

Education and Training 2020

ETUCE Circular 3/2011

*Information concerning
the EU 'Education & Training' 2020 Programme
and the EU 2020 Strategy*

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Crises and Education

It is already foreseeable that the deep sovereign debt of numerous EU countries will contribute to stronger and deeper European financial, economic, and political crises. While there are numerous austerity measures in the education sector in the EU Member States, the European Union institutions have not found a common approach on the budget in education and training. The ETUCE statement on the European Budget in October highlighted this disagreement: "In its Draft budget of the European Union for the financial year 2012, the Council proposes to cut the Community investments in education and training by no less than € 130M. Especially concerning are the proposals to reduce the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) as well as the research initiative People by €60M each. [...] Reacting to this dark perspective, the Education and Culture Committee of the European Parliament has courageously proposed an increase of the budget lines devoted to education, notably €45M for the LLP."

As far as ETUCE is concerned, the education policy of the European Union is greatly affected by a more market-oriented approach. Education is considered as a tool to contribute to the growth of Europe and a future upturn but all education policy documents seem to include some ideas, which may encourage the governments to decrease the public fund in education, to deteriorate the autonomy of schools and to privatise education.

Representatives of the Ministries of Education in the last European Commission Lifelong Learning Committee meeting heavily criticised the business-oriented approach of the European Commission, saying that the industries always have short-term plans, but education has a life-long purpose. The new plan of the European Commission for the next year is to create a so-called *Sectoral Skills Alliances* to involve companies in the development and teaching of the vocational education and training subjects according to their needs. There is a similar initiative regarding the curricula in higher education.

The following Circular articles all highlight these elements when they report about the new EU policies: the European Commission policy on the *Modernisation of Higher Education*, the new Lifelong Learning Programme, the so-called *Erasmus for All*, and the new research programme, the *Horizon 2020* all include that the role of the education is to fulfil the need of the businesses. The most alarming idea is the establishment of a "Master level study loan guarantee scheme" of the European Union, which may contribute to social exclusion, and thereby support the banking sector more. The *Horizon 2020* apparently will shift the research activities towards serving the need of the industries. ETUCE has been active in monitoring and lobbying against these policies.

The new Lifelong Learning Programme: Erasmus for All

Comenius, Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci lost against Erasmus

The European Commission launched a Communication on the new *Erasmus for All* programme on 23 November 2011. The aim of the *Erasmus for All* is to merge all current *Lifelong Learning Programmes* into one single programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the 2014-2020 period.

The European Commission decided to keep only the name of "Erasmus" as this is the best known mobility programme among the EU citizens and to erase the programme names of Comenius, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth in Action. Instead, the programmes will be divided according to these topics: *Erasmus Higher Education*, *Erasmus International Higher Education*, *Erasmus Training* (for vocational education and training), *Erasmus Schools* (for general education), and *Erasmus Youth Participation*.

The suggested benefits of the merging are greater streamlining, simplicity and efficiency. The programme rests on three types of key action:

Key action 1: Learning mobility of both learners and staff
Key action 2: Cooperation for innovation and good practices
Key action 3: Support for policy reform

The European Commission estimates to extend the number of the individual mobility to 5 million learners and 1 million staff. Key action 1 will offer mobility opportunities for staff, for higher education and vocational education and training students and for youth. It would also establish a “*Master degree mobility* including a study loan guarantee scheme”.

Key action 2 focus on strengthening innovative partnerships between educational institutions and business in the following themes: 1. Regional and local partnerships; 2. Sector Skills Alliances (“large-scale partnership between education and training establishments and businesses to create new sector-specific curricula in VET”); 3. IT platforms and; 4. Capacity building with 3rd countries.

Key action 3 will emphasise the tools and impact of the Open Method of Coordination in education, training and youth. Additionally, it will promote the policy dialogue with third countries and international organisations.

The European Commission foresees to increase the budget, but it still depends on the decision of the European Parliament and the Council before the programme can be adopted in December 2013. In the new budget, the individual mobility is strongly favoured and may receive 66% of the total funds. The *Cooperation for innovation* key action will receive 25% and the final key action on *Support for policy reform* will receive 5% of the budget.

ETUCE is concerned about the plan to establish a loan guarantee scheme for obtaining Master studies abroad, wherein the EU will provide incentives to private banks to give study loans for students with better conditions. This may encourage the governments to increase a trend of marketisation at the Master level, which most certainly would contribute to social exclusion. Furthermore, the new programme relies on an excessively business-centred approach.

