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Learning to work and working to learn in 2025

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Learnovation Vision Paper 2

“Learning to work and working to learn in 2025”

November 2009

A Vision for 2025:

“Being a Lifelong learner becomes a condition of life. Thanks to their massive and natural use in everyday life, technologies acquire an emancipating power on people opportunity and ability to learn, favouring a spontaneous tendency towards meta-cognition and ownership of their learning process”

1. Introduction

This Paper presents the Learnovation vision for 2025 within and around the world of work and combining features of formal, non-formal and informal learning, i.e.: Inter-organisational learning, e-Learning at the workplace and Professional learning networks. Such “territories” can be represented graphically according to their position in a continuum ranging from individual initiative to learn to coordinated organisational initiatives. This continuum reflects a great differentiation in e-learning territories which are developing within and around the world of work: on the one hand, learning in professional contexts can be encouraged and actively supported by an organisational initiative (e.g. learning centres of companies offering on-demand learning opportunities to their employees or peer learning and support, enhanced/enabled by ICT), while on the other hand, it can be the result of an individual initiative (as is the case for joining an existing professional network) and could be generated through informal learning initiatives.

The Vision Paper is structured around **three main blocks**: state of art of innovation, expected future, and recommendations to reach the desired future scenario, the latter being composed of long term recommendations for 2025 and short term agenda on urgent actions to be taken starting from 2010 to let the desired scenario(s) come true.

The paper must be seen as a component of the whole Learnovation effort to refresh the EU vision of innovation and ICT for learning, and is based on a number of research results that can be accessed through www.elearningeuropa.info/learnovation.

2. State of art of innovation in learning at, for and through work

Companies associate innovation with products, services and processes, but not often with learning: **e-learning is not used to shape innovation, but to accompany it, and more frequently follow it.** Despite the fact that this area represents by far the most innovative and active field for applied learning innovation, the following challenges have to be faced urgently:

- **Large companies' frustration:** Convergence between e-learning and Knowledge Management did not happen: e-learning has become a common practice in large organisations, but has not matched the Knowledge Management challenge. It has not gone into the area of tacit knowledge, it has just been associated to explicit and "packaged" knowledge. e-learning is used to do what was done in the classroom cheaper, but it is not used for innovation or change management. **The relation between learning and innovation is missing.**
- **SMEs' frustration:** E-learning was regarded, especially in the early days, as the solution for all SMEs' training problems. The building up of "social capital" among SMEs and their service providers is a challenge that was frequently lost in past years: increased competition, often reduced public funding, "overmanaged and underled" public initiatives: all these factors partially explain some of the failures, but the basic cultural problem that was not properly addressed when formulating the expectations was the lack of collaborative attitudes within SMEs when an immaterial and badly managed phenomenon such as learning is concerned. Probably the sense of urgency to learn together was not there and/or was not stimulated enough by most of the initiatives. The proposed **e-learning supply may have offered cost-effective solutions to "ordinary" problems but often did not match the emotional side of the motivation to invest in learning; it was probably not associated enough to what SME leaders considered really valuable for their development or critical to their survival.** This area of e-learning is not well studied, so it is difficult to say if the awareness of the problems is generalised and if other diagnostic approaches and conclusions are available.
- **Professional networks frustrations:** Individuals do not always learn and share their experiences in innovative ways through e-learning. Moreover, **collaborative learning is not growing as quickly as expected.** Some experiences exist but are reserved to high profile professionals, whereas the **dominance is of relatively flat e-learning models, distributing the knowledge of more experienced and research oriented professionals to other members of the professional community.** Furthermore, there is a strong need to better develop Learning 2.0 approaches in professional environments

3. Looking ahead: expected future developments

As outlined in the previous section, despite the "forerunner" role of working environments in enhancing and promoting innovation, some key frustrations are currently featuring the different "learning areas (or territories)" related to learning at, for and through work. When looking ahead, one further needs to consider the following factors, which are believed to have an influence on the evolution of learning in the working world:

- **Institutional hierarchies** matter a lot in the diffusion and introduction of innovation into companies. However, there are several **"hidden innovation rivers", not led by the organisation** hierarchy, that produce conditions for future change and already practice innovative working and learning processes.

