

Education and Training 2020

ETUCE Circular 1/2011

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

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Economy and education – endangering the national systems?

The education sector after the crises

At the moment, 23 million people are unemployed in the European Union as a result of the recent financial and economic crises. The education sector was also affected by the crises: in 2009 almost all EU countries reduced their expenditure in education by a significant level. Education systems are being forced by governments to dismiss thousands of teachers, degrade teachers' working conditions, close schools, infringing the rights of the pupils and deteriorating the quality of education. Thus, social exclusion is a risk in the European Union Member States.

When the ETUCE sent its Statement to the EU on the G20 Summit (Seoul, November 2011), we highlighted that cutting education budget will endanger the stability of society. In the 2nd half of 2010, there were many EU initiatives, which started a new trend of EU policy on education wherein education is considered as a tool of economic recovery. So, in the next couple of years, the education sector is forced to focus more on special skills development for the instant need of the labour market instead of a holistic approach of general skills and competences development. Furthermore, the EU recommends to the Member States to invest a larger portion in early childhood education and care, followed by the other education sectors, and the least amount to higher education. For this purpose, the EU is analysing possibilities to create a wide-access EU-level study loan facility. In countries, where higher education is still mostly publicly founded, the university budgets will be cut, as a consequence low- and middle class students will be forced to take study loans, which can contribute to social exclusion.

EU answer on financing education

The EU was strongly shaken by the crises, which led the Ministers responsible for economic and financial affairs to decide to reign in the national reform programmes and expenditures of all Member States. The *Economic and Financial Affairs Council* approved a reform on 7 September, 2010 named the *European Semester*. It is a cycle of economic policy coordination, launched in 2011, operating with a 6-month budgetary review. The *Economic and Financial Affairs Council* intends to re-examine and revise the budgetary decisions of the Member States, every first semester of the year.

A so-called *Annual Growth Survey* of the European Commission and a *Draft Council Conclusion* will be published each January, which analyses the national programmes of the following year and gives recommendations to the Member States. Each March, the European Council will identify the main economic challenges the EU faces and will give advice on national policies. Each April, the Member States will submit their national reform programmes setting up initiatives to be undertaken to strengthen their policies in areas such as employment and social inclusion. This issue is highly significant for future education policies and investment in the sector for the foreseeable future. Finally, the Council of the EU and the European Council will provide policy advice to the Member States each July, before they finalise their budgets for the following year. The first European Semester started in January this year by the *Council Conclusions on the Role of Education and Training in the Implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy*.

Role of Education and Training in the EU 2020 Strategy

According to the EU 2020 Strategy, by 2020 75 % of the population aged 20-64 is projected to be employed, and the share of early school leavers will be under 10%. Moreover, at least 40% of the younger generation will have a tertiary degree. The *Council conclusions on the Role of Education and Training in the Implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy* were adopted by the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 14 February 2011. The Conclusions are based on three reports of the *Annual Growth Survey*, which are part of the *European Semester* package.

The reports explain that the Member States will not be able to achieve the benchmarks of the EU 2020 Strategy: 200 000 more young people will drop out than was targeted (10.5% instead of 10%), and 800 000 fewer 30-34 y.o. will graduate by 2020 (37.3% instead of > 40%).

The Conclusion describes an education which lacks economically relevant skills. It refers to the flagship initiatives, such as the *Youth on the Move* (highlighting more labour market related higher education and more mobility to workplace learning), the *Agenda for New Skills and Jobs* (emphasising the labour market relevance in E&T, closer collaboration between public services, schools and employers), and the *Digital Agenda* and *Innovation Union* (constraining a right mix of skills and competences and the need for more scientific studies).

The Commission stresses the curriculum design to be based on projections on future skill gaps and needs at national, regional, local and sectoral level. Tackling against early school leaving is focused on innovative learning and teaching methods, but not on more investment. Considering the higher education, the Conclusion highlights more varied sources of funding and more partnership with businesses.