The Erasmus for all Communication and the proposal for a Regulation can be found via: http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/doc/com_en.pdf

Extension of tuition fees?

The effect of the crises on the EU higher education policy

“Higher Education is Not for Sale”

In October, the ETUCE conveyed a statement on higher education in response to the Communication of the European Commission entitled “*Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe’s higher education systems*”. The statement emphasised the following:

- The mission of universities and other higher education institutions is much broader than providing knowledge to the business sector.
- Education should prepare people for life and not only serve the short-term needs of the labour market.
- Tuition fees only contribute to the marketisation of education and leads to the exclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

The proposed loan guarantee scheme, which also appeared in the proposal for regulation of the *Erasmus for All* programme, was highly criticised in the statement. ETUCE therefore urged the European Commission to reverse its policy of supporting the expansion of tuition fees in higher education.

ETUCE also stressed that the view of the European Commission on involving employers and labour market institutions in the design and delivery of programmes is an attack on the basic academic freedom of universities. The European Commission describes the research as an activity to serve commercial goals and defines the mission of the research sector as to train 1 million new researchers to the industries. However, many of the Nobel Prize winner researchers were supported from a non-“cost-effective” approach.

Changes in the EU research policy

Public consultation on the European Research Area

The European Commission conducted an online public consultation entitled “*Areas of untapped potential for the development of the European Research Area*” with 30 November 2011 as the deadline to submit answers. The aim of the public consultation was to gather views on key obstacles of a well-functioning European Research Area (ERA).

In connection with the consultation, the European Commission has provided a background document to serve as guidance. The document describes current progress and challenges to the European Research Area and gives recommendations as to what is needed in order to complete it. The recommendations are among others:

- Better working conditions, career prospects and gender balance among researchers.
- Increased funding and autonomy for universities.
- Opening up research and making it more publicly available.
- Common strategies and priorities for cooperation in international Science, Technology and Innovation.
- Improving the involvement of stakeholders in EU research policy and the implementation of the ERA.

However, there is also an emphasis on the request for tighter bonds between public research institutions and the industry, e.g. through contractual agreements. The document does not pay any attention to how this might affect research autonomy or the societal purpose of the ERA. ETUCE replied to the public consultation criticising these elements of the EU research policy.

The ETUCE statement on higher education is available at:

http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_2010_Statements.html

Horizon 2020

The European Commission published the *Horizon 2020* programme on 30 November 2011, which will run as an overall research and innovation programme of the EU between 2014 and 2020. The *Horizon 2020*, just like the *Erasmus for All*, is a result of an idea for a merger in order to simplify the programme set-up. Thus, it would consist of the existing *Framework Programme for Research*, the innovation related activities of the *Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme* and the *European Institute of Technology*. With a budget of 80 billion Euros, the *Horizon 2020* programme aims to link the research more to serve the industries, businesses. The priorities of the *Horizon 2020* will be the followings:

1. **Excellent Science** to support talented individuals
2. **Industrial Leadership** to promote research to serve the industries
3. **Societal challenges** to enhance linkage between researches in different sectors

ETUCE is concerned about the strong market oriented approach under priority 2, as the programme would financially contribute to research activities specifically for industrial purposes. The programme will undergo negotiations in the European Parliament and in the European Commission and will be adopted by the end of 2013.

The *Horizon 2020* programme documents can be found via:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/pdf/proposals/com%282011%29_809_final.pdf#view=fit&pagemo de=None

Mobility as a state of mind

Polish Presidency conference on mobility

The Polish Presidency organised a conference in Sopot on 17-19 October to discuss the role and potential of mobility in formal and non-formal education. The conference, entitled '*Mobility as a tool to acquire and develop competences from childhood to seniority*' provided an overview of the current situation of educational mobility and the prospective future developments.

Representatives from the European Commission ensured that the topic of mobility is intended to stay on as a main item within education. Participants underlined the need to emphasise not only the dissemination of mobility, but to ensure the quality. Although many EU programmes focus and funds mobility, it is still regarded as an obstacle in many regions and not as an improvement of the national schools and education. However, mobility should be a norm and must be a state of mind, as was expressed by several speakers. Therefore, teachers (and students) should be supported and encouraged to participate in exchanges across countries and regions by school policies and school heads.

An overall document, *The Final Declaration*, was drafted and adopted, presenting a summary of the debates and recommendations provided by the participants and can be found here at <http://konferencje.frse.org.pl/img/Mfile/377/file.pdf>.

New benchmarks for learning mobility

According to the Education Council of the European Union targets, 6% of students in the vocational education and training and 20% of the higher education students shall benefit from the mobility programmes and participate in abroad mobility by 2020.