- **Age and gender** are becoming very important, introducing serious cultural, technological and social generational gaps that can become either a lever or an obstacle to change, depending on how they are dealt with.
- In relation to the above, there is a **diversity management issue** emerging. Either because of increasingly multicultural societies or because of internationalisation/globalisation of companies different styles of management are emerging often bringing to organisational clashes. Instead, the valorisation of differences should be seen as a way to foster innovation and Human Resources Development.
- In this area, **trainers have evolved faster than in formal education from a transmissive role to a supporting role**. It is more natural for them to adapt to change, since they are often employees of the company, borrowed for use as trainers. This is an asset to be strongly valorised.

There are two intertwined organisational core tensions emerging from the above mentioned factors which might have an influence on learning: top-down vs bottom up driven innovation and cultural clashes (either intergenerational or linked to different cultures and management styles).

The DELPHI Survey run by Learnovation to investigate on the future of learning (in terms of innovation in learning and contribution of learning to innovation) led to some interesting results which are relevant to envision the future of learning at, for and through work. Somehow in line with the core tensions identified above, respondents to the DELPHI identified social networking on-line, globalisation and multiculturalism among the main external factors that will produce the most important change in the way people learn. Technological progress was also mentioned (actually at the top of the list). Technological progress and social networking on one side and multiculturalism and globalisation on the other side reconstitute us to the main tensions in management that companies are currently already facing: the challenge is then how to merge the value added and know how of differently aged working generations and at the same time of workers coming from different cultures implying different working styles. Another key challenge is how to integrate technological progress and its implications and developments in the working and learning process in such a way that is not perceived as a risk but rather as a potential asset. There is a widespread resistance on the companies and PAs side to the introduction of social networking as a mean to work and learn better. Social networking is perceived as an obstacle to efficiency: in most EU countries access to the Internet by employees is limited because they are affiliated to private companies or public administrations so to avoid access to social networking sites. There have been several cases of people fired because they were found active on Facebook while on leave for health reasons, or even if they had criticised their company on social networking sites.

The results of the survey consultation lead to a learning world featured in 2025 by the following trends:

- specialisation of the learning offer
- increasing adaptation of learning systems to individual needs
- motivation and interest as the main levers of learning in adulthood
- increasing experimentalism and change in learning pushed from the bottom.

In this general context, what scenarios are expected for learning at, through and for work?

Learnovation identified four macro scenarios graphically represented below and asked experts to rate their feasibility in each lifelong learning area, including those related to the field analysed in this document.

Convergence

Inertia	"Mc-learn" Hyper competition of providers on a global scale will lead to a "strive for survival" of learning providers	"Babelogue" The world becomes a global network of learning occasions/spaces available any time anywhere	Innovation/ pro-activity
	"The monad" Education becomes more and more insulated from the context and unable to explore emerging innovation practices into learning environments.	"Civitas" Education improves its "profile", its "relevance" to the context, i.e. the learning patrimonies of local communities and "responsiveness" to stakeholders' needs	

Context

Mc Learn and Babelogue emerged as the most expected scenarios as concerns learning at, through and for work. Both scenarios stand within the convergence trend, implying internationalisation, universalisation and deterritorialisation of learning and of learning value and increasing networking activities as a source for learning. It should be noted that Mc Learn was not intended by respondents as a synonymous of learning offer standardisation, but rather as a more effective management of learning and a systematic mechanism of public-private partnerships in place to improve the quality of the learning offer. Recommendations of respondents related to the future hoped evolution of this area include:

- increase focus on individual interests beside the company ones
- increase role of ethical issues in training
- favour public private partnerships aimed at increasing quality of the learning offer
- increase focus on soft training
- favour flexibility in access to Lifelong Learning for workers
- foster informal learning recognition
- foster non formal and informal learning through online communities but be aware of the reliability and quality issues.

4. Towards a desired scenario: the LEARNOVATION recommendations

The border separating an expected scenario from a desired one is very blurred. Analysing the free comments provided by the experts consulted with the DELPHI one can argue that the desired scenario for the area of learning at, through and for work is one where what is currently perceived as a risk (intergenerational gaps, cultural clashes, web 2.0 applications for networking) becomes an asset for innovation and where learning becomes a tool for organisational change.

What are the actions to be implemented to support the realisation of such a vision?

