



ETUCE Circular 2/2012

Information concerning the Education & Training 2020 strategic framework

- **New Lifelong Learning Programme: Erasmus for All**
- **Education Council meeting of the Danish Presidency**
- **Bologna Ministerial meeting and BFUG Policy Forum**
- **EU-US High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth**
- **Promotion and validation of non-formal and informal learning**
- **Making post-secondary vocational education and training more attractive**
- **CEDEFOP: Loans for vocational education and training in Europe**
- **Social awareness about early school leaving**
- **Creative Classrooms - Creative Learning Environments**
- **Teachers of Mathematics, Science and Technology**
- **Recommended reading**
- **Dates to remember**

New Lifelong learning Programme: Erasmus for All

Erasmus for All

The recent Lifelong Learning programme, including for instance the Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, Youth in Action sub-programmes, will expire in 2013. The “Erasmus for All” proposal, which is to be adopted as the new framework for lifelong learning programmes was published in December, 2012. The new framework programme, to be operated between 2014 and 2020 will merge all sub-programmes and focuses mostly on higher education. ETUC included the view of the teachers’ trade unions in an ETUC position. The position, which was sent to the European Union institutions and to the Member Organisation for lobbying purposes, strongly criticised the proposal to institute a European level student lending facility, the marketisation policy in higher education and research, and the merger of the sub-programmes. More information on the proposal is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/>. Lobbying of the Ministries of Education with the ETUC Statement is still important, as the Education Council and the European Parliament still can change the text of the proposal until its adoption in 2013. The ETUC Position on the European Commission proposal “Erasmus for all” is available at: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9766>.

Survey on long-term school education staff mobility

The proposal envisages extending the number of teachers participating in mobility by 1 million. Therefore, the European Commission and a consortium (Ecorys) have been conducting a survey on long-term school education staff mobility. This survey investigates whether the long-term mobility of school staff will be feasible in the framework of the Erasmus for All programme. It asks what the obstacles might be for teachers to participate in long term (3 months-1 year) exchange programmes. The 10-15 minutes-long, anonymous survey is available in 6 languages until 30 June: <http://uk.ecorys.com/mobilitysurvey>. The result of the survey will be published in spring 2014.

European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme Committee

The Committee, which meets twice a year, had its first meeting in May, 2012. The European Commission highlighted that this is a critical period concerning the funding, and therefore planning the future, of the lifelong learning programme. However, the budget of the Erasmus for All programme should be increased by 70%, which would come to over 1,7 billion Euros. The 2020 Joint Progress Report adopted in February included concerns that the Member States are tending to cut their education budget. The European Commission and the Presidency proposed an annual peer review in September or October on key issues emerging from the previous European Semester, wherein the European Commission could review the education budget of each country proposed for the next year.

Finally, the Committee members were informed that decentralised and centralised programme actions will be open to Macedonia for 2013, and the centralised projects only for Albania and Bosnia- Herzegovina.

Education Council meeting of the Danish Presidency

On 10 & 11 May, 2012, the second Council meeting for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport under the Danish Presidency took place in Brussels. On the agenda for the meeting were, among other items, establishment of the “Creative Europe” and “Europe for Citizens” programmes, the “Erasmus for All” programme, the benchmark for employability of graduates from education and training.

“Creative Europe” and “Europe for Citizens”

The Council reached a partial agreement on establishing the two programmes for the period 2014-2020 as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework. The two programmes seek to promote cultural diversity, enhance competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors and to increase citizens’ awareness and understanding of the European Union as well as increase citizen participation in EU political life.

“Erasmus for All”

The Council agreed on a partial general approach on the proposal for a regulation establishing the “Erasmus for All” programme for the period 2014-2020. “Erasmus for All” replaces the Lifelong Learning programme. The European Commission has proposed a budget increase of 70%, which will be negotiated in the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. As the new programme merges all sub programmes, several Member States called for greater visibility of the youth field in “Erasmus for All”, some of them advocating an entirely separate programme.

Employability of graduates

In 2009, the Member States agreed on a reference level on European average performance as a means of monitoring progress and identifying challenges, including a benchmark for employability. At the Council meeting conclusions on the employability of graduates from education and training were adopted.

The initial goal of the proposal of the European Commission on employability of graduates is to come back to the European headline target of 82% young graduates in employment by 2020.

The benchmark is not considered as a target for individual Member States to be reached by 2020, but as an encouragement to Member States to take national measures that improve the match between education and employment. This can be achieved by creating partnerships between education and training institutions and enterprises and promoting entrepreneurship education.

