ETUCE Circular 3/2012

Information concerning the Education & Training 2020 strategic framework

European Union education policy

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European Union education policy

On the way to a new Lifelong Learning Programme "Erasmus for all"

In July, Doris Pack, chair of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) of the European Parliament published a draft report on the proposal for a regulation establishing "Erasmus for All", which will be the successor of the Lifelong Learning Programme between 2014-2020.

ETUCE supports Ms Pack's amendment to restore the name of the programme to the Lifelong Learning Programme instead of "Erasmus for All", as proposed by the European Commission. The word "Erasmus" could be misleading since it is mostly associated with mobility in higher education; mobility in all educational sectors should be strengthened in the new programme. ETUCE also supports the amendment on maintaining the brand names and descriptions of sub-programmes as outlined in the current Lifelong Learning programme. However, ETUCE is concerned that no objections to the proposal of an Erasmus loan guarantee facility have been made by Ms Pack. ETUCE is worried that the new loan system will encourage governments to reduce public spending on higher education.

ETUCE would like to highlight in the proposal the roles of adult learning and increased mobility of adult learners and adult learning staff. ETUCE supports the more pronounced role of non-formal and informal learning in the programme, but will advise that an insertion should be made on validation of non-formal and informal learning. ETUCE also finds that the role of social partners should be more apparent in the text of the proposal and that social partners should be actively involved in the work of the new programme, especially through the Open Method of Coordination structure. There should also be a reference to social partners in the list of definitions included in the final proposal, as was the case in the former programme.

The draft report on the new educational programme, presented by Ms Pack, will be discussed in the CULT Committee during the fall, and will also be debated during the Education Council meeting on November 26.

Horizon 2020

Amendments for the Horizon 2020 programme have been discussed in the last two meetings of the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). The Horizon 2020 is proposed by the European Commission as a merger of programmes for research and innovation by 2014-2020. According to the proposal, the programme is intended to create new jobs and growth through research and innovation with a budget of 80 billion euros.

Discussions in the Committee mainly focused on maintaining the budget, the question on open access to data and publications, and the role of industry vs. universities, when it comes to allocation of funds within the budget.

Most Committee members opposed the proposed budget cuts of the Council in the funding to the programme; they think that a sufficient budget is needed to carry out such an ambitious programme, and for Europe to be leading in the field of research and innovation. It was suggested, that if the Council decides to make budget cuts exceeding 10%, the European Parliament will not agree with this proposal.

Discussions followed on open access to data and publications. Several members thought it necessary to make a differentiation between open access to *data* and open access to *publications*, protecting data to a larger extent

than final publications, arguing that data can be more sensitive. A common agreement within the Committee has not yet been reached.

Also, the allocation of funds for research in industry over funds to research institutions and universities still needs to be agreed on. Some members preferred more funds to go to research in industry, while others emphasised the need to extend research in universities.

The final amendments will be voted on in the ITRE Committee on 28 November.

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting

The first Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council meeting under the Cyprus Presidency took place on 4 October in Luxemburg. In the meeting the Ministers for employment and social affairs evaluated on the work on the European Semester, which is the budgetary and structural programme implemented every six months, and on the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) published by the European Commission in April. Many Ministers asked that the social dimension in the ESPSCO Council policy should not be neglected in favour of only financial policies.

Further, Council Conclusions on the European Commission's employment package *towards a job-rich recovery* were adopted, with a focus on creating jobs for young people.

Council Conclusions on *preventing and tackling child poverty and social exclusion and promoting children's well-being* were also adopted. The Council hoped for more mainstreamed policies in the area of childhood poverty and social exclusion across EU Member States. For this to happen, more adequate financing and more involvement of stakeholders is important.

Reports from Open Method of Coordination working group meetings

Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving

In the spring 2012, the European Commission established a stakeholder group on Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving alongside the two on-going Open Method of Coordination thematic working groups on Early School Leaving and Early Childhood Education and Care. ETUCE is represented in all three.

Challenges in tackling Early School Leaving

The 3rd meeting of the Thematic Working Group of the European Commission on Early School Leaving took place on 24-25 May 2012. ETUCE was represented by Elżbieta Leszczyńska (NSzz Solidarnosty).

The main objectives of the meeting were to discuss the 2012 and 2013 work programme, to review early school leaving policies, to prepare peer learning activities in the Netherlands in 2012, and finally to reflect on the examples of national strategies on ESL from four different countries.

The meeting included presentations and discussions on equity and quality in education supporting disadvantaged and schools.

Examples of national strategies against early school leaving from France, Portugal, Estonia and Slovenia were presented, and later discussed by the plenary. The main challenges and opportunities of each country were identified for further work on the subject. The main challenges identified by the group in tackling early school leaving were cooperation between services, coordination of measures, use of data, and community involvement.