Learnovation elaborated, based on the results of analysis of innovation in learning in all Lifelong Learning areas, a set of 26 “statements” on urgent actions for change in order to implement innovation in learning and to make sure that learning supports innovation of the European society and economy. Originally, five main statements were linked to the area analysed in this vision paper:

Encourage all forms of learning at the workplace

Working and learning overlap in the knowledge society. The organisations should develop a climate supportive to open ways of learning which takes into consideration the motivation of both the learner and the organisation.

Embed learning into change

Organisational needs cannot be solely addressed by knowledge-based solutions; problems and opportunities for organisations should be addressed by project work, peer learning, experience exchange and informal learning, all of which can be supported by ICT. eLearning should be conceived as a means to support performance and accelerate transformation

Celebrate and recognise learning achievements

Recognising the value of prior learning achievements both formal and informal in the workplace will encourage further learning. Learning should not be considered as only qualifications or as hierarchical levels. European reference tools like the EQF could be helpful in this respect

Remember diversity and differentiation of learning needs and styles

The knowledge, competences; attitudes and values required in contemporary work places are diverse and differentiated. This should not be forgotten when optimistic positions are expressed on the potential of Web 2.0 forms of learning to make Lifelong Learning a reality for all.

Encourage informal learning beyond the limits of one organisation

Inter-organisational (i.e.: supply chain networks) and extra-organisational networks of people are gaining importance in continuing learning. Validation of such learning should be developed

Do not forget the bottom line

Celebrate and recognise the contribution of learning to the strategic goals of the organisation where performance, innovation and success measures are met and / or exceeded

Such statements were subject to a multilevel consultation involving (in chronological order):

- the ca 100 experts and policy makers participating in the Learnovation Open Forum held in Brussels in May 2009;
- the ca. 1200 practitioners participating in the on-line consultation launched through the Learnovation web site
- the ca. 50 experts and decision makers involved in the DELPHI consultation.

The elaboration of the ratings as well as of the comments and proposals for new urgent actions to be included led to the following “imperatives for change” to be implemented by 2025:

Imperatives for change – Horizon 2025

Celebrate and recognise learning achievements
Recognising the value of prior learning achievements in the workplace is fundamental to encourage further learning, EQF has a potential to support this at EU and world level.
Remember that not all workers are stereotypical knowledge workers
Non-knowledge workers should not be forgotten when optimistic positions are expressed on the potential of new Web 2.0 forms of learning to make Lifelong Learning a reality for all.
Encourage all forms of learning at workplace
Working and learning overlap in the knowledge society. Organisations, both from the private and public sector, should develop a climate supportive to open ways of learning which takes into consideration the motivation of both the learner and the organisation. New instruments such as e-portfolios should be promoted.
Encourage the business community to adopt learning as a priority in its strategic development and change management approaches
Organisational needs cannot be solely addressed by knowledge-based solutions; problems and opportunities for organisations should be addressed by project work, peer learning, experience exchange and informal learning, all of which can be supported by ICT. eLearning should be conceived as a means to both support performance and accelerate transformation.

Recommendations – Agenda 2010

In order to implement the above mentioned imperatives for change, the following action lines are suggested, in the form of recommendations, as short-term instrumental actions to be put forward by policy and decision makers:

- Companies shall utilise ICT as a support for collaborative exchange and cooperative construction of knowledge, rather than as a tool for developing and accessing knowledge repositories
- The public sector shall associate the introduction of e-learning with a rewards system for improved performance and proper leadership.
- Public policies shall shift funding from general support to e-learning adoption in companies (especially SMEs) to actions focused on studying and experimenting:
- How e-learning can provide leverage for organisational change and innovation in companies, since companies associate innovation with products, services and processes, but not often with e-learning.
- How Web 2.0 implications (for instance social networking) can be used for learning and organisational change in companies and Public Administration rather than rejected as a risk to productivity.
- How to address the challenge to integrate the need for knowledge exchange as a lever for inter-organisational growth and the need to respect confidentiality typical of the business world.

- Which strategies to adopt to allow non knowledge workers to contribute actively to innovation and organisational change under the motto "technological progress is part of innovation, not the other way round".

