



ETUCE Circular 2/2013

Information concerning the Education & Training 2020 strategic framework

European Union education policy

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Recommended readings

Dates to remember

European Union education policy

EU approach on funding education

Country-specific Recommendations - European Semester 2013

The European Commission published the new country-specific recommendations in the framework of the European Semester process for each member state on 29 May 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/>

In the country-specific recommendations the Commission called for a special focus on the Youth Guarantee in 12 member states, and the need of reforming vocational training systems in no less than 17 member states, including stronger work-based learning components and apprenticeship schemes.

There are also specific tailored recommendations to each individual member states' education systems. In the case of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia the recommendations are to improve the access to inclusive education, including quality early childhood education for disadvantaged children, in particular for Roma children. In the case of Denmark, Latvia and the United Kingdom the country-specific recommendations advise to improve the quality of vocational training and increase the accessibility, number and quality of apprenticeships. In the case of Estonia, the recommendations point out improving the labour-market relevance of the education and training system, also by further involving the social partners and implement targeted measures to address youth unemployment.

Social Investment Package and Investing in Children

Social Investment Package

The European Commission published its Communication entitled *"Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020"* accompanied by the Commission Recommendation *"Investing in Children – breaking the cycle of disadvantage"* and 7 staff working documents on 20 February 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en&moreDocuments=yes>

The position of ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation), which included ETUCE viewpoint, was adopted at the Extraordinary Executive Meeting of 23 April 2013. The resolution is available at: http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/SIP_EN_Final_Resolution.pdf. The trade unions welcome the fact that the European Commission with the Social Investment Package has recognised the need for social investment in the EU, but mere recommendations are not enough. The key concern of the position of the trade unions is that the EU needs real social investment. Therefore, they called for additional investment equivalent to 1-2% of European GDP. The trade unions deplore that the Social Investment Package will not bring the needed balance to EU governance. The new tools of economic governance primarily focusing on diminished public finances are of a binding nature and risk counteracting the principles of the social investment strategy. Child poverty should be addressed through integrated strategies that go beyond children's material security and promote equal opportunities.

The aim

The aim of the Communication is to encourage the member states to put more emphasis on social investment and to modernise their welfare states through improved active inclusive strategies and more efficient and effective use of social budgets. Social investment is described as enhancing people's capacities and supporting their participation in society and the labour market. As a consequence, social investment benefits individuals' prosperity, boost the economy and help the EU to emerge stronger, more cohesive and competitive from the crisis.

The Communication aims to achieve its goals through the following proposed actions to be carried out in the member states and by the European Commission:

- Place greater focus on social policies such as (child)care, education, training, active labour market policies, housing support, rehabilitation and health services.
- Simplify benefit systems and their administrations, reduce administrative burdens and frauds and increase take up.
- Improve targeting of social policies to ensure that those most in need receive adequate support while reducing the burden on public finances.
- Assure social investment throughout the individual's life: Implement the Recommendation on *Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*' (see below).
- Develop comprehensive policies against early school leaving containing prevention, intervention and compensation measures.

The aim of the *Recommendation on Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage* encourages the member states to adopt policies to invest in children to achieve improved well-being of all children in particular to children in vulnerable situations. Early intervention and prevention is highlighted as essential for developing more effective and efficient policies. The policies addressing child poverty are primarily the competence of member states, but the ambition is to strengthen the synergies and learn from best practice examples across the EU.

The Recommendation advises the member states to address child poverty and social exclusion from a children's right approach, to maintain an appropriate balance between universal policies and targeted policies. In particular, there should be ensured a focus on children who face increased risk due to multiple disadvantages and to sustain investment in children and families in order to allow for policy continuity and long-term planning.

The proposed actions are divided in to 4 main areas:

- Access to adequate resources
- Access to affordable quality services
- Improving education systems' impact on equal opportunities
- Children's right to participate

- The European Commission will monitor, in the framework of the European Semester, the efficiency and effectiveness of social systems and their emphasis on social investment, in order also to improve adequacy and sustainability.
- The European Commission will monitor reforms towards active inclusion and adequacy of income support in the framework of the European Semester.
- The European Commission will publish a Recommendation on best practices for Roma inclusion.
- The European Commission will enhance information about social rights through more user-friendly Social Protection Guides.
- The European Commission will present a Directive with the objective to achieve a better application and enforcement of free movement rights in order to prevent discrimination on the basis of nationality and reduce the obstacles mobile workers face.