As far as the ETUCE is concerned, this policy of the EU will contribute to more privatisation and commodification of higher education. According to the discussion in the ETUCE Education Advisory Panel, we should fear that this kind of attempt to regulate the budget will risk limiting education budgets. Thus, the ETUCE will follow up this policy of the European Union and will continue to lobby for proper investment into education in order to maintain high quality.

The new policy of the European Union on Vocational Education and Training

The role of VET

There is a growing role of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the EU policy in the last decade. After the economic crises this trend is extending: the focus is on the high level vocational skills development, as it has an easier path to the labour market. The ETUCE stresses that education must remain both a holistic and labour market oriented approach, as education is not only a tool of economic activities. We also stress that the maintenance of balance between school-based and work-based learning is essential in respect to the diversity of the VET systems. Hence, the ETUCE urges the cooperation models between companies/businesses and education to remain balanced between the holistic approach and the labour

market relevance in school curricula, initial and further teacher education.

Vocational Education and Training in the Treaties

According to the *Treaty of the European Union*, education is a national competence as regards the cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU. However, the EU contributes to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and by supporting and supplementing their actions, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States. At the same time, VET obtained a special place in the Treaty, in Article 166, which stipulates that “the European Union shall implement a vocational training policy, which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States”.

The European Commission acts together with EU Member States and other countries to strengthen VET across Europe. The Copenhagen process was established in 2002, laying out the basis for co-operation in VET, with 33 European countries involved. Further objectives of this cooperation are laid down every 2nd year, by a so-called ‘communiqué of ministers’. The last one, the *Bruges Communiqué* was launched in December, 2011, with the participation of the ETUCE.

A new ten-year vision

At the end of 2010, both the European Commission and the Belgian Presidency of the European Union created new policies to strengthen VET. The European Commission presented a 10-year vision for the future of vocational education and training in the communication: “*A New Impetus for European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to Support the Europe 2020 Strategy*”¹. The main focus of the programme is VET modernisation and increased attractiveness, as well as implementing the EU common reference tools (EQF, ECVET, Europass and EQAVET).

The strategic objectives of the new programme are:

- To ensure **Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET)** as an attractive learning option with high relevance to labour market needs and pathways to higher education
- To create easily accessible **Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET)** for people in different life situations, facilitating skills development and career changes
- To facilitate flexible systems based on the recognition of learning outcomes, including diplomas, and supporting individual learning pathways
- To ensure adequate support for those at a disadvantage
- To facilitate cross-border mobility as an integral part of VET practices

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0296:FIN:EN:PDF>

Growing roles of teachers

The role of teachers is given a special focus in the process of VET modernisation. Enhanced focus on how teachers are recruited, their professional development, the involvement of new pedagogies in teaching, curriculum design, quality assurance, management and administrative tasks, according to the Commission, are all elements, which should be further validated and reflected in the career status of teachers.

In its statement, the ETUCE agrees with the objective to increase the status of VET through modernisation by promoting attractiveness both for teachers and students. However, the ETUCE doubts that this can be ensured without supplementary funds. Furthermore, the ETUCE finds it important to emphasise, that a modernisation process not only replies to the demands of the labour market, but also supports equality, equity and social cohesion.

The Bruges Communiqué

On 7 December 2010, the ETUCE joined Ministers of Education, representatives of employers and unions and the European Commission in a meeting in Bruges to discuss the shared objectives for Vocational Education and Training for 2011-2020. The Bruges Communiqué is the latest revision of the Copenhagen Process for European co-operation on vocational education and training. The significance of the communiqué is that both short – and long-term objectives are listed, planned to be evaluated every 4 years, which can encourage the signatory states for better implementation. It aims to create greater confidence in one another's vocationally oriented education and training systems.