Research in the field shall focus on:

- Elaboration and testing of valorisation and certification of prior learning in companies as a key lever to motivate low skilled and low end workers to undertake Lifelong learning opportunities.
- Studies on quality and reliability assessment mechanisms of the information circulated through on-line communities (particularly professional networks)
- Elaboration and testing of new learning models for trainers so to support their (already happening) transition to learning facilitators, peer mentors in professional networks and catalysts of inter-organisational relations.

Annex: Background

The LEARNOVATION project

In the period 2008-2009, the LEARNOVATION project, supported by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, has worked to stimulate a consultation process aimed to lead to a collective and consensus-based new vision of eLearning (or technology-enhanced learning) in Europe. The rationale of the exercise is to inspire the full exploitation of its potential to implement lifelong learning strategies and to support innovation in Europe, also beyond the borders of education and training systems.

What is behind this Vision Paper

LEARNOVATION has organised a number of activities involving a high number of European decision makers, experts and practitioners in the field of ICT for learning, with the aim of reaching a set of recommendations that can contribute to guiding EU E&T policy in a long term perspective by increasing the level of innovation and creativity of EU LLL systems.

The present document presents the results of these activities and the constructivist process that has brought to the LEARNOVATION Recommendations, along the following steps:

- 1. Desk research and EU networks consultation.** An intense desk research phase has brought the LEARNOVATION consortium to the identification of a number of learning-related areas that need specific attention in terms of innovation and creativity. The work has concentrated on four main areas, related to school education, higher education, work-related learning and informal learning. The results of this work, that are available in four Cluster Reports at www.elearnineuropa.info/learnovation, have then been discussed with some of the most relevant European networks in the field of ICT for learning¹ in March and in November 2008, as well as with key European and national policy makers².
- 2. LEARNOVATION Open Forum, Brussels, 27 May 2009.** The result of the previous phase has been condensed in 26 “imperatives for change” (that are presented in the next paragraph), a list of actions that should be taken in all the four areas tackled by the project plus some general transversal imperatives. These 26 statements have been discussed and improved in small workshops and then have been voted in terms of relevance during the **LEARNOVATION Open Forum**, organised in collaboration with the European Commission in Brussels on the 27th of May 2009. The main result of the Open Forum has been a list of the most relevant 10 imperatives in the opinion of the selected stakeholders present at the event.
- 3. Online consultation (July-September 2009).** Following the Open Forum, with the aim to involve in the consultation all interested European stakeholders (targeting in particular E&T professionals and practitioners), the 26 statements have been at the centre of a broad online consultation, conducted through the eLearning Europa Portal and promoted through the main networks in the field (EDEN, EFQUEL, etc...). The consultation has involved more than 1100 participants and has resulted in a new list of 10 top imperatives for change, plus in a high number of bottom-up comments, ideas, and concerns.

¹ This has been possible thanks to the Learnovation Roundtable, an informal cooperation platform that gathers 8 key European networks in the field of ICT and innovation in learning. For more information see www.learnovation.eu.

² The proceedings of these events are available at www.elearnineuropa.info/learnovation

4. **Delphi Consultation (July-October 2009).** To complete the consultation, the 26 statements have been included in the DELPHI Survey that LEARNOVATION has conducted in the period July -October 2009, that was focussed on the future of European E&T in terms of ICT, innovation and creativity. This has allowed a restricted number of selected experts to give their view on the 26 imperatives “with an eye on the future”.

The results of these four phases have then been analyzed by the Learnovation consortium, with the aim to transform them into a set of practical recommendations that can contribute in shaping future learning and learning-related policies at the EU and at national level, by instilling the needed level of innovation and creativity, discretely but substantially supported by ICT, in E&T settings. Chapter 3 of this Report presents these recommendations, together with some very practical ideas that could contribute to increase the level of innovation and creativity in E&T settings.

The LEARNOVATION Commitment

Finally, given the interest raised by the exercise and the relevance and potential impact of the resulting recommendations, LEARNOVATION commits to make this open consultation a permanent exercise rather than an exceptional event. In this sense, the Learnovation consortium and the Learnovation Roundtable (www.learnovation.eu) will explore partnership possibilities with European and national stakeholders to make sure that the 2009 consultation can be remembered as the first important step of a systematic bottom up policy agenda definition process involving stakeholders in the debate on the role of learning for innovation and creativity and for shaping the future of Europe.