

PREFACE

Thanks to the active involvement of all the members of the network, the objectives that EUNEC formulated for 2010 have been realized, and have sometimes exceeded our expectations.

Thanks to the Jean Monnet grant, EUNEC is now a network, working with professional methods and recognized in Europe. José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, congratulated us for our tenth anniversary in the preface he wrote for the study 'Education councils in the EU. Balancing expertise, societal input and policy advice in education policy making', executed by the Public Management Institute of Louvain, monitored by a EUNEC steering committee.

EUNEC planned to act as an interface between education councils and European institutions. In 2010, EUNEC has been very actively involved in activities organized under the Belgian Presidency of the EU, especially 'Breaking the cycle of disadvantage' in Ghent, 'Youth on the move' in Antwerp and 'Quality and Transparency as interface between VET, Schools and Higher Education to enhance mobility and to support easier pathways to Lifelong Learning' in Bruges. EUNEC took part in European consultations and was involved in the meeting preparing the European programmes for 2013-2017 in Barcelona.

EUNEC continues to inform the national/regional councils about the main policy lines in European education, to act as an interface between the education councils (internal networking) and between the education councils and the European Union (external relationships); to share good practice, challenges and opportunities during the meetings of the executive committee. Our tools and productions are published for everybody on the website: newsletter, state of affairs of the European education

policy, networking between national councils, seminar, conference, research,...

Two major events this year: a seminar in Limassol in June: 'Measuring effectiveness in education and training, especially in a period of economic crisis, and the impact of indicators, benchmarks, testing and evidence' and a conference in Brussels in December : 'Participation and involvement of stakeholders in the modernization of education policies both at national and European level'.

2010 was thus a very active year for the network.

We hope that a new grant of the Jean Monnet programme will help us to enhance, during the next 3 years, the professionalization of our work and our tools, especially the website which needs to be evaluated: we want it to be a real treasure of information about EUNEC, its works and proposals, but also about the councils member of the network and about the important European challenges for education and training.



Simone Barthel
EUNEC president



Mia Douterlungne
General Secretary

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CONTEXT

Education and training are seen as key actors in the development of a knowledge society. Therefore, both the EU and the member states put forward daring targets to energize the sectors of education and training making them more performing.

A SHORT HISTORY OF EUNEC

In order to give these innovation policies a broad societal support, governments mobilize the educational and social-economic stakeholders such as representatives of school boards, teacher trade unions, parent and student organisations and social partners to participate actively in the conception and the implementation of policies and activities in education and training.

Therefore most of the member states have set up national or regional formal institutions of consideration and consultation, bringing together all these stakeholders or part of them, in some cases together with experts, to formulate their recommendations.

Education councils have diverse statutes, but they all function as an advisory body towards governments on future education policies.

In 1999, some councils decided to work together on European educational subjects, and, to encourage a closer and more intense cooperation, the education councils created in 2000 EUNEC, a **European network of national and regional education councils**, with the support and the help of the European Commission, and in particular of Mr Domenico Lenarduzzi.

In 2010, EUNEC celebrated its tenth anniversary, during a conference on stakeholder participation held in Brussels, and organized by the Flemish Education Council and the Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation of the French Community in Belgium, two founding members of the network.

In 2008, EUNEC was recognized and granted as European organisation acting at European level in the field of education and training under the Jean Monnet programme (DG EAC N° 28/07). Within this programme, EUNEC obtained a Framework Partnership agreement for 2008-2010.



MISSION

EUNEC is convinced that all those involved in education (the European Commission, the governments of the Member States, the education councils, the stakeholders and all European citizens) can benefit from this European network where major evolutions and reforms in educational systems can be discussed thoroughly and prepared for a successful implementation.

EUNEC aims to discuss the findings and recommendations of all European projects in education and training, to determine standpoints and to formulate statements on these issues. EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively towards the European Commission, relevant DGs and other actors at European level, and to promote action by EUNEC members and participants at national level. EUNEC has the objective that the councils should put the main international policy lines high on the national agenda.



EUNEC wants to work in two directions:

They want to disseminate and discuss – at the national and at the European level - all documents, texts, studies... that are launched by the European Commission within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Bologna process, the Copenhagen process and Education and Training 2020.

With sound and coherent statements, the members of EUNEC want to influence the discussions and the decisions on the major European issues in education and training both on the European and on the national level.

Ten years later, EUNEC is a valuable partner for the European institutions, as **José Manuel Barroso**, president of the European Commission, states in his congratulations for the tenth anniversary:

*“Just as Education Councils are **key advisers** to their national governments, their European network has become **a significant stakeholder** in our Europe-wide cooperation in education and training.*

This pivotal role cannot be underestimated. European bodies carry important messages both ways. They are a vital channel for informing educationalists in their home countries about European policies and about the results and progress that come about from the cooperation between Member States. They also keep the European Commission up to date on the needs of the education and training sector throughout Europe, and help us to direct our work to the maximum benefit of our citizens, of our member countries, and thus of Europe as a whole.”

In the **Conclusions of the Council** and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, **on enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and social partners, in particular employers, in the context of lifelong learning (May 2009)** we read the following text:

*“The Council emphasises that education and training institutions should seek greater openness and responsiveness to the wider world and actively communicate with other partners in society at large. **Existing national models for the consultation of all relevant stakeholders and social partners are very valuable** to the ongoing development of education in its role to prepare our citizens for the challenges of life in the 21st century. The Council invites the Member States to **actively encourage the development of platforms for mutual dialogue between education and training institutions and employers and other relevant stakeholders at national and regional level** (...). The Council also invites Member States to tackle any unjustified barriers that may exist to the development of such partnerships. Member States are invited to **promote close cooperation with employers and other stakeholders at the systemic level** (with regard to the recognition of learning outcomes, the improvement of labour market forecasts, the implementation of European tools..)”*

We are convinced that the activities of EUNEC in 2010 contributed to the implementation of this policy line.

