

ETUCE Circular

2/2014

Information concerning the Education & Training 2020 strategic framework



Have your say on the priorities of the EU on education and training!

A new European Commission will be set up in autumn after the European Parliament elections. The DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, therefore, is renewing its political objectives for the future 5 years (2015-2020).



1. Revision of the EU2020 strategy

What is it about?

[EU2020](#) is an overall strategy of the European Commission and the Council, adopted in 2010 by the Council of Ministers. They adopted headline targets to achieve them in each member states by 2020. The Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester Process (EU's advice to the governments on what areas they should spend their yearly budget) is based on these targets:

1. Employment 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed
2. R&D 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&D
3. Climate change and energy sustainability greenhouse gas emissions 20%,
- 4. Education: Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10% at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education**
5. Fighting poverty and social exclusion at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Concerning the fact that the 4th priority links to education, we ask the ETUCE member organisations to fill in the Public Consultation of the European Commission by October:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/eu2020/consultation_en.htm

ETUCE perspective:

We believe that the strategies set up in 2010 were referring to well-developed economies, societies, labour markets, which have been strongly undermined by the crisis. Therefore, most targets and benchmarks have not been achieved or have been achieved partially.

Targets and benchmarks in the EU2020 strategy should be made coherent with the ones in the ET2020 strategy. Targets on education and training should be stronger and more effective, and related to **investment and financing**, which was affected by enormous budget cuts decided by the Member States in the framework of austerity measures.

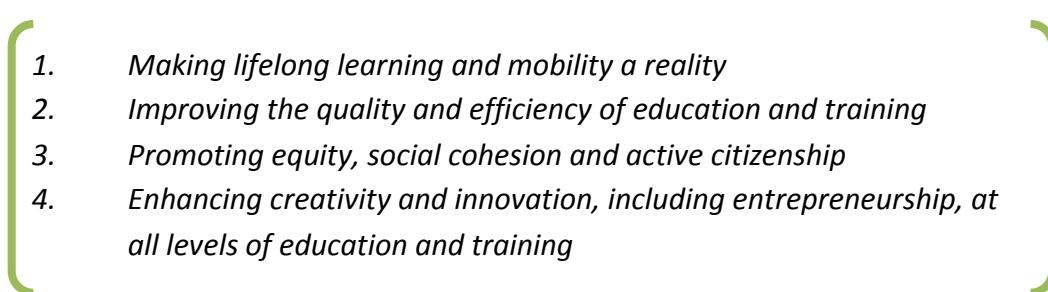
Social partners involvement in setting up and implementing/monitoring the strategies, targets, and benchmarks is a key issue: the lack of involvement can undermine the process. This should be a **transversal priority** to the whole EU2020 strategy.

2. Revision of the ET2020 strategy

What is it about?

[Education and Training 2020 strategic framework](#) was set up in 2009 based on headline targets and benchmarks. 2 of its benchmarks were put into the overall EU2020 strategy in 2010 (higher education attendance, early school leaving). The Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester Process (EU's advice to the governments on what areas they should spend their yearly budget) are based on these targets:

4 strategic objectives:

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- 1. *Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality*
 - 2. *Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training*
 - 3. *Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship*
 - 4. *Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training*

Member States agreed on the following *five benchmarks*:

1. *Adult participation in lifelong learning: By 2020, an average of at least 15 % of adults should participate in lifelong learning*
2. *Low achievers in basic skills: By 2020, the share of low-achieving 15-years olds in reading, mathematics and science (3) should be less than 15 %*
3. *Tertiary level attainment: By 2020, the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment (4) should be at least 40 %*
4. *Early leavers from education and training: By 2020, the share of early leavers from education and training (5) should be less than 10 %.*
5. *Early childhood education: By 2020, at least 95 % of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education*

The European Commission is asking the opinion of social partners on the future priorities on ET2020. Therefore, we would like to ask ETUCE member organisations to fill in the Survey of the European Commission by 5 June: <http://www.ghkint.com/surveys/et2020/>

ETUCE believes that further priorities could be added to the recent ones, for example:

1. *Increase and sustain investment in education and training.*
2. *Increase number of quality educated teachers in all forms and sectors of education. Ensure high quality induction phase and continuous professional development for teachers at all levels and in all sectors of education and training.*
3. *Increase the average of EU population participating in ET paths linked to innovative and transversal skills*
4. *Increase the average of young people participating in apprenticeships and work-based learning schemes*
5. *Increase the average of workers participating in workplace learning and adults participating in CVET and lifelong learning*
6. *Decrease the average of EU working age population with low literacy and low numeracy skills from 20% to 5% (see PIAAC results)*
7. *Decrease the average of EU working age population having low ICT skills from 25% to 5% (see PIAAC results)*



Investing in education and training

The Education Council adopted [Conclusions on Efficient and Innovative Education and Training to Invest in Skills](#) on 24 February 2014.

