

Commentary and report on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning

Responsibility for this text lies with:

The Platform Non-formal Adult Education (Beraadsgroep Vorming)

The Foundation for Folk High School Work in the Netherlands (Stichting voor Volkshogeschoolwerk in Nederland)

The Association of Dutch Institutes for Non-formal Adult Education (Bond van Nederlandse Volksuniversiteiten)

Compiler and editor: Kees Hammink

Contributors:

Prof Max van der Kamp, Professor in Andragogy at the University of Groningen

Jan Houtepen, Manager Education and Welfare at Prisma-Noord Brabant

Marcel Spierts, Co-ordinator Innovation Project Cultural and Social Education

Ruud Duvekot, Co-ordinator Information and Research Centre for APEL

Paul Hensen, Staff member of the The Association of Dutch Institutes for Non-formal Adult Education

And the 50 participants from various organisations of formal and non-formal adult education in the meeting of experts held on 6 June 2001

Translation: Sheila Dale

Introduction

The significance of the Memorandum

This paper comprises the commentary and recommendations of the Platform Non-formal Adult Education, the Foundation for Folk High School Work in the Netherlands, and the Association of Dutch Institutes for Non-formal Adult Education on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning from the European Commission.

We consider the fact that the European Commission is calling for a Europe-wide debate on lifelong learning and the way in which that can be achieved to be of great importance. It provides the opportunity to advance much further in a discussion that has been going on since the middle of the seventies, and which up to now has produced little more than wishful thinking at a high level of abstraction. Lifelong learning is (still) rarely incorporated as a leading principle in educational policy, or any other kind of policy which creates learning opportunities for citizens.

At the same time one can see a practice developing in which learning new things, reinforcing knowledge and competences, and updating old knowledge is slowly but surely becoming part of the everyday life of businesses and citizens. At least for those citizens who, and those businesses which, wish to hold and improve their position in the (labour) market. Many of those who are both excluded from the market and who have had limited chances to develop their intellectual skills and capacities are, moreover, still a long way off from lifelong learning.

The aim of the organisations who support these comments and recommendations is precisely to make room for those forms of non-formal and informal learning that do justice to the emancipation of socially and economically disadvantaged groups of citizens.

In the Spring of 2001 the Platform Non-formal Adult Education, a network organisation of professionals with key positions in the Dutch non-formal education area, organised a meeting of experts on the Memorandum. Some experts were asked to provide a written input to one of the Key Messages. The meeting was supported by the Foundation for Folk High School Work in the Netherlands and the Association of Dutch Institutes for Non-formal Adult Education.

Using the written inputs as a starting point,¹ a day was devoted to discussion in work groups with some 50 people from various sectors of adult education. This discussion was concluded with the formulation of recommendations, aimed at putting more of the Memorandum into practice.

This document, with commentary and recommendations, has been compiled by the Platform on the basis of the results of the meeting of experts. A fuller version of this document will be published in Dutch, which will include the text of the written contributions from the experts. This international version contains the essence of the critical observations and the recommendations aimed at putting into practice the policy resolutions in the Memorandum.

¹ Adult Education in the Netherlands: formal adult education takes place in Regional Education and Training Centres and non-formal adult education takes place in adult education centres, peoples universities, folk high schools, centres for adult education & training & guidance, associations and by means of socio-cultural work (mainly in community and club houses, local centres and cultural centres).

For the Platform Non-formal Adult Education the following Key Messages were of central importance:

- Key Message 1: New basic skills for all
- Key Message 2: More investment in human resources
- Key Message 3: Innovation in teaching and learning
- Key Message 4: Valuing learning
- Key Message 6: Bringing learning closer to home

The Platform did not consider Key Message 5 (Rethinking guidance and counselling). The members of the organising committee had neither sufficient knowledge and insights within their own ranks, nor sufficient time to mobilise the knowledge which exists in the Netherlands with regard to this subject, to provide an adequate reaction.