TARGET GROUPS

Through the members, education councils, EUNEC reaches stakeholders, experts and policy makers in the field of education and initial training in Europe.

EUNEC members are education councils. An education council must meet the following criteria (Statutes, Chapter II, art. 6):

- be composed of several partners of the educational community and/or experts;
- serve as a forum for consultation;
- operate at the level at which education policy is shaped;
- fulfil inter alia an advisory role in relation to the government and the ministers of education and/or the parliament and/or other official bodies;
- it must be a council whose competence extends to the educational system as a whole (including or not the tertiary education) or at least a council linked to one or more levels of education.

Organizations that fulfil the same type of tasks or have the same type of competency are within the limits of the national education councils and may be admitted as members.

The composition of the education councils guarantees the involvement of all the principal stakeholders in education in a region/country. This way, EUNEC wants to reach all stakeholders (policy makers, social partners, parents, students, teachers, providers...) in education throughout the European Union.

EUNEC MEMBERS IN 2010

Members are national councils, or regional councils, such as in Belgium where education and initial training are exclusively regional matters. Both Belgian councils were founding members of EUNEC.

All the members receive the information and the reports, take part in the networking and are involved in the meetings such as the seminars and conferences. But EUNEC has different categories of members according to their involvement or not in the daily work and/or management of the network.

Members of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly

Those members take part in all the activities and in the decision making process of the network.

FLEMISH COMMUNITY (BELGIUM): Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (VLOR)

FRENCH COMMUNITY (BELGIUM): Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation (CEF)

THE NETHERLANDS: Onderwijsraad

PORTUGAL: Conselho Nacional de Educação (CNE)

SPAIN: Consejo Escolar del Estado (CEE)

ENGLAND: Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)

LITHUANIA: Lietovous svietimo taruba (LST) Lithuanian Education Council

CYPRUS : Symvoulío Paideías

FRANCE: Haut Conseil de l'Éducation (HCE)

HUNGARY : National Council for Public Education

Members of the General Assembly

Those members take part in all the activities of the network. They approve the statements but don't take part in the decision process on the programme and on the management of the network.

ESTONIA: Estonian Education Forum (EEF)

CZECH REPUBLIC: National Training Fund (NTF)

FINLAND: Opetushallitus (National Board of Education)

WALES: General Council for Teaching

GREECE: Ethniko Symvoulío Pedas (ESYP) - National Council of Education

Network members

NORTHERN-IRELAND: Southern Education and Library Board



INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT THE EDUCATION POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The objective is to

- enhance the cooperation on these issues between the EUNEC members
- disseminate European proposals and tools on national/regional level; EUNEC disseminates European documents and initiatives to the members of its councils and tries to clarify them by summaries, comments or translations.

A REVIEW OF THE MAIN POLICY LINES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

the 'State of Affairs'

In 2010, the EUNEC secretariat prepared three overviews of the main policy lines in education and training, the so called 'state of affairs'. These documents present an overview of the documents that education councils need to integrate the European common policy lines and frameworks in their recommendations towards national Ministers of education and governments.

These synthesis documents describe in a very concise and accessible way the new policy documents. They summarize the main lines of the documents and offer links to the full texts. They take into account all documents linked to education and training and transversal domains (youth, culture, welfare, concurrence..) by all relevant decision making organisations (Parliament, Council, Presidency, Commission). The main policy lines are also

paying attention to other international organisations working in the field of education and training, such as OECD (a.o. CERI studies), UNESCO, UNICEF and the Council of Europe.

In 2010, the following themes were given major attention:

- The evaluation of the Lisbon strategy and the new strategy Europe 2020 (consultation process, European Commission Communication, Council Conclusions with numerical rates)
- Education and Training 2020:
 - Council conclusions on competences supporting lifelong learning
 - Council conclusions on the social dimension of education and training
 - The role of education in combating poverty and social exclusion
 - Increasing the level of basic skills in the context of European cooperation on schools for the 21st century
 - Education for sustainable development
- The Bologna process
- The Copenhagen process. A new impetus for European cooperation in VET to support the Europe 2020 strategy. The Bruges communiqué.
- The agenda for new skills and jobs
- The implementation of the European Qualifications Framework
- The high cost of low educational performance; the impact of the economic and financial crisis on education.
- TALIS Teaching and Learning International Survey
- Education for all (UNESCO)
- Adult learning

- ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study) UNESCO
- Lifelong Learning Programmes
- Culture – Youth – Employment – Internal market: conclusions and communication that are linked to the field of education and training. Special attention for the youth on the move initiative.

All these documents have been presented and discussed at executive committee meetings. These discussions are important, as an instrument for in-service training of the presidents and secretary generals of national and regional education councils. They pull the attention to new developments, to possible links between EU frameworks and national policies, to new approaches for ongoing and future advisory work. They offer a basis for common work and collaboration on new recommendations.

These documents are also important for determining emerging themes and fixing the themes EUNEC will work on in the following year.

The 'main policy lines' are translated if necessary and disseminated by all members among the staff and members of their own councils.

Education councils offer platforms to local stakeholders such as school boards, school heads, teacher unions, student organisations. Through the channel of the council a lot of stakeholders get an insight in the European education policy. The states of affairs play an important role in raising the awareness and the understanding of advisers of ministers and local education stakeholders of the common European reference frameworks. By taking them into account in preparing national advices, the

advices of education councils contribute highly to the national implementation strategies of these frameworks.

