



Education and Culture

# QA in continuing education programmes: Opportunities and Challenges in Europe

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# Education & Training 2020



## EU 2020

EU political agenda for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through an economy based on knowledge and innovation

Updated strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training

## E&T2020

Lifelong learning + mobility

Quality and efficiency

Equity + social cohesion

Creativity+ innovation

Higher education and research are high on the EU agenda. Reforms are needed to allow universities to play their full part in reaching policy objectives



# EU2020 strategy & flagship initiatives



- Priority areas are addressed by seven flagship initiatives.
- The most relevant for higher education policy:
  - **Youth on the Move**<sup>[1]</sup>: aims to increase the chances of young people of finding a job by enhancing student and trainee mobility and improving the quality and attractiveness of education and training systems in Europe;
  - **An agenda for new skills and jobs**<sup>[2]</sup> aims to make it easier for people to get the right skills and competences and be able to use them in the appropriate jobs;
  - **Innovation Union**<sup>[3]</sup>: aims to improve conditions and access to finance for research and innovation in Europe, to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs.

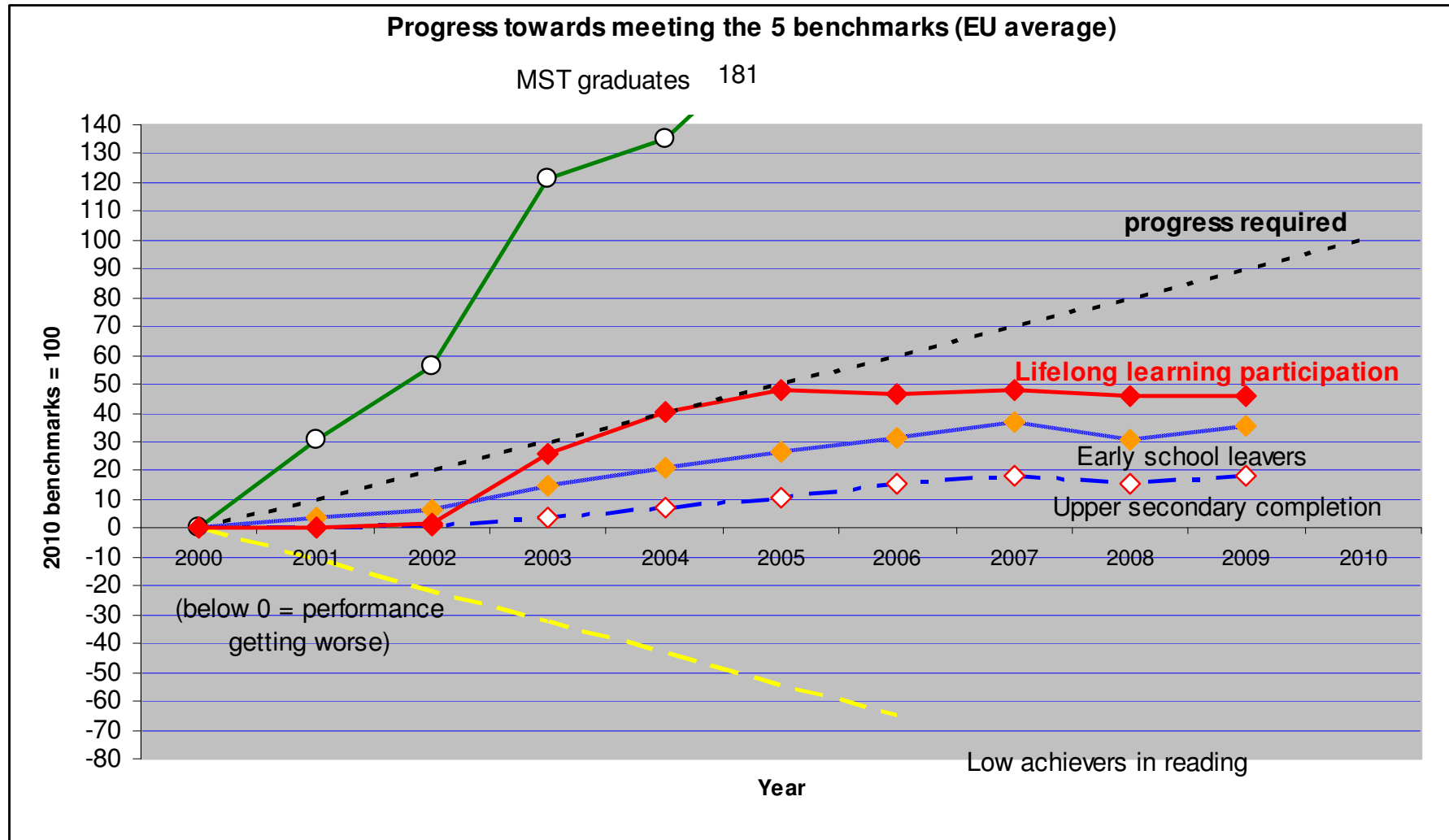
[1] <http://europa.eu/youthonthemove/>

[2] <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=822&langId=en>

[3] [http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm)



# The Lisbon process and LLL



# EU policy and LLL challenges



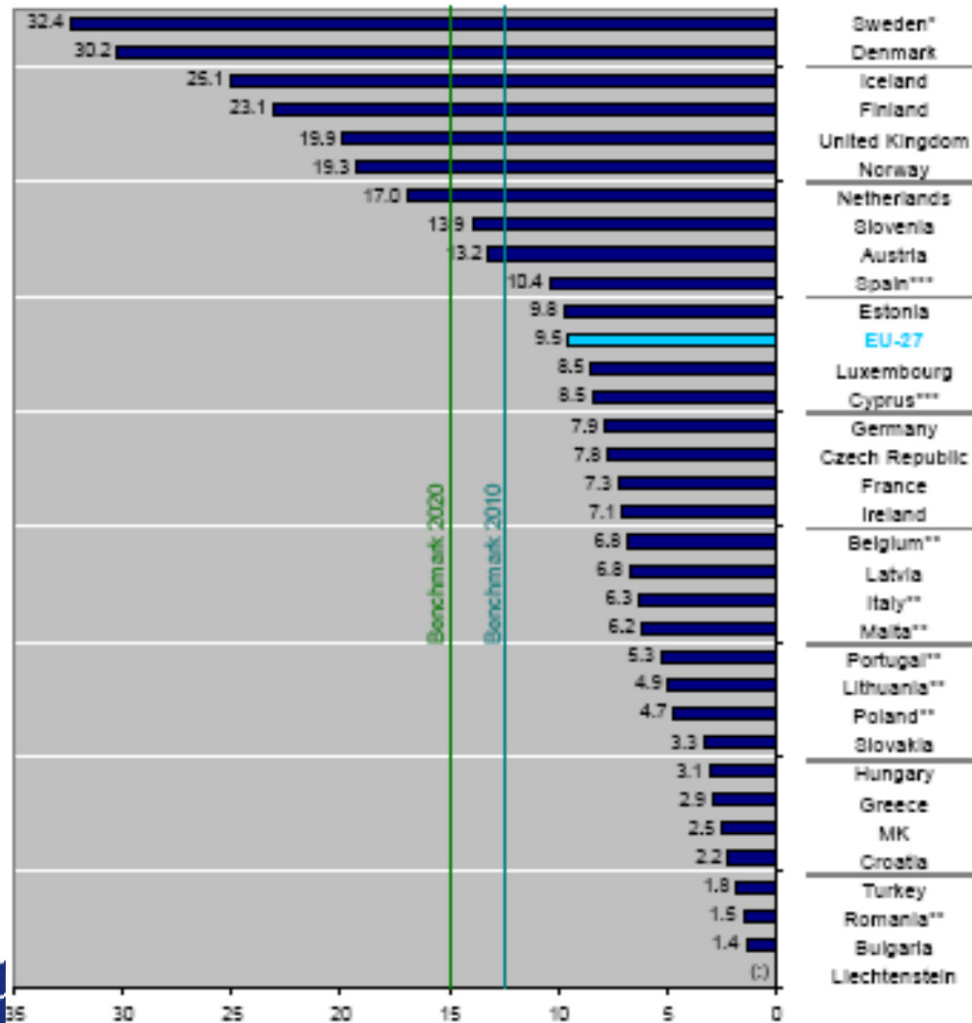
- EU2020, and flagships related to higher education:
  - Universities go LLL
  - QA vital in making European Higher Education more attractive, trustworthy and transparent
- Bologna agenda for 2020:  
Widening access and recognition of prior learning
- Two Recommendations EP and Council on QA in higher education (1998 and 2006) on European cooperation  
QA Flexible study paths and programmes, incl. ODL
- Continuing training must reach the **benchmark of 15% of all adults** participating in lifelong learning