Youth

The Council adopted conclusions on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people, and agreed to establish a thematic working group, with the aim of sharing best practices on how to promote the creativity and innovative capacity of young people.

The proposal, which seeks to make use of skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, is to consider the effects of the financial crisis, which has left 20% of the 15-24 year old cohort unemployed in the EU-labour market. At the moment this amounts to 5 million young people.

A policy debate on the current high level of youth unemployment was initiated at the Council meeting.

Bologna Ministerial meeting and BFUG Policy Forum

Funding

Following the last EI-ETUCE Higher Education and Research Standing Committee meeting held on 24-25 April, 2012 in Bucharest, a Bologna Ministerial meeting and a Bologna Policy Forum was held on 26 - 27 April 2012, wherein EI and ETUCE were represented. Ministers responsible for higher education and research in 47 countries met at the Bologna Ministerial meeting. EURYDICE published a report from the meeting mapping out the implementation of the Bologna action-lines in the participating countries^[1]. Furthermore, a European Area of Recognition Manual^[2] was published by European Area of Recognition (EAR) project. The manual provides practical guidelines for fair recognition of qualifications

The three significant documents adopted were: the *Bucharest Communiqué*^[3]; *Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*^[4]; and a *Statement of the Third Bologna Policy Forum*^[5]. The draft text of the Bucharest Communiqué did not mention public responsibility at all, and EI and ETUCE representatives proposed that it be reaffirmed, drawing from previous communiqués. The EI and ETUCE delegates successfully lobbied for adoption of a text of the Bucharest Communiqué, which advocates the highest level of public funding in higher education: “we commit to securing the highest possible level of public funding for higher education and drawing on other appropriate sources, as an investment in our future. We will support our institutions in the education of creative, innovative, critically thinking and responsible graduates needed for economic growth and the sustainable development of our democracies. We are dedicated to working together in this way to reduce youth unemployment.”

Academic perception

EI presented a report at the meeting on *Academic Perception of the Bologna Process*^[6]. In the report we recommended to the ministers that they should focus on the inclusion of staff and students and in particular the teaching staff and their trade unions. The paper refers to the recommendations of UNESCO on the *Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* from 1997¹ and of the Council of Europe on *Academic freedom and university autonomy*² from 2006 as these are the documents which set the international standards for academic work.

We suggested that they have regard to the EI Supportive Environment paper^[7] in the debates. We stated in the report that “Academic freedom for both academic teachers and researchers; trust and collegiality; reduction of excessive bureaucracy; eradication of excessive workload; recognition of the role of early stage researchers; availability of professional development programmes for all staff; career perspectives; recognition of teaching and research as key pillars of academic activity; recognition of the role of quality of teaching and research as the main factor of professional attractiveness; improved physical and emotional working environment; inclusive and anti-discriminatory policies in the workplace; work-life balance, access to sabbatical leave, recognition of collective bargaining and public funding.”

^[1] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/138EN.pdf

^[2] http://www.eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR_manual_v_1.0.pdf

^[3] <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20Communique%202012%281%29.pdf>

^[4] <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/2012%20EHEA%20Mobility%20Strategy.pdf>

^[5] <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20BPF%20Statement%281%29.pdf>

^[6] <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/EI%20report%20Bologna%20ministerial%202012.pdf>

¹ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13144&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

² <http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta06/erec1762.htm>

^[7]

http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Irina/BFUG_PL_AM_26_14.2_Supportive%20working%20environment%20for%20academic%20staff.pdf

The European Students' Union also published a report entitled *Bologna with Student Eyes 2012*^[8]. It includes a list of recommendations on designing and implementing internationalisation strategies, portability of grants and loans, targeted and increased Erasmus grants, and reconciliation of regional imbalances within the EHEA. ESU also pointed to the growth in private funding (tuition fees) and commodification of higher education across Europe. EI and ETUCE have a common interest with the students in fighting this trend.

EU-US High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth

Directorate-General for Trade of the European Commission ran a public consultation on the work plan of a future high level working group, which will deal with jobs and growth generated by US-EU trade investments. This working group should identify policies and measures in the foreseeable future to increase EU-US trade and investment to support mutually beneficial job creation, economic growth, and international competitiveness. The public consultation ran until the end of April. ETUCE answered the public consultation as it is expected to influence the education policy of the European Union.

As we stated in our statement, our major concern is the option for a negative listing approach as has been taken in the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Under negative listing, member governments must indicate those services and regulatory measures to which the agreement will not apply. This contrasts with the positive listing approach used in previous EU bilateral free trade agreements and in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations, where member states can decide which sectors they would prefer to further liberalise. Under a negative list approach, EU governments will need to anticipate current and future regulatory needs so as to expressly exclude sectors like education and other public services. ETUCE urged the European Commission to accept that education and all matters affecting the regulation of education systems should be expressly excluded from any agreement. ETUCE is following up this topic.