These states of affairs are also available for a broader audience: they are published on the website (www.eunec.eu) and in the newsletter reaching more than 200 correspondents, individual citizens as well as organisations.

EUNEC PARTICIPATES IN THE DEBATE ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

EUNEC insists on the importance of (more) stakeholder involvement in European policies. For that reason, EUNEC uses every possible occasion to express its viewpoints on relevant matters in education and training on the European level.

Participation in Presidencies of the European Union

During the Belgian Presidency of the EU, in the second half of 2010, EUNEC was closely involved in three major events organized, which gave us the opportunity to express our viewpoints on several specific themes and to enhance our impact on decision making on the European level.



- **Conference on social inclusion** (Ghent, 28-29 September 2010).

EUNEC was involved on two different levels:

- The EUNEC secretariat was involved in the preparatory meetings, discussing, together with the Belgian Presidency team for education and training, the theme and objective of this conference.
- 12 members of the EUNEC executive committee participated at the conference and played an active role in the following workshops: early childhood education and care; pupils at risk of social exclusion; lifelong learning pathways and partnerships to tackle educational disadvantage; low skilled adult learners. The conclusions of these workshops and of the conference were taken to the formal Education Council in November 2010, where education and social inclusion were on the agenda.

- **Conference on youth on the move** (Antwerp, 5-6 October 2010)

EUNEC participated at the conference. The conclusions of this conference were taken to the Education Council in November and had an impact on the content of the Council conclusions on Youth on the move.



- **Conference on ‘Quality assurance and transparency as interface between VET, Schools and Higher Education to enhance mobility and to support easier pathways to lifelong learning’** (Bruges, 6 December 2010)

Five members of the EUNEC executive committee participated at this conference. Jean Pierre Malarme, member of the EUNEC executive committee, was a speaker in the panel of the first workshops on ‘The role of learning outcomes and qualification standards in quality assurance’. EUNEC members also took part in the debates in other workshops: involvement of stakeholders in quality assurance; external quality assurance and accreditation; quality assurance of work-based learning leading to formal qualifications. The conclusions of the conference were a major input for the Bruges Communiqué. EUNEC is glad to see its ideas and priorities reflected in this communiqué.



Answers to public consultations by the European Commission



In 2010 EUNEC formulated a reaction on the consultation of the European Commission **on the Europe 2020 Strategy**. This reaction has been prepared and discussed at the executive committee meeting in December 2009, and finalised in the first weeks of 2010.

EUNEC formulated a reaction on the consultation on the **future programme in the field of Education and Training (2014-2020)**. A proposal was prepared by the secretariat, based on the input of several member councils; the proposal was discussed and approved through electronic mail.



Cooperation in European studies

Cooperation in a study on 'Critical factors and good practice in implementation of LLL strategies'.

GHK consulting was appointed by the European Commission to undertake this analysis in order to collect good practices illustrating, on concrete examples, what factors have led to successful implementation of such policies.

EUNEC filled in the template proposed by GHK, and coordinated the reactions of several of its members (Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation; Flemish Education Council; Portuguese Education Council). The results of this study have been presented by Michael Teutsch and Bernard Chabera, European Commission, at the Peer learning seminar on 'Critical factors for the implementation of LLL' in Vienna, 19-21 May 2010. EUNEC participated at workshop 3 at the conference on social inclusion, on 'Lifelong learning pathways and partnerships to tackle educational disadvantage', where Michael Teutsch opened the debate with a presentation on 'Six factors that are critical for the implementation of LLL strategies and policies'.

Cooperation in a study on 'A possible framework to facilitate transnational mobility of trainees for placements at enterprises'.

GHK consulting was appointed by the European Commission to undertake a study on a possible framework to facilitate transnational mobility of trainees for placements at enterprises. The study will provide the Commission with a list of concrete and practical recommendations regarding how to overcome existing

obstacles to mobility and how these recommendations could be implemented.

EUNEC participated at an interview. The input for the interview was prepared at the EUNEC secretariat and mainly based on the EUNEC statements on the recommendations of the study MoVE-iT: Obstacles to mobility in VET, discussed during a seminar with all members on 9-10 November 2006.

The interview took place on Friday 29 October 2010. Results of the study will be communicated to the European Commission in 2011.

Contributions of EUNEC representatives at EU conferences and the stakeholders' forum

European events organised by the institutions



The president and an expert of EUNEC participated at the third **stakeholders' forum of the European Commission**.

The central theme of the Forum, organized by the European Commission in cooperation with EUCIS-LLL and the European Youth Forum, was the future of the next generation of EU programmes in the field of education and training, youth and international cooperation in higher education (from 2014). The forum took place in Brussels on 28-29 October 2010. It was part of a larger consultation process on the future of the next generation of EU programmes, in which EUNEC already took part.

A representative of EUNEC participated at the following other stakeholder events:

- Stakeholder meeting: Mainstreaming occupational safety and health into education, Brussels, 24 February 2010
- ESCO stakeholders conference (European Skills, Competencies and Occupations Taxonomy), Brussels, 17-18 March 2010
- Meeting school education, stakeholder platform, Brussels 14 June 2010

Other international or European events

Whenever EUNEC is invited to an international event (conference, debate, workshop, seminar, survey), the secretariat forwards the invitation to the members by e-mail.

In accordance to the members' expertise and interest, a EUNEC member or the secretary represents the network at these events. Positions taken during these conferences are based on the common understanding laid down in the statements. At conferences and workshops, EUNEC representatives are the voice of the network.

The EUNEC representative spreads the information throughout the network. The executive committee insists on the multiplying effect of participation in conferences on behalf of EUNEC. Every representative is expected to make a report and send it to the secretariat. The secretariat makes a compilation of these reports in a document 'attended events' that is presented and commented on executive committee meetings and published on the website www.eunec.eu.

