



EDUCATION COUNCILS AND THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA

**Report of the seminar of the European Network of Education Councils,
Sèvres, 16-17 May 2019**

Brussels, October 2019

EUNEC secretariat, Koning Albert II-laan 37, 1030 Brussels

www.eunec.eu

Education Councils and the European Education Area

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INTRODUCTION

EUNEC is the **European Network of Education Councils**. Its members advise the governments of their countries on education and training. 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's members and participants at national and regional level. EUNEC also has the objective that the councils should put internationalization and mobility high on the national agenda, that they should clarify the European policy in education and training towards all relevant stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

The European Commission has set out its vision for how we can **create a European Education Area by 2025**. The [Communication](#) was intended as a contribution at the meeting of 17 November 2017 in **Gothenburg**, where European leaders met to discuss the future role of education and culture in strengthening a shared European identity. This informal meeting of heads of state and government took place at the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus programme and in the framework of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth.

The Commission believes that it is in the shared interest of all Member States to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for job creation, economic growth and social fairness as well to experience European identity in all its diversity.

The primary responsibility for education and culture policies lies with the Member States, at national, regional and local levels. However, the European Union has played an important complementary role over the years. This is particularly true when it comes to cross-border activities. Over the past decade, the European Union has also developed a series of 'soft policy' tools to help Member States in the design of national education policies. Since 2000, Member States have been cooperating under the 'Framework for European cooperation in education and training' (ET 2020) which set common objectives and benchmarks. The Commission believes it is now time to build on these foundations and greatly step up our ambition.

The following actions can contribute to this European Education Area:

- [Making mobility a reality for all](#): by building on the positive experiences of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps and expanding participation in them as well as by creating an EU Student Card to offer a new user-friendly way to store information on a person's academic records;

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- [The mutual recognition of diplomas](#): by initiating a new 'Sorbonne process', building on the 'Bologna process', to prepare the ground for the mutual recognition of higher education and school leaving diplomas;
- [Greater cooperation on curricula development](#): by making recommendations to ensure education systems impart all the knowledge, skills and competences that are deemed essential in today's world;
- [Improving language learning](#): by setting a new benchmark for all young Europeans finishing upper secondary education to have a good knowledge of two languages in addition to their mother tongue(s) by 2025;
- [Promoting lifelong learning](#): by seeking convergence and increasing the share of people engaging in learning throughout their lives with the aim of reaching 25% by 2025;
- [Mainstreaming innovation and digital skills in education](#): by promoting innovative and digital training and preparing a new Digital Education Action Plan;
- [Supporting teachers](#): by multiplying the number of teachers participating in the Erasmus+ programme and eTwinning network and offering policy guidance on the professional development of teachers and school leaders;
- [Creating a network of European universities](#) so that world-class European universities can work seamlessly together across borders, as well supporting the establishment of a [School of European and Transnational Governance](#);
- [Investing in education](#): by using the European Semester to support structural reforms to improve education policy, using EU funding and [EU investment instruments](#) to fund education and setting a benchmark for Member States to invest 5% of GDP in education.
- [Preserving cultural heritage](#) and fostering a sense of a European identity and culture: by developing – using the momentum of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage – a European Agenda for Culture and preparing a Council Recommendation on common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching.
- Strengthening the European dimension of Euronews, which was created in 1993 by several European public broadcasters, with the ambition of having a European channel offering access to independent, high quality information with a pan-European perspective.

Some of the actions are already being implemented. Others are only planned.

On 22 May 2018, the Council for Education adopted [conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area](#).

The conclusions highlight the crucial role of education and culture in bringing Europeans together and for the future of the EU. The conclusions invite member states to cooperate and continue reflecting on a shared vision of a EEA, including its possible goals, objectives and scope, and its links with the post-

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2020 strategic framework for cooperation in education and training. Special emphasis is put on: Erasmus +, digital skills and education, higher education, high quality and inclusive education, involvement of new stakeholders including disadvantaged groups, language learning and the recognition of qualifications.

Further and updated information can be found at the [website of the European Commission](#).

The focus of the seminar is on how education councils can position themselves in view of the European Education Area plan, and on how they can play their role as a mediator, bridging the gap between the European policy level and the school/class level.

'As we look to Europe's future, we need to equip ourselves with an ambitious, shared agenda for how we can use learning as a driver for unity. Education is key because it is education that equips us with the skills we need to become active members of our increasingly complex societies. It is education that helps us adapt to a rapidly changing world, to develop a European identity, to understand other cultures and to gain the new skills one needs in a society that is mobile, multicultural and increasingly digital.¹

¹ Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, at the occasion of the first European Education Summit, Brussels, 25 January 2018.

PROGRAMME

The seminar is hosted by CNESCO (Conseil National de l'Évaluation du Système Scolaire). The seminar took place at the premises of CIEP (Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques) in Sèvres, close to Paris.