Further information is available at http://trade.ec.europa.eu/consultations/?consul_id=160.

Promotion and validation of non-formal and informal learning

In preparation for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL), which may be adopted in November 2012, the European Commission launched a public consultation, which ran between December 2010 and 9 February 2011. The report on the result of the consultation was published in the first semester of 2011.

The objective of the consultation was to invite individuals and organisations (European Committees, NGOs and Social Partners) involved in validation of NFIL to participate in an online survey focusing on three sections: the importance of validation of NFIL; developments and challenges within the field; and focus on EU actions and policy priorities.

The survey showed that validation of NFIL is important to the respondents. NFIL is still far from being recognised on the same level as formal learning when it comes to recruitment and allocation in education and training courses. The respondents consider that certification of NFIL necessary. The respondents put forward the following as hindrances for further development for validation of NFIL: discontent with existing validation schemes, and barriers, such as lack of awareness of NFIL and lack of trust in validation processes and outcomes.

^[8] <http://www.esu-online.org/asset/News/6001/BWSE2012-online.pdf>

With regard to actions carried out at EU-level, the respondents thought that the status and value of NFIL could be raised as a complement to formal learning and that links could be built between validation and education/training credit systems to support recognition of qualifications.

The final conclusion of the public consultation was that validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by the respondents, individuals and stakeholders alike, and that existing validation schemes need improvement.

Making post-secondary vocational education and training more attractive

At its plenary session held on 18-19 January 2012, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion on making vocational education and training an attractive alternative to higher education.

According to the EESC, Europe faces a shrinking workforce, lack of skilled labour and labour shortages in some sectors due to demographic changes. Based on research conducted by Cedefop and the ETF, the EESC addressed issues regarding higher demand for medium and high-level qualifications and decreasing demands for low-skilled workers, and also focused on the problem regarding the diversity in VET across Europe. The EESC found that assessment of VET is necessary in order to better recognise vocational qualifications in the National and European Qualifications Frameworks (NQF, EQF).

The Committee made recommendations to the Commission, Member States, Social Partners and businesses on how to meet the future challenges and demands.

Key points of the EESC recommendations are:

- The EESC calls upon the Commission to encourage Member States to improve quality and efficiency of VET in order to make the field more attractive.
- Social partners must play an active role in bringing together the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.
- The EESC further calls upon the social partners to be pro-active and use all methods and tools for improving the attractiveness of post-secondary VET.
- Further assessment is needed to avoid duplication of already existing programmes.
- Member States should balance education and training systems to achieve the EU headline target of 40% completion of tertiary and equivalent education.
- Financial and non-financial incentives should be developed so as to attract businesses, especially SMEs, to engage in promoting VET.
- Industrial sectors and companies ought to provide more places for apprenticeships.

CEDEFOP: Loans for vocational education and training

In its attempt to facilitate mobility in higher education across Europe, and addressing the economic costs and difficulties which students face when studying abroad, the European Commission made a proposal on EU-wide loan schemes. With this the European Commission intends to replace national student loan schemes. The proposal suggests that the EU should act as guarantor of student loans in addition to banks, and cover the first losses from non-repayment, making loans easier and cheaper to get for students.

Following the proposal of the Commission, CEDEFOP published a report entitled *Loans for vocational education and training in Europe* in May 2012. The report maps out the use of loans for learning in 33 countries and analyses

the schemes in eight selected Member States: in France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Finland, Sweden and the UK.

The report attempts to assess the loans involved and discusses their strengths and weaknesses and impacts on performance. The government is the loan provider in almost all cases of VET loan schemes. From the report it is evident that loans and subsidies can be very expensive for the state budget.

The report concludes that there is no best loan scheme model for financing VET in Europe.

ETUCE welcomes the focus on promoting mobility across Europe both in higher education and in vocational education and training. However, ETUCE strongly disapproves on any kind of loan mechanisms, which will reduce further investment in education by the Member States. ETUCE fears that, even though the report seeks to take into account vulnerable groups, loan schemes in financing education abroad will result in further exclusion of VET learners from these groups.