This is an overview of such attended events :

- Grundtvig, a decade of European innovation in adult learning, Brussels, 26-28 January 2010



- New skills for new jobs: action now, Brussels, 4 February 2010
- Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. Indicators and benchmarks, Anders Hingel, Brussels, 2 March 2010
- EU 2020 Strategy: raising the game, European Movement, 3 March 2010
- Thematic forum School Business Cooperation, Brussels, 24-25 March 2010
- Annual conference of the Lifelong Learning Programme, Barcelona, 19 May 2010
- Grundtvig tenth anniversary conference on European cooperation in adult learning, 'Shaping the future', Copenhagen, 23 September 2010
- Combating poverty and social exclusion during the economic crisis and beyond, Lisbon, 15-16 October 2010
- Brighter futures. Building effective partnerships to end child poverty. (Sweden, 4-5 November 2010).
Manuel Miguéns, member of EUNEC executive committee, represented the network during the closing round table. His contribution is in the report of the conference at the Eurochild website.
- Promoting active learning and ageing of disadvantaged seniors, European Parliament, Brussels, 16 November 2010
- Youth education to labour market transitions, Brussels, 29-30 November 2010 (Belgian Presidency of the EU).



IMPORTANT THEMES ON THE AGENDA IN 2010

THEME 1

STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING

During the past three years, EUNEC has been working on a more complete overview of the existing education councils and advisory bodies through Europe, in order to enlarge the network and to strengthen stakeholders participation both at national/regional level and on the European level.

This working process is a multi annual project of EUNEC made possible by the grant. The working process consists of a study, the dissemination of that study and a major action line of EUNEC.

EUNEC commissioned a study on education councils and advisory bodies in the EU. This study is executed by the IVO (Instituut voor de Overheid or Public Management Institute, Catholic University of Louvain). 2010 was a very important year for this study: finalisation, conclusions and publication. The next year will be an important year for the dissemination and the follow up of the impact of the research results.

EUNEC wanted an inventory of existing education councils and other bodies assuming the same function in the field of stakeholder participation in education and training. Secondly EUNEC wanted an analysis of the critical factors that influence the effectiveness and the functioning of well organised stakeholders involvement in education policies.

The results of this study will be used for the enlargement of the network, for informing countries without organised stakeholders participation on the features and effects of education councils and for information towards the European Commission on how education councils can offer platforms for closer collaboration between stakeholders in education and training and the broader world.

An extra outcome of the study is a self evaluation questionnaire, elaborated in the margins of this research: existing education councils have at their disposal a valuable tool helping them to optimise their functioning. During the conference on 'Participation and stakeholder involvement in education policy making' on 1-2-3 December 2010 in Brussels, education councils welcomed this questionnaire as a valuable new instrument.

Description of the work done in 2010

- In depth case study of the Spanish Education Council. Professor Marleen Brans conducted interviews with the President, Vice-President, Secretary, two interested parties, one expert member, and one government representative. She was transferred with two pieces of advice, one of which the board considers as a success, one as a failure, which then she discussed with the interviewees. Those activities have been organized in Madrid by Antonio Frias del Val, expert in the Consejo Escolar del Estado and member of the EUNEC executive committee.
- Completion of the basic factsheets

On 1-2-3 December 2010, the publication 'Education councils in the EU. Balancing expertise, societal input and political control in the construction of policy advice' was presented at an international audience (ISBN 9789081333627). EUNEC statements on stakeholder participation are based on the research recommendations.

Important parts of the study have already been translated into French, presented and disseminated (an initiative from CEF, French Community, Belgium).



Conference on stakeholder participation in education policy making in the EU

The conference 'Stakeholder participation in education policy making' took place in Brussels, on 1-2-3 December 2010. 67 participants, coming from 18 different European countries and representing their national/regional education council, participated at the seminar. The event was hosted by the Vlor (Flemish Education Council) and the CEF (Council of the French speaking Community of Belgium).

On the first day, Professor Marleen Brans, Professor Public Policy, and Jan Van Damme, Researcher, Public Management Institute, Louvain presented the results of the study. They facilitated interactive workshops on how to optimise an education council; the workshops were based on the recommendations of the study. Pascal Smet, Flemish Minister for Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels and President of the European Council for Education, Youth and Culture during the Belgian Presidency of the EU reflected on important challenges for education and on the importance of stakeholder participation.

On the second day of the conference, Pasi Sahlberg, Adj. Professor at the university of Helsinki and DG of CIMO (National Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation), presented his view on 'Global educational reform movement and national educational change'.

Lucie Davoine, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, and Gina Ebner, president EUCIS LLL talked about participation of education stakeholders on EU level.

Participants adopted **statements** that are based on the recommendations formulated by the research team in the study, and the outcomes of the discussions on these recommendations during the workshops.

A **report** of the conference including the statements, was sent to all participants, to all EUNEC members, to the European Commission and OECD. It was published on the website.



THEME 2

EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

EUNEC organized an **expert seminar** on 'Education and training in a period of economic crisis'. The seminar took place in Limassol, Cyprus, on 31 May – 1 June 2010. 26 participants, coming from 13 different European countries and representing their national/regional education council, participated at the seminar. The event was hosted and co-organized by our colleagues from the Education Council in Cyprus.

Participants were welcomed by Olympia Stylianou, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Culture, and member of the EUNEC executive committee.

Elpida Keravnou, president of the Governing Board of the Cyprus University of Technology, presented the case of Cyprus as far as investing in education is concerned.

Prof. dr. Henriette Maassen van den Brink from the Netherlands made a presentation on the economic and social benefits of education.

Anders Hingel, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Head of Unit, Analysis, statistics and indicators; coordinator of the report 'Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training' tried to answer the question how to enhance effectiveness and visibility of impact: 'Education and training: the chance of equity'.

Mia Douterlungne, EUNEC General Secretary, chaired an interactive session reflecting on benchmarks.



On the second day of the seminar, participants discussed education and budgetary restrictions.

Mireille De Koning, professional assistant within the Research Unit at Education International (Global Union Federation representing education workers) gave an overview of EI's work and findings from the survey on the impact of the crisis.

Manuel Miguéns, Secretary General of the Conselho Nacional de Educação (Portugal) presented the Portuguese case.

All participants adopted **statements** on the subject.

A **report** of the seminar including the statements, was sent to all participants, to all EUNEC members, to the European Commission and Parliament, OECD and other international organizations active in the field of education and training. It was published on the website.



THEME 3

A TRANSVERSAL ATTENTION TO THE PROMOTION OF CITIZENSHIP WITH AN EMPHASIS ON VULNERABLE GROUPS AND SOCIAL COHESION

Given the composition of the education councils, with all stakeholders in education and training, this is one of the overall aims of the network. This concern is prominent in the “acquis commun” in the different statements of EUNEC.

In 2010, EUNEC closely worked together with the team of the Belgian Presidency of the EU in the preparation of the conference ‘Breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Social inclusion in and through education’, Ghent, September 2010.

EUNEC kept members and stakeholders informed about activities and outcomes in the framework of the European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion.

EUNEC closely follows the debate on education for migrants and on early childhood education and care. Relevant documents are summarized by the secretariat, discussed at executive committee meetings and disseminated.

Representatives of EUNEC attended conferences putting emphasis on vulnerable groups and social cohesion. Reports of the conferences are presented at executive committee meetings, and disseminated through the website and the newsletter.

- Grundtvig, a decade of European innovation in adult learning, with a presentation from Helene Clark (director LLL programmes and policies) on Grundtvig's contribution to the fight against social exclusion (26-28 January 2010)
- Thematic Forum School – Business Cooperation, with a presentation from Frank Vandenbroucke, Member of the Flemish Parliament and former Flemish Minister of Work, Education and Training, insisting on the overall objective of equal opportunities. (24-25 March 2010)
- Combating poverty and social exclusion during the economic crisis and beyond: a multi-level governance approach (Lisbon, 15-16 October 2010)
- Brighter futures. Building effective partnerships to end child poverty. (Sweden, 4-5 November 2010). Manuel Miguéns, member of EUNEC executive committee, represented the network during the closing round table.
- Promoting Active Learning and Ageing of Disadvantaged Seniors. EUNEC secretary general Mia Douterlungne, participated at this public conference at the European Parliament on 16 November 2010.



MANAGEMENT OF THE NETWORK

Organisation of the network

The **General Assembly** is the highest body of the network and has all the responsibilities that have not explicitly been adjudged at the Executive Committee by the statutes. The responsibilities of the General Assembly include the right to:

- discuss and decide on matters concerning the operation, activities and working programme of the network;
- elect the President of the network;
- discuss and decide matters concerning the existence of the network;
- amend the statutes;
- approve or amend the internal rules of procedure upon the proposal of the Executive Committee;
- dissolve the organisation;
- exclude a member;
- discharge the members of the Executive Committee at the end of their mandate

In 2010, the General Assembly met on 3 December in Brussels. The minutes of this meeting are published on www.eunec.eu.

The **Executive Committee** is the board of the network. The Executive Committee must:

- implement the decisions of the General Assembly;
- announce the meetings of the General Assembly and the other network activities;
- approve new members
- appoint the auditor
- approve the accounts after receiving the auditor's report
- decide on the budget
- take decisions in accordance with the statutes of the network, in accordance with the interests of the network or with the policy of the General Assembly;
- report to the General Assembly on its activities and its financial management
- nominate the general secretary

The executive committee is at the same time also the place of real exchanges and networking about the national and European priorities in the field of education, the place to discuss news on European projects, the place where the state of affairs is presented.

Composition of the Executive Committee in 2010: Simone Barthel (president), Mia Douterlungne (general-secretary), Adrie van der Rest/Fons van Wieringen, Natalia Cuddy, Carmen Maestro Martin/Antonio Frias del Val, Ana Maria Bettencourt/Manuel Miguéns, Roos Herpelinck, Jean-Pierre Malarme, Emilija Sakasolskis/Egle Pranckuniene, Olympia Stylianou, Tas Szebedy, Christian Vulliez

In 2010, the Executive Committee met on 1 June in Limassol, on 27 September in Brussels and on 3 December in Brussels.

The **EUNEC secretariat** is composed by the President, the General Secretary, two experts and the secretary.

They coordinate the project and assume the daily management of the network; they keep the contact with the European institutions and the agency (Jean Monnet grant). They also represent the network in a lot of European events organised in Brussels, for budgetary reasons.

In 2010, the presidency is taken up by the Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation (Belgium, French Community); the General Secretariat and the secretariat are assumed by the Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (Belgium, Flemish Community).



Networking between members for shared activities

EUNEC members regularly work together in subgroups on specific themes in the field of education and training, according to their own national agenda or to the European agenda.

In 2010 the Dutch and the Flemish education council started up a cooperation on the theme of soft goals in education. The Spanish and the Portuguese Council exchanged good practices in the preparation of their 'state of the education'.

Executive committee meetings are excellent occasions to see which colleagues from other education councils could offer help or work together on specific themes.

