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## EU Bank Social Partners Joint Declaration on:

### **LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE BANKING SECTOR**

#### Introduction

At the Bank Social Dialogue Plenary Meeting in June 2001, it was agreed to include the topic of Life Long Learning in the 2002 work programme. A working group was established and this joint statement was a product of its work.

The bank social partners are convinced that lifelong learning is a key aspect both for the competitiveness of companies and for the employability of workers. They welcome the ETUC/UNICE/CEEP's 'Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications' (hereinafter "the ETUC/UNICE/CEEP Framework of actions")<sup>1</sup> as a positive contribution for the banking sector. The bank social partners have collected data from social partners in 18 countries with regard to the definitions, the legislative framework and the practice on lifelong learning in the banking sector. The data collected has been gathered in an inventory of lifelong learning (hereinafter "the inventory").

The fundamental objective for social partners is to determine which factors help to build a culture on lifelong learning. The four key themes that emerged from the inventory are all determinants for a lifelong learning culture:

1. Defining professional, vocational and entry level skills
2. Recognising and validating competencies and skills
3. Providing information and support on principles, rights and responsibilities
4. Employment and retraining through mobilising resources

The bank social partners recognise that the above four key themes could be explored in further details at the levels referred to in the ETUC/UNICE/CEEP Framework of Actions.

#### *1. Defining professional, vocational and entry level skills*

The entry requirements for junior financial services jobs vary enormously, both by job and by country; bank staff needs a much wider-ranging knowledge than a decade ago. The range of products and services which banks can sell is much wider following the deregulation of the sector overall.

Access of all workers and companies to lifelong learning should be promoted to enable a greater adaptation of lifelong learning to present and future qualification needs. This is particularly important in the present context of an increasingly complex finance sector with variances in access to lifelong learning.

Therefore, the development of vocational or professional qualifications is a priority for the European banking sector in relation to what is at stake for:

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<sup>1</sup> Agreed on 28 February 2002

- young people in the context of their career guidance and integration into working life
- employees who lack the required skills when new working methods are introduced
- employees in the management of their careers and their capacity to remain in employment, also in relation to the introduction of new working methods/new technologies that require new qualifications.

## 2. *Recognising and validating competencies and skills*

The social partners regard recognition and validation of competencies as essential, in order that:

- each employee is aware of and encouraged to develop her/his competencies in the course of her/his occupational life
- each enterprise has the tools to better identify and manage the competencies in the company.

Implementation of the above will assist in ongoing work on transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications.

The skills and competencies for which bank employees are trained and which are useful on the job should be clearly identified and articulated.

The bank social partners recognise the value of regularly reviewed training plans for all employees.

It is important that employees' own perspectives about their training needs are incorporated into training plans, and that it is clear to employees what the short- or long-term outcomes of particular training activities will be.

Such a clear organisational commitment to training and development, and the linking of the two is seen, for instance, in Dutch banks (personal educational plans for every employee) and in the case of the Swedish insurance company Skandia's "Competence Savings".

Skandia constitutes a good practice example on how a financial institution can profit from building a lifelong learning culture.

Skandia has created the competence savings concept around the belief that competence is key to competition. "If you think competence is expensive - try incompetence". The competence savings supplements Skandia's staff training budget and aims at increasing the general knowledge level of employees and thereby improves Skandia's profitability. The concept is based on three key components: a personal development plan, a competence savings plan and a web-based competence exchange service. The personal development plan is drawn up in consultation between Skandia and the employee. It is worth noting that the concept allows staff to acquire knowledge/training both within and outside the finance sector, thus it is not necessarily job specific training.

A further example is Enbicredito in Italy which constitutes a significant practice on how retraining is used to retain bank employees in employment. Enbicredito monitors vocational training needs in the Italian finance sector and guides finance employees with regard to educational/relocation packages.

### *3. Providing information and support on principles, rights and responsibilities*

Banks should be facilitated to become learning organisations, where everyone learns and develops through the work context, for the benefit of themselves, each other and the whole organisation. If developed in a framework of mutual responsibility lifelong learning will become a win-win situation that creates added value to both employers and employees.

Bank social partners should consider the following principles, rights and responsibilities:

- All actors – public authorities at national and European level, employers and workers – share a responsibility to work together on lifelong learning and to support individuals in taking responsibility for their own training.
- Employees have a responsibility and a duty to be willing to be part of the lifelong learning process.
- Together the social partners should conduct social dialogue at appropriate levels and where appropriate implement agreements in respect of education and training in the workplace.
- Employers have a key responsibility to provide for developing the competencies of their workforce.
- The social partners promote employees to improve their general qualifications and competencies.
- Every employee has the right to be trained to fulfil the job he/she is doing.
- Learning activities, which are required to fulfil the job should take place during working time and be paid by the employer.
- Within LLL opportunities may arise for educational leave
- Social partners at all levels should consider how investment on learning and development should be recorded and reported.

LLL opportunities may arise both inside and external to the workplace. As such there is a joint responsibility for both employers and employees to identify and take advantage of LLL opportunities. This may involve the employee using his/her own time or the employer providing time-off. Any specific arrangements should be discussed by social partners at the appropriate level.

### *4. Employment and retraining through mobilising resources*

Regular training and lifelong learning opportunities should be routinely and systematically made available to all employees regardless of their position or type of work contract. Assumption that certain groups of employees, e.g. women/older workers are not interested in development must be avoided.

The social partners recognise the need to promote equal opportunities for employees in relation to life long learning.

Care should be taken to ensure that atypical workers, such as part-time staff or evening shift workers are not excluded from training opportunities by virtue of their working hours.

Companies and training providers therefore need to be sensitive to the particular circumstances of part-time staff and the need to arrange the timing and location of training to suit their working patterns.

Life Long Learning will help develop transferable skills, which will increase employees' employability.

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