

ETUCE conference: Preventing Early School Leaving through ICT

Eleonora Waltraud Schmid from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) presented the latest findings which show that the challenges connected to early school leaving lay both inside and outside the education system. With regard to using ICT strategies to attract risk groups back to school, most EU countries are still in an experimental stage. Guus Wijngaards, ETUCE representative in the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Working



Group on ICT, emphasised the need to discuss the use of ICT at school level and to take teachers', students', and parents' perspectives into account when promoting the use of ICT in education.

The conference was the final activity of an on-going ETUCE project, which connects to one of the five head targets of the European Union's ten-year growth strategy EU 2020. The EU 2020 strategy has set the target to reduce the school drop-out rate below 10% and to raise by 40% the rate of 30-34 year olds completing third level education. To follow up on the project outcome, please visit: <http://www.elfe-eu.net/>

On 28-29 November 2013, the final conference of the ETUCE project Teacher Unions Preventing Early School Leaving through the Use of ICT in Education took place in Bratislava, Slovakia. The conference gathered together teacher union representatives, representatives from the employers' federation (EFEE) and from the students' association (OBESSU), researchers, and teachers. In order to learn from the experiences made in different national contexts, school teachers and leaders were invited to present their daily experiences in making use of ICT in their institution to attract pupils back to school.

The main objective of the conference was to discuss practical guidelines on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education in support of the prevention of early school leaving. These practical guidelines aim to give advice to teacher unions, education institutions, policy

makers and other stakeholders in education. They build up on the findings of the four project case studies in upper secondary schools and teacher education institutions in Portugal, The Netherlands, Denmark and Azerbaijan, as well as on the outcome of a project workshop conducted in September 2013.

Erasmus+



On 3 December 2013, the Council adopted the regulation establishing **ERASMUS+**, the European Union's Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020. More information is available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm.

It brings together in a single programme activities previously covered by a number of separate programmes (including the Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Mundus and Youth in Action) and it also covers activities in the new area of the European competence sport. The new programme has a total budget of about €14.7 billion - which represents an increase of 40% compared to the precedent budget.

Following the Council's adoption Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth said "*I am pleased that Erasmus+ has now been adopted formally by the Council. The budget increase of 40% demonstrates the EU's commitment to education and training. Erasmus+ will enable young people to increase their knowledge and skills through experience abroad which will improve their employability. While a majority of the budget will be used for individual mobility grants, Erasmus+ will also support partnerships to help people make the transition from education to work, and reforms to modernise and improve the quality of education in Member States.*" ETUCE has lobbied at numerous occasions in the previous 2 years to increase funds in the programme to each sector.

CEE EU Conference

The Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius that took place on 28-29 November 2013 ended as a failure. This was mainly due to the fiasco to achieve an agreement with Ukraine. Four of the six participating countries have distanced themselves from the EU. Only Moldova and Georgia initiated Association Agreements with the EU at the Vilnius summit. At the same time thousands of Ukrainians marched in support of the EU Eastern Partnership in the biggest demonstrations since the Orange Revolution in 2004.

The Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit is available at <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/statements/-joint-declaration-of-the-eastern-partnership-summit-vilnius-28-29-november-2013>



Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership



The EU and the US started negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in July 2013. The outcome of such an agreement on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership may have critical implications of the member states' capacity to regulate and as a consequence to provide public services including public education. In particular, trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership make the reversal of liberalisation and

the establishment of new services more difficult. More information on this topic can be found in the draft report *PUBLIC SERVICES IN EU TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS* available at http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/Draft_report_Markus_Krajewski_mtg14Nov2013.pdf.

The Annual Growth Survey is strongly criticised by Members of the European Parliament

The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) criticised strongly the European Commission for its Annual Growth Survey, which repeatedly gives over-optimistic economic forecasts. According the MEPs, the European Commission is not taking sufficient account of these errors and not adapting its economic reform recommendations to tackle the ensuing social problems. Rather the MEPs

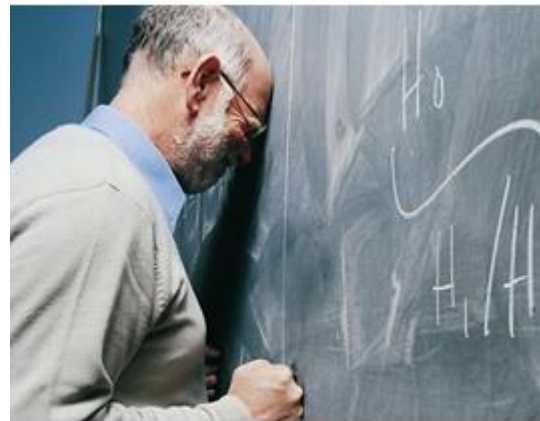


pointed out that the Annual Growth Survey was a case of “more of the same, year after year”. Mr Rehn, the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Euro, opened the meeting with the MEPs on a very positive note saying that Europe was seeing a turnaround and that growth was returning. However, after being pressed by many MEPs on his opening remarks he then qualified these by saying "I did not say I am satisfied by the way the economy is. There is no room for complacency". In contrast, Mr Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, painted a bleak picture of the employment front in his opening remarks, warning that unemployment was becoming structural and divergences between the core and periphery were growing, as was the mismatch between skills supplied and demanded. In addition he stressed that the drop-out rates from education or training is also worrying.