The objective of the policy paper:

- Much still remains to be done to reverse the impact of the crisis and to tackle underlying structural problems in education and training, which are linked to the lack of relevant skills for the labour market.
- One in five of adult person has low literacy and numeracy skills, which seriously limits their employability. Although forecasts suggest that almost all jobs in the future will require at least basic digital skills, many school pupils still lack access to necessary digital technology and content needed to acquire them. A large number of adults lack digital skills altogether.
- There is an urgent need to address the key challenges of youth unemployment and inadequate skills levels and to facilitate the transition from education and training to work.
- Member States should intensify efforts to improve education and training and continue to invest in efficient, high quality education and training. Member States should have long-term investment in the modernisation of education and training and the development of skills, with emphasis on the efficiency and quality of educational investment, especially to ICT use in education.

The Council Conclusions recommend to the EU Member States to:

1. *"Seek to facilitate investment in education and training as growth-friendly sectors", and make full use of the Erasmus+ Programme and the European Structural and Investment Funds taking into account the education and training aspects of the Europe 2020 country-specific recommendations.*
2. *Support education and training institutions to use new technologies and digital content as a complement to traditional educational approaches.*
3. *Consider teachers as an essential element for educational success, improve teacher training by more use of digital tools.*
4. *Support teachers and school leaders in acquiring a high level of digital skills and adopting innovative teaching practices, for example through flexible training, incentive schemes, and updated curricula for teacher education.*

ETUCE strongly welcomes the focus on investment in education and training from the European Union leaders. However, maintaining and increasing investment in education and training as a recommendation to the member states should have been more underlined in the Council Conclusions. ETUCE regrets that the role of social partners in the process of modernizing education and training was not mentioned in the text.



Adult Learning in EU trade agreements

The controversial **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership** (TTIP) is a comprehensive trade agreement currently being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. Even though education is rarely mentioned by the TTIP negotiators, unfortunately there is not a guarantee that the European education and training systems will not be affected.

Recently it became evident that education is being targeted in the trade deal. The US chief negotiator, Dan Mullaney, said the *US is aiming to expand access of profit-oriented companies of the US to all European service sectors including higher education, adult learning and other education services*. This is contradictory with the message of the European Commission that public services, including education, will not be affected by the trade negotiations.

It is clear that large for-profit companies on education are lobbying heavily to include education into TTIP as they view education as a very profitable sector. The EU has so far denied that primary, secondary and higher education is under discussed in TTIP. However, as the US is very keen to include at least “private adult” and “other education services” in the trade agreements and the EU is not refusing the possibility of negotiating on these.

Adult education is a very broad field. European Commission’s definition on adult learning touches upon all levels of education, as ‘*the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities which are undertaken by adults after a break since leaving initial education and training, and which results in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills*’. According to the [CEDEFOP definition](#) it includes general or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and or personal purposes. This also includes what may be referred to as ‘continuing education’, ‘recurrent education’ or ‘second chance education’. Similarly, “other education services” is a very broad category and include among other things language learning, tutoring and preparatory courses.

The US aims to exclude reservations on market access and national treatment. Full market access would imply that governments would be prohibited from adopting measures, such as quotas or limitations on for-profit providers to restrict their ability to entering “the marketplace”. The national

treatment means that member states would have to extend the same benefits and privileges that domestic education institutions and schools benefit from to foreign providers e.g. US for-profit education companies.

With most education systems in the EU containing a mix of public and private, non-profit and for-profit provision, the line between public and private education is not easily defined. Therefore commitments taken on private education services might also affect public education. This is the reason that [ETUCE demands that education is entirely excluded from the TTIP negotiations](#).

There is a consultation going on between member states (Ministries of Trade /Economics/Finance) and the European Commission (DG Trade) for instance on defining “adult” and “other education services”, liberalisation of these services, and offensive interest of member states on these areas.

ETUCE believes that education and training in general should be excluded from trade negotiations, and adult learning in particular from the TTIP negotiations. We think that Ministries of Education should be also consulted on these issues, and the negotiations should not be under closed doors without the involvement of the trade unions.