The VET is seen in 2020 by the Commission as attractive and inclusive, providing employability and growth. The following key priorities are highlighted in the Bruges Communiqué:

- Modernised VET sector with more investment on quality teaching
- Attractive VET as a 1st choice of studying for pupils, 2nd choice for adult
- VET as pathway for tertiary/higher education (EQF level 5 or higher)
- Maximum access to lifelong learning for adults, for non-formal and informal learning by more open and flexible VET schools
- More opportunities for study and work experience abroad in order to improve language skills, self-confidence and adaptability and possibility to be hired in another country
- Quality and efficiency: high quality VET with focus on employment
- More inclusion and access for disadvantaged people
- Creative, innovative and entrepreneurial thinking

The ETUCE welcomes that the Communiqué responds to the critics of the stakeholders on the *Communication - A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy* considering a balance between labour market and individual fulfilment in VET. The ETUCE agrees that key competences and democratic citizenship have to be included in future VET, representing a broader concept of the education.

The ETUCE welcomes that the Commission plans regular, short-term revision of the existing occupational, educational standards with the involvement of the social partners. Public responsibility in quality of VET and investment in education is essential.

Update on the *Education, Youth and Culture Council* meetings

The meeting of the *Council on Education, Youth, Culture and Sport* in Brussels, 18-19 November 2010, brought many highly relevant policies to the education sector at the EU level. The Council debated on the following topics:

- **European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training**
- **The Youth on the Move Initiative**
- **Basic Skills in Schools**
- **Education for Sustainable Development**
- **The Role of Education in Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion**

European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training

The Council adopted conclusions on the ***Priorities for European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020***. The conclusions also set out a programme of short-term deliverables related to these priorities for the years 2011 to 2014. The conclusions were, in particular, the basis for the discussions at the informal ministerial meeting specially devoted to VET on 7 December 2010 in Bruges.

You can find more about the ETUCE statement on the new VET policy of the EU via this link:

[http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_10/ETUCE_Statement -
_The new EU policy on VET.pdf](http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_10/ETUCE_Statement_-_The_new_EU_policy_on_VET.pdf)

Youth on the Move Initiative

This new flagship initiative intends to promote study and apprenticeship mobility of students, which greatly contributes to the individuals' professional and personal development. It invites the Member States to remove obstacles of mobility to teachers and trainers. The criticism of the ETUCE is that the target group of the study on the mobility programmes of the EU is still aimed at 16-35 year only. This excludes many of the teachers who otherwise would have improved their personal and professional competences by participating study trips abroad. Please find a detailed article on this issue below.

To read more about the ETUCE statement on the Youth on the move initiative please follow:

[http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_10/ETUCE_Statement -
_New Youth on the Move initiative.pdf](http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_10/ETUCE_Statement_-_New_Youth_on_the_Move_initiative.pdf)

Basic Skills in Schools

In the context of ***European cooperation on schools for the 21st century***, the Education Council adopted a Conclusion, which recognises that more effective action should be taken in order to achieve the EU 2020

Benchmarks on basic skills. Better curriculum design, motivation for reading literacy, new technologies and the gender dimension are among the actions recommended. The Commission set up a high-level expert group to examine the most effective ways of supporting reading literacy with the intention to present a proposal for policy action in the first half of 2012.

For further information on this Council Conclusion please follow the link:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st14/st14948.en10.pdf>

Council Conclusions on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The Council conclusions highlight that change of attitude towards green environment is essential at the school level. The paper integrates economic, social and environmental perspectives, and stresses that sustainable development aspects should be mainstreamed into all areas of education and training in order to create “green schools”. The Council invites Member States to support education for sustainable development implementing this dimension into lifelong learning strategies and the education and training of teachers and trainers. Please find a detailed article on this issue below.