This introduction is followed by a brief general commentary on the Memorandum. It goes into some of the principles and assumptions which lie behind the Memorandum. It situates the Memorandum against the background of the debate on lifelong learning as it has been conducted in the Netherlands in recent years, and makes a few observations on the relationship between formal, non-formal and informal learning. This provides the starting point for 5 separate commentaries and sets of recommendations relating to the Key Messages.

General commentary

Lifelong learning from both the social and economic viewpoints

It is good that the European Commission has put lifelong learning on the political agenda again. In so doing it has an eye not only to economic objectives but also to (European) citizenship, social cohesion and personal development.

The responsibility for lifelong learning is a matter for various (Social) Partners, from which the government cannot withdraw. Lifelong learning reaches people not only through stimulation of the demand for it, but also by means of innovation in educational provision.

The Draft Memorandum leaves something to be desired by way of conceptual clarity, just as in the use of the existing 'body of knowledge' on education. The implementation strategies are vague, no concrete 'targets' for lifelong learning are mentioned. A weakness is the absence of reflection on the resources necessary to achieve the extremely ambitious objectives. On this point in particular national governments have an excuse for putting action on the back burner. That learning throughout life will cost more is obvious; not obvious is how these costs can be met. How far are people prepared to increase public expenditure for lifelong learning?

The case which is made out in the Memorandum for the relationships between formal, non-formal and informal learning, is very much appreciated, particularly from the learning theory perspective (bringing learning close to the learner, making it more effective etc.) At the same time some caution should be exercised in this with regard to policy concerning informal learning. Steering informal learning (in accordance with policy) assumes a capacity to interfere in citizens' private lives. Secondly, care must be taken to avoid formalising informal learning (which gains its strength at present from the very fact that it arises from individual motives and needs and takes place in 'non-educational settings'), thereby divesting it of its intrinsic power.

The importance and place of non-traditional and informal learning activities merit further development. Learning and education are no longer the exclusive privilege of school or higher education as (ped)agogical islands in the life of society. They are coming out of their space and time channels.

Learning and education can also take place at work, via the mass media, associations or neighbourhood action groups. These places and situations form so many learning contexts for active citizenship. This is the only way in which people can acquire skills in real social practices. Connection to what is going on in society also enables the development of 'rich learning environments'.

In a rich learning environment coaching is aimed at stimulating learners to organise the learning for themselves. Learners' delight in learning and motivation are continually being called upon to this end.

The opening up of the boundaries of learning and the development of rich learning environments forces educational institutions into close discussion and co-operation with other organisations and institutions. Co-operation between education and other organisations in civil society - such as consumer organisations, unions, employment offices, political parties, social life, town hall, health services and housing associations - has therefore become essential.

Recommendations

1. The 'social cornerstone' of the policy on lifelong learning must be fortified. An Interdepartmental Steering Group should be established at national level, under the co-ordination of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, with the brief of formulating a national action programme in the broad context of the Memorandum from the European Commission. In setting the tasks for the group explicit consideration should be given to education and informal learning for active citizenship and to educational campaigns and programmes that aim to combat social exclusion. The Steering Group must formulate its proposals in line with the recently published National Action Programme for combating poverty and social exclusion. Such a steering group should also make recommendations with regard to government policy, as well as to regional and local authorities, for the explicit creation of opportunities for a functional partnership between formal and non-formal learning. A renewed campaign programme cannot be a master plan to cover everything. It is a matter of developing an incremental approach that plugs into activities, programmes and experiments that are under way and that fit with the social keynotes of the Memorandum in terms of both vision and practice.
2. The Memorandum discusses the possibility of a 'right to learn' as a way of achieving lifelong learning. It is certainly worthwhile turning this question over again and looking at it in the context of the course of life today. (The question was raised as far back as the seventies in the debates about 'permanent education'.) Matters such as educational leave, educational vouchers and such like deserve the attention of Europe again in the context of new relationships between Social Partners, investments in, and rewards from education, and moral and ethnic grounds for entitlement. Thus the debate now must be not only about the 'right to learn', but also about the 'obligation to learn'. The stimulation of demand for lifelong learning is taking on increasingly radical forms. (In the Netherlands migrants have been required, since 1998, to follow an assimilation course, unemployed people risk losing benefits if they refuse training.) The question is how far is it appropriate to include such forms of compulsion and coercion in a policy for lifelong learning? In future the question needs to be asked what these 'new' obligations mean with regard to motivation and incentives, and in that context, for the way in which people learn, formally or informally, to associate with each other.