Entrepreneurship spirit or learning to make businesses?

The European Commission published a Communication on "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan on 9 January 2013: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0795:FIN:EN:PDF>

An ETUCE statement was adopted by the ETUCE Bureau on 25 April 2013. The statement is available at: http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2013/FINAL_ETUCE_statement_on_Entrepreneurship_2020_Action_Plan.pdf.

The statement emphasizes that the most worrying element of the policy initiative is the very narrow perception of entrepreneurship conceived as a business development model as outlined in the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. In the Communication the whole process of education becomes an entrepreneurial development process solely aimed to generate economic growth. ETUCE believes that the definition of "entrepreneurship education" must extend far beyond the business model conception.

ETUCE disagrees with the definition of entrepreneurship education outlined in the Action Plan. We think that entrepreneurship education should prepare the students to obtain democratic skills and educate people for life promoting initiative, taking responsibility and analysing situations. We believe that developing skills and competences like creativity, initiative, tenacity, and teamwork are essential for all students and not only for future entrepreneurs to develop businesses.

Report from the Thematic working group on Entrepreneurship Education

The *Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education* of the European Commission organised two peer learning activities and two meetings in recent months. A first peer learning activity took place in Copenhagen on 18-20 February 2013 and a second peer learning activity was organized in Vienna on 17-19 April 2013, afterwards meetings were held on 13-15 May 2013 and 4-7 July 2013. ETUCE was represented by Aase Bonde (DLF, Denmark), Conceição Nunes (Sindep, Portugal) and Brian Cookson (NASUWT, UK).

At the first peer learning activity the topic of stakeholder engagement for entrepreneurship was discussed. Especially, the discussion emphasized how the gap between the business sector and the educational sector can be reduced.

The second peer learning activity focussed on developing entrepreneurial education and how it is implemented in curricula and the potential of innovative pedagogies. The aim of the meeting was to draft a framework of references for entrepreneurship competences including good practice of how competences related to this reference framework are implemented in curricula and translated into teaching methods.

At the meetings on the 13-15 May 2013 and 4-7 July 2013 emphasis was placed on the drafting of the final report of the Thematic working group. It was discussed how to encourage governments to adopt as wide as possibly an approach of entrepreneurship education to learning.

European Alliance for Apprenticeship

The European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAfA) was launched on 2 July 2013 at the 2013 WorldSkills competition in Leipzig, Germany. The joint declaration was initiated by the cross-sectoral social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UAEPME, CEEP), and signed by them and the Lithuanian presidency. The joint declaration will be endorsed as Council conclusions by the ministers of education in November at the Education Council meeting. The Joint declaration is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/apprenticeship/doc/declaration_en.pdf.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeship aims at reforming VET systems and improving the image of apprenticeships with the objectives of tackling youth unemployment in the short term and contributing to better skills matching and competitiveness in the longer term. It is highlighted that in order to achieve the objectives, it is important to integrate high quality work-based learning component in all initial VET programmes and furthermore good links between VET, the labour market and the wider education system is essential.

Other organisations can also join the alliance by filling in a pledge via: http://ec.europa.eu/education/apprenticeship/pledges_en.htm. An ETUCE pledge for the European Alliance for Apprenticeship was approved by ETUCE Bureau in September. According to this, ETUCE and its member organisations will continue to promote the following among the VET teachers and trainers:

- To ensure quality apprenticeship places in the enterprises.
- To get in contact with enterprises to provide apprenticeship place to VET students, to improve their technical knowledge, and to ensure continuing broader based learning;
- To improve quality teaching in VET;

ERASMUS+ Programme

On 26 June 2013, the Irish Presidency secured an agreement among member states and with the European Parliament on the new support programme for education, training, youth and sport **ERASMUS+**. The programme will be the successor of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2014). The programme will have a budget of approximately €16 billion over the next seven years and will bring together all the current EU and international schemes for education, training and youth.