The reality of teachers is miles away from the picture painted by the stereotypes

A number of recent reports published by Eurydice demonstrate that the reality of teachers do not match the rosy picture that is painted by stereotypes.

Key Data on Education in Europe displays that in recent years, the education and training sector in Europe has recorded the most significant fall in tertiary graduate rates compared to other disciplines. The Teachers’ and School Heads’ Salaries report shows that the primary and secondary teachers' entrance level statutory salaries are lower than national per capita GDP in most European countries. The National Sheets on Education Budgets



Stereotypes and reality combined can make teachers' lives a little less than perfect

in Europe 2013 provide the most recent data on planned education expenditure in European countries. National education budgets are presented by type of expenditure and level of education. The publication makes it possible to identify changes in education budgets between 2012 and 2013. Moreover, the national sheets address the reasons for changes in the budget.

The OECD published the PISA 2012 results on 3 December 2013, which is available at <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm>. Generally the East-Asian countries are dominating the top ranking, such as Korea. The report showed that the countries with the highest performance are at the same time the countries with the highest equity. Finland and Estonia are the only EU countries achieving high performance and socially equitable distribution of learning outcomes.

The EU underachieves in relation to its [Education & Training 2020 benchmarks](#). **In mathematics** the average share of low achieving students in the EU has essentially remained the same (22.1% compared to 22.3% in 2009). **In reading** the percentage of low achievers has declined from 23.1%

(2006) to 17.8%. **In science** there is a trend towards improvement. The percentage of low achievers has been dropping from 20.3% in 2006 to 16.6% in 2012.

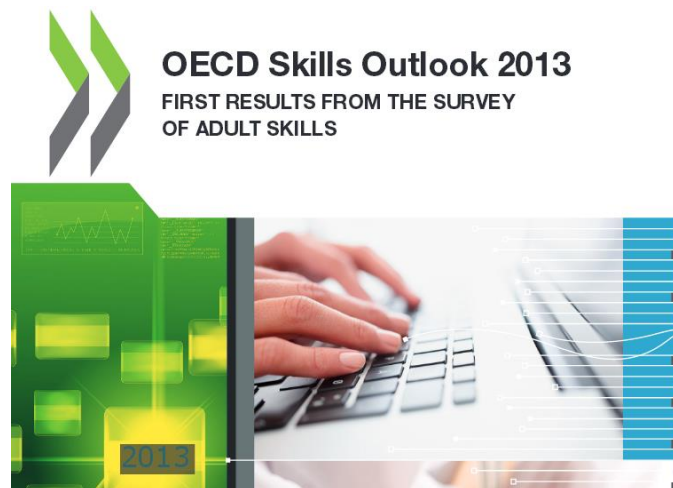
The results show that the gender differences remain: in math boys perform better than girls, in science it is a mixed picture throughout the EU and in reading girls perform better than boys. In particular the results show that almost all underperformance in reading is found amongst boys.

The confidence measure showed a strong relation with gender differences. In particular it showed that girls have much lower confidence in math, even when performing at the same levels as boys. An important policy message would therefore be to make girls more confident in math.

The result also showed the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) as more than one year vastly increases the average math scores.

The first results of the survey of Adult Skills - Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

The OECD's [PIAAC survey](#)) is the first world-wide survey on adults' skills. It tested literacy, numeracy and problem solving ICT skills of adults aged 16-65. PIAAC covers only 17 countries from Europe. According to the results, those who are highly educated like to participate in adult learning, have higher salary and better job.



The results are shocking: 1 out of 5 adults have low skills in numeracy and literacy. 1 out of 4 adults are low skilled in ICT. 57 million adults lack literacy skills and 68 million adults lack numeracy skills. The adults in Japan, Finland, and in the Netherlands are the top achievers in the PIAAC tests, while Poland, Ireland, France, Spain are the lowest achievers, with Italy scoring the lowest rate. Surprisingly, having tertiary education does not provide great difference in skills in around half of the OECD countries. However, the VET graduated achieved much less than the general secondary school education graduates.

17% of European adults are completely illiterate in ICT, which means that they have never used computer or did not know how to highlight a sentence or move the mouse. For example 27% of the Italians and 26% of the Polish adults are completely illiterate in ICT.

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