Key Message 1: New basic skills for all

The notion of 'New Basic Skills' is not remarkable for its conceptual clarity. After the collapse of the 'New Economy' on the international exchanges, the word 'new' lost some of its allure. The Commission does not make clear what is meant by 'new' at this time. Also the list of skills makes a very arbitrary impression. Skills, qualifications, competences are run together. For further debate a thorough conceptual analysis of possible basic skills in the knowledge society seems sorely needed.

If conceptual clarity leaves something to be desired, there is even more need for empirical evidence on the extent to which the population possesses the skills in question. What is the relationship with notions such as initial qualifications and citizenship. The more basic skills are extended, the more the question arises of how such skills can be learned. Sometimes basic skills seem to be primarily a matter of (social) insight, and it would be nice for everyone to have a lot of this, but that would be to deny the 'human limitations': not everyone can learn everything.

Although there is a sad lack of clarity with regard to the 'New Basic Skills', much more is known, both conceptually and empirically, about the 'old' ones, such as functional literacy. Although functional literacy is mentioned in the Memorandum, the problem is grossly underestimated. The International Literacy Survey (IALS) has clearly demonstrated that in most industrialised countries the ability to understand functional information in everyday life is still a huge problem. Although the Netherlands came out fairly well in international comparisons, none the less ten per cent of the population have great difficulty with instructions, maps, graphics, guides and forms. This is not just the case among non-indigenous people, but also among large numbers of older people, early school-leavers and the long-term unemployed. The understanding of simple everyday information can rightly be listed as a basic skill in the information society, it is the basis of learning. UNESCO has announced the 'Literacy Decade', the Memorandum also could address functional literacy more closely.

Secondly, or, even better, in combination with the 'old' basic skills (which must have priority), social competences and the skills to be able and willing to participate in social and political life should be part of the set of basic skills. It is a matter of strengthening the position of the individual and the contribution s/he makes to society. This is the essence of citizenship.

Recommendations

3. There needs to be greater conceptual clarity with regard to what can be deemed to be basic skills for all at present and in the near future.
4. In this connection, priority should be given to the 'old' basic skills:
 - a. Functional literacy
 - b. Functional numeracy
5. This should be complemented, if the aforementioned priorities are achieved, with:
 - a. Social competences, such as the development and taking of responsibility, the development of tolerance and respect, skills to express oneself and one's opinions.
 - b. Communication skills
 - c. Skills for social and political participation

It is suggested that the acquisition of these skills should be coupled with the gaining of insight into social and political structures and stimulation to wide participation in society and politics.

6. The learning and acquisition of basic skills, and the maintenance of these skills, must be linked to the course of life.
7. Courses on basic skills must also be able to be run by institutions for non-formal education. These institutions must be recognised/approved. Government, education providers and consumer organisations should first agree indicators with regard to evaluation/assessment.
8. It is essential that courses are designed and promoted in a way that will reach groups who are not reached, or who are hardly reached, at present (illiterates, the very old, fringe groups etc.). Welfare services must again take an active part in stimulation and recruitment and also have an important role in making educational needs known. For the development of successful strategies for encouragement and motivation the Consultative Group recommends that national development projects be set up, aimed at those groups who do not participate, or participate very little, in existing (basic) education provision.
9. Emphasis must be given to the concept of multiculturalism, particularly in the design of learning aimed at strengthening basic skills. In addition to indigenous people, people from other cultural backgrounds (where the average level of education is lower than in the indigenous population) need to strengthen their basic skills. The more the learning of these skills can take place in a multicultural context, the more effective it will be.
10. People who are not active, or who are no longer active, in the workforce must be able to obtain credits at regional education and training centres and institutions for the education of adults. This needs structural financing and an imaginative approach to the Law on Adult Education and Vocational Education and Training.