Erasmus+ brings together the Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo, Comenius, Grundtvig, Erasmus and Jean Monnet actions), Youth in Action and five other international programmes including Erasmus Mundus and Tempus into one single, simplified and modern programme.

In addition, as a novelty sport initiatives will be included. The programme will focus on mobility, cooperation and policy reform. Improvements will be made to support international study, training, teaching and volunteering opportunities. These improvements will benefit higher education and vocational students, trainees, teachers, trainers and youth workers. Good practice will be shared through cross-cultural and cross-institutional learning in education and training institutions, and youth organisations. These will be formally put in place through “Knowledge Alliances” at university level and through “Sector Skills Alliances” in vocational institutions.

Social dimension of higher education and higher education in the world

On 16-17 May 2013, the Education Council met in Brussels. The ministers adopted Council conclusions on:

- the social dimension of higher education
- the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people
- maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The Council conclusions on the social dimension of higher education, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/137144.pdf invites the member states to:

- To adopt national objectives which are aimed at increasing the access, participation and completion rates of under-represented and disadvantaged groups in higher education
- To encourage cooperation between education providers at all levels, including those providing non-formal and informal learning, and other relevant stakeholders, in order to identify the particular groups that may be under-represented in higher education, as well as to promote greater participation of under-represented groups within the teaching profession itself across all sectors of education.
- Develop flexible and transparent progression routes into higher education, in particular from vocational education and training and from non-formal and informal learning, facilitated by transparency tools such as national qualifications frameworks linked to the European Qualifications Framework.
- Working together with higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders to increase higher education completion rates by improving the quality of the teaching and learning process, in particular through more flexible delivery and the provision of relevant post-entry supports, and by improving the attractiveness of courses and labour market relevance.

The European Commission published its Communication “*European higher education in the world*” on 11 July 2013. It will underline the Council conclusions to be adopted by Education Ministers in November this year.

The aim

The aim of the Communication is to assist the member states and higher education institutions in developing strategic partnerships that will allow Europe to tackle global challenges more effectively. The key concern is how European higher education institutions can uphold its attractiveness when faced with increasing competition from other regions. Strategic action is the key word. The Communication builds on recent initiatives such as *Modernising Europe’s Higher Education Systems* and *Rethinking Education*, and is a response to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education.

The Communication sets out the following key priorities for higher education institutions and member states:

- promoting the international mobility of students and staff through transparency and recognition of learning acquired elsewhere
- promote internationalisation at home stressing the importance of languages and digital learning
- strengthening strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building including “*balanced involvement of business and higher education*”
- Europe 2020 and Erasmus+ as means to offer stronger policy support and financial incentives for internationalisation strategies
- improve comparability of qualifications and ensure quality assurance
- increase worldwide cooperation for innovation and development on common challenges including international capacity-building partnerships

Report from the European Commission’s Thematic Working Groups

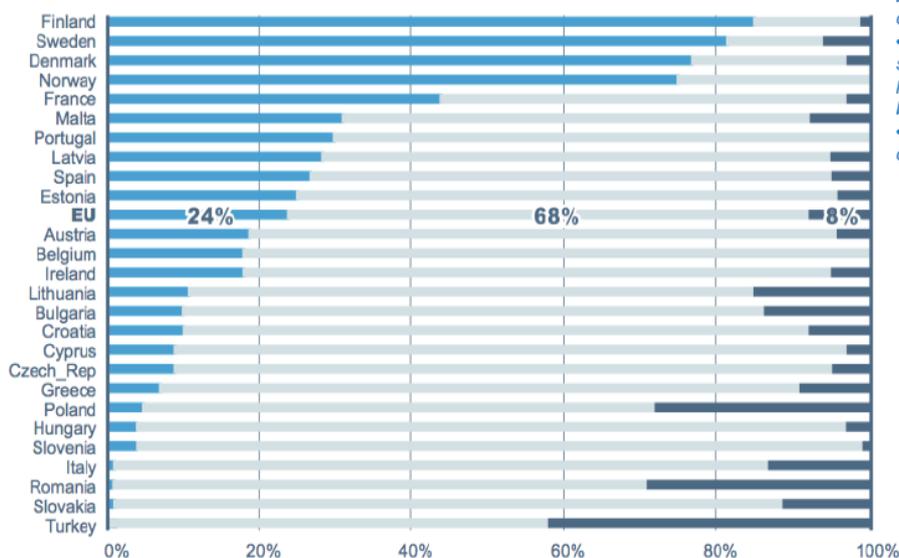
Towards innovative and creative learning environments in the classroom