The ETUCE statement is available at the ETUCE website:

http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_10/ETUCE_Statement_on_Draft_Conclusions_on_ESD.pdf

Council Conclusions on the Role of Culture in Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

Shedding new light on inequality and social exclusion has been the primary purpose of the European year of combating poverty and social exclusion 2010. Referring to the Conference “Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage through Education” held by the Belgian Presidency in September, the Ministers of the Council agreed on the particular importance of education in combating poverty and inequality. Prerequisites for successful policies, such as early childhood education, commitment by parents and teacher training, were emphasised as imperative when combating poverty.

The Ministers highlighted the need of increased language learning to integrate children with a migrant background as well as the need to support Roma children².

Please find the policy paper following this link:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf

On 14 February 2011 the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council adopted the following initiatives: **The role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy** and **Contribution of education and training to the new European Semester**.

The Council conclusions on **Contribution of education and training to the new European Semester** highlight that more efforts need to be done by Member States to achieve the benchmarks of the EU2020 strategy. However, there are many countries which are implementing education reforms despite the economic recession. In the Council Meeting, several Ministers emphasised that the figures should matter in the development of the education sector, but the human factor and qualitative interventions were also

² Read an additional evaluation on the European Year on combating Poverty and Social exclusion in the coming January Newsletter

extremely important. In this context, the role of teachers and professional development programmes for teachers are essential.

The Council conclusions **on the role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy** invite the Member States to invest efficiently in high quality, modernised education and training. Ministries of Education must more efficiently combat against early school leaving and young unemployment. The paper also highlights the need for increased cooperation between higher education institutions, research institutes and enterprises. The ETUCE stresses that higher education cannot be privatised by this process.

Mobility for Students and Teachers: Youth on the Move

In July 2007 a Green Paper was published by the Commission with the intention to stimulate the discussion on learning mobility for young people. It suggested that a new mobility initiative, open to all young Europeans, should help foster a deepened sense of European identity and citizenship while boosting the circulation of knowledge as a key to Europe's knowledge-based future. As a consequence, in 2007, the Council concluded that mobility in higher education was a key priority of the EU. In 2008, the Council invited the Member States and the European Commission to further develop the concept of mobility for young people, concluding that *"every young person should have the opportunity to take part in some form of mobility, whether this be during their studies or training, in the form of work placement, or in the context of voluntary activities"*.

The Commission Communication

In September 2010, the Commission launched their new flagship initiative, as one of seven under the EU2020 strategy, namely the *"Youth on the Move - An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union"*. This initiative is based on the estimation that an increase from 29% of all jobs today to 35-40% in 2020 will require high-level qualifications, which means that approximately 15 million additional jobs will require such qualifications, combined with the capacity to adapt and innovate in a rapidly changing world.

The communication was divided into four main lines of action, namely: development of education and training systems; modernisation of Higher Education; transnational learning and employment mobility; and youth employment. The Commission would like all young people to have mobility experience by 2020. Therefore, they publish guidelines of relevant European Court of Justice Rulings for students, public authorities and stakeholders on the portability and creation of new recognition of diplomas and access to universities. Additionally, they intend to launch a European Vacancy Monitor.

The Commission encourages the Public Employment Services of the Member States to help young graduates to access the labour market, and suggests that collective bargaining and wage arrangements could help young people (young women) and temporary contract workers to be hired and trained at the workplace. The EU mobility programmes also support the experience of teachers, trainers, researchers and youth workers abroad; therefore establishing and maintaining international networks was a significant step to encourage them to participate in these programmes.