Key Message 2: More investment in human resources

It would be most helpful if Social Partners could agree the budget available for permanent education and the regulations allowing people to participate in educational and training activities. These rules should then be written into collective agreements for each branch of industry.

Discussion has been going on for years in the Netherlands with regard to paid educational leave. Unlike in other countries (including Belgium) nothing has ever come of this discussion. This can be combined very well with parental leave and caring leave. Thus the Netherlands can learn a lot in this respect by exchange with other countries.

The attention paid to older workers with little education is justified. Older non-indigenous people in particular need basic skills in Dutch and Dutch society.

But there are also other groups that deserve attention. Functional illiteracy among workers should be spotted on the shop floor. Employers must be given some encouragement. Firms are stimulating the use of PCs by private PC projects. In the context of social enterprise in business, firms can put PCs and internet facilities into districts and neighbourhoods, in libraries and canteens where people can practice. In the Netherlands too there are many good examples of a joint approach between education, welfare services and the business world: among other things, ICT and older people (Regional Educational and Training Centres together with welfare services for older people, old peoples' associations, and Rabobank)

Employers' and workers' organisations should be able to stimulate investment of this kind in a 'learning society'. Clearly there is still too little appreciation of the fact that investing in education covers its costs:

improved quality, staff who are better motivated, less absence through illness. The short-term product and profit mentality is against us in this.

Recommendations

11. The Social Partners must make general agreements for lifelong learning (with regard among other things to rules for leave - leave for caring combined with education - individual learning accounts for established employees).
12. Business concerns can usefully fulfil their social enterprise functions by creating rich learning environments both inside and outside the business.
13. Unemployed people must also be encouraged by the social services to participate in educational activities. Welfare work, businesses, and non-formal education have a part to play in this.

Key Message 3: Innovation in teaching and learning, the new role for teachers and trainers

The changes in teaching and learning contexts which the memorandum calls for, at least implicitly, have far-reaching implications for methods of teaching and learning. From the point of view of method, there is discussion at present of a change from transfer to participation. A consequence of this shift is that in the methodology the emphasis comes to lie more on experience and competence and less on the curriculum laid down. The significance of (learning) experiences to learners become more crucial in determining the quality of educational processes than the extent to which the learners can reproduce the learning material they have been given.

Shifts in learning contexts and methods are not without implications for the tasks and roles of education professionals. These professionals are increasingly becoming people who guide and support the learning processes: they clarify, refer, and give feedback. Their facilitative tasks are coming more to the foreground, that is to say they are being given the brief of developing learning opportunities for others by helping to clarify questions about learning and so assisting in the creation of appropriate provision for learning. This change of accent can be seen, among other things, in the following roles which are becoming more and more characteristic of the professional practice of those in the education profession²:

- The growing importance of problem-directed and problem-based working is changing the contact-making role of the professional more and more into a research role. S/he must not only point out new social questions and needs and devise new learning trajectories into which these can be 'translated', but also actively research what new questions and expectations exist among clients and customers.
- In designing relevant learning trajectories, content and methods, the professional must increasingly function as specialist in learning theory.

²See Th.Jansen and T. van den Berg, 'Educaties', in: M. Spierts (ed) Werken aan openheid en samenhang. Een nadere verkenning van culturele en maatschappelijke vorming. Maarssen, Elsevier, 2000.

