opposed to national government action, in the areas of education and vocational training generally benefit or disadvantage the UK? Can you point us to any published evidence or analysis in support of your view?

Comments:

EU project funding has allowed colleges to establish overseas links with EU partners that have helped them to develop both educational and commercial opportunities. AoC has also been able to contribute to sector wide EU partnerships and projects in key issues for the sector which has helped us to develop expertise in these areas. There are currently no UK Government funding available for this type of overseas activity.

2 Are there any specific EU activities in the areas of education and training that you consider particularly beneficial or particularly disadvantageous to the UK?

Comments:

The benefits are that it allows for funded student and staff exchanges which greatly enrich their study and work experience. It allows for the exchange of ideas and it allows for institutional partnerships. It also allows for the AoC to engage on an EU level via EU networks. The main advantage is the funding the EU provides to support these activities.

There are concerns that the amount of 'paperwork' and bureaucracy can hinder colleges' EU work. It can also demand considerable staff time and resource to access and monitor EU funded partnerships.

3 Do you think the EU, as opposed to national government, should do more or less in relation to education and training? If so, where and why?

Comments:

The current UK FE model is a good fit for our particular situation. I would be concerned that if the EU became over prescriptive on TVET providers work, e.g. insisting on the application of the dual system, as this would lose a national approach to meeting national needs. It would also be worrying if EU government looked to limit UK colleges' autonomous governance model. However, it is unlikely that the EU's TVET policy would develop along these lines.

4 What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on education and training in your sector and how?

Comments:

We work through EU instruments such as EQAVET, ECVET, EQF and Erasmus +

5 What challenges or opportunities are there for the UK in further EU action on education?

Comments:

There is still work to be done on harmonising VET qualifications and quality which needs to be done if EU aspirations on mobility of labour are to be met.

6 What international bodies or arrangements other than the EU are important to education and training in the UK? How does your experience of dealing with them compare with the EU's activity in this sphere?

Comments:

Colleges work through organisations such as UKTI, British Council and World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics to develop their international work. As there focus is not exactly in line with EU objectives and systems it is difficult to make a comparison. Speaking generally, the EU is an excellent source of funding for colleges' overseas work but it is very bureaucratic when compared to other agencies.

The Programmes

7 For the specific programmes which are funded and managed via the EU (such as Erasmus or Leonardo), what are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national responsibility and funding for these activities?

Comments:

It allows for an EU wide approach to be taken which focuses on EU objectives rather than national (this can be both good and bad). It means that you can work with a wide range of different countries. The current model of a national agency (Ecorys) allows us to get to know their objectives and approaches and helps to localise support. It also helps to 'personalise' EU funders and is a positive model, especially as Ecorys take a very proactive and welcome approach in working with the sector.

8 Can you point to evidence which shows that language learning has improved through participation in the programmes?

Comments:

It is difficult to find evidence that directly supports this. However, the opportunity that EU partnerships afford FE students to travel abroad, meet new cultures and languages is invaluable. It is the only chance of an international experience a lot of FE students will have and it would have some impact on their awareness of MFLs and hopefully their enthusiasm to learn them. I think that the UK's challenges with MFL learning goes deeper than EU projects.

9 How would you describe the costs and benefits to your organisation of participating in the programmes?

Comments:

The cost is around time; in the application, monitoring and disseminating of projects.

The benefit is that allows us to reach into an EU network of TVET providers and share approaches to key issues facing our sectors. For example in the last couple of years we have been involved in EU partnerships on; Working with NEETs, Approaches to embedding Entrepreneurship and TVET leadership. We are now waiting for funding of an HVET project and a project exploring CPD via skills competitions.

It also allows us to have a policy line to the EU commission via EUproVET (an association of EU VET associations).

Policy Coordination

10 Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

Comments:

There seems to be more tools and instruments being applied to help harmonize EU approaches. There is also a growing focus on TVET and approaches to how the FE system can be best developed on an EU wide level, e.g. introduction of EU sector skills councils.

11 Is it appropriate that Europe 2020 focusses on early school leaving and the completion of tertiary education?

Comments:

Yes, if the EU is to be globally competitive, enjoy sustainable economic growth and social cohesion then these are important areas to focus on .

12 Has the adoption of EU education policy frameworks or Council Recommendations had any impact on your sector?

Comments:

No not directly, UK Government policy is the most important impact on the FE sector.

13 How does policy cooperation on education in the EU compare with other organisations, for example the OECD?

Comments:

Through its funded programmes and instruments it has a more active role in the FE sector than OECD.

14 Can you point to examples of reform in national policy which have resulted from EU co-operation in education and training?

Comments:

No, not really

15 How would you assess the costs and benefits to policy makers of participation in education policy cooperation at EU level?

Comments:

At the current moment the benefits tend to be at an intuitional and perhaps sector level. However, it is important for the UK to have a policy maker level engagement with the EU as some of the issues coming out of strategic documents such as the 'Bruges Communiqué' are important.

YOUTH QUESTIONS

General Issues

16 What evidence is there that EU action in the area of Youth benefits or disadvantages the UK?

Comments:

17 Do you think the EU should do more, or less, in relation to Youth, and why?

Comments:

18 Do you think the EU focuses on the right aims and priorities in the Youth field?

Comments:

19 Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

Comments:

20 Has the adoption of the Structured Dialogue had any impact on your sector?

Comments:

21 What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on your sector and how?

Comments:

22 What international bodies or arrangements are important to your sector beyond the EU?

Comments:

23 Has the EU had an impact on young people's opportunities to have a voice in policy and decision making, or on organisations' work to involve young people in shaping services?

Comments:

24 Has the EU had an impact on young people's social inclusion in the UK?

Comments:

Youth Programmes

25 What are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national funding for activities under the Youth Programme?

Comments:

26 What do you think about the criteria and conditions set by the EU for applying for and receiving funding?

Comments:

27 What do you think about the aims and activities of Erasmus+ in comparison to the Youth in Action programme?

Comments:

28 Any other comments?

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply.	
E-mail address for acknowledgement:	

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy

- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 June 2014

Send by post to:

International Education Division, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Send by e-mail to: BalanceofCompetence.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk.