



ETUCE Circular 1/2014

Information concerning the Education & Training 2020 strategic framework

European Union education policy

- **Spending on education is an investment: progress in countries in 2013**
- **National reforms on education and training in the light of EU policy**
- **Priorities of the Greek Presidency in education and training**
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- ***ICT and education (incl. IPTS report)***
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- ***Professional development of VET trainers***
- ***Early School Leaving***

Recommended readings

Dates to remember

European Union education policy

Spending on education is an investment: progress in countries in 2013

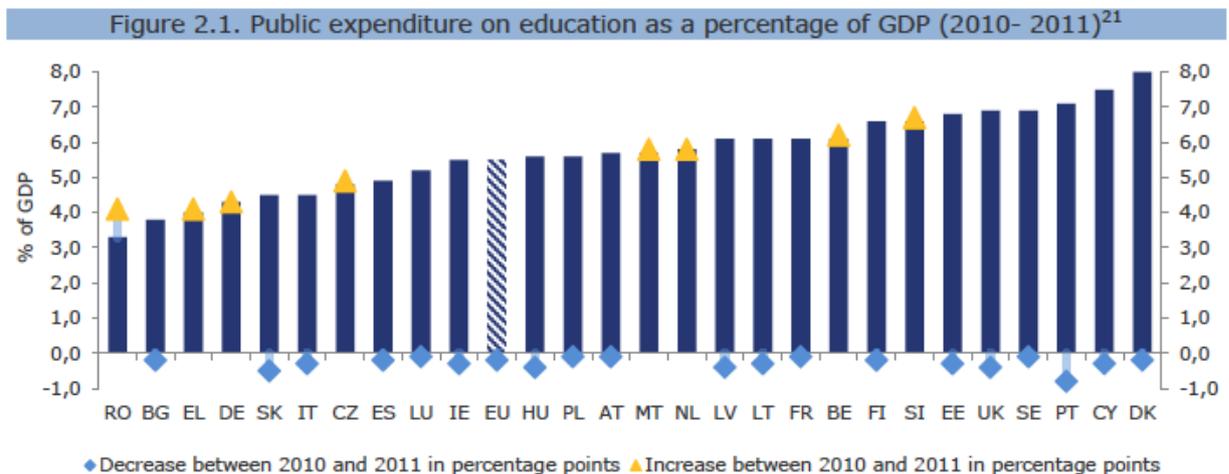
The European Commission published its [Education and Training Monitor 2013](#) on 30 October 2013. It is an annual report that provides a picture of each country's progress in relation to specific benchmarks and indicators, and highlights the latest policy developments and analysis. Furthermore, it is accompanied by 28 individual country¹ reports and an online visualisation tool². The online tool enables to evaluate the performance and progress of member states in relation to the Europe 2020 respectively Education and Training 2020 targets.

The monitor focuses on the following 5 areas:

- Investing in skills and qualifications
- Tackling early school leaving and raising the bar in school education
- Emphasising effectiveness and quality in the modernisation of higher education
- Facilitating the transition from education to work through vocational education and training
- Upgrading skills through lifelong learning

Investing in skills and qualifications

The monitor highlights that spending on education is an investment, not a cost. It points out that underinvestment in human capital risk undermining Europe's prospect for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth in the future. However, the data from the member states shows that investments decreased in 16 member states between 2008 and 2011. In addition, the education budgets continued to decline by more than 5% (2011-2012) in six of the above mentioned 16 member states.



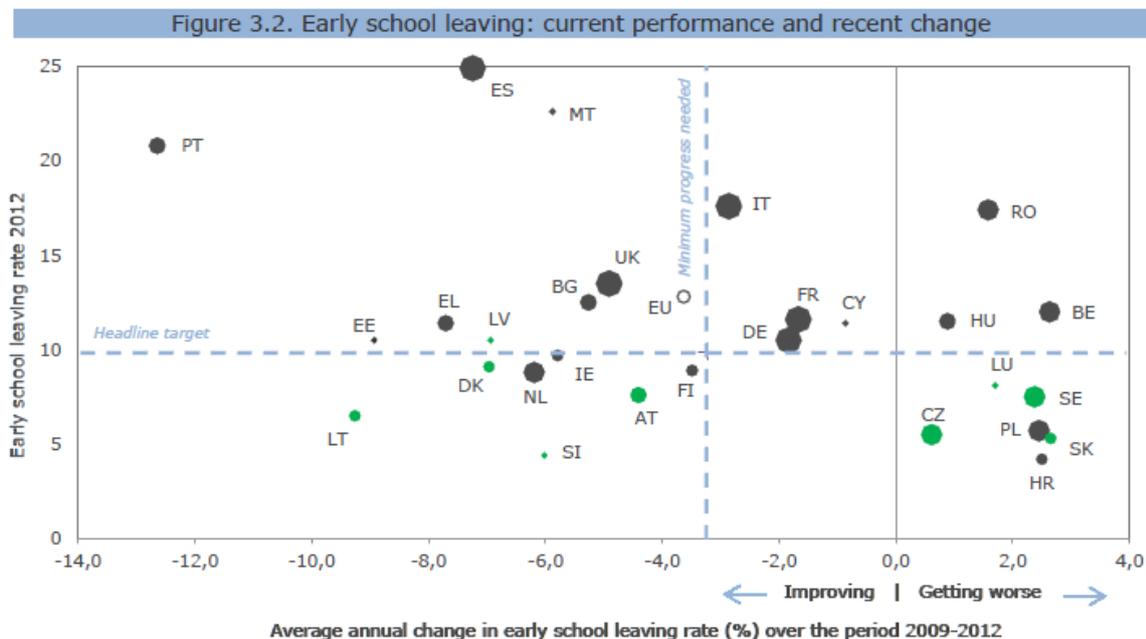
Source: Eurostat (Government finance statistics; online data code: gov_a_exp). Notes: No comparable data for HR. Countries are ranked in ascending order according to public expenditure on education in % of GDP in 2010.