- When it comes to guidance, the professional is being asked to act more and more as an individual (trajectory) guide. Of course the more traditional form of group tutor, in which the worker builds up a specific relationship with the target group of an educational activity, is still important. But in addition to this people are increasingly being asked to act as trainer, coach, facilitator or adviser for individualised needs and questions. In this context attention to the informal moments that can encourage the development process of a participant is especially important.
- As organiser, the professional is increasingly expected to think and behave in line with the organisation's mission. In this context it is of growing importance to represent the organisation in all kinds of networks at neighbourhood and district level, where joint initiatives and collaborative projects can arise (see the educational networks referred to in Key Message 6).

Recommendations

14. The way in which productive self-directed learning can be generated by various categories of people (various by age, cultural background, sex etc.) and the role in this which needs to be played by education professionals in varying settings, needs to be more closely mapped. On the one hand by means of research and on the other by extracting and logging learning experiences from examples of good practice.
15. In all sectors concerned with the education of adults (be it knowledge-based or personal/cultural) there must be discussion with regard to how adults learn. A point deserving of special attention is learning in non-formal and informal settings.
16. The role of professionals in all types of education of adults needs to be extended, and attention must be paid at least to:
 - a. Monitoring, showing the effects of interactions, the tracking of learners etc.
 - b. Encouraging learning in the context of various forms of social organisation (work, neighbourhood, associations etc.)
 - c. Facilitating learning in a great variety of contexts, and by the use of a range of media.

Specific attention must be paid to the use of new information and communication technologies.
17. The development of training at Masters level for (adult) educators must be developed in the centres of higher vocational education.

Key Message 4: Valuing learning, recognition of prior learning (non-formal and informal)

The Memorandum speaks of the assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. Key Message 4 in particular goes into this. It is clear that the Memorandum is aiming to improve the transparency of individual competences by granting legal status to knowledge, expertise, skills and attitudes that have been acquired (irrespective of how and or where). In the Netherlands we sum this process up under the concept of EVC, the Dutch variant of the English language term APEL (Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning): the assessment, recognition and certification of competences gained informally.

Thus EVC (APEL) is primarily a procedure for the formal recognition of learning through informal processes. Showing the 'full, broad pallet of someone's talents' can have a number of positive effects. It can also mean that by using APEL an organisation is better able to match existing (individual) education and training plans more closely to the objectives of the organisation.

The development of competences can take place in formal learning processes, subject to modern design. But competences are also developed in informal learning processes such as at work, in household tasks, via voluntary work, via hobbies, through involvement in organisations in civil society or by means of courses. If these competences are comparable with formal qualifications, then it should be possible to give them recognition. Because what point is there in doing a course on something you can already do and prove you can do?

For people in employment, and for those who are seeking employment also, APEL means tapping all kinds of career and development opportunities. For employees with an interrupted education or training it offers the chance to complete this and so strengthen their position. APEL also provides many opportunities for the reintegration of people who are looking for work. For low-skilled work in particular APEL is not aimed at gaps in knowledge and skills, but focused on what is known and what skills are in place - hence the slogan 'The flask's half full' that we have given to the vision of APEL in the Netherlands. Guidance on how to 'top up the flask' is of importance subsequently, otherwise it stays at the level of a snapshot of individual attributes. Combining and recognising existing knowledge and skills and adding to it with new knowledge leads to interesting prospects for both organisations and individuals.

In its policy document 'In Goede Banen' (In Good Jobs), which appeared in the Summer of 2000, the Dutch government stressed the importance of APEL in dealing with problems in the labour market, and declared that structural implementation of APEL in the Netherlands will be taken firmly in hand, so that Social Partners at sectoral or branch level can handle their responsibility for using the APEL system efficiently.

To prepare for, and to support this, the Dutch government has established an Information and Research Centre for APEL (Kenniscentrum EVC). Great emphasis has been laid on the fact that this information and research centre is to use the existing structure as far as possible. The role will be to gather knowledge on APEL, to develop this knowledge, to make it accessible, to disseminate it, to encourage and advise people to set up their own APEL procedure.