The CEDEFOP report can be found via: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5520_en.pdf

Reports from Open Method of Coordination working group meetings

Social awareness about early school leaving

Following the Conference on Early School Leaving hosted by the European Commission (DG Education and Culture) in Brussels 1-2 March, an Open Method of Coordination Working Group meeting was held. ETUCE was represented by Elżbieta Leszczyńska. The objective of the meeting was to reflect on the main outcomes of the conference, which focused on increasing social awareness of early school leaving in Europe, and further to discuss the working programme of the group.

The conference concentrated on policies of various countries to fight early school leaving. Emphasis was put on the role of the school in an information society, and on the need for flexibility in order to allow teachers to be more creative. Four workshops were initiated in the conference, respectively: approaches towards reducing early school leaving; cross sectoral cooperation; vocational education and training and early school leaving; and attractiveness of learning. The main conclusions of the groups were given as recommendations for the working group on early school leaving to consider.

The working group discussed and reached following conclusions concerning the results of the conference and the future work programmes:

- The role of teachers, trainers, and teacher education in reducing early school leaving is crucial and should be acknowledged and promoted.
- Different approaches to evidence-based policies towards early school leaving are effective.
- Cross-sectoral cooperation in municipalities and other sectors is necessary.
- Vocational education and training can be used as an effective measure against drop-outs and school failure.
- Offering students, who are at risk of early school leaving, new learning opportunities, which can reduce drop-outs.
- Schools in the information society need to be more flexible and support changing styles in order to increase the commitment of their students.
- Schools, teachers, and local initiatives need to be supported by the educational system.

Creative Classrooms - Creative Learning Environments

Guus Wijngaards represented the ETUCE at the 2nd Open Method of Coordination Working Group meeting on ICT and Education in Brussels in January 2012. Other participants at the meeting were EU country representatives and experts of stakeholder organisations. The main objective of the meeting was for the working group to help build a new European initiative concerning the systemic impact of ICT in education, the so-called “*Creative Classrooms/Creative Learning Environments*”-initiative.

Further, questions on national policies, future national initiatives, actions, experiments etc., concerning ICT and education were discussed to determine which key topics and approaches the countries preferred when dealing with ICT and education.

Moreover, a visit to the offices of European Schoolnet was organised on the first day of the meeting. The visit included a presentation on “the Future Classroom Lab”, a project where ministries and industry partners work together in visualising the reorganisation of conventional classrooms to support changing styles in teaching and learning. For more information on this project: <http://fcl.eun.org/>

Teachers of Mathematics, Science and Technology

At the 6th Open Method of Coordination Working Group meeting on Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) held on 5-6 March 2012 in Brussels, Helvijs Valcis represented the ETUCE. The main objectives of the meeting were a drawing up of the final report of the working group and the results of findings in EURYDICE reports on mathematics and science education in Europe.

The working group is to continue to study themes like motivation; working methods/different learning styles; proper tests of curriculum; teaching materials; development of subjects; teacher education and in-service training; school leadership. Four subgroups in the areas “Teachers”, “Curriculum and Assessment”, “School leadership”, and “ICT and Individualisation” are to take place up before the next working group meeting in June.

Recommended reading

- ⇒ **EQUAVET-ECVET-EQF: Assuring the quality of VET qualification**
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/EQUAVET-ECVET-EQF_Joint_Seminar_Report.sflb.ashx.pdf
- ⇒ **ETF: Proposed Indicators for Assessing Technical and Vocational Education and Training**
[http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/E112211E42995263C12579EA002EF821/\\$file/Report%20on%20indicators%20April%202012.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/E112211E42995263C12579EA002EF821/$file/Report%20on%20indicators%20April%202012.pdf)
- ⇒ **Communication from the Commission: Towards a job-rich recovery**
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st09/st09309.en12.pdf>
- ⇒ **Eurydice: Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe**
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st09/st09309.en12.pdf>

- ⇒ **The European Higher Education Area 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report**
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/138EN.pdf
- ⇒ **Comparison of A-levels with International Qualifications** <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-05-10-icossa-summary-report.pdf>
- ⇒ **OECD: Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century**
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/35/49850576.pdf>

Dates to remember

- DG MARKT opened a public consultation on **Access to a bank account by Erasmus and exchange students**. The online questionnaire will be open until **19 June 2012**:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2012/exchange_student_bank_account_en.htm
- DG EAC and Ecorys survey on **long-term teachers' mobility** is open until **30 June**:
<http://uk.ecorys.com/mobilitysurvey>.

18-19 September, 2012

27-28 September, 2012

8-9 October, 2012

5-6 November, 2012

28-29 November, 2012

HERSC meeting in Brussels

Third Party Violence project final conference in Cyprus

ETUCE Committee

European Commission conference: Quality assurance in VET and Adult Education

ETUCE Conference in Budapest