



ETUCE Circular 1/2013

Information concerning the Education & Training 2020 strategic framework

European Union education policy

- **The European Commission must reconsider its “Rethinking Education”**
- **European Parliament’s report on “Erasmus for All”**
- **Youth Guarantee**
- **New university ranking launched by the Irish Presidency**

Report from the European Commission’s Thematic Working Groups

- **New competences and innovative learning environments on math teaching**
- **Quality teaching in higher education should have increased recognition**
- **Teachers’ professional development across diversity**
- **Qualification of the early childhood education teachers**
- **Growing importance to entrepreneurship education**
- **Opening Up Education**
- **Developments and tools on quality assurance in adult education**

- **Recommended readings**
- ***Dates to remember***

European Union education policy

The European Commission must reconsider its “Rethinking Education”

Rethinking Education

The Communication of the European Commission on Rethinking Education was published by the European Commission on 20 November 2012, accompanied by seven staff working documents: http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking_en.htm. The Communication is supplemented by the following seven staff documents:

- an education and training monitor 2012;
- country analysis; language competences,
- partnerships and flexible pathways;
- assessment of key competences;
- vocational education and training skills;
- supporting the teaching profession

The Communication was integrated into *the conclusions of the Education Council* on 15 February 2013 (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/135467.pdf).

The objective

The objective of the Communication is to set out priorities in education to support the current and future challenges in education, the high rates of youth unemployment and the needs for better skills and competences in the labour market. In particular the European Commission suggests and proposed the following:

- an expanded focus on the development of transversal skills in the areas of entrepreneurial skills;
- science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related skills
- language skills
- to improve vocational education and training (VET),
- combined with increased valuation of teaching and of skills gained in and outside of schools
- increased use of information and communications technologies (ICT).
- more focus on recruiting and retraining teachers and trainers in VET
- through the development of a competence framework or a professional profile for teachers.
- further investment in education and training at all levels of education
- to look into possibilities of cost-sharing with the private sector via public-private partnerships and tuition fees.

The Communication

ETUCE response was integrated, together with the opinion of other European level trade union federations, to an ETUCE Position, which was sent to the Education Council and the European Commission in January.

ETUCE welcomes the objectives of higher levels of employment by improving the quality and the access to education. We also strongly agreed with the objective of upgrading the European system of vocational education and training (VET), supporting high quality early childhood education and actions for school leadership and teacher education.

We believe that member states should refrain from making public spending cuts which affects the provision of high quality education and training. Therefore, ETUCE supports the view of the European Commission on the need for further investment in education in order to achieve the long-term effects of education on employment and on the labour market. ETUCE appreciates that the Communication acknowledges the fact that most member states have made budget cuts in education and the encouragement that member states maintain investment in education despite the crisis.

However, ETUCE regrets the fact that there was no consultation with the social partners on the draft text of the Communication, which demonstrates that effective social dialogue on European and national education and training issues is still lacking. Thus, we strongly urged the European Commission to improve the role of the social partners in its policymaking and include teachers in all decision making process on education.

We sent the message to the European Commission that the role of education is much broader than fulfilling the economic targets of European and national strategies. Education shall prepare individuals first for life and secondly for the labour market. It is important that the formation part of education is not overridden by purely economic concerns. The proposed worthy objectives of skill and competence improvements will not solve the problem of unemployment. The European Commission should focus more intensely on job creation and actively find new solutions in contrast to continuous austerity measures.

The view of the European Commission on cost-sharing as a way of funding education is not accepted by ETUCE. It is suggested in the Communication that member states should involve companies to a greater extent in the funding of education, especially in VET. ETUCE strongly opposes any kind of privatisation of the VET-system. Moreover, the continuous push in the Communication of increasing the use of tuition fees in higher education is worrying, instead equity and universal access must be placed in the front row.