¹ Currently, the link is not available due to the reorganisation of the European Commission webpage. It will shortly be available by google search.

² Currently, the link is not available due to the reorganisation of the European Commission webpage. It will shortly be available by google search.

Tackling early school leaving and raising the bar in school education

The monitor takes stock of the rate of early school leaving, which is one of the Europe 2020 headline targets. The EU average rate of early school leavers was 12.7% in 2012. This is a decrease of 0.7% compared to 2011. However, the decline was mainly a result of progress in some bigger member states and it hides negative trends of increasing early school leaving in a number of other countries.



Source: JRC-CRELL and DG EAC calculations based on Eurostat (LFS) data. Member States having already achieved their national targets are marked in green. Countries are shown according to their 18-24 cohort size, with five categories. Further notes: the average annual change rate is artificial for countries with a break in series, i.e. NL (2010) and LV (2011).

The gender pattern of early school leaving remains. Boys are at a considerably higher risk of leaving school before finishing upper secondary education than girls. The EU average is 14.4% for boys and 10.9% for girls. Early school leaving is more than twice as high among foreign-born children than the native-born children, even if the difference is decreasing. It is crucial to achieve substantial decline in early school leaving for the migrant children. A [recent study](#) pointed out that inclusive education systems are better equipped to integrate migrant children successfully.

The benefits of early childhood education are highlighted as a measure to prevent early school leaving. The EU average participation in early childhood education is high (93.2%), but there is a need to improve the quality of the sector. Furthermore, the evidence-base must be strengthened for the quality of early childhood education and the criteria that makes early childhood education a strong start for individuals.

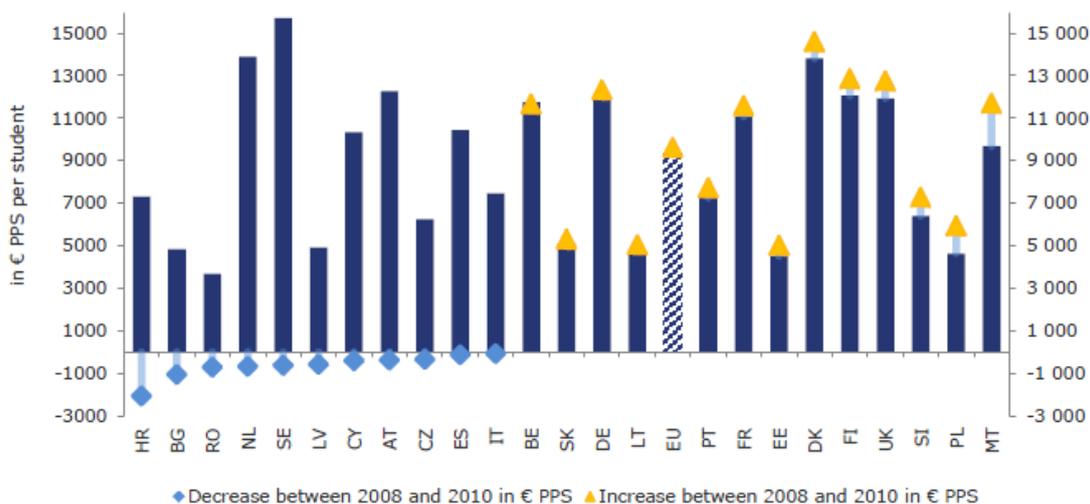
The indispensable role of teaching staff is highlighted not only in relation to the learning outcomes of students, but also in intervention measures to prevent early school leaving. In particular, it is emphasised that member states need to establish and reinforce mechanisms both to attract, select and recruit the best candidates as well as to provide them with the best education and assure that they are supported in their professional development throughout their careers. This issue is all the more urgent when taking into account the EU's demographic changes and the simultaneous trend of relatively low status of the teaching profession and a declining number of applicants for teacher education.

