



**European Economic and Social Committee**  
**The President**

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**ETF CORPORATE CONFERENCE 2012**  
***MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING:***  
***CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES***

**Staffan Nilsson's conclusions**

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
—————  
Check Against Delivery

Dear Madlen, Dear Mr Mendes, dear friends,

It is always a pleasure to take part in ETF events and to cooperate with always very active and engaged Madlen Serban and her team.

Actually, ETF represents very well the third pillar of my mandate's program: ***Solidarity and Development***. Europe is like a tree that is acquiring new branches, but it is also connected to the rest of the world. International cooperation is a source of progress, not only for the one who receives support, but also for the provider.



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In times of crisis, some may be tempted to forget it, through protectionism and some forms of populism. Under my mandate, the EESC works hard to build the evidence that cooperation and solidarity are very efficient to make the world better.

I am also very concerned about the **education as a way to raise democracy**. I believe that in the developing countries we, in Europe, can harness the potential of human capital through the reform and the development of education and training. It is a key to make efficient multi-level governance in EU and the world.

This conference has given us a rare opportunity to exchange experiences and views on the principles of good multi-level governance.

I am sure that this exchange of views has been very fruitful and inspiring.

I don't like to focus too much on the word "crisis". The more we use it, the more we will get used to having it, and it might become a mantra. I always try to focus on the solutions. What do we need to do? What can we do? What are the priorities?

This conference is very timely; demographic trends pose major challenges to the labour market. It suffers from structural problems. Young people in particular find it difficult to gain a footing in the labour market, despite skills they have. It is not only the case in Europe. It is also a major problem in Tunisia, where the demographic trend is the opposite: it is a very young population with high skills and no jobs.

Europe is facing ageing and has more and more skilled young people, who can hardly find jobs. The common fact is that youth unemployment entails major economic and social disadvantages for society and restricts opportunities for growth.

To remain competitive, Europe and the rest of the world need to be innovative. To make it possible we need investments. But we also need individuals with medium and higher level qualifications to respond to labour market needs. However, at the same time companies often have difficulties to recruit and retain well qualified workers.



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Actually the crisis – may it be social, economic or democratic - has put our VET (Vocational Education and Training) systems to the test. We should see it as an opportunity to improve or change what is needed to be changed.

This area is a major challenge but also an opportunity for many countries all over the world. Let's engage in it!

It is clear that the part of the solution lies in more efficient and up-to-date VET systems, which improve skills, employability and mobility of workers. In this regards, so far a lot has been accomplished at European level.

Some progress has been achieved to make VET and higher VET more relevant and attractive. But looking at the targets related to education and training and the actual results, we have to admit that more effort is needed and that more funding should be allocated to VET.

What shall we do?

- **The partnership between the business and the education sectors should be deepened to match the labour shortages and the future needs.** Training should lead to the employment. We need to attract more students and workers to learn and upgrade their skills and competences. To achieve that, the image of VET has to be promoted.
- **Marrying formal education with non-formal learning will benefit all, but especially disadvantaged groups.**
- **We need to improve the cooperation between all actors: national governments, local authorities, and civil society** should be able to seize a dialogue and create synergies.

I often say that there is no single one solution. There exists a large spectrum of possible actions. The more numerous we will be around the table, the more efficient we will be: every one at the right place, with the right competence and task...this is how musicians get to play nice symphonies. **Let's play the music of multilevel governance!**



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The Committee will be honoured to assist and support ETF and all the partners in this process.

Thank you!



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