A Youth on the Move Website

AA Youth on the Move website has been set up by the Commission: <http://europa.eu/youthonthemove/> as an extra service for everyone interested in the development of this new flagship of the EU2020 strategy. This website gives access to all information on EU mobility and learning opportunities. The Commission has proposed a **Youth on the Move card** to facilitate mobility. It also initiated a new intra-EU initiative "**Your first EURES Job**", which is supposed to support young people to access employment opportunities and take up a job abroad, as well as encourage employers to create job openings for young mobile workers. The Commission also considers transforming the preparatory action "Erasmus for young entrepreneurs" into a programme to promote entrepreneurs' mobility. A public consultation is open on the Youth on the Move card until 4 June 2011:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/yom_en.html

An ETUCE Statement

In October 2010, the ETUCE published a Statement in response to the Commission Communication on the Youth on the Move-initiative. In general, the ETUCE welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to invite the Member States to support young graduates and unemployed people to enrol in the cross-country labour market. However, the ETUCE believes that the younger pupils and the highest proportion of teachers are excluded from mobility experience. The issue of financing is also a crucial element in the new initiative. It is critical to ensure that education and mobility for all to remain a public responsibility under all circumstances. The ETUCE will continue to monitor the development within this policy field.

Being “green”: Education for Sustainable Development

The new perspective on Education for Sustainable Development is a continuation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, adopted by the Council in 2006. This strategy provides a framework for a long-term vision of sustainability within economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection. It highlights the key role of education as a prerequisite for promoting the behavioural changes, providing all citizens with the key competences needed to achieve sustainable development. Such a development is also in accordance with the EU 2020 strategy which seeks to prepare for the many socioeconomic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges facing Europe and its citizens in the years ahead. Some of the major issues are specifically outlined in the Sustainable Development Strategy:

- Climate change and clean energy
- Sustainable transport
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Conservation and management of natural resources
- Public health
- Social inclusion, demography and migration
- Global poverty

The Council conclusions

According to the Education Council, all European citizens should be equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to understand and deal with the challenges and complexities of life, while realising their responsibility for the environmental, social, cultural and economic implications. Education for sustainable development (ESD) in a lifelong learning perspective is therefore needed at all levels of formal education and training, as well as in non-formal and informal learning.

Furthermore, the Council emphasises that ESD should be an underlying principle in all education and should be built on value-based and interdisciplinary learning, developing new knowledge, skills and attitudes, emphasising creative thinking, innovation and long-term perspective. Following the Conclusion, the ESD could also play a role when the competences necessary for the future employability are developed, and thus have a link to the Labour market development.

ESD and Teacher Education and In-Service Training

As teachers and trainers at all education and training levels will face a variety of specific pedagogical challenges in teaching transversal subjects such as ESD, the Council highlights that teachers in particular should be given a crucial role in shaping the perspective on ESD. They therefore encourage the Member States to equip teachers, trainers, school staff and school leaders with the tools, knowledge and competences required to promote and include the principles underlying ESD in their teaching and management. As such the Member States are recommended to raise awareness of the importance of ESD among teachers, trainers and school leaders at all levels of education and training. Furthermore a multi- and inter-disciplinary cooperation, networking and exchanging of new ideas, including on-line networking should be encouraged. Greater cooperation with the local community and all other relevant stakeholders should be facilitated to ensure a broad approach to the complex theme.

ESD from the perspective of the ETUCE

The ETUCE agrees with the Council perspective according to which education plays an important role in preparing individuals to make appropriate choices for sustainable development. The ETUCE furthermore welcomes that ESD is approached with a lifelong learning perspective touching upon all levels and forms of education and training. However, in its Statement the ETUCE expresses concern that principles such as tolerance, diversity and peace are not referred to in the Council Conclusions. The ETUCE strongly supports that the Council is willing to equip teachers, trainers and schools leaders with tools, learning materials and online networking facilities, but reminds the Council that “green schools” require sustainable financing schemes, as education is the smartest investment in sustainable development.

The future Lifelong Learning Programmes, 2013-2020

In November 2010, the European Commission opened a public consultation on the future Lifelong Learning Programmes (LLP), 2013-2020. As part of the public consultation, an event was organised by the European Commission DG EAC, the European Civil Society Platform on LLL and the European Youth Forum. The *European Stakeholders’ Forum on EU Cooperation in Education and Training, Youth and International*

Cooperation aimed at exchanging views among the most relevant stakeholders on the LLP and to provide feedback to the European Commission.