Towards a European Area of Skills and Qualifications

The European Commission run a public consultation until 15 April 2014 to create the so-called European Area of Skills and Qualifications. ETUCE encouraged its member organisations in Europe to fill in the questionnaire using a joint ETUCE-ETUC position.

Via this consultation the European Commission hoped to get feedback from citizens about the European level qualification, transparency and recognition tools and instruments, which it has been developing for long time, such as:

Qualification frameworks: [European Qualification Framework \(EQF\)](#), [Qualifications frameworks in the European Higher Education Area \(QH-EHEA\)](#)

Passports: [Europass](#): Europass CV, Europass Mobility, Skills passport, Youthpass, Certificate Supplement, Diploma Supplement, Language Certificate

Credit transfer tools: [European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training \(ECVET\)](#), [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System \(ECTS\)](#)

Recognition tools: [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#), and [ENIC-NARICs](#)

Info centers, networks: [Ploteus Portal](#), [EQF Portal](#), [Euroguidance](#), [European Inventory for](#)

In their [joined position](#) the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and ETUCE supported the public consultation to seek ways to simplify the numerous EU-level qualification, recognition and transparency tools for education and training which have been developed by the European Commission.

We highlighted that facilitating mobility and recognition of education and training not only contributes to skills development and employability, but also promotes the integration or reintegration into work, learning and training. We fully support the efforts of the European Commission to promote education and training mobility, quality assurance and transparency via these tools.

We had the following opinion on setting up the European Area of Skills and Qualifications:

- The crisis has strongly hit the education and training sector at all levels. Therefore, these tools should contribute to the **employment** of the students and job seekers.
- It is still a challenge at the European level discussions to agree on the **main principles** of use of some of the tools and to implement them at national level.
- There are still many obstacles to finding a compromise among the Member States on these tools.
- The continuing difficulties surrounding the tools prove that the **social partners** were not fully involved (or even not at all) in the design and the start of the implementation of the related European policies and instruments (at both EU and national levels). However, primarily social partners are able to build a stronger link between education and the labour market and improve such recognition and transparency.
- There is a lack of national level **social dialogue** on these tools. Most of the National Agencies, National Contact Points, and Departments of the Ministries dealing with these tools do not allow dialogue with the social partners on the tools and instruments.
- We believe that the same national and European Commission **experts** should be members of several groups on the different tools to facilitate transition on the work among these groups.
- The tools should not have been set up to solely serve purposes of **different educational sectors**. Many of these tools should be interlinked. We encouraged the Commission to make urgent changes on the principles and practical approach towards the tools and to try to **serve all sectors on education and training** with them.
- At the same time, it is a challenge to ensure that citizens, mostly the unemployed, make **use of the tools** which are ready to contribute to their employment. At this stage only the Europass instruments (CV, Language certificate, Diploma and Certificate supplement, etc.) are ready to be used by job seekers and graduates, but their dissemination is still not appropriate. The knowledge of these tools among social partners, as well as generally among the citizens, is lacking.

The European Commission is organising a conference on 17 June to present the results of the consultation. Registration is possible via <https://conference-EASQ.teamwork.fr>.



Recent European developments in adult learning

ETUCE is represented in thematic working groups of the European Commission. The Thematic Working Group on Adult Learning of the European Commission organised a meeting on 3 March 2014. ETUCE was represented by Rossella Benedetti (UiScuola, Italy). The following policy developments were discussed:

1. [Key action 3 under Erasmus+ Programme](#) provides opportunity to finance project on adult learning. The priority themes for this call are:

- *assessment of transversal skills in basic and secondary education,*
- *practical entrepreneurial experience at school,*
- *cooperation on innovative methods for fast and smooth academic recognition across borders in higher education,*
- *reducing the number of low-skilled adults,*
- *encouraging the development and internationalisation of young people's volunteering.*

National trade unions can also apply to this call by 2 October 2014.

2. The results of the [survey of OECD \(PIAAC\)](#) should contribute to major developments on adult learning at national levels. The results show that 20% of the European adults have very low numeracy and literacy skills, and 25% of European adults lack the skills to use ICT. More than one in four adults can only solve very simple tasks in ICT environments (14%) or only have very basic or no computer experience (13%). This has a negative effect on their social and economic circumstances and employability.

3. The working group discussed about **teachers' and educational professionals' training** and how to design a durable policy. The group underlined also that there is no concrete definition of adult learning provision either at European or at national level. This causes problems concerning the trade negotiations of the EU with the US, mentioned in.