The Information and Research Centre began its activities on 1 January 2001. As such, the Centre is a direct development of Objective 4 in the Memorandum (Annex 1). This can be explained on the basis of mission, vision and strategy.

The mission of the Information and Research Centre is the optimal use of human resources within and between branches/sectors by means of the assessment, valuation and recognition of competences gained elsewhere (knowledge, skills, attitude) or by means of the APEL-system.

At present the Information and Research Centre is primarily aimed at the world of work and those who are working. The Platform Non-formal Adult Education is of the opinion that this function needs to be extended in line with the Memorandum to other sectors in society such as welfare, voluntary work and informal learning.

Recommendations

18. The Memorandum, and in particular this Key Message, has fallen on fertile ground in the Netherlands. The Dutch approach to Key Message 4 via the Information and Research Centre for APEL (Kenniscentrum EVC) is an example which readily lends itself to copying in Europe. The Dutch approach has already been drawn to the attention of the European Commission. Interest has been expressed in using this approach for the development of Key Message 4 throughout Europe.
19. The exchange of knowledge should not be aimed solely at APEL in relation to work and qualifications that are relevant in the employment sector. Qualifications in the broader area of social participation, acquired in informal and/or non-formal educational settings must also be included in the exchange of knowledge.
20. The opportunity to have competences recognised should be laid down as an individual right in laws and regulations on this matter. In principle, every citizen should have the right, regardless of financial or other obstacles, to access to such a facility.
21. In addition to APEL, there must be more opportunities for the international comparison and recognition of diplomas.
22. Assessments of competences must be given legal status, according to an APEL assessment procedure with suitable quality assurance controls.
23. In both the formal and non-formal education sectors, the opportunity of APEL for people who wish to play an active part in education and welfare work as volunteers must be given priority, certainly in the light of a threatening shortage in educational personnel.

Key Message 6: Bringing learning closer to home, on the way to educational networks

The Platform Non-formal Adult Education supports the importance of strong partnerships between the formal and non-formal sectors. In terms of learning outcomes and results for citizens, such partnerships can considerably increase the effectiveness. By means of partnerships efficient networks of learning opportunities can be formed at local level.

The primary function of such networks is to involve as many people as possible in a great variety of learning activities, both formal and informal. Such networks comprise traditional education, education and (basic) education for adults as well as socio-cultural work, people's universities, club work, and institutions which support learning, such as libraries etc.

The partnerships in networks play an active part in the creation of social values, the provision of learning opportunities and the reinforcement of a social climate in which learning is a positive social value, a climate in which broad layers of the population can develop a common conviction that learning makes sense and is useful both at the personal level and that of society, and that people can gain satisfaction from it.

Partnerships are one of the ways of making the connection between formal and non-formal learning on the one side and informal learning on the other, a connection that can only be encouraged by indirect methods.

At the general level this can be achieved by publicity and the promotion of learning as a 'social asset', as happens with Learning Week. At the level of the individual, the connecting of formal, non-formal and informal learning is an act of free will and choice which can only be influenced by the creation of positive conditions and stimuli. To this end the more explicit formal and informal learning contexts need to be supported, and this needs to be shown in the methods used (experiential learning) and the ways in which learning and participation in learning activities are supported (counselling). In practice, partnerships, and making partnerships effective in the context of the founding principle of lifelong learning, are still sometimes hindered by the fact that the various formal and non-formal sectors are governed by differing regulations and legislation. These differences can impede the development of 'lifelong learning' in practice. The Memorandum does not devote sufficient attention to this. In particular, it barely touches on the implications of the concept for traditional initial education for young people. Behind laws and regulations regarding initial education, and likewise large areas of the curriculum in secondary and higher education, there still lies the philosophy that, after a certain number of years of initial education, people are equipped for life.