In order to prepare a specific event or a specific document, sometimes the members of the executive committee decide to organise temporary working groups:

The secretariat (Flemish Education Council, Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation) and the Cyprus Education Council worked together to organize the seminar in Limassol.

The secretariat and the Flemish Education Council and the Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation worked together to organize the conference in Brussels.

A working group (Flemish Education Council, Lithuanian Education Council, Spanish Education Council, Portuguese Education Council) is preparing a revision of the EUNEC statutes.

A steering committee was set up to monitor the study on education councils (Flemish Education Council, Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation, Conselho Nacional de Educação, Nederlandse Onderwijsraad). This working group gathered a last time in March 2010.

***In 2010, EUNEC closely worked
together with partner
organisations***

The results of the seminars and conferences are sent to the European Commission, to the national governments or the national representatives in the European Institutions (Parliament, Education Council, ..).

EUNEC often works together with experts from partner organisations:

In 2010, EUNEC closely worked together with

- The European Commission, DG EAC. Mr Pierre Mairesse (replaced by Lucie Davoine) was speaker at our conference in Brussels; Mr Anders Hingel spoke at our seminar in Limassol.
- ELGPN (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network). Mr Raimo Vuorinen, coordinator of the network, and invited as speaker at the EUNEC conference on Guidance in October 2009, informs the EUNEC secretariat about possible new member councils.
- European Youth Forum. Maarten Coertjens was invited at the EUNEC conference in Brussels. He was also speaker at

the conference organised by the Flemish Education Council in 19 May 2010 (in Schaarbeek, Brussels) on European education policy.

- As a follow-up of the cooperation with the EPA, European Parents Organisation (Brigitte Haider was speaker at the EUNEC conference in Vilnius in October 2008), we keep each other informed about our activities. EUNEC was invited at the EPA anniversary conference on 19 June 2010 in Milan and at the November 19th/20th conference on "Challenge Migration - connecting Europe through through History" in Vienna; Brigitte Haider and EPA president Johannes Theiner participated in the EUNEC conference in December 2010.
- Education International. Mireille De Koning (EI research unit) was invited as a speaker at the EUNEC seminar in Limassol.
- EUCIS LLL. President Gina Ebner made a presentation on stakeholder involvement at EU level at the EUNEC conference in December.
- EUNEC participated in the preparation of the application of Prof. Ides Nicaise and Prof. John Holford (Nottingham) (call EACEA/10/2010) for a project on stakeholder involvement in the field of adult education (based on the results of the study on LLL 2010).

We send our newsletter with up to date information on our network to the other organisations that are granted under the Jean Monnet Programme, key activity 3; we had the opportunity to meet and to network with these organisations that share our objectives on the Coordinators meeting organised by EACEA. We receive information by e-mail about their activities.

The list of the organisations: *ESN (Erasmus Student Network); EUROCLIO; Europäischer Verband Beruflicher Bildunsträger; EADTU (European Association of Distance Teaching Universities); EAEA (European Association of the Education of Adults); European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education; EOSE (European Observatory of Sport and Employment); EPA (European Parents Organisation); European Platform for Rehabilitation; EUCEN (European University Continuing Education Network); FEDEC (Fédération Européenne des écoles de cirque professionnelles); YA-YE (Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise Europe); OBESSU (Organising Bureau of the European School Student Unions).*

EUNEC annual account 2010

EUNEC 2010 - 31 december 2010

earnings		92769,66
	Membership fees	28000,00
	Grant European Commission	59928,00
	Bank interests and reimbursement	4841,66
expenditure		101386,29
	subcontract KULeuven	10000,00
		10000,00
	Staff travel and subsistence	6284,17
	Attendance meetings and conferences	1109,76
	Reimbursement grant 2008 European Commission	26559,93
	Seminar Cyprus May June 2010	13867,31
	Conference Brussels December 2010	28999,37
	Auditor	726,00
	General administration costs	3451,66
	Bank costs	50,00
	Port costs	338,09
balance		-8616,63

bank account balance 31/12/2009	28714,89
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bank account balance 31/12/2010	20098,26
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EUNEC as an International Non-Profit Organisation

EUNEC General Assembly adopted a limited change of the statutes of the network (article 5.2) :

Responsibilities of the members:

Members assume different responsibilities within the network.

- *Members with management responsibility. They are taking part in all activities. They are active members of both the executive committee and the general assembly.*
- *Members participating in the general assembly. These members are participating in seminars and conferences and in the general assembly. They are not member of the executive committee.*
- *Network members are invited to conferences and seminars but don't take part to the decision process.*

All the members are involved in the networking by mail and have the opportunity to participate in the debates on a subject. All the members have the possibility to invite other members to join their own activities.

These changes have been published in the Belgian Law Gazette on 27 September 2010 (www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv/tsvn.htm number 880.464.842)

ANNEX 1: STATEMENTS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON EDUCATION

Negative effects

European countries are just starting to feel the impact of the crisis on national budgets. It is clear that some countries yet feel the impact of important economic measures, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. It is not yet clear what price education will pay. In Western Europe, measures often have caused a reduction or a delay in new projects and new investments.

Loans will certainly continue to have a negative impact on education and will exacerbate developments that are already taking place.

It is important to continue to commission research during a crisis like this in order to evidence the impact of such crisis and to guard against an erosion in the quality of outcomes and opportunities for our children/students.

Reduction in the investment for education would be disastrous for social cohesion: the risks for those groups most at need (minority groups, lower skilled, those with special educational/social needs) are great. At the same time, people without qualifications risk to be more and more excluded from work and social provisions.

The need for substantial financial cuts and shrinking budgets should not become an obstacle in the implementation of educational reforms; cuts in the budgets should not be aimed at the development expenditure, but at operational costs.