4. The European Commission is currently setting up the [Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe \(EPALE\)](#), which targets adult education stakeholders (providers, teachers, trainers, policy-makers, media, researchers, etc.). EPALE is designed to become the reference point on adult learning in Europe, and should become essential to any professional in the field. It will support the development and quality of adult learning in Europe by number of features and tools that would include collaborative networking space, calendar of events and courses, a library of high quality educational and policy resources, discussion groups on adult learning.



Quality assurance and mobility in higher education

The Thematic Working Group on modernising higher education of the European Commission organised a meeting in Brussels on 29 March 2014. ETUCE was represented by Jens Vraa-Jensen (Denmark).

The following issues were discussed:

1. The group discussed about the balanced budget in higher education, whether it could be obtained by reducing expenses or by enhancing the income.
2. One of the main issues discussed was the report from the European Commission "[European higher education in the world](#)". The group was talking about the most important points of the report:

- *The education institutions should strengthen the capacity of higher education and research to address global challenges by engaging in innovation-orientated international partnerships and alliances.*
- *Tackle the remaining obstacles for the development and implementation of joint and double degree programmes, both at institutional and national level*
- *Improve provisions for quality assurance and cross-border recognition.*

3. One of the most troublesome things for students is the difficulty of validating their studies in different countries. The higher education institutions have the tools to develop this, they should do an appropriate use of international programs, and try to facilitate the validation process to the students. International cooperation is an opportunity and it can bring significant benefits for the European students, for the European universities and for the higher education institutions.

4. Also they analysed the [Report on Progress in Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#) (European Commission). According to the report the main challenges in higher education are:

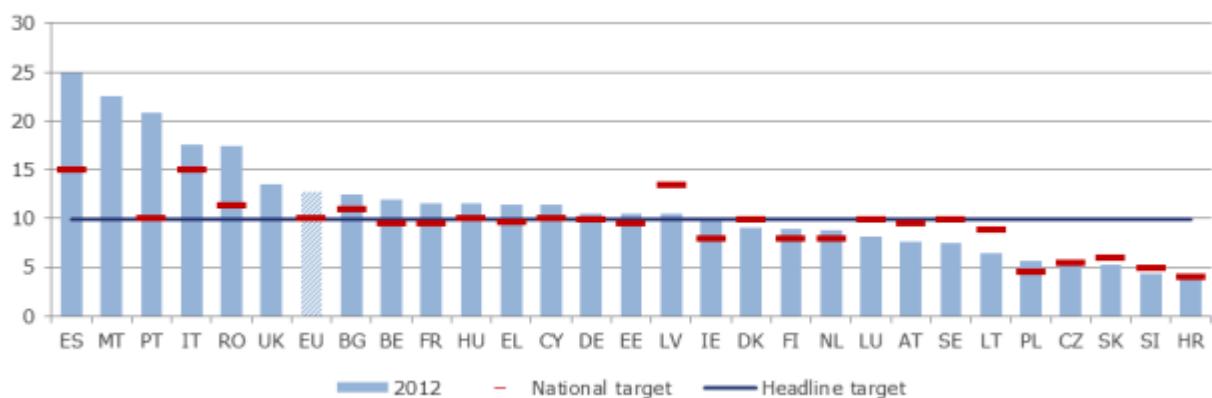
- increasing student population
- Need to improve quality of learning and teaching, aligning to societal and labour market needs
- Introducing new technologies, MOOCs, virtual and blended learning
- PIAAC shows differences in graduates' skills
- Improving flexible learning pathways

- Need for effective HE systems-value for money



Collaboration on school policies to fight early school leaving

The Thematic Working Groups of the European Commission on School Policy dealing with Teacher Education and Early School Leaving met in Brussels on 20-21 February 2014. ETUCE was represented by Hans Laugesen GL (DK) and Dan Taubmann (UK). In 2010 the member states of the EU adopted the EU2020 Strategy to achieve, among other targets, less than 10% early school leaving in the countries. The following table shows the status of reaching this target in 2012.



Data Source: European Commission

The table shows that early school leaving is still higher than 10% in half of the EU countries, with highest rates in Spain (25%), Malta (23%), Portugal (21%), Italy (17%), and Romania (17%). Therefore, the working group identified five topics of collaboration to fight against early school leaving.