The idea of learning centres is extremely attractive. Education must indeed be brought to people where they live, take their recreation, and work. Therefore partnerships need to be formed with organisations in civil society, associations, neighbourhood centres, institutions for adult education, libraries. In the Netherlands welfare services and educational services have grown too far apart. They need to be able to hold hands again to provide, together, what are referred to as 'learning centres' (places where education can be provided as close to people as possible). The scaling-up and centralisation of educational work in regional educational and training centres must be corrected by deconcentration of outlets and anchoring in the local community. This also will require new connections and partnership with welfare work and non-formal education.

Recommendations

24. The scaling-up and centralisation of educational work in regional educational and training centres must be corrected by deconcentration of outlets and anchoring in the local community. This also will require new connections and partnership with welfare work and non-formal education.
25. More forms of partnership must be traced and described. In doing this the advantages (in terms of money, motives and interests of partners, political and social basis, together with the effects on the target groups) should be looked at as well as the problems which present as a result of differences in legislation and structure.
Subsequently co-operative projects can be encouraged between formal and non-formal education (including socio-cultural work) by means of a project approach: pilots agreed with municipalities and, maybe, regions (c.f. the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment ISSA scheme - literally Innovation Subsidy for Social Activation - a funding arrangement through which innovative projects in social mobilisation and participation can be sponsored). We suggest that a national innovation budget be made available to enable the pilots to be set up. Following evaluation of the pilots, in due course education legislation could be supplemented (The Basic Education Act, The Secondary Education Act, The Adult Education and Vocational Education and Training Act).
26. Once pilots have been started, to test their feasibility and effectiveness we suggest that there be goal-oriented research into the implications the concept of lifelong learning has for the curriculum in the design of initial education for young people. In this context it is a matter both of the curriculum for the various phases of such education, as well as of how that can be translated into better legislation.
Little is known over participation in informal and non-formal education for adults, or about the participation of adults in initial education. In the light of the lifelong learning policy it would be worth undertaking research to gain more insight into this matter.

It is important in this connection to get a conceptual grasp of the relationships and reciprocities between the initial and non-initial sector, and between formal, non-formal and informal learning. On the basis of insights into these relationships a way of working can be created which aims at greater coherence and which will therefore lead to more effective lifelong learning.

27. The development of educational networks between formal education, basic education, people living in the same neighbourhood, residents' committees, housing associations, socio-cultural work and suchlike, with non-traditional and informal learning activities geared to each other as the central concept, deserves more encouragement from government than has been the case up to now.

Final remarks

These comments and recommendations are an attempt to contribute to the further development of both policy and social practice with regard to lifelong and life wide learning. In drawing up this document the organisations concerned looked at the matter primarily from the angle of current practice in the education of adults, and of new and promising developments taking place in the field. In putting the policy and proposals into practice a leading principle must be the further development and stimulation of new projects, innovative ways and methods of working, and original ideas that help to make more robust citizens and provide access to learning and learning opportunities for large numbers of people (and in particular for those who, for educational and social reasons, have had less access, opportunity and motivation).

In the further development of the proposals, including those which form part of the recommendations in this paper, care must be taken to choose practical and clear solutions, so that policy measures drawn up with the best of intentions do not get bogged down in a bureaucratic swamp, full of conditions, constraints, incomprehensible rules and fudged responsibilities in which the learner citizen is lost sight of.

Reaching and (re)motivating citizens who are educationally, socially and often also economically disadvantaged must have the highest priority. Specific action must be taken on this issue. In that context it is important that further putting into practice of the Memorandum be linked to the National Action Plan for combating poverty and social exclusion which appeared in 2001, an action plan that is made by all the Member States of the European Union.