The Council Conclusions

The Education Council adopted *Council Conclusions on investing in education and training – a response to Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey* (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/135467.pdf). In order to achieve the objectives the Council conclusions call attention to:

- Establishing a closer link between the key strategic policy challenges identified throughout the European Semester and OMC activities
- A stronger complementarity of activities and avoidance of duplication by better exploiting the presence which EU member states have in other international organisations, such as the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe
- Regular communication between the Education Committee and all thematic working groups
- Stimulate a constructive process of follow-up of the country-specific recommendations by sharing, with the relevant policy committees

European Parliament's report on "Erasmus for All"

The Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) of the European Parliament adopted its report on "Erasmus for All" on 27 November 2012. The Erasmus for All will be the new generation of Lifelong learning Programme, which will expire in the end of 2013. The CULT Committee discussed on the proposal of the European Commission in the last half year: http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/doc/com_en.pdf. The CULT Committee agreed on 273 amendments on the proposal from the European Commission.

The amendments focus first on the **name** of the programme: the CULT committee proposes to change the proposed name to "YES Europe", which would refer to "Youth Education and Sport". Secondly, the CULT committee proposed to retain the current brand names for the sub-programmes (Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci etc.), and thirdly to include detailed objectives for the chapters on education, training and youth.

ETUCE strongly supports to change the name of the programme because the name has been associated with higher education, and thus it was misleading.

ETUCE likewise strongly favours to retain the current brand names and descriptions of the sub-programmes. ETUCE lobbied to restoring the study visits which previously have been led by CEDEFOP. These visits have been very successful and constantly guaranteed to include the interests of workers, trade unionists, teachers' trainers, headmasters and policy makers who deal with education and training policy. The new programme will provide possibilities of adults to participate in short-term training activities abroad.

The Education Council made numerous recommendations and took into consideration the suggestions of the trade unions sent to the Education Council, including:

- prioritising, and where possible strengthening investments in education and training
- equal opportunities for access to quality education
- Strengthen the role of education and training in the Europe 2020 Strategy
- raising the performance of education and training systems by ensuring effective communication and strong partnerships between the relevant policy areas, education and training sub-sectors, the social partners, and different levels of governance
- promoting excellence in vocational education and training in cooperation with the social partners
- revising and strengthening the professional profile of the teaching profession

In addition, ETUCE strongly supports the emphasis given in the amendments to the increasing mobility of teachers, to the role of VET in education, to address the inequalities in educational achievement, social cohesion and inclusion of vulnerable groups including tackling early school leaving. Furthermore, ETUCE welcomes the enhanced focus on adult learning, especially to increase participation of low-skilled and low-qualified adults.

ETUCE is deeply concerned about the proposal to establish a European Student Loan Guarantee scheme for students obtaining their masters programme abroad. ETUCE fears that this loan guarantee scheme could cause the extension of the tuition fee courses, having the effect of excluding low, middle class and socio-economically disadvantaged students from higher education.

Negotiations started in February between the Council (represented by the Irish Presidency), the European Commission and the European Parliament, aiming at preparing an agreement on the proposal. The plenary of the European Parliament scheduled its vote on the proposal by May. The aim is to finalize negotiations before the end of the Irish presidency in order to leave the European Commission with sufficient time to complete important preparatory work for the programme to begin on 1 January 2014.

Youth Guarantee

The rate of youth unemployment is alarming across the European Union. Currently 5.5 million people under the age of 25 are unemployed. In 12 out of 27 member states the youth unemployment rate is above 25%, in Greece and Spain for instance it is over 50%. The European Commission proposed therefore the following:

1. a so-called *Youth Guarantee to tackle the worrying youth unemployment*. It would provide young people (under the age of 25) a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.
2. a *European Alliance for Apprenticeships* to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships and to promote national partnerships for dual vocational training systems. Finally, in the first half of 2013, the European Commission will launch a stakeholder consultation on developing a EURES jobs for young people programme, and will present an initiative to put EU mobility instruments, funding and governance on a more structural footing, proportional to their importance. On 28 February 2013, the Employment Council will adopt a political agreement on the Youth Employment Package.
3. The social partners to work towards a *Quality Framework for Traineeships* to ensure that traineeships provide young people with high-quality work experience under safe conditions.

The proposal for the Youth Guarantee was put forward by the *Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission* on 5 December 2012 through two policy documents: 1. *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Youth Guarantee*, and 2. *Commission Communication on Moving Youth into Employment*. Both documents are available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1731>.