The participants drew up recommendations for a future LLL Programme, which were presented to the European Commission representatives. The ETUCE contributed to two of the consultations. Short-term mobility for teachers is essential for their personal and professional development. The participants of the stakeholders' forum agreed that a holistic approach to education is needed to further develop lifelong learning. The current programmes are perceived as very individual learning paths, and are not sufficiently supporting the development of teachers, technology and stakeholder involvement. Quality in education should thus not only be focused on the scope of the single student and labour market needs, but be measured through a broader embracement of skills, social cohesion and also informal and non-formal learning.

The need for wider mobility and networking opportunities for staff in the education sector were also emphasised, and the forum pointed to a consistent lack of programmes on language learning ever since the Socrates Programme ceased to exist in 2007. In addition, advanced considerations on the future Youth in Action programme resulted in recommendations for long-term funding, inclusion of the whole European youth and management simplification.

Public Consultation on the Lifelong Learning Programme

In the continuation of the stakeholders' forum and as a response to the public consultation on the configuration on the Lifelong Learning Programme 2014-2020, ETUCE published two statements responding to the new visions and the problems of the new LLP. We highlighted the need for more investment in education mobility opportunities, which should be accessed by all students and teachers. The ETUCE is of the opinion that it is a shame to wait until university to be able to gain experience abroad through an Erasmus programme.

The ETUCE believes that unless the difficulties of teachers' mobility are resolved, the future LLL Programmes will not fulfil their purpose. As regards the provision of qualified teacher replacement, this requires in particular ensuring a sound financial basis and portability of pension and security rights, recognising periods of experience abroad, maintaining a balanced teacher force, and proper support of teachers by the employers of both sending and hosting countries.

The ETUCE Statement on the *Public Consultations on the future Lifelong Learning Programme* is available at the website:

[http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_11/ETUCE_Statement -
Public Consultations on LLL post 2013.eng.pdf](http://etuce.homestead.com/Statements/2010/2010_11/ETUCE_Statement_-_Public_Consultations_on_LLL_post_2013.eng.pdf)

Reports on the Open Method of Coordination Working Groups

In the framework of the EU2020 Process, the European Commission opened possibility for representatives of Ministries of Education and other relevant social partners, like the ETUCE to discuss on education policy

development within the working groups. The new working groups will draw up clear political recommendations within a shorter period (6-24 months).

'Assessment of Key Competences' Thematic Working Group

The Commission Thematic Working Group on the 'Assessment of Key Competences' met on 7 October 2010. The meeting was attended by the ETUCE representative, Birgitte Birkvad, several Member States and representatives from Eurydice, CEDEFOP and OECD.

The participants to the working group discussed the overall experiences and expectations in relation to assessment practices, trying to map out challenges and priorities for the future work. The group presented a broad overview on assessment practices and problems. They emphasised a request to broaden summative assessment with the aim to cover better the key competences and facilitate the transitions between different levels of education. In relation to formative assessment, the working group agreed that attention should be paid to both national level and school level competences, cross curricular competences, including social and civic competences, entrepreneurship and creativity.

The group will discuss further the actual attainment of key competences, the opportunities for a better use of research findings and collected data aimed at improving teaching and learning. The ETUCE representative explained to the working group that teachers welcome the idea of the key competences, but insist that implementation of reforms should involve and commit teachers to a higher extent.

'Professional Development of Teachers' Thematic Working Group meetings

The working group meetings on 29-30 November 2010 and on 17-18 February were attended by Hans Laugesen and Agnes Roman, as ETUCE representatives. In relation to the policy challenges decided by the Ministers of education, the working group will deal with the following topics: Recruitment and selection of teachers; Teacher competences, values, attitudes; Teacher educators; Initial educators; Continuous Professional Development, Mentoring. A *Handbook on Induction phase of new teachers* had already been published by the European Commission in 2010, and was followed by activities on School leadership and on Teacher education systems.