On 28 November 2011, the council adopted *Council Conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility* taking into account the recent economic situation. The benchmarks are not concrete targets for Member States, but are recommendations to be included in the national priorities.

The learning mobility is defined here as physical and not online mobility. The recommendation of the Council Conclusions to the Member States is to prepare statistics and conduct surveys on teacher mobility at all levels of education in order to develop an indicator for teacher mobility. It also emphasises the need to recognise the abroad study or work experience after the teacher returns to the home country.

In its statement to the European Union institutions ETUCE emphasised that major difficulties remain within teacher mobility. Examples of these could be: providing qualified teacher replacement, ensuring a sound financial basis, portability of pension and security rights; recognising the experience periods abroad; maintaining a balanced teacher force; and securing proper support from the employers in the sending and hosting countries. We recommended to the EU to include these elements to the statistics when they map out the obstacles of participating in mobility programmes. ETUCE stresses the importance of the involvement of education stakeholders, especially teacher trade unions in promoting learning mobility.

The policy paper is available at : <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st16/st16745.en11.pdf>

The role of the trade unions in quality assurance in VET

CEDEFOP, the European Union agency focusing on the improvement of the vocational education and training at national and European levels, organised a conference on 24-25 November, 2011. The conference entitled *Common EU tools for education and training – Working together for shared vocational education and training policies*. CEDEFOP invited stakeholders and social partners to discuss their role in implementing quality assurance framework and tools in vocational education and training.

The implementation of the initiatives to improve the quality in education by tools such as EQF (and corresponding NQFs), Europass, ECVET, EQAVET, which were created in 2008-2009, meets numerous obstacles.

First of all, the social partners were never informed on the meaning of the abbreviations and expected to get more knowledge on these by the conference. (Please find the explanations below). Secondly, the conference participants, coming from employers' or employees' organisations complained that since they have not been informed about these tools, often the design of these continued without the involvement of the trade unions at the national level. Thirdly, according to the social partners, although it is

essential to participate in the discussions on the design and delivery of these tools, today the priority of most trade unions is the fight against the austerity measures to survive the crisis.

All in all, the conference was an added value for the social partners as it highlighted the need to approach the Ministries to involve the trade unions more and possibly better in the implementation of these EU tools.

- **EQF and NQF** mean European and National Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning. The European Quality Framework (EQF) was developed to be able to compare the learning outcomes, the knowledge, skills and competences of the graduates in whole Europe according to 8 qualification levels. For instance, learning outcomes in level 1 mean that a person can have basic general knowledge and can work under supervision, which may refer to having a primary school degree. The National Qualification Frameworks has been set up and will be finished in 2012 by the EU Member States to match the national qualification levels (primary, secondary, VET, BA, MA, PHD) and the levels of the EQF. Information is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/general/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf, http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm.
- **ECVET**: the approach of the European Credit System for VET is the same as of the EQF but with the creation of a credit system (like ECTS credit) in VET. The testing and development of the system has been going on and the final implementation will be as from 2014. More information is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ecvet/flyer_en.pdf
- **EQAVET**: European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET is a reference instrument to help authorities of Member States to promote and monitor the improvement of their systems of vocational education and training (VET). All Member States, involving the social partners, should have implemented it by summer 2011. More information: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm
- The **EUROPASS** is a system to make the certificates, diplomas for VET, for higher education, the CVs more understandable in another country when the owner of the certificate moves to it. See more information: http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Introduction.csp?loc=en_GB

Key competences of teachers

The European Commission organised a peer-learning activity within the Open Method of Coordination Working Group on '*Professional Development of Teachers*' in Ireland on 2-6 October 2011, at which the ETUCE was represented by Tatiana Babrauskiene. The meeting was a great opportunity for the representatives of the Ministries of Education, EFEE (European Federation of Educational Employers) and ETUCE to share the view on how to develop the key competences of the teachers at the national and EU levels.

The objective of the peer-learning activity was to exchange ideas on policy approaches on the competence requirements, as well as the selection and professional development of school teachers.

It was agreed that defining the competences of teachers within a framework is a difficult task. On the one hand, it can provide important support and benchmarks for teachers. On the other hand it is not a panacea and should not reduce teaching to a narrow instrumentalist ‘tick box’ approach. The conclusion of the meeting was that defining more clearly the competences teachers requires the involvement of all stakeholders and teachers in the development.