Emphasising effectiveness and quality in the modernisation of higher education

While the tertiary education attainment approaches the 40% benchmark with an EU average of 35.7% more attention is needed to increase completing rates, which for many member states is below 70%. A [recent report](#) shows that lack of individual resources is the most significant factor for dropout. Social economic background is dominating all other factors affecting dropout including gender and ethnicity.

The spending trends on higher education have showed a largely uneven picture in the EU. On average the EU expenditure has remained stable, however cuts have been made in 11 countries. In particular, it is worrying that 6 of those countries implementing cuts spend below the level of EU spending. In addition, changes have happened in the division of public-private spending. A number of member states have shifted towards a larger share of private spending. Such a trend is particular strong in the UK and a number of Eastern European countries.

Figure 4.5. Expenditure per student on tertiary education institutions in € PPS (2008-2010)

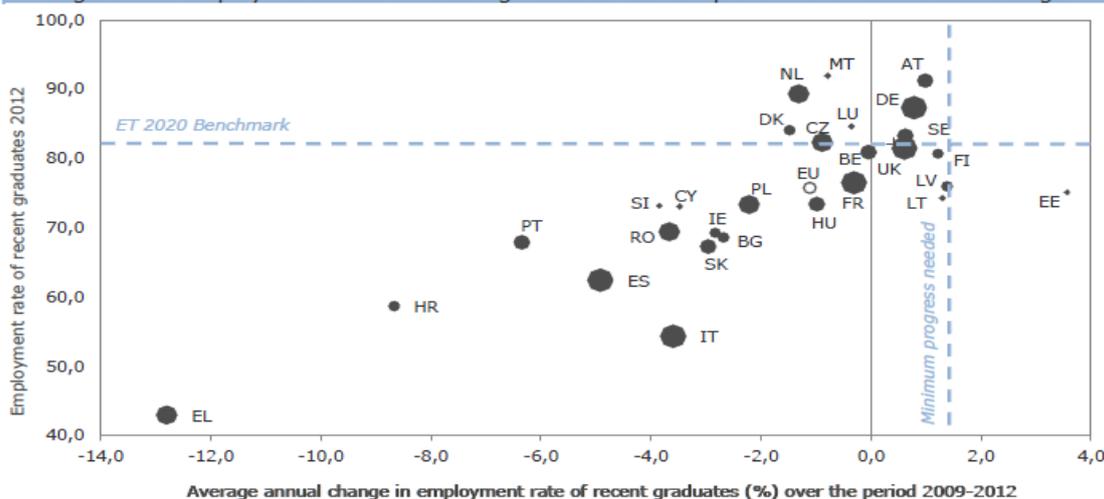


Source: Eurostat (UOE). Online data code: *educ_fitotn*. The expenditure includes public and private expenditure on both public and private tertiary education institutions. Countries are ranked in ascending order according to development between 2008 and 2010.

Facilitating the transition from education to work through vocational education and training

The employment rate of recent graduates with a least upper secondary education stands at 75.7%, which is a decline of 6.3% since 2008. In addition, 21% of people with tertiary qualifications are active in jobs that are below their qualifications. Evidence shows that students from vocational education and training programmes experience a more straightforward transition from education to work in the member states with developed work-based learning.

Figure 5.3. Employment rates of recent graduates: current performance and recent change



Source: Eurostat (LFS online data code *edat_lfse_24*). Note: Countries are shown according to their 20-34 cohort size, with five categories.

A benchmark on the employability of graduates from education and training was adopted by the Council in 2012. The target is that by 2020 82% of young European aged 20-34 graduating within the last three years are in employment.

Upgrading skills through lifelong learning

Based on the results of the PIAAC survey (mentioned above), there is evidently the need for lifelong learning. Adult participation is most prevalent among the young and highly educated.

National reforms on education and training in the light of EU policy

Eurydice published its report [Education and Training in Europe 2020 – Responses from the EU Member States](#) on 12 December 2013. The report is a complement to the analysis of the Education and Training Monitor (mentioned above). In addition to the report, there is a [national examples document](#).