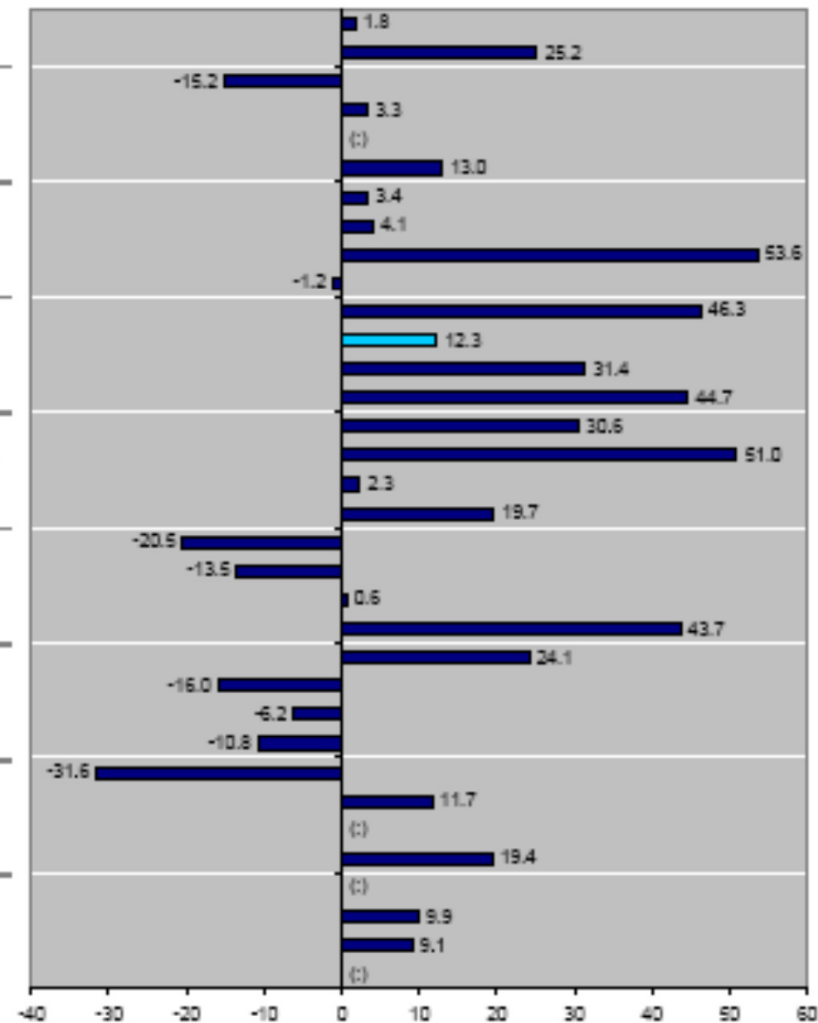
# Participation in LLL per country



Percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training (2008)



Evolution 2003 / 2008 (% relative change)



# Communication on Modernisation of HE



- Adopted: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011
- Key policy issues for Member States and HEIs:
  - “Encourage a greater variety of study modes (e.g. part-time, distance and modular learning, **continuing education for adult returners and others already in the labour market**), by adapting funding mechanisms where necessary.”
- The European Commission will:
  - “Provide specific guidance and recommendations on raising basic and transversal skills and **overcoming skill mismatches**.”