Improving ICT in education

Guus Wijngaards represented ETUCE at the first Open Method of Coordination Working Group meeting on ‘*ICT and Education*’ held in Brussels on 13-14 October. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the roadmap of the working group. Furthermore, the meeting gave an overview of the European Commission’s work in ICT and Education, as well as summaries of recent key studies in:

- Measuring use and impact of ICT in education.
- Learning digital competences.
- ICT as an enabler of innovation in education.

The main task for the working group is to help building a new European initiative towards systemic impact of ICT in education: Creative Classrooms, Creative Learning Environments. The core aim of the new initiative is to support the EU Member States to mainstream and integrate ICT use in their educational policies and practices as it has been inscribed in the EU agendas “New Skills for New Jobs” and “Digital Agenda”. The new initiative is deemed necessary as the Member States, while successfully using ICT in informal education and training, have had large gaps in implementing ICT in formal education and training.

At the working group’s next meeting in January 2012 the initiative will be discussed further.

Teaching Mathematics, Science and Technology

The first peer-learning activity meeting of the “*Teaching Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST)*” Open Method of Coordination Working Group had a special a focus on the priorities and challenges in mathematics, science and technology education in Finland and Estonia. The peer-learning activity was attended by Helvijs Valcis on behalf of ETUCE. The aim of the meeting was to identify and exchange opinions on relevant policies and themes.

The main general tasks of the thematic working group are to contribute to the understanding of Member State policies in this field, with particular attention to low-achievers; to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policies and strategies and; to help transfer effective policies and strategies between countries.

The working group concluded on the following set of policy levers to support the low achievers:

- Greater quality in stakeholder cooperation, with Finland as a role model.
- Promoting MST teaching.
- Integrate, organise and train special support teachers.
- Early intervention and greater use of technology in teaching.

Furthermore, EURYDICE published in November 2011 two studies about *Mathematics Education in Europe* and on *Science Education in Europe*. The reports provide overviews on existing policies and strategies. They deal with subjects such as teacher approaches and skills along with student motivation and inclusion. The links to the two studies are available in the 'Recommended Readings' section of the circular.

OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey – TALIS

Birgitte Birkvad was as an ETUCE representative at the 12th meeting of the Board of Participating Countries in the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) on 27-28 October.

The meeting gave updates on recent OECD developments including new indicators for the report: *Education at a Glance 2012*. The new indicators are data on actual working and teaching time of teachers, and teachers' salaries. The *Education at a Glance* will also include a profile of teachers in different countries, including background and teacher training.

Unfortunately, OECD will not publish any report on School Leadership due to lack of resources, but the TALIS 2013 report will include data in this field. TALIS 2013 will also include a question on teacher mobility.

European Parliament conference on New Skills for New Jobs

ETUCE attended a conference entitled "New Skills for New Jobs" on 19 October held by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

The conference touched upon different topics, such as the problems on the highly, but not sufficiently qualified young people for the labour market; transition from education and training into the labour market; and the right balance between short and long-term skills training in order to meet the current and future needs of both workers and the labour market.

Especially the transition period from training to labour market was discussed as being of key importance. It was suggested, in order to ease the transition, to improve career guidance and ensure a better adequacy of the education to the future job.

It was debated whether there is too much reliance on the public system to train workers at the moment. Voices among the conference participants suggested that companies should take more responsibility in promoting training for both current and future workers but that the companies need incentives to do this. However, how to create these incentives and what the contents of it should be was not touched upon.

Recommended readings

- ⇒ **European Council:** *“The protection of minors and human dignity and on the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audio-visual and online information services industry – Protecting children in the digital world”.*

The report has been prepared on the basis of the EU Member States responses to a questionnaire. It concerns the new challenges for the protection of minors in electronic media, particularly online services. The report can be found via:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st14/st14268.en11.pdf>

- ⇒ **EURYDICE:** *Mathematics Education in Europe: Common Challenges and National policies.*

The report can be found via:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/132EN.pdf

- ⇒ **EURYDICE on “Science Education in Europe: National Policies, Practices and Research.”**

The report can be found via:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/133EN.pdf

Dates to remember

1 January 2012:	Danish Presidency of the European Council
20 January 2012:	ETUCE Special Crisis meeting, Brussels
14 February 2012	Education Council meeting
20-21 February 2012:	European Early Childhood Education Conference, Budapest
8-10 March 2012:	ETUI-ETUCE Vocational Education and Training Seminar, Lisbon
23-24 April 2012:	Higher Education and Research Standing Committee Meeting , Bucharest
23-25 May 2012:	European and Global School Leadership conference, Dublin