ANNEX:

5 Examples of good practices in The Netherlands in which non-formal and informal learning complement formal education.

Name of Project 1	Educational TV Experiment
Organisations/institutions involved	The City of The Hague TV-West Training organisations Voluntary organisations Work organisations
Contact person/address	Name: Ms. R. Timmerman Organisation: the City of The Hague E-mail: R.TIMMERMAN@ocw.DENHAAG.nl
Target group	Newcomers, the long-term unemployed, people in work, voluntary workers.
Financing	From various budgets at local level
Duration	September 2001 - December 2001
Brief description of the project	Broadcast of 16 instalments of the programme 'Clear language - Dutch on the shop floor', in a regional context, supplemented with a regional component, coupled with activities in voluntary organisations, training institutes, and work organisations

Name of Project 2**Senior Citizens on Site**

Organisations/institutions involved

Organisations providing accommodation for older people in Tilburg

Contact person/address

Name: Mr. J.van den Muijsenberg
Organisation: Volksuniversiteit Terra Nova
E-mail: vu-tilb@csnet.nl

Target group

Senior Citizens in old people's homes and from the area around homes

Financing

Contributions from participants
Accommodation provided by old people's homes
A small subsidy from the municipality

Duration

Yearly cycle in principle

Brief description of the project

Keeping up to date and being involved in things

Name of Project 3	Intermediary - bridging parents and school
Organisations/institutions involved	Overijssel Support Centre for Minorities Enschede Socio-cultural Work Basic education Municipality Enschede People's University
Contact person/address	Name: Ms. M.van der Meer Organisation: Volksuniversiteit Enschede E-mail: vu-ensch@csnet.nl
Target group	Non-indigenous parents
Financing	Earmarked subsidy from Enschede People's University (for target groups of voluntary workers and non-indigenous people)
Duration	In half-yearly cycles
Brief description of the project	<p>The Overijssel Support Centre for Minorities took the initiative to establish a number of support centres in the region. Aim: to make non-indigenous parents less fearful of their children's school. Non-indigenous parents are often afraid to approach the heads of schools, the governors, the parents' council etc., or do not know how to do this. The Centre, run by volunteer non-indigenous parents, acts as intermediary: bridge between parents and school. The People's University in Enschede has also developed a project to keep the Centre alive for longer and to support education by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meetings providing information on education (aim: transfer of information and recruitment of parents to staff the Centre) 2. courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dutch education system - Overview of Dutch society - Communication skills

Name of Project 4

Social Learning Workshop

(with regard to Key Message 3)

Organisations/institutions involved

Spectrum (Institute for Social Welfare)

Contact person/address

Name: Ms. R. Schaper
Organisation: Spectrum
Telephone: 00 31 26 3846247

Target group

Professionals in socio-cultural work

Financing

Duration

One-off training in 5 meetings in different regions

Brief description of the project

Social Learning Workshop introduces the Concept of Social Learning in welfare work practice. Participants become acquainted with the concept and develop competencies for the identification, recognition, design and conveying of social learning processes. The workshop is practice-directed: It is concerned with improving methods of handling. Participants are professionals from socio-cultural work who are engaged in: getting people involved in society; fostering social cohesiveness in neighbourhoods, districts and villages; improving peoples' problem-solving abilities. It ranges from work with migrants to work with older people, from youth work to community work.

Name of Project 5 (with regard to Key Message 4)	Portfolio: new opportunities for phase 4 clients (unemployed people with a long way to go before landing a job)
Organisations/institutions involved	Foundation for the Management of Volunteers Welfare organisations Centre for Voluntary Organisations Organisations concerned with getting people into work
Contact person/address	Name: Ms. E. Hofman Organisation: Stichting Vrijwilligersmanagement E-mail: e.hofman.svm@svmgroep.nl
Target group	Unemployed people who have a long way to go before landing a job
Financing	
Duration	Putting together a portfolio: 4 months in 4 stages: introduction, inventory compilation, creating a profile, action plan
Brief description of the project	The individual's attributes are demonstrated via a portfolio. The insight this gives makes it possible to develop a personal action plan appropriate to the wishes and potential of the owner of the portfolio. Compiling a portfolio is an exceptionally good way of showing an individual's achievements and potential. The portfolio method can also be used for other categories of job-seekers and people who are socially isolated.