The report focuses on recent and forthcoming national reforms undertaken since 2011 across four thematic areas that have a direct relevance to the Europe 2020 strategy:

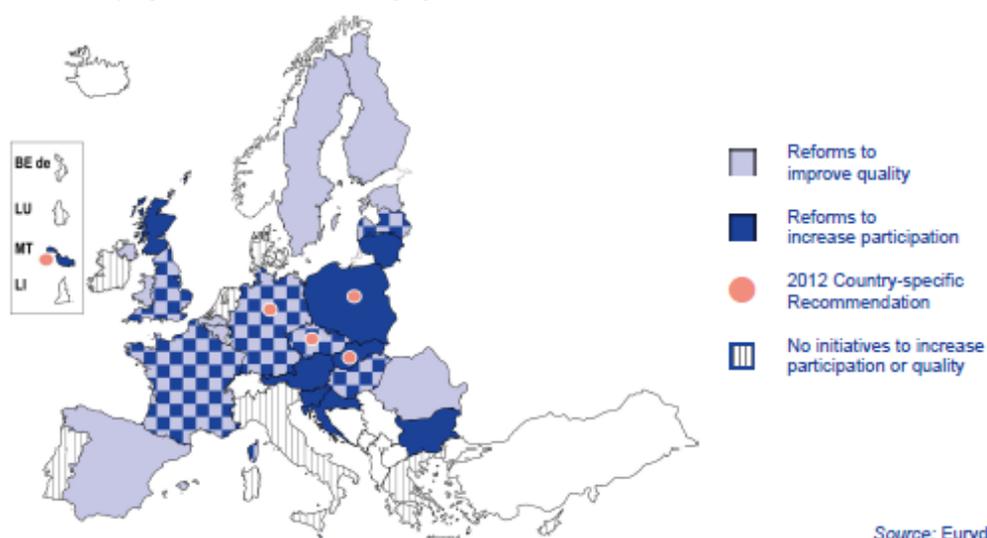
- Early school leaving (ESL)
- Higher education
- Youth employment and vocational education and training (VET)
- Lifelong learning

Early school leaving (ESL)

Most of the national reforms focus on prevention measures. 2/3 of the member states have recently or will initiate plans to facilitate access to early childhood education and improve its quality. Recent reforms include, among others, expanding provision and supporting children's attendance by statutory means and/or by providing financial assistance. Another set of preventive measures focuses on policies to support disadvantaged pupils such as language training for migrant children, strategies for better integration of Roma children, additional resources to schools with a high share of disadvantaged pupils and strengthening remedial measures.

Much attention has been directed towards the VET sector and in half of the countries reforms of the VET sector have taken place. The measures focus in particular on how to make the VET programmes more attractive by improving guidance, diversifying the range of qualifications by modularising courses, or facilitating the transfer to higher education. On the intervention level the main area of policies focus on career guidance.

Figure 1.2: Large-scale initiatives to increase participation or improve quality in early childhood education and care in EU-28, implemented since 2011 or in preparation



Explanatory note

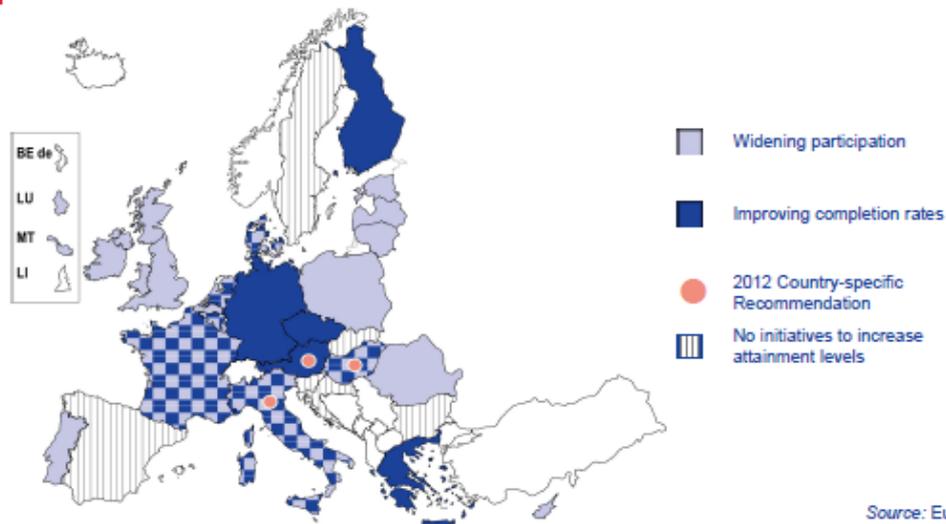
'Large-scale initiatives' refers to measures that are applied across the whole education system and which have been launched since 2011, or are in an advanced stage of development prior to implementation.

Higher education

In the area of higher education, one of the main areas of reforms aim to widen participation in higher education by providing support to disadvantaged students, improving the access routes to higher education and reforming

systems of students support. In half of the countries the introduced measures concentrate on improving completion rates through strengthened career guidance or the provision of financial incentives for timely completion of studies.

Figure 2.2: Large-scale initiatives to increase higher education attainment levels in the EU-28, implemented since 2011, or in preparation



Explanatory note

'Large-scale initiatives' refers to measures that are applied across the whole education system and which have been launched since 2011, or are in an advanced stage of development prior to implementation.

High priority is given to the improvement of quality and relevance of higher education with 2/3 of the countries taking action in this area. In the area of quality assurance there is a trend towards establishing a single quality assurance and accreditation body.