The Handbook is available via the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc2254_en.htm

The first meeting also focused on the assessment systems. In many countries, it remains a challenge to adapt their final exam system to the requirements not only on traditional competences but on all key competences. A continuous assessment system should be a dialogue with students to enable them to learn from the process and not just add to the administrative workload of teachers. In some countries the outcome for students of an assessment system is diminished because the assessment is also used to measure whether the teacher is achieving the goals and uses the result to influence teacher's salary or further career. The debate showed that teaching meaningful assessment systems in teacher's education should be given priority.

The most significant discussion of the 2nd meeting grew from a presentation on the Teaching Council in Ireland, by Aine Lawlor. Ireland established the Teaching Council in 2005. The regulatory role of the Teaching Council is registration of teachers based on qualification, advocacy on teaching, review of the Accreditation of Programmes of Teacher Education. The council promotes teaching with meetings, seminars, conferences, newsletters, websites, surveys, corporate events, media relations and keeps up the Codes of Professional Conduct. The Codes of professional conducts includes the Code of Conduct on ethical standards, discretion judgment, decision making, dealing with complexity and the Code of Conduct on values (collegiality), professional practice (teachers and other actors). The presentation generated a discussion on recognition of professional qualification of teachers, and the special roles of teachers among other professions.

'Modernisation of Higher Education' Thematic Working Group

The meeting in October on brainstorming the development of higher education was attended by Jens Vraa-Jensen as an ETUCE representative. The recent economic and financial crises generated significant problems in the higher education sector. The plan of the government in the United Kingdom is to increase the tuition fees and introduce wider access to study loan. The human and social science faculties have to combat with major budget cuts. Croatia recently introduced tuition fees at the universities, and changed the juridical status of faculties, which used to have greater autonomy. The Netherlands also cut the budget of the universities and provide fewer grants. The German universities started to upgrade the status of teaching with the support of the governments and a so-called Academy of Teaching and Learning was established.

The work of the group was focusing on the new Commission Communication on Modernising the Higher Education Sector. The Communication will try to encourage the member states to update their policies on higher education as the last Communication on this issue from 2006 cannot be followed anymore.

Calls for Public Consultation

The European Commission opened new discussions on different EU policies following the debate on Modernisation of Higher Education, Professional Qualification Directive and Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning.

The ETUCE hereby asks its Member Organisations to participate in the following public consultations by filling in the online questionnaires:

- ✓ Consultation on **Youth on the Move Card** is open **until 3 June 2011**. Individuals and organisations can express their opinion on a future EU-level student card, which may merge all existing student cards. The purpose of the card would be to encourage young people to participate in events, study programmes abroad. The online survey is available in the following website:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_en.html
- ✓ Consultation on the **Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding**: http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfr/index_en.cfm. The deadline for contributions is **20 May 2011**.
- ✓ The European Commission launched a public consultation on the **Future Strategy of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)**. The ETUCE would like to invite EU member organisations to reply to the online questionnaire **prior to 30 June 2011**:
<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=OPCEITSIA>.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology was set up to enhance cooperation between business and higher education & research. As far as ETUCE is concerned, this Institute follows a strategy, which ignores the academic freedom of universities and follows market principles in the university governance. It also encourages to limit the scope of university research by strong business-related approach and to focus it exclusively on natural science and technology.

Dates to remember

19-20 May 2011	Education Council meeting: Quality and Access to Early Childhood Education and Care and National Headline Targets on Early School Leaving
25-26 May 2011	Conference of the Hungarian Presidency on the European Qualifications Framework, Budapest
1 July 2011	Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union
22-26 July 2011	Education International 6 th World Congress, Cape Town
28-29 September 2011	Conference of the Polish Presidency on Multilingualism

- September 2011* Recommendation on the Promotion and Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning
- September 2011* Communication on Modernisation of Higher Education