Thursday 16 May 2019

*Chair of the day: **Manuel Miguéns**, EUNEC president and secretary general of the CNE (Portuguese Education Council)*

09.00 – 09.30 h	Registration and coffee
09.30 – 10.15 h	Welcome session <i>Manuel Miguéns, EUNEC president and secretary general of the CNE (Portuguese Education Council)</i> <i>Stéphane Foin, joint director of CIEP</i> <i>Nathalie Mons, president of CNESCO</i>
10.15 – 10.30 h	A general overview of the European Education Area as a broad policy initiative , and a state of the art of the different actions <i>Bianca Busuioc, European Commission, DG EAC</i>
10.30 – 11.00 h	Key note stimulating the reflection on 'What could be the EEA? What are the opportunities and the pitfalls?' <i>Maarten Simons, KULeuven, Belgium</i>
11.00 – 11.15 h	Short break
11.15 – 11.45 h	Current education priorities and converging policies in France and in the EU <i>Patricia Janissin, Deputy Director for European and Multilateral Affairs, Directorate for European and International Relations and for Cooperation, Ministry of National Education</i>
11.45 – 12.15 h	Questions and answers/debate
12.15 – 14.00 h	Lunch at CIEP
14.00 – 16.00 h	Zoom in on actions under the European Education Area. Panel. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Automatic recognition of qualifications: the BENELUX experience in higher education (<i>Marie-Anne Persoons, Department of Education and Training, Flanders, Belgium</i>)• Greater cooperation on curricula development (<i>Alice Micallef, Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning</i>)

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and Employability, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta)

- Improving language learning (*Isabelle Leguy, General Inspectorate, France*)
- Mainstreaming innovation and digital skills in education (*Maria João Horta, DG Education, Ministry of Education, Portugal*)
- International mobility of pupils and students (*Raymond Kubben, Dutch Education Council*).

17.00 h Walk at 'Domaine national de St Cloud'

19.30 h Dinner at restaurant [Cap Seguin](#)

FRIDAY 17 May 2019

09.00 – 11.30 h **School visit linked to the theme of improving language learning.** Collège de Sèvres

12.00 – 13.30 h Lunch at CIEP

13.30 – 15.30 h **Zoom out: what can be the role of education councils?** *Round Table chaired by Manuel Miguéns, EUNEC president*

Introduction by Roos Herpelinck, responsible for the Commission on International Education and Training Policy at the Flemish Education Council.

All members are asked to bring their answers to the question: 'How do education councils position themselves in view of this EEA policy plan? Are they aware of what is happening at EU-level and of the possible impact on national and regional education policy? How can education councils play their role as a mediator, bridging the gap between the European policy level and the school/class level?'

Welcome session

Stéphane Foin is joint director of CIEP

Stéphane Foin welcomes the participants on behalf of CIEP (Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques).



CIEP: a perfect place to discuss the European Education Area

The timing of this EUNEC seminar on the theme of the European Education Area is perfect. In the campaigns preparing the European Union elections, a lot is being said about what the EU can do for the Member States. The theme of the European Education Area offers a good opportunity to talk also about what Member States can do to work towards a stronger EU.

CIEP is a symbolic place to host this meeting, as topics such as mobility, recognition, language learning, digitalisation, cooperation on curriculum development are at the heart of CIEP activities, and at the heart of this European Education Area.

Brief presentation of CIEP

CIEP is an institution of the French Ministry of Education, dealing with international public cooperation in education. It offers expertise and continuous training in various fields: education and training, teaching in/of French, French language certifications, recognition of qualifications and international mobility.



The strategic objectives of CIEP are:

- Strengthening its position as the main institution of the French Ministry of Education abroad;
- Supporting the use of the French language worldwide and contributing to the development of the President's plan in support of French language and plurilingualism;
- Helping open up the French educational system to the wider world and facilitating European and international mobility.

A team of 230 persons works for CIEP, involving a network of national and international experts and partners. CIEP has a local centre in Reunion Island, and is member of the Sorbonne University Alliance.