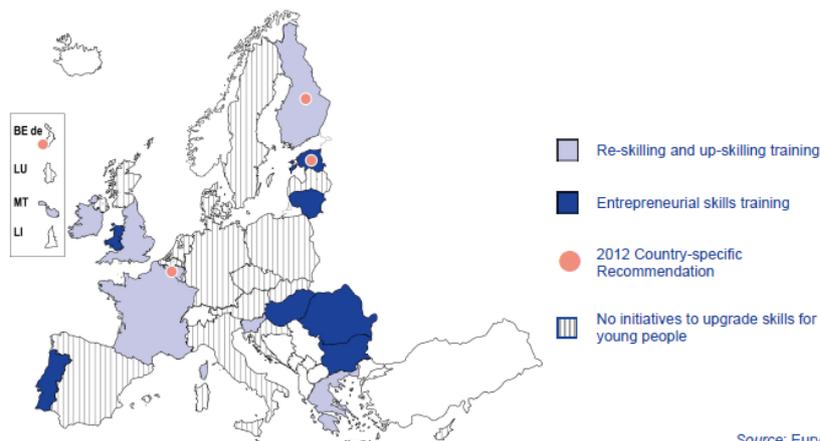
Youth employment and vocational education and training (VET)

Youth Guarantee schemes entailing the offer of a job, good-quality apprenticeship or a traineeship or continued education are under preparation in the member states. 2/3 of countries report policy measures aiming at improving school-to-work work transition by further developing work experience opportunities, most in the VET sector. The majority of the measures concentrate on implementing a dual system model and introducing more work-based learning and apprenticeships.

A number of measures have been introduced to strengthen the links between education and training and the labour market. In particular, these measures emphasise the importance of involving the social partners in curricula development in VET.

In addition, 2/3 of the member states are introducing initiatives that can help young people to upgrade their skills. The target group is mostly unemployed or early school leavers. The content concerns in particular the sectors with labour market potential or shortages, but also entrepreneurship skills.

Figure 3.3: Large-scale initiatives to upgrade skills for young people in the EU-28, implemented since 2011 or in preparation



Source: Eurydice.

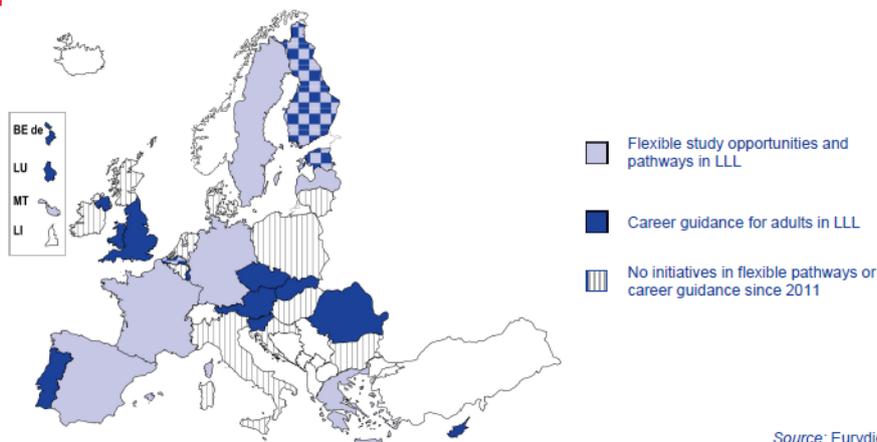
Explanatory note

'Large-scale initiatives' refers to measures that are applied across the whole education system and which have been launched since 2011, or are in an advanced stage of development prior to implementation.

Lifelong learning

Adult participation in adult learning in lifelong learning is far from reaching the 15% benchmark of the Education and Training 2020 target. Initiatives in this field include improvement of career guidance, awareness raising, offering more flexible study opportunities and pathways, emphasis on low-skilled/low qualified groups and financial incentives for participation in LLL.

Figure 4.2: Large-scale initiatives to develop flexible study opportunities and pathways or career guidance for adults, implemented since 2011, or currently in preparation, EU-28



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

'Large-scale initiatives' refers to measures that are applied across the whole education system and which have been launched since 2011, or are in an advanced stage of development prior to implementation.

In addition, validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning has been recognised as one tool to motivate adults to engage in further learning.

Priorities of the Greek Presidency in education and training



On 1 January 2014, Greece took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The key priorities of the Greek presidency on education are high quality, efficient and equitable education and training systems to enhance employability in Europe.

Two Council meetings will take place for Education Ministers during the Greek Presidency. On 24 February 2014, the Ministers will adopt Council Conclusions on *Efficient and Innovative Education and Training to Invest in Skills*. At the Council meeting on 20-21 May 2014, the Ministers will adopt Council conclusions on *Quality Assurance at all levels of Education and Training* and Council Conclusions on *Quality Teachers' Education*. These Council Conclusions will highlight the need for high quality teaching through the provision of adequate initial education and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers and by making teaching an attractive career choice. At the same Council meeting, the European benchmark in the field of language learning will be discussed.