In the perspective of budgetary constraints, the impact on the teaching profession is a crucial one. The attractiveness of the teaching profession should be one of the corner stones of budget policies. Economic cuts should not impact teachers by increasing workloads, hiring of unqualified – but cheaper – teachers. Performance related assessments should not tie salaries to standardized test results.

Improving lifelong learning is an important factor in order to counter the negative effects of the crisis.

Opportunities offered by the crisis

The global economic crisis has provided the opportunity to pause and reflect on our education systems, how they are funded and what their priorities should be.

The crisis can provide a drive to optimise the efficiency of available resources in order to continue the efforts without any compromises or reductions to quality: money has to be channelled to the most problematic areas.

In responding to this crisis, we also have the opportunity to acquire experience, skills and knowledge which may enable us to anticipate and manage future crises. It can be more democratic – it is learning democracy.

This crisis has encouraged European countries to come together and to share experiences and questions. We now need to further develop networks for the effective transfer of skills and experiences. The education councils have a crucial role in this process.

THE BENEFITS OF INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION ON SOCIETY

The return of investments in education is an important issue in a period of crisis. Is there a true causal effect between investments in education and benefits for society?

Figures support this supposition: education and training are central levers not only in tackling the present economic crisis but also in preparing a more sustainable, social and innovative society. Research (meta analysis) shows that the rate of return to a year of education is between 7 and 9% and has increased the past twenty years. Underperforming in education is simply too expensive: there is a clear added economic value.

Moreover, investing in education has important social returns: 5 to 9 %. Education contributes to better health and longer life expectancy; education reduces social costs of health, criminal justice and social security; education contributes to social participation and social cohesion.

Investment in education is an investment in progress in the socio economic and cultural domains, in both the long term and the short term; results will not always be immediate.

However, research results are not always reliable and harmonized. There is a need for more meta analytical research and interpretation of the causes and effects of investments in education and human development to inform the whole community, especially during the economic and social crisis.

For education councils it is important to have and expand this evidence that education has causal effects on crime, justice.. It is a strong argument towards the government for reallocation of budget to education and training. Policy makers, employers, parents, community need to be aware of the benefits and act accordingly.

EUNEC thinks that education has to be considered as an investment, more than as a cost. National councils are well placed to argue and to disseminate evidence that proves the benefits and the returns of investments in the economic and in the social field.

A MORE EVIDENCE BASED POLICY WITH ADEQUATE USE OF BENCHMARKS

As a means of monitoring progress and identifying challenges, as well as contributing to evidence-based policy making, a series of reference levels of European average performance ('European benchmarks') were agreed on by the Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting (12 May 2009). They should support the strategic objectives outlined in the Council Conclusions. These benchmarks build on the existing ones adopted under the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme. According to the Council conclusions, these benchmarks should not be considered as concrete targets for individual countries to reach by 2020.

Rather, Member States are invited to consider, on the basis of national priorities and whilst taking account of changing economic circumstances, how and to what extent they can contribute to the collective achievement of the European benchmarks through national actions.

According to the Spring Council Conclusions of 25-26 March 2010 on 'Europe 2020', there is agreement on 'headline targets', that are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. They should help measure progress achieved in implementing the strategy. While some of these targets are reflected in EU legislations, the others are not of a regulatory nature and do not imply burden-sharing ; they represent a common aim to be pursued through a mix of national and EU level action.

Benefits

A lot has been achieved thanks to the European Union benchmarks: they launched the debate, they put important issues prominently on the agenda (early school leaving, participation in lifelong learning,..). The targets have stimulated policies; at least they opened up the narrow national perspective.

In order to justify the spending on education, benchmarks play an important role (accountability of the education system).

The method of benchmarks and indicators is useful as a reference; individual nations can use them as tools for their development and learn from each other.

Pitfalls

Benchmarks are an instrument for comparison, but cannot be considered as a value in se. Benchmarks should reflect the complex reality of education. By nature, benchmarks inform about what is at the surface: they don't show that progress can

be made underneath, in the quality of education. Benchmarks can therefore not replace critical analysis.

The indicators and benchmarks have to be based on research. Policy and research should be more connected in this area. There is a need for internationally comparable data. In this respect EUNEC welcomes the work on ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study).

Benchmarks should not only reflect the actual achievement of the Member States, but also the progress that was made according to their different starting positions.

National benchmarks.

In the most recent European documents we read that Member States will be asked to agree on national benchmarks in the same fields as the existing European benchmarks. This is a completely new development. Although these national benchmarks might raise the degree of responsibility of the national education systems, there is a true risk that the European dimension will be lost; national benchmarks might become important at the expense of the European benchmarks. A compromise will have to be found between the national and the European logics.

Education councils should be involved in the national targeting exercise.

The impact of the crisis needs to be born in mind when considering a country's progress towards EU benchmarks.

Which benchmarks?

Two benchmarks agreed on by the Council of Ministers for Education in 2009 are about to be numerically fixed by the Spring Council meeting of 17 June 2010, in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The benchmark for higher education should be enlarged to different forms of tertiary education. A well qualified working force does not mean that all need to have a bachelor or a master degree. Raising qualification levels should take into account the value of Vocational Education and Training. Moreover, this benchmark needs to be fine tuned taking also into account the socio economic background of the students in order to develop efficient policies concerning participation in higher education.

The benchmark for early school leaving is not clear: there is again the need for more internationally comparable data on what is meant by 'early' school leaving.

EUNEC states that, within the discussion on new benchmarks, the happiness factor is an overlooked variable that needs to receive more attention.