ETUCE response

ETUCE Bureau had a discussion on the policy proposal. Accordingly, ETUCE believes that the initiative by the European Commission is very relevant, and ETUCE agrees with the European Commission's proposal of strengthened partnerships between employers and trade unions in order to boost employment, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for young people. It is also positive that the Youth Guarantee aims to enhance basic skills and to provide individual guidance and counselling in schools, which are fundamental in the attempt to keep potential early school-leavers and low-skilled students in education.

ETUCE welcomes the focus on further education and training for young unemployed people. However, it is problematic to draw the line of the Youth Guarantee at the year of 25 years. Especially, because in a number of EU countries like in Germany and the Nordic countries students only finish their studies after the age of 25. Therefore, the European Trade Union Confederation has been working to make the youth guarantee available for young people below 30 years. The European Parliament made a resolution in January 2013 to support the availability of the youth guarantee for people under the age of 30 years.

New university rankings launched as part of Ireland's Presidency of EU

U-Multirank, a new university ranking system developed by the European Commission in the past years was launched by the Irish Presidency and the European Commission in Dublin on 30. January 2013. U-Multirank measures the performance and excellence of higher education institutions across a variety of dimensions. Five areas are measured:

- reputation for research,
- quality of teaching and learning,
- international orientation,
- success in knowledge transfer and contribution to regional growth.

Some 500 universities are expected to sign up to take part, with the first rankings results expected in early 2014.

According to Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth the new ranking will “enable young people to make better informed decisions about where to study; it will also allow universities to compare themselves in a more transparent and useful way. The new listing will differ from existing international rankings by rating universities according to a broad range of performance factors, which will provide a more accurate, comparable and user-friendly guide to university quality..”

As well as providing an authoritative ranking comparing institutions. U-Multirank will also rate universities in four specific subject areas: business studies, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and physics. The list of specific disciplines will be gradually expanded in future years.

An independent consortium will compile the ranking, led by the Centre for Higher Education (CHE) in Germany and the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) in the Netherlands. The consortium will also work with national ranking partners and stakeholder organisations representing students, universities and business to ensure completeness and accuracy. The new rankings will be impartial, based on measurable criteria and data.

€2 million in EU funding has been secured for U-Multirank from the Lifelong Learning Programme for 2013/14, with the possibility of a further two years of seed-funding. The goal is for an independent organisation to run the ranking thereafter.

For further information <http://eu2013.ie/news/news-items/20130130newuniversityrankingslaunched/>

Reports from Open Method of Coordination working group meetings

New competences and innovative learning environments on math teaching

Report from the Thematic working group on Mathematics, Science and Technology

The Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) of the European Commission organised a peer learning activity (PLA), on 1-4 October 2012 hosted by the Ministry of Education of Slovenia. The topic of the meeting was New competences and innovative learning environments. ETUCE was represented by Helvijs Valcis (LIZDA, Latvia).

The aim of the meeting was to discuss about the role of ICT and setting up innovative learning environments as part of any curriculum reforms in mathematics and science.

The discussions concentrated on the impact of ICT in motivating low achieving students to study maths and science. The participants visited schools and had meetings with different stakeholders of the education system of Slovenia.

A subgroup of the Thematic Working Group would continue discussions in a Google Group Forum to exchange best practices of developing new learning environments and the use of ICT, which were submitted in a report to the group's coordinators.

Further, a conference between the Thematic Working Group and EU financed project on Mathematics, Science and Technology took place on 6-7 December 2012 in Brussels, with the aims of sharing the results of EU financed project in the area.

Quality teaching in higher education should have increased recognition

Report from the Thematic working group on Modernization of Higher Education

The Thematic Working Group on Modernization of Higher Education of the European Commission organised a peer learning activity (PLA) in Berlin on 19 – 21 September 2012 and a succeeding meeting was held on 5 -6 November 2012. ETUCE was represented by respectively Anita Prunty (DCU, Ireland) and Jens Vraa-Jensen (DM, Denmark).

The aim of the peer learning activity was to reflect upon issues in relation to 'excellence in teaching' through practices and experiences from different European countries. The participants discussed whether different countries have specific policies and/or mechanism to promote excellence in teaching in higher education.