It is important to achieve better collaboration within the school by:

- *Improving the role and competences of teachers, such as skills for preventing, recognising, dealing with early school leaving; communication, teamwork skills, pedagogy, new teaching skills. It is essential to create new roles for teachers in collaborating with students, families, other professionals.*
 - *Improving support for student via curricula adapted to individual needs, language, also emotional, health support.*
 - *In school organisation and leadership the role of school managers, school development plans, framework, rules for collaboration within the school should be improved.*

To achieve better collaboration beyond the school, involvement of parents and extended **families and other relevant local stakeholders** (professionals, services, civil society, local authorities and businesses) is important.



Working on transversal skills

The Thematic Working Group on Transversal skills of the European Commission met in Brussels on 29-30 January 2014. ETUCE was represented by Brian Cookson (NASUWT, UK) and Guus Wijngaards (AoB NL).

The group is separated to three subgroups: 1. Entrepreneurship, 2. ICT, 3. Languages

The primary focus of the group is mutual learning and the identification of good practices among the Member States. The group, after its 18-month work, will come up with essential outcomes, such as:

- *European Reference Framework for Digital skills*
 - *Feasibility report on European Reference Framework for Entrepreneurship*
 - *Guidelines for use of European Reference Framework for Languages*
 - *Feasibility report on Citizen Tool for Self-Assessment of Transversal Skills*

The group intends to provide assistance to Member States facing issues identified in the Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester process.



Improving the quality of vocational education and training

The Thematic Working Group on VET of the European Commission met in Brussels on 14 - 15 March. ETUCE was represented by Daniel Taubman (UCU UK).

The various challenges in VET were discussed:

- Providing needs and support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Promoting the attractiveness of apprenticeships and VET
- Quality assurance in VET

The group was particular dealt with a report of the European Commission:

1. Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors

The report investigates apprenticeships and traineeships in the EU countries. Countries with rigorous apprenticeship schemes, such as Germany, Austria, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland, are the most successful in terms of facilitating transition to work. The review and analysis of the main apprenticeship and traineeship programmes in all 27 Member States have identified a number of factors which most often contribute to their success.

According to the report the key success factors of apprenticeship and traineeship are:

- *Robust Institutional and Regulatory Framework*
- *Active Social Partner Involvement, Constructive dialogue with trade unions and employee representatives*
- *Strong employer engagement*
- *Close Partnerships between Employers and Educational Institutions*
- *Funding including Employer Subsidies and Other Incentives*
- *Close Alignment with the Labour Market Need*

2. Report on Work based learning in Europe

As 50% of young people in Europe at upper secondary level are enrolled in VET, the document focuses mainly on upper secondary VET. The report focuses on the following:

- Work-based learning models in Europe: apprenticeships, on-the-job training periods in companies and work-based learning integrated in a school-based programme.

- benefits of high quality work-based learning
- “success factors” for effective work-based learning : governance, quality and partnerships.
- tools for making work-based learning work in practice and enhance its quality.

Finally, the conclusions are stressing the need for the active commitment and expertise of not only policymakers, notably those responsible for education and training and for employment/ labour market policy, but also – crucially – of social partners and other key actors.

Recommended readings

- **The European Youth Forum launched the report “Quality Jobs for Young People”**

http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/yfj_qualityjobs_en_issuu

The European Youth Forum presented last month the publication “Quality Jobs for Young People”, which finds that the economic crisis and austerity measures have had huge consequences for young people in terms of jobs but also in terms of their quality of life, autonomy and levels of social inclusion. The youth unemployment rate still stands at a worrying 23.5% and 7.8 millions of young people under the age of 25 are considered as NEETs (not in employment, education or training). In total, this is more than a quarter of the young Europeans who are today without, professional, educational or training activities.

- **Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage**

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2061&furtherNews=yes>

Child poverty and social exclusion is one of the major challenges facing the European Union and, in February 2013, as a key part of its Social Investment Package (SIP), the European Commission issued a major recommendation on investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

Members of the [European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion](#) were asked to prepare country reports which could assist the Commission and Member States in the implementation of the Recommendation and inform its monitoring, in particular in the context of the European Semester and the cooperation in the social area between EU countries and the European Commission.

A [Synthesis Report](#) has been produced by the Network Core Team on the basis of the independent experts’ reports covering the 28 EU Member States.

Dates to remember

2-3 June, 2014	ETUCE Equality Committee
17 June, 2014	European Commission Conference on European Area for Skills and Qualifications
7-8 October, 2014	ETUCE Education Advisory Panel
9-10 October, 2014	ETUCE HERSC meeting –Brussels
13-14 October 2014	ETUCE Committee
26-27 November 2014	ETUCE Special conference as closure of the Unite for Education campaign