Report from the Thematic Working Group on ICT and Education

The Thematic Working Group on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Education of the European Commission held a meeting on 20-21 March 2013. The Thematic Working Group organised also a peer review on 23-24 May 2013. ETUCE was represented by Guus Wijngaards (AoB, the Netherlands).

The focus of the meeting was on innovative and creative learning environments in the member states. Different projects from member states were presented including “*First steps of the new Creative Classroom Lab project*” and “*First steps of ePortfolio project*”. The European Schoolnet presented the *Survey of schools: ICT in education*, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/KK-31-13-401-EN-N.pdf> showing a wide spread in the use of ICT in education among member states.

Fig. 1.13b: Percentages of students by school type in terms of equipment
(Grade 8, country and EU level, 2011-12)



Type 1: Highly digitally equipped schools: relatively high equipment levels, fast broadband and relatively high connectedness
Type 2: Partially digitally equipped schools, with lower than type 1 equipment levels, slow (less than 10mbps) or no broadband, and some connectedness
Type 3: As type 2 but with no connectedness

Also, the study on *implementation of systematic and large scale ICT-enabled innovation for learning and recommendations for scaling up the “creative classroom” in Europe*, <http://is.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pages/EAP/SCALECCR.html> was presented by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS). The IPTS reported on the final results of the developments of a *Digital Competence framework*, <http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC68116.pdf>. In addition, member states’ representatives presented on good practices and future plans concerning new teaching and learning environments, so-called *Creative Classrooms*.

Finally, a discussion took place concerning specific actions on *“New learning, teaching and assessment practices through digital technologies”* as identified by the European Commission under the future initiative *“Opening up education”*

Emphasizing mathematics, science and technology as basic skills

Report from the Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, science and technology

The *Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, science and technology* of the European Commission held a meeting on 6 March 2013. ETUCE was represented by Helvijs Valcis (LIZDA, Latvia).

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the outline and finalisation of the final report of the thematic working group. The outline mentions the target of less than 10% of an age group not achieving basic skills in mathematics, science and technology. This is a more ambitious target than the current European benchmark of 15%. This is based on the fact that the 10% target is already achieved in some countries. The issue of mathematics, science and technology as basic skills was discussed. It was suggested that future work within the European Commission could focus on how to change the view that one can live without basic skills in mathematics, science and technology.

Opportunities for professional development of in-company trainers

Report from the Thematic Working Group on Professional development of VET Trainers

The *Thematic Working Group on Professional development of VET Trainers* of the European Commission arranged a peer-learning event in Louvain-La-Neuve on 28-30 May 2013. ETUCE was represented by Conceição Nunes (Sindep, Portugal).

The aim of the meeting was to reflect on policies and practices that support the quality of training in enterprises through the development and updating of in-company trainers’ competences. The participants discussed opportunities for professional development of in-company trainers to develop necessary competences (patterns, formats and content) and on the opportunities for validation of prior learning (competences acquired on the job) and its link to continuing professional development of in-company trainers.

Financing Adult learning

Report from the Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning

The *Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning* of the European Commission organised a meeting and a workshop on 12-13 June 2013. ETUCE was represented by Rossella Benedetti (UilScuola, Italy).

On the first day a workshop on *“Reskilling Upskilling – Financial Instruments and Social Partner Agreements”* took place. The main conclusions highlighted that funding instruments benefit from multi-stakeholder involvement in their governance and implementation. The government has a vital role in setting national legal frameworks and ensuring there are effective mechanisms for implementation. Also, public funding is necessary to overcome barriers of meeting public policy objectives and support disadvantaged individuals to access equitable learning opportunities.