Eurydice presented the findings of *The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report* (<http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf>), which is a survey based on 21 countries showing that the subject of 'excellence in teaching' is seldom dealt with on its own, but the countries deal with it as part of excellence in higher education.

The Thematic Working Group emphasized the importance of increased awareness among the EU member states on the issue of quality teaching in higher education. The participants agreed that teaching and learning should be recognized as high a priority as research, but also that the two are complementary rather than competing. Also, the group pointed out the need to define the term of 'excellence in teaching'. The group noted that excellence in teaching is integral to European policy and programmes like the Europe 2020. It was also proposed to develop a charter of quality teaching at the European level.

At the meeting on 5 -6 November 2012 the issue raised in Berlin about good teaching rather than excellence was further developed. In connection to this professional development in teaching was highlighted.

Finally, the issue of recognition and development of establishing a *European Area for Recognition* was discussed.

Teachers' professional development across diversity

Report from the Thematic working group on Teachers Professional Development

The Thematic Working Group on Teachers Professional Development of the European Commission organised a meeting on 13 November 2012. ETUCE was represented by Hans Laugesen (GL, Denmark).

The meeting reflected upon the effects of the economic crisis on education and on how to select the best teachers when funds are scarce.

As documented in the Eurydice report on *Teachers' and School Heads' salaries in Europe* (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/salaries.pdf), the major part of expenditures in education goes to salaries, namely 70%. However, as a result of the economic crisis salaries have been cut as a general trend, but most severely in Eastern European countries. As much as 6 countries have cut the share of education in terms of percentage of GNP. This was the case principally in Ireland, Greece, Spain (reduction mainly in 2010/11), Italy, Portugal and Slovenia (mainly in the allowances).

The Thematic Working Group planned and organised a peer learning activity in the Hague in the Netherlands on 2-6 December 2012 on theme of policies to select the best for teaching. Here the participants, mostly governmental representatives, recognized that it is a challenge to agree on a common European level policy recommendation on selecting the best teachers because of diversity across the countries. But the peer learning activity helped the participants to identify essential questions that need to be asked by any member state in considering teacher selection procedures.

Qualification of the early childhood education teachers

Report from the Thematic working group on Early Childhood education and care

The Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care of the European Commission arranged a peer learning activity (PLA) together with the *Hungarian Institute for Educational Research* and development on 19 – 21 November 2012. Also, the Thematic Working Group had a follow up meeting on 17 - 18 January 2013. ETUCE was represented by Stig G. Lund (BUPL, Denmark).

The objective of first peer learning activity was to learn about curriculum matters in a split system illustrated by the Hungarian example through visits to nurseries and kindergartens.

The representatives discussed education and training of kindergarten teachers and assisting staff. Based on the fact that Hungary recently introduced a bachelor programme of nursery education, the education of nursery professionals are brought into the same level as of kindergarten teachers. Since the issue of curriculum values, principles and monitoring was debated in details, and the debate shows a significant diversity across Europe in the area, education of the staff should necessary involve working with curriculum issues.

At the follow-up meeting, the discussions were organized in subgroups including debate on whether family day-care shall be included into the issue of early childhood education. The overall view of government representatives was that it should be included because this is the existing practice in Europe, especially for the 0-3 age group. The discussion also focused on that the staff should have a minimum of BA study level.

Growing importance to entrepreneurship education

Report from the Thematic working group on Entrepreneurship Education

The Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education of the European Commission organised a peer learning activity (PLA) on 23 – 25 January 2013. ETUCE was represented by Brian Cookson (NASUWT, UK).

The objective of the meeting was to discuss learning outcomes of entrepreneurship education at different education age stages. The debate focused on that entrepreneurship education should not be concentrated on promoting business development as such. The participants highlighted that entrepreneurship education is far more wide-ranging and should promote innovative thinking, team work, problem solving and financial understanding. A comprehensive model of entrepreneurship education shall focus on the wider skills where the teacher acts as the facilitator, mentor and skill developer.

The Thematic Working Group highlighted that in the current times of recession and austerity, it is even more important that the future workforce has gained experiences of all facts of entrepreneurship education.