The Greek Presidency will end its term on 1 July 2014, when the Italian Presidency will follow.

Further information on the Presidency is available [here](#).

The six-month Programme of the Presidency can be found [here](#).

Opening up Education towards more technical innovation

European Commission Communication

The European Commission published its [Communication on "Opening up Education"](#) accompanied by a [Commission staff working document entitled "Analysis and mapping of innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources in Europe"](#) on 25 September 2013.

The aim of the Communication is to set out a European agenda for encouraging high-quality, innovative ways of learning and teaching through new technologies and digital content.

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

- Support innovative teaching and learning environments through the use of structural and investment funds
- Ensure recognition and validation of new forms of learning
- Support teachers in obtaining a high level digital competences and adopt innovative teaching practices, including revising curricula for teachers' initial education and new professional evaluation mechanisms
- Encourage formal education and training institutions to include digital content
- Encourage the production of high-quality educational materials
- Connect every school to broadband, upgrade ICT equipment and develop national digital repositories via using structural and investment funds by 2020

ETUCE statement

An ETUCE statement was adopted by the ETUCE Bureau on 19 December 2013. ETUCE welcomes the European Commission's proposal for innovative ways of learning and teaching through new technologies and digital content.

However, a number of critical issues need to be addressed. The key concern of ETUCE is that the initiative can be another step in the direction of disaggregating and privatising education. In particular, there is a lack of information on who the proposed “new education providers” are supposed to be. It implies, nevertheless, to the reduction of teachers as well as of schools in a digital revolution in education. In addition, the use of digital application should not be considered as a goal in itself but in its function of adding value in teaching and 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 declaration³ was initiated by the cross-sectoral social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UAEPME, CEEP), and signed by them and the Lithuanian presidency. The joint declaration was endorsed as a [Council Declaration](#) by the Employment Council on 15 October 2013.

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 to secure good links between VET, the labour market and the wider education system is essential.

The Council Declaration consists of 9 key messages highlighting that high-quality apprenticeship schemes can make a positive contribution to combating youth unemployment by fostering skills acquisition and securing smooth and sustainable transitions from the education and training system to the labour market. The effectiveness and attractiveness of apprenticeship schemes should be encouraged by their adherence to several common guiding principles where appropriate and according to national circumstances.

Member states will undertake VET system reforms, in cooperation with social partners and other relevant stakeholders, by introducing an apprenticeship pathway or improving existing schemes in order to increase the number, quality and attractiveness of apprenticeships.

Other organisations can also join the alliance by filling in a pledge via: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/alliance_en.htm. ETUCE encourages its Member Organisations to sign national pledges individually or in cooperation with other trade unions. An [ETUCE pledge](#) for the European Alliance for Apprenticeship was approved by ETUCE Bureau in September 2013. ETUCE and its member organisations will continue to promote the following among VET teachers and trainers via publications, meetings and seminars:

- 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;

The next ETUCE seminar on Quality Assurance in VET and apprenticeship will take place on 7-9 April 2014.

OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey on Adult Skills (PIAAC)

The OECD published the first results of the [Survey of Adult Skills](#) as part of the **Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)** on 8 October 2013. The survey evaluates the skills of adults in 24

³ Currently, the link is not available due to the reorganisation of the European Commission webpage. It will shortly be available by google search.

countries including 17 EU member states. It offers insights into the availability of some of the key skills and how they are used at work and at home. A major component is the direct assessment of key information-processing skills: **literacy, numeracy and problem solving** in the context of technology-rich environments.

The objective of the survey is to assist countries to better understand how education and training systems can promote these skills. A [data visualisation tool](#) is offered, where it is possible to compare countries on the following elements: overall performance, age, education, occupation and migrant status.



Main findings

The results show that socio-demographic characteristics are linked to skills proficiency. In particular, it shows that in the case of poor initial education combined with the lack of opportunities to further improve proficiency a 'low skills trap' evolves where poor proficiency leads to fewer opportunities to further develop proficiency and vice versa. The results showed that one in five adult in the participating EU countries have low literacy, almost one in four scored low on numeracy skills and one in four lacks the skills to effectively use ICT for problem solving. In order to tackle such a vicious circle it is critical to invest in high-quality early childhood education and initial schooling, especially for children of disadvantaged backgrounds.

Another aspect concerns the evolution of skills throughout life. It shows that older adults generally have lower proficiency than their younger counterparts, though the scope of the difference between generations varies considerable among countries. This fact suggests that policy may play a significant role in diminishing the otherwise negative link between key information-processing skills and age. Particularly, it shows a connection between proficiency and the amount and quality of the opportunities to develop and maintain proficiency over a lifetime, most although not exclusively through formal education and training. In addition, it shows a clear relationship between the amount of participation in organised adult learning activities and average proficiency.