# Europe's main LLL challenge



Need for a **genuine lifelong learning culture** that supports, values and recognises *all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective*

- Including formal, non-formal and informal learning
- Motivation for LLL:
  - New career pathways
  - Second chances for people
  - Upgrading workforce
  - Personal growth
  - Demographic changes





# Providing the right mix of skills



- Education and training systems must deliver the right mix of skills.
  - must ensure that people possess the skills and competences for a rapid and successful transition to employment.
- Good progress made in adapting school curricula, introducing reforms along the **European Key Competences Framework for Lifelong Learning**, and using the **Europass**.
  - Member States should implement national qualification frameworks based on learning outcomes.
  - Transversal role of digital competences across the economy



# Other EU action points



- Joint European cooperation transversal policy instruments: EQF, Key Competences Framework, ECVET and EQAVET.
- European Guidelines for validating informal and non-formal learning
- European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning
- Open Method of coordination - upcoming handbook on higher education strategies
- Lifelong Learning Programme
- University-Business Forum



# Higher Education and LLL



- “Attitudinal barriers”
  - measures and incentives needed to encourage HEIs to actively get involved in LLL
- HEI should also focus on non-traditional learners:
  - Both for employed and unemployed people
  - Recognition of prior-learning
  - Flexible study paths and programmes, including ODL
- Need to actively promote and deliver LLL to ensure impact to learners
- Complexity and sectoral structure of E&T systems,  
Diversity of involved actors  
Different priorities at national, regional and local levels  
=> obstacles to rapid implementation of sustainable LLL policies.



# Need for coordinated efforts



- Complexity and sectoral structure of E&T systems,  
Diversity of involved actors  
Different priorities at national, regional and local levels  
=> obstacles to rapid implementation of sustainable  
lifelong learning policies.
- LLL in HE to be implemented at several levels:
  - EU is coordinating through Open Method of Coordination and LLP projects
  - Member states responsibility to establish sustainable LLL strategies and to fund
  - Higher Education Institutions to deliver
  - Stakeholder involvement



# QA and LLL

- Non-traditional HE: need for open, flexible and transparent education
  - Broader European perspective in QA procedures, Don't focus just on national realities
  - Example of Masters: integral part of EU's LLL strategy
    - Ex.: Professional practice as admission requirement
  - Joint programmes: useful tools for exchange of good practices
- Access to HE: need for VET-HE bridges



# Bridging QA schools – VET-HE



- Stronger EU dimension needed in VET + HE: QA systems should position themselves internationally and be more transparent and comparable (to stimulate mobility)
- From perspective of LLL and mobility it is important that permeability within and between education sectors/subsystems is guaranteed



# Bridging QA schools – VET-HE



- But QA systems are very different within the sector, between sectors and between countries (in QA tradition, size of institutions, student population, extent of state control, priorities etc.)
- What they have in common is the **common language of learning outcomes**.  
The link with the EQF/NQF could act as catalyser for constructing bridges