Furthermore, the working group agreed that vocational education and training should be used as an effective measure against drop-out and school failure, and be emphasized as an important measure against early school leaving. The working group generally recommended offering new learning opportunities to pupils in risk of early school leaving, to avoid drop-out.

Finally, the first meeting of the group of stakeholders on early school leaving and early childhood education and care was announced to take place 26 June.

First meeting of the stakeholder group on Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving

The first meeting of the Group of Stakeholder organisations working on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and Early School leaving (ESL), took place on 26 June 2012. ETUCE was represented by Elżbieta Leszczyńska (NSzz Solidarnosty). Other participants of the event were representatives of 31 non-governmental organisations at the European level.

The main objective of the meeting was to establish the new Stakeholders' Group of Non-governmental organisations as a parallel structure to the OMC Thematic Working Groups on ECEC and ESL, and to present the main result of the working groups on ECEC and ESL. Further, it was the objective of the meeting to discuss the main issues and opportunities concerning ECEC and ESL from the stakeholders' perspective.

The meeting consisted of two sessions dealing with ECEC and ESL separately. In each session, a presentation of the role, mandate, main objective and policy issues of the working groups on ECEC and ESL was followed by an open space discussion about which topics should be explored at the European level. Following the discussion, six topics in each were identified. Concerning ECE, lack of shared vision in policies, image of the child, non-centre based services, staff, accessibility, and research should be explored. In the field of ESL attractiveness, bridging ECEC and ESL, parental involvement, comprehensive policies/cross-sectoral approach, VET and finally second chance education were the topics.

The meeting concluded that disadvantaged groups need more support to achieve access to ECEC services, and that peer learning activities between different institutions should also be supported.

It was also suggested that Member States could make ECEC a part of the education system, and thus subsidise it through public funding.

The group agreed that further research is necessary concerning the effectiveness of pre-schools and schools, in sustaining and meeting the needs of vulnerable groups and how to ensure smooth transition within the different education levels. Regarding teachers and other professionals, the group proposed to raise discussion around unified qualifications professionals working at pre-school and primary school levels.

Finally it was decided that the Stakeholder Group organisations' meeting will take place twice a year.

Curricula in Early Childhood Education and Care

The third meeting of the *Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)* took place on 18-19 September 2012, in Brussels. ETUCE was represented by Stig G. Lund (BUPL). The main objectives of the meeting were improvement of early childhood education curricula and preparation of a peer-learning activity in Hungary.

The working group was asked to define determinants of success of early childhood education, which was followed by a discussion in the plenary. The group agreed that the determinant factors for successful early childhood education are the amount of teachers and resources, universal access to early childhood education for 0-3 year olds, and the importance of play and introducing educational principles from early childhood education to primary school.

An OECD representative presented the work of OECD on early childhood education and care, including the "Starting Strong III", which is a new publication focusing on quality issues and which defines policy tools to enhance quality in early childhood education and care. The representative also presented planned curricula for early childhood education. OECD will initiate a new project in 2013-14 on monitoring quality of ECEC.

A Hungarian ministerial member introduced plans for peer learning activities in Hungary in November 2012, and the subgroups discussed what should be the focus of the event. Compulsory kindergarten attendance from 2014 in Hungary, the role of play, the education of nurses and kindergarten teachers, and finally the role of researchers will be the main topics at the peer learning activities.

The next meeting of the working group will be in January 2013.

Measuring the impact of entrepreneurship

The 3rd meeting in the Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education took place from 18-19 May. The objectives of the meeting were to reflect on the subject of measuring the impact of entrepreneurship education, to refine the work programme, to plan meetings and finally to discuss the content and format of a policy handbook.

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to approaches of measuring the impact of entrepreneurship. The meeting began with a few presentations about the future Communication of the European Commission on Rethinking Skills and about the Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020. Later there were presentations about the effect of Entrepreneurship Education and instruments of measuring learning outcomes.

The second day of the meeting focused on the policy handbook, work programme, planning the meetings and other outputs of the group. Three presentations were held by the European Commission on the "Erasmus for all", on results of previous working groups and on expert groups working on creativity. It was decided that the group would produce a printable policy handbook as guidance for policy makers.

The group was asked to refine the work programme and define dates and actions for 2012 and 2013. The session resulted in an amended work programme, and refined goals for the sub groups.

The role of ICT in education

The Thematic Working Group on ICT and Education held a peer-learning activity on 17-19 September 2012 in Norway. ETUCE was represented by Guus Wijngaards (AOB). Other participants were EU country representatives and experts.