In addition, the survey demonstrates the crucial importance of education for social well-being and political participation in society. Consequently, in all the countries participating in the survey individuals scoring a lower level of proficiency in literacy are more likely to report poor health and perceive themselves as objects rather than actors in the political processes. In most countries, individuals with lower proficiency are similarly more likely to have lower level of trust in others.

The way forward

The General Secretary of the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, John Evans, welcomed the results of the survey calling it a wake-up call on the need to make lifelong learning far more a reality for workers. Especially, the finding shows that governments and employers in many countries have failed to invest sufficiently in workforce development.

This involves barriers to continuous vocational training as well as problematic human resource policies, work structures and processes that fall short of making full use of skills and competences acquired by workers. In addition, low-cost and low-skills strategies, which are pursued by businesses is an important element to tackle. The social partners have an important role to play in improving the rate of participation in lifelong learning and help workers overcome barriers to continuous learning. Through partnerships the social partners can be a driving force in the continuous development of workers.

PISA 2012 results



The OECD published the results of the [PISA 2012](#) (The Programme for International Student Assessment) report on 3 December 2013. It assessed the competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science with a focus on mathematics in 65 countries. Around 500.000 students participated. The key results is summarised in [PISA 2012 Results in Focus](#). Additionally, there is a [Compare your country – PISA 2012 tool](#).

Main findings

Generally the top rankings are dominated by East-Asian countries. The results show a strong socio-economic impact on student performance. The difference in math score points between the upper 25% and the bottom 25% on the socio-economic index is more than 100 in Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, France, Czech Republic and Germany. This difference between the upper 25% and the bottom 25% amounts to more than three years of schooling. 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 PISA results demonstrated that the quality declined in many European countries. The EU underachieves in relation to the Education and Training 2020 benchmarks. However, behind the EU average there is a big variation among the EU member states. PISA focuses on mathematics, reading and science as the three areas of basic skill:

- 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). Low achiever students in math increased compared to 2009 in Greece, Hungary and Slovakia and Sweden.
- In **reading** the percentage of low achievers has declined from 23.1% (2006) to 17.8%. So far, only Estonia, Ireland, Poland, Finland, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have reached the EU benchmark of achieving less than 15% low achievers. In Slovakia, Sweden and Finland the proportions of low achievers went up to a significant degree compared to their 2009 level.
- In **science** there is a trend towards improvement. The percentage of low achievers has dropped from 20.3% in 2006 to 16.6% in 2012. However, the situation worsened in Sweden, Portugal, Hungary and in particular Slovakia.

The **gender differences** remain: in math, boys perform better than girls, in science it is a mixed picture and in reading girls perform better than boys. 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, girls showed 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.

In almost all member states **migrant students** are underperforming compared to non-migrants students. Second generation students generally perform better than first generation students. The difference between first-generation migrants and their non-immigrant counterparts is significant in several member states, in particular in Finland, Denmark, France, Slovenia, Sweden and Greece, where the gap is between 25 and 40%. The result showed that an overlapping determinant is socio-economic status. The disadvantage for migrant students is at least 30% smaller when adjusting for socio-economic status.

The PISA results also reconfirmed the crucial importance of quality early childhood education. In particular, it showed that more than one year participation in early childhood education vastly increases average math scores.

Conditions for learning abroad

Eurydice published its report [Towards a Mobility Scoreboard: Conditions for Learning Abroad in Europe](#) on 10 January 2014. The report defines indicators which reflect the objectives of the EU Council Recommendation on promoting the learning mobility of young people, adopted in 2011. The next update is planned for 2015.

The Mobility Scoreboard focuses on five key factors that influence young people's motivation and ability to study or train abroad. It consists of the following scoreboard indicators:

- Information and guidance on learning mobility
- Preparation of opportunities for learning mobility – foreign language skills
- Portability of public grants and publicly-subsidised loans
- Recognition of learning outcomes
- Mobility support provided to students with low socio-economic background

It reveals that these factors vary significantly between Member States – and that no single country scores highly on all measures of their "mobility environment".

Reports on the referencing of national qualifications frameworks to the European Qualification Framework

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) provides a common reference framework, which assists in comparing the national qualifications systems, frameworks and their levels. It serves as a

translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe.

In order to make the EQF work, European countries participating in Education and Training 2020 are invited to relate their national qualifications levels to the appropriate levels of the EQF and to indicate the relevant EQF level in all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents. Thirteen national referencing reports were published in the [European Qualification Framework portal](#). In "[Compare Qualifications Frameworks](#)" page, it is possible to compare how national qualifications levels are been linked to the EQF in the nine countries that have already finalised their referencing process.