The Thematic Working Group is currently working on a report, which is to be finalized in May. *The Rethinking Education policy package* recently published by the European Commission gives special attention to develop entrepreneurship education.

Opening up Education

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 meeting on 21-22 January 2013. ETUCE was represented by Kirstine Finnemann (ETUCE Secretariat).

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the new EU initiative “*Opening up Education*” developed by the European Commission as well as the use of open educational resources in the member states. The new initiative of “*Opening up Education*” is based in particular on the major growth of publicly available online courses. The focus was on using information and communications technology and open educational resources/material in order to achieve more efficient and quality education and training. However, the challenges teachers and students are facing with using these publicly available materials include the access to internet in classrooms and at home and to equipment, and the copyright issues of these materials. In connection to this, the financial aspect was discussed: who should pay to the writer and publishers of these materials?

On the second day, Dr David Massart from European Schoolnet introduced the *EU-wide Learning Resources Exchange* (LRE) project (<http://lreforschools.eun.org/web/guest/home>), which is a catalogue of open educational resource providers in the different member states.

The European Commission mentioned the possibility of the establishment of *a European platform for open educational resources* with the following objectives:

- Incentivise production of open educational resources and encourage teachers to include them
- Establish “open access” requirements with EU funding
- Define business models on how to implement and finance open educational resources
- Establish a legal framework on copyrights, open licences, intellectual property right etc.

Developments and tools on quality assurance in adult education

Report from the Thematic working group on Quality Assurance in Adult Education

The *Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in Adult Education* of the European Commission organised a meeting on 18-19 December 2012. ETUCE was represented by Tatiana Babrauskiene (FLESTU-LETU, Lithuania).

The objective of the meeting was to establish a policy guideline, which would include a quality framework for adult learning, a toolkit with practical advice, policy options and case studies.

The group has three subgroups on accreditation, staff quality and indicators. They draw up a list of quality criteria for accreditation of providers, a checklist for self-evaluation and outline of staff profiles, a draft competence profile for staff teaching basic skills and overall quality criteria across system and provider level.

During the meeting’s second day a report was presented on the conference entitled *Adult Learning – Spotlight on investment* (<http://adult-learning-investment.eu>), which was held in Brussels on 12-13 December 2012. The

conference focused on the benefits and challenges of adult learning together with the strength and drawbacks of different approaches to its financing. In addition, policy lessons were drawn on the wider benefits of lifelong learning, effective policies to increase participation and how to address different target groups.

It was suggested that the Thematic Working Group should cooperate with the *secretariat of EQAVET, the European Quality Assurance for VET*.

Recommended reading

- ⇒ **Recommended annual taught time in full-time compulsory education in Europe**
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/taught_time_EN.pdf
The publication contains annually updated facts and figures on the amount of time allocated to core subjects by grade/stage in full-time compulsory education.

- ⇒ **EURYDICE: Developing Key Competences at Schools in Europe**
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/145EN.pdf
The report reviews and analyses current national policies for developing the key competences for lifelong learning.

- ⇒ **The structure of the European education systems 2012/13: schematic diagrams**
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf
The diagrams represent the structure of mainstream education from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2012/13 academic year.

- ⇒ **Qualifications frameworks: new policy briefing**
http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Qualifications_frameworks_new_policy_briefing_EN
The ETF's new policy briefing explains:
 - The ETF approach to national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in its 31 partner countries,
 - How NQFs are implemented already or how they could be implemented in future,
 - How NQFs can help to make qualifications more relevant and support wider education and training reform.

Dates to remember

12-13 March, 2013	Conference on Quality Assurance in Qualifications Frameworks in Dublin
15 March, 2013	Launch of the ETUCE European Online Platform for School leadership Launch of the ETUCE European Online Platform for Early Childhood Education Launch of the ETUCE European Online Platform for Vocational Education and Training
19-20 March, 2013	Conference on Better Assessment and Evaluation to Improve Teaching and Learning
26 March, 2013	ETUCE Bureau meeting
15-16 April, 2013	HERSC
19 April, 2013	Project: Teaching profession, advisory group meeting
25-26 April, 2013	ETUCE Committee