The role of education councils

Discussion about the national benchmarks is not on the agenda of several national/regional education councils. National/regional education councils will try to raise awareness and to put these national benchmarks on the agenda of their policy makers. In this respect, education councils can learn from each others' experiences within EUNEC

ANNEX 2: STATEMENTS ON PARTICIPATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION POLICY MAKING

Education councils as places for participation and consultation of stakeholders, a key element in education policy making

Participation and consultation of citizens and stakeholders is a key element in policy decision making. It is generally being recognized as a main indicator of good governance.

Education councils are regional or national bodies that provide regional or national ministers, governments, parliaments, with policy advice on innovation in educational policies. In fact, it is one of the most important formal bodies used by governments in their decision making processes as an efficient and effective way for involvement and participation of stakeholders. In the European field, EUNEC, the network of national and regional education councils is considered as a partner in the European policy making process for education and training.

What are Education Councils ? A scientific study gives the answer

Education councils are diverse bodies, with their own characteristics. There is a growing interest to examine the benefits of a council, both by governments and stakeholder organisations, aiming to make consultation processes more transparent and efficient.

Therefore, EUNEC decided to undertake a study on the concept of participation, expertise, legitimacy and involvement of stakeholders and experts in educational policy processes: *'Education councils in Europe - Balancing expertise, societal input and political control in the production of policy advice'* (Marleen Brans, Jan Van Damme, Public Management Institute – KUL).

EUNEC organized a conference on stakeholder participation in Brussels on 1 – 3 December 2010, based on the lessons drawn from the research, with the input of European policy makers and national or regional representatives of education councils. EUNEC adopted the following recommendations, on a meso and micro level. The recommendations are based on the conclusions of the discussions in workshops during the same conference. Participants at the workshops came from countries that have an education council, that used to have one or that intend to create one.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

These meso recommendations pertain to institutional and political decisions and contexts. They thus appeal to those policy actors who are responsible for organizing and employing advisory organizations, should they seek to raise the legitimacy of the input, throughput and output of their advisory councils, and ultimately also of their policy decisions.

These meso recommendations can be useful for countries that don't have yet an education council.

- To be efficient and real partners in the policy making process, education councils need to be recognized and to be stable

1 Give some sort of **legal recognition** to the advisory council. Legally embed its role

2 Legally settle the council's **access points** at different stages of the policy advice, to ensure the connectedness of the council with the actual policy making. It is important that education councils can be involved in the decision making process at different stages: to have influence in the early stage and also in the implementation stage.

3 Ensure **sufficient funding** to the advisory council as an organization or to the members. Only this way, the council can become a stable organisation where expertise can be built up over time. This favours independence and continuity and helps foster a stable policy environment in which policy memory can grow. In times of economic crisis, this recommendation is even more relevant.

4 Invest in the **knowledge base** councils may draw upon (benchmarking, monitoring, evaluation and research).

5 Combine legal guarantees with sufficient discretion (=the flexibility a council has to organize its structure and work). With **discretion and flexibility**, a council can make most of possible policy windows and successfully deliver boundary work (=bridging the worlds of science, policy making and society).

6 Allow for the **inclusion of different communities in** order to broaden the knowledge base of policy making, if not through membership, representation and co-optation, than through mechanisms of consultation of experts and civil society interests.

- Education councils, as advisory bodies, need some formal contacts with principals (Principal-agent theory holds that organizational relations may be understood as a series of delegations of authority from principals to agents).

7 Raise the commitment of the governments as a principal by **communication with leading civil servants**. However, the autonomy of the council and its legitimacy has to be guaranteed, and therefore the role of the civil servants has to be clearly defined.

8 Raise the **number of principals**, by for instance including the parliament as a client of the council's advice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATION COUNCILS

These micro recommendations concern education councils themselves as organisations, to help them to improve the quality of processes and organization, and outline possible routes and mechanisms for increasing their input as well as throughput and output legitimacy.

- Concerning the internal organisation

1 Adopt strategies and tools for **combining civil society input and expertise**. Supplement inclusion through membership structure with consultation mechanisms such as expert pools, e-fora or focus groups. When information is imperfect, councils do best to consult their past knowledge base or engage in ad hoc consultation of academic experts. EUNEC is convinced that councils still need to go outside to have access to the best available knowledge.

2 Adopt mechanisms to avoid domination by certain groups and/or persons by virtue of their knowledge or position.

3 Adopt different advisory tracks. These different tracks can have different rules on membership, mandate, decision making rules etc.

4 Develop strategies to train staff and leaders as boundary workers. Boundary workers need communication skills, skills in policy analysis, journalistic skills. They have to be able to understand the perspectives, sensitivities and constraints of different principals in the policy environment, and to have receptive antennae for political and organizational behaviour.

➤ Concerning the dissemination of the outcomes

5 Adopt conscious and diversified dissemination strategies in order to communicate with different principals and raise the utility of the products.

6 Customize information to the different principals and audiences. Translate expert opinion or academic research into information accessible to societal representatives; vice-versa, translate the needs of various societal actors into relevant information for academic experts. Narrow the gap between the experts and the public. Turn academic research into practical points for policy intervention.

7 Engender with members and principals different understandings of advisory success in order to prevent frustration and to raise commitment. Longer term impact is no lesser success than affection policy immediately. Education councils need feedback mechanisms after the advice is given, rather than a simple acceptance or rejection. Education councils should communicate and celebrate success, even if it is partial.

- Concerning the agenda

8 Efficiently **plan and time advisory processes** and projects in annual and multi-annual work programmes. This allows the council to align with the government's policy cycle.

- Concerning external cooperation

9 Work together with similar structures in other countries in order to create a 'European common sense'. Learn from each other. **International cooperation** improves the efficiency of processes and products.