Report from the European Commission's Thematic Working Groups

Digital learning materials and competences

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 organised a peer review in Hague on 16-18 September 2013. ETUCE was represented by Guus Wijngaards (AoB, the Netherlands).

The main topic for discussion was the status quo and future plans on digital learning materials, open education resources (OER) and Learning Analytics in the member states and how these relate to the European Commission's initiative *Opening up Education* (see above).

The outcomes of the study on future scenarios for open education in 2030 was presented. The main objective of the OEREU project is to provide empirical evidence to policy makers with the aim of guiding policies in the field of Open Education. A number of reports were published recently like the [final report on DIGCOMP](#): A Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competences in Europe.

The report focuses on the following 5 areas of digital competence:

1. Information: identify, locate, retrieve, store, organise and analyse digital information, judging its relevance and purpose.
2. Communication: communicate in digital environments, share resources through online tools, link with others and collaborate through digital tools, interact with and participate in communities and networks, cross-cultural awareness.
3. Content-creation: Create and edit new content (from word processing to images and video); integrate and re-elaborate previous knowledge and content; produce creative expressions, media outputs and programming; deal with and apply intellectual property rights and licences.
4. Safety: personal protection, data protection, digital identity protection, security measures, safe and sustainable use.
5. Problem-solving: identify digital needs and resources, make informed decisions as to which are the most appropriate digital tools according to the purpose or need, solve conceptual problems through digital means, creatively use technologies, solve technical problems, update one's own and others' competences.

Financing Adult learning

Report from the Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning

The two *Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in adult learning and Financing Adult Learning* of the European Commission organised a joint meeting on 1-2 October 2013. ETUCE was represented by Rossella Benedetti (UiIscuola, Italy).

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the draft final report of both thematic working groups, to suggest possible links or common issues between the two. It was highlighted that Quality Adult education provision is needed. To achieve this more resources should be allocated to research, data collection and policy making.

The final report of Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in Adult Learning is available at http://www.bildung.erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/III_erasmus/dateien/erwachsenenbildung/TWG_QUALITY-AL_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

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 Strasbourg/ Offenburg on 28-30 October 2013. ETUCE was represented by Dan Taubman (UCU, UK).

The aims of the peer-learning event were to improve the understanding of policies and practice that support the quality of training in enterprises through the development and updating of in-company trainers' competences. Special attention was placed on specificities and challenges of competence development in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The peer learning focused on similarities and differences between the German and French VET systems, and included visits to a medium sized employer in Germany and to vocational training centres in Strasbourg and Offenburg.

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 meeting on 19-20 September 2013. ETUCE was represented by Elzbieta Leszczynska (NSzz Solidarnosty, Poland).

The aim of the meeting was to finalise the draft final report of the thematic working group. Some of the key messages of the report are:

- Support schools to develop supportive learning environments focusing on the needs of the individual pupils
- Promote multi-professional teams in school to address early school leaving
- Support schools in their efforts to involve local communities, parents and pupils
- Promote the understanding of early school leaving in initial education and continuous professional development of school staff and especially teachers
- Reinforce accessibility to second chance schemes

- Ensure specialised teacher education and support for the continuous professional development of teachers in second chance education

The Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving is available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf.

Recommended reading

➤ **Keeping young people in (vocational) education: what works?**

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9084_en.pdf

The CEDEFOP Briefing Note addresses the problem of early school leaving and dropout in vocational education and training and points to possible measures to reduce it. Guidance, alternative routes within mainstream VET and individualised support are some examples. The role of vocational teachers and apprenticeship trainers is stressed and the need for appropriate support to the teachers and trainers. School-based VET and apprenticeship schemes should adopt a comprehensive quality approach and include clear performance indicators in cooperation with the social partners.

➤ **The Mentor Handbook - A Practical Guide for VET Teacher Training**

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/MENTORING_HANDBOOK_final_version.pdf

The handbook seeks to provide a general methodology for introducing mentoring as well as approaches to recruiting, supporting and training mentors, systems of mentoring and case studies that exemplify practice. The handbook is aimed at practitioners, VET providers, researchers and policy makers dealing with supporting initial teaching and training in the vocational education and training sector.

➤ **Qualifications frameworks in Europe: forging the right links**

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9083_en.pdf

The CEDEFOP Briefing Note focuses on developments and challenges of qualifications framework in Europe. The European Qualification Framework (EQF) has spurred the promotion of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) based on learning mobility. The main challenges involve the need for integration with other policies such as validation, guidance, curriculum reform and credit transfer arrangements. Involvement of the social partners at all stages is emphasised.

Dates to remember

24 February, 2014	ETUCE Bureau
6-7 March, 2014	HERSC meeting - Brussels
17 March, 2014	Education Advisory Panel
15 April, 2014	Deadline of Public consultation on a "European Area of Skills and Qualifications"
7-9 April, 2014	ETUCE seminar on Quality Assurance in VET
14-15 April, 2014	ETUCE Committee