# Bridging QA schools – VET-HE

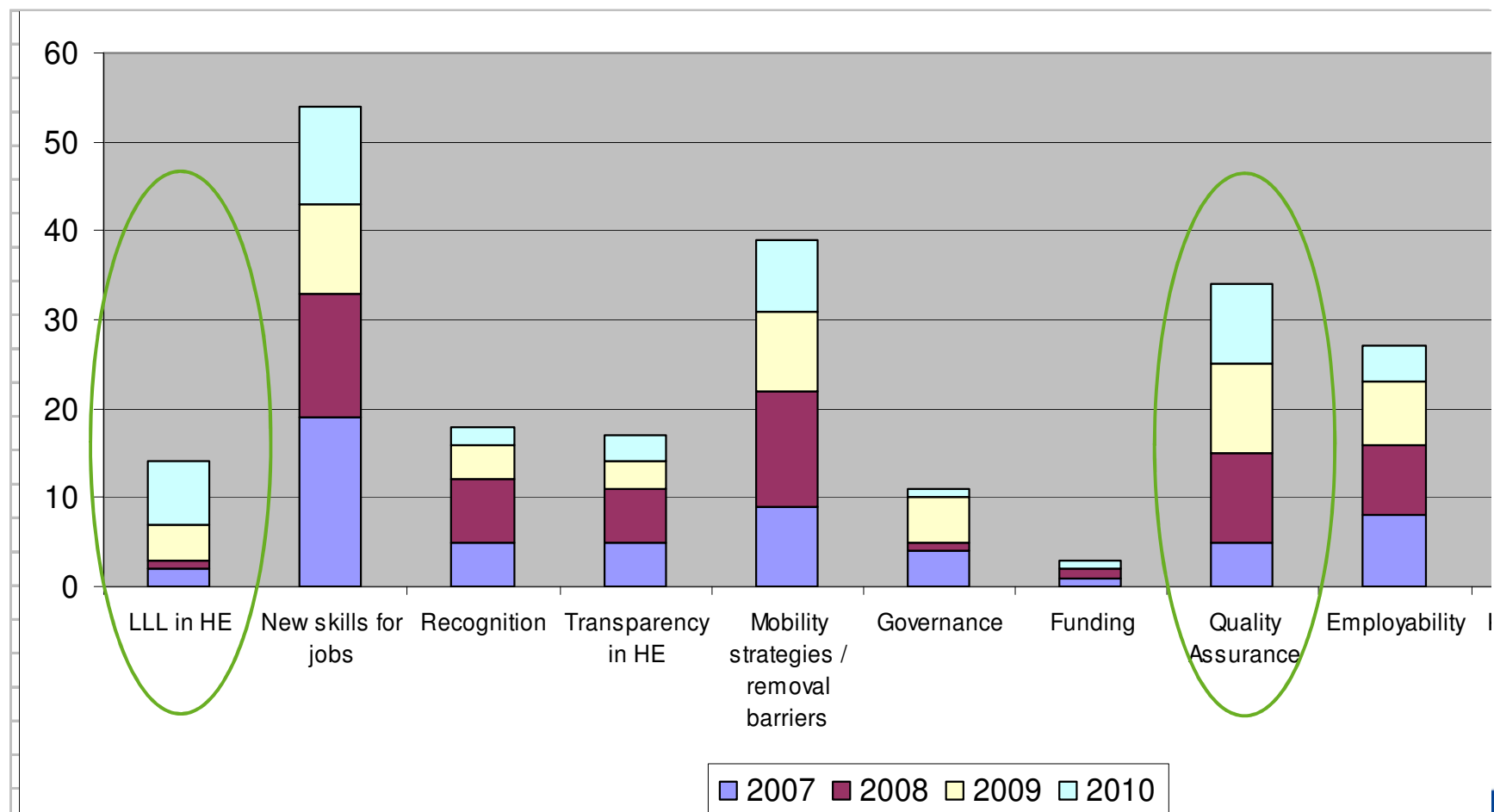


- Focus should not be on building one integrated QA system for all sectors
- But rather on more transparency and better understanding of the different QA systems
- And on practical cooperation between main QA actors of different sectors, in particular on resolving bottlenecks for recognition of qualifications,
- Need to discuss about which bridges are needed for assessment, validation and recognition of qualifications obtained in education





# HE policy priorities and EU programmes: Erasmus centralised actions



# Concluding Remarks

- To make LLL a reality, E&T systems should make a stronger effort towards really open, flexible and transparent education
- Need a coordinated effort from all actors involved
  - HE QA systems have an important role to play
  - Need a stronger involvement from employers
- QA HE mechanisms should support LLL by
  - a broader European dimension
  - providing transparency and recognition
  - better adapting to non-traditional education and learners
  - Creating bridges with other education levels and sectors, notably with VET
  - incentivating HEI involvement in LLL