On the second day the key messages of the study on *Financial Adult Learning* were presented. The key findings underline that although the level of adult participation varies greatly between countries, there are similar patterns across all countries. For example, most adult learning is non-formal, participation increases with initial level of education and participation decreases with age. Normally adult learning provides as good a rate of return as investments in initial education. Furthermore,, adult learning has a higher correlation with innovation than higher education. The Thematic working group is continuous working on the final report to be published in October 2013.

Special support and training of teachers essential to reduce early school leaving

Report from the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving

The *Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving* of the European Commission organised a peer learning activity in Paris on 16-19 April 2013. Also, the Thematic Working Group held a meeting on 25-26 June 2013. ETUCE was represented by Elzbieta Leszczynska (NSzz Solidarnosty, Poland).

The aim of the peer learning activity was to reflect upon issues in relation to *cross-sectoral cooperation and second chance education* through the French example. Furthermore, its objective was to develop a common understanding of collecting data on early school leaving and second chance education. In addition, the success factors and possible obstacles in the French policy approach were discussed and conclusions were drawn towards developing guidelines on new policies.

The main conclusions emphasized the following elements: the collaborative role of stakeholders, in particular at local levels, is a key element. Complementary collaboration amongst professionals working in the field of early school leaving is needed but most critical is that the various stakeholders become mediators for young people. In relation to second chance education the teacher - student ratio is crucial. Teaching is organized in small groups and learners feel that they are part of an education community. In addition, it was stressed that more must be done to remove the stigmatization associated with the provision of second chance education. In relation to teachers and teachers training the professional development of teachers and involving them in a structured process of evaluation is key. Early school leaving should also be introduced in initial teacher training.

The recommendations of the participants underline the significance of teachers in the process of reducing early school leaving. The report will be finalized at the next meeting of the thematic working group.

Recommended reading

- **Learning mobility and non-formal learning in European contexts: Policies, approaches and examples**
http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/publications/YNB/YKB17_Text.pdf,
http://book.coe.int/EN/ficheouvrage.php?PAGEID=36&lang=EN&produit_aliasid=2781
The book on learning mobility is a joint Council of Europe and European Commission publication and provides texts of an academic, scientific, political and practical nature for all stakeholders in the youth field - youth leaders and youth workers, policy makers, researchers and so on. It plans to contribute to dialogue and co-operation between relevant players and to discussion on the further development and purpose of youth mobility schemes and their outcomes for young people.

- **Empowering vulnerable adults to tackle labour market challenges Findings from study visits 2010/11 and 2011/12**
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/21318.aspx>
Some 25 study visits held between 2010 and 2012 focused on helping vulnerable adults to get into the labour market. They cover issues on how to access guidance services; how to make full use of knowledge, skills and competences, and how to get them recognised; how to participate in training, and how to find rewarding employment. This publication collects findings from these study visits, and features 29 successful initiatives from all over Europe.

- **Quality in the adult learning sector: final report**
http://ec.europa.eu/education/adult/doc/quality_en.pdf
 - The results of the study should support the European Commission by contributing to a knowledge base, which will inform a number of future activities to be undertaken in the framework of European Cooperation on Adult Learning Policy.
 - Its specific objective is to “map and to analyse the scope, content and implementation of quality approaches, standards and other relevant recent developments such as the development and implementation of accreditation systems and institutions, in the adult learning sector”.

- **CEDEFOP TIMES, including readers’ comments on the employment scenarios for 2025 by Helmut Skala and Roland Gangl, Austrian Teachers Union**
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/Newspaper_Interactive_COMMENTS_final.pdf
 - In the second edition of The Cedefop Times you’ll find an interview with Commissioner Vassiliou, articles on apprenticeship, skills mismatch, youth employment and scenarios for 2025, as well as readers’ comments.

Dates to remember

13-14 November, 2013	Development of the Teaching Profession, Final Conference-Berlin
21-22 November, 2013	HERSC meeting -Brussels
28-29 November, 2013	Project: ICT in education, final conference-Bratislava