The objectives of the meeting were to visit two Norwegian schools working with ICT, to discuss mainstreaming of ICT in Norwegian education policy, and finally, to help to prepare the meeting of Education Ministers in Oslo in the beginning of December 2012.

The working group visited two Norwegian schools, a primary and lower secondary school, and an upper secondary school, where ICT is a common teaching tool in all subjects at all levels. The schools have made large investments in science and language, and every student has access to a laptop while attending the schools.

Furthermore, presentations were given on the role of ICT in the Norwegian educational sector, on the Centre for ICT in Education, and Policy developments established in Norway, and on the currently running public consultation entitled 'Opening Up Education'. The working group gave feedback based on the school visits, and a discussion on the status of ICT in different levels of education (from kindergarten to upper-secondary level) took place.

You can reply to the public consultation on 'Opening Up Education' until 13 November 2012 at the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/open_en.htm

Financing Adult Learning

The 3rd meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning took place on 25-26 September. ETUCE was represented by Rosella Benedetti (UIL Scuola). The main objectives of the meeting, was to discuss the work programme, questionnaire items, the organisation of peer learning activities (PLA), and the structure of the final policy handbook.

On the first day of the meeting the working group was divided into subgroups. The subgroups discussed the questionnaire on financing adult learning and proposed amendments, and the plenary reached agreement on the final work programme.

Discussions continued on the second day of the meeting focusing on the policy handbook featuring guidelines on financing adult learning for policymakers. The guidelines will be issued on the basis of feedback from Member States (via the questionnaire results) and PLA findings. The representative of ETUCE argued that the working group should not ignore stakeholders in this process, and suggested to include feedback from stakeholder organisations. The European Commission representative reminded the working group that there was still time to comment on the questionnaire, but the European Commission was not ready to accept the suggestion on including stakeholders. The discussion resulted in an agreement on a raw structure of the Policy Handbook.

Further work on outlining the policy handbook will be carried out in the next meeting of the core group 24 October, where the ETUCE representative is also present.

Recommended readings

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators

Tuesday 11 September, the European Commission hosted the press conference for this year's launch of *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*. Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on Education Policy to the OECD's Secretary General, presented the key findings of the OECD-report concerning, among other things, the economic crisis and education, investments in education, and the demography of the teacher population in Europe.

The economic crisis and public spending on education

Though the crisis has meant educational budget cuts in many European countries, Andreas Schleicher claimed that there has been a 50% increase in investments in education since 2000. Further, he established that with public investment in education the benefits of having a well-educated workforce will always outweigh the costs of spending on education. However, he also emphasised that public financing of education requires a very high taxation level, and hereby also sanctioned the right to finance education by raising tuition fees in educational institutions.

Ageing teachers a challenge for EU education sector

At the moment, more than 40% of secondary school teachers are aged 50 or older, and in some EU countries the share counts for even more than 50%. This will mean a great shortage in school teachers in the years to follow. Further, the OECD indicators showed that teachers in primary and secondary education are paid far less than teachers in tertiary education.

Xavier Prats Monné, European Commission Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture, ended the conference with some concluding comments on the European Commission's future initiatives concerning education, among them a reform of higher education, initiated last year, and the Communication on Rethinking Education due to be published in November.

Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2012

Eurydice, in cooperation with Eurostat and the European Commission, published the report entitled Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2012 at 20 September. The report covers all EU Member States, as well as countries in the European Economic Area, and Croatia and Turkey.

Findings in the reports show that the average age to start learning another language is between 6 and 9 in Europe. However, although students learn languages at an early age, the time for teaching foreign languages has not increased and is still low compared to other subjects.

Other noticeable findings are that there has been an increase in the share of students learning two foreign languages during compulsory education. English is the most taught of foreign languages: today, more than 90% of students in Europe learn English in lower secondary or general upper secondary education. French, German, Spanish and Russian follow English as the most popular foreign languages to be taught in schools.

Problems regarding teaching of languages in schools include a low share of foreign language teachers in the European teacher population, and significant problems for school heads to fill teaching vacancies for language

teachers. Also, students claim that their language teachers do not use the target language sufficiently when teaching. Furthermore, the European Commission finds it surprising that only few countries require their language teachers to spend a given amount of time in the target language country. The Commission comments that this should maybe be a criterion in future teacher training for language teachers.

The report is available at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/143EN.pdf

Final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy

In February 2011, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou initiated a High-level group of experts to examine how to support literacy throughout lifelong learning, and to make proposals for improving literacy among both school students and adults. Based on the work of the group, the final report was published on 6 September 2012.

The report focuses on literacy skills in Europe relating to society as a whole, as well as to specific age groups. It sets out the main facts behind literacy, and seeks to explain overarching issues related to literacy and preconditions for success considered to be relevant.

The report is concluded with a set of recommendations to policymakers and proposals for a wide range of actions by different players across the educational sector and society.

The high-level group recommends to:

- Create a more literate environment
- Raise the level of literacy teaching and provide more reading support
- Increase participation and inclusion of all groups in society

Furthermore, the report addresses specific **recommendations** for each educational player to contribute on improving literacy in different age groups:

Players	Young children	Primary age	Adolescents	Adults
School and educational institution leaders		Ensure primary schools focus on reinforcing motivation and emphasise reading for pleasure.	Support all teachers within the school to teach reading. Ensure literacy is seen as the school's core business and develop a vision for it. Develop a school-wide literacy strategy.	Ensure classes are small without too much variation in learners' literacy levels. Provide classes at convenient times. Ensure suitable course length and intensity.
Teachers (Including vocational training and adult education)		Develop instructional strategies and pedagogical approaches to teach reading in a way appropriate to each	All teachers should be reading teachers, even if they are not language or literacy teachers. Teach reading	Specialise in adult literacy training. Adapt teaching strategies to individual needs. Link authenticity

		individual learner. Provide children with individualised support, engaging reading materials and a creative culture that combines equity with high expectations as early as possible. Ensure early intervention, in a non-stigmatising way, embedded in day-to-day activities. Use formative assessment to identify literacy skills and needs from the very beginning of formal education. Integrate technology in teaching practice.	strategies that enable all students to cope with texts, also in subject areas. Assess motivation as well as literacy skills. Use attractive, age- and gender appropriate materials to motivate adolescents to read, including digital material. Allow students free time for reading and to choose their reading material. Use formative assessment to diagnose individuals' strengths and weaknesses and therefore help teachers to adjust their strategies	and relevance in teaching strategies. Link instruction to real-world tasks and relevant challenges
Teacher education institutions	Provide extensive training for teachers to recognise and remedy literacy problems at an early stage.	Provide extensive training for teachers to recognise and remedy literacy problems at an early stage. Integrate online reading, digital technologies and critical literacy in curricula for teacher education and CPD.	Ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to recognise reading difficulties, for adolescents and adults in particular. Provide teachers with knowledge and skills to overcome literacy difficulties even if they are not a literacy or language teacher. Provide further learning to make sure that all teachers have the necessary skills to tackle literacy difficulties among adolescents or adults.	

The report is available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/literacy/what-eu/high-level-group/documents/literacy-report.pdf

Major geographic disparities in education

On 14 September 2012, the NESSE network of experts published the independent report, *Mind the Gap - Education Inequality across EU Regions,* authored for the European Commission.

The report presents regional differences in education, and highlights that there are often more, or at least as many *intra*-national differences as *inter*-national differences when it comes to educational opportunities and outcomes in the EU.

According to the report, Southern European countries have the highest rates of people with low formal qualifications, while the highest rates of people with high formal qualifications are in the UK and in Central and Eastern Europe. The UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Northern Spain and Cyprus are in the lead when it comes to the shares of people in tertiary education, while Italy, Portugal and Eastern EU-countries rank at the bottom. When it comes to overall participation in education as a percentage of the total population, EU Member States in the North and the West have the highest percentage of people in education, and EU Member States in the South and South-East of Europe have the lowest percentage shares.

The key messages from the report are that regional disparities within and between EU Member States can hinder a balanced development and also cause a brain drain towards more advanced regions. The writers state that education policy alone is not enough to solve the problems: more tailored social policies are also necessary.

The report is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/doc/nesse/report_en.pdf

Further recommended readings

⇨ **Eurobarometer:** *Europeans and their languages*
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf

⇨ **Eurydice:** *National Student Fee and Support Systems – 2011/2012*
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/fees_and_support.pdf

⇨ **Eurydice:** *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe 2011/12*
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/salaries.pdf

⇨ **Cedefop:** *From education to working life – The labour market outcomes of vocational training*
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3063_en.pdf

⇨ **Cedefop:** *Study on Mobility Developments in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education an Youth Exchanges*
http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/more-information/mobility-study-report.pdf

⇨ **Eurydice:** *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2012*
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/143EN.pdf

⇨ **European Commission:** *Mind the gap – Education Inequality across EU Regions*
http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/doc/nesse/report_en.pdf

Dates to remember

29 October 2012	ETUCE Advisory Panel Meeting, Brussels
5-6 November, 2012	European Commission conference: Quality assurance in VET and Adult Education
26 November 2012	Education Council Meeting, Brussels
26-28 November 2012	ETUCE Conference, Budapest
1 January	Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union