Cooperation in education and training

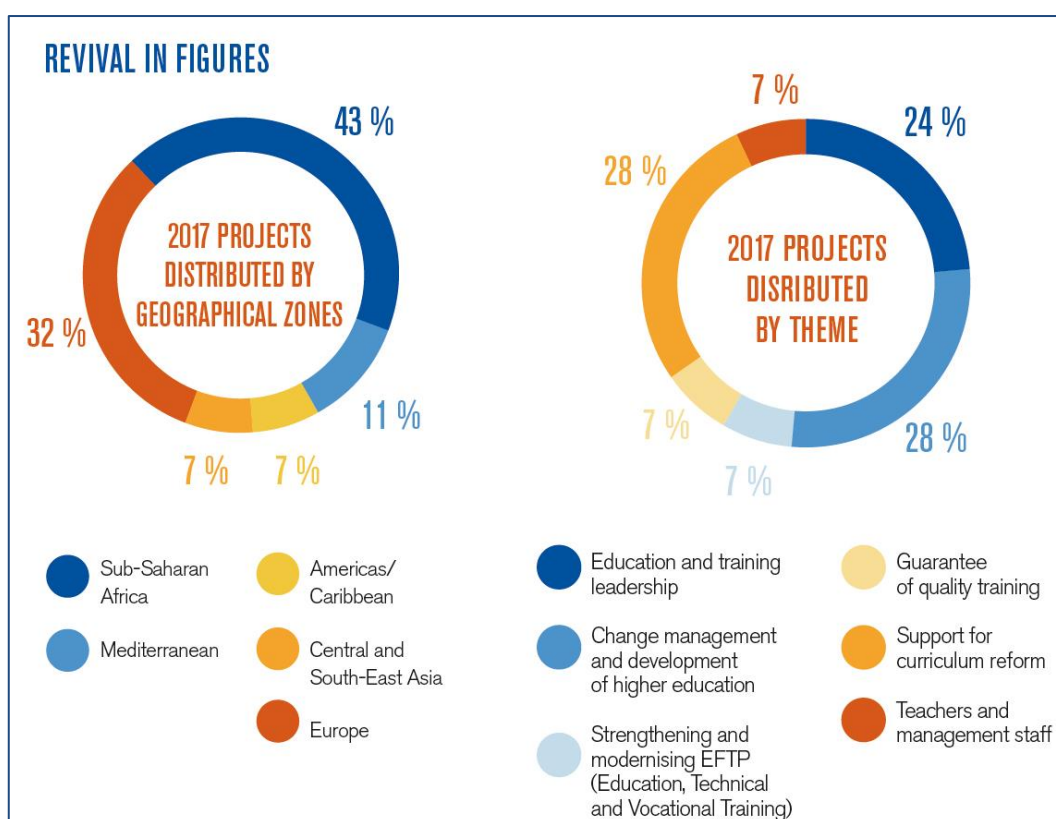
CIEP has proven experience in over 60 countries, in three areas of intervention:

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- Project management of bilateral or multilateral funding (French Agency for Development, European Union, World Bank, ...);
- The organisation of conferences and seminars relating to issues facing educational systems;
- The offer of bespoke training courses and expert services.

The volume of activity of cooperation in education projects is settled at close to 9.930.000 euro in 2017, which means an increase of 9 % in comparison with 2016.

The graph below shows the distribution of projects in 2017, by geographical zones and by themes:



CIEP and CNESCO, le Conseil National de l'Évaluation du Système Scolaire, are working together with the objective to enable the French education system to remain open to the world and to learn from successful experiments elsewhere.

They have organised jointly five international comparison conferences:

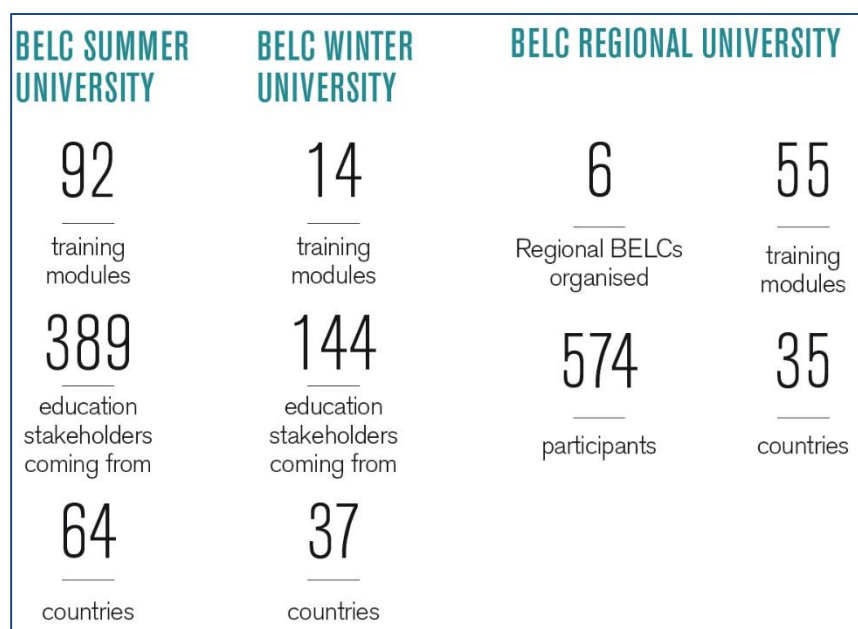
- Social diversity at school (2015);
- Inclusive school (2016);
- Vocational education and training in secondary schools (2016);
- Early school leaving (2017);
- How to build an orientation course throughout schooling? (2018).

French language

CIEP is supporting bilingual education: support for projects, training and management of the website 'Le fil du bilingue'. The centre offers expertise and seminars on request, supporting teaching of/in French worldwide. In 2018, projects run in Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon. CIEP manages the 'Qualité français langue étrangère' certification.

CIEP offers training courses for French language professionals:

- PROFLE+ (French as foreign language online training);
- CIEP+ (online training);
- BELC Universities in France and abroad (5 international universities in 2018), as demonstrated in the graph below:



CIEP also offers tailored training courses.

The year 2017 was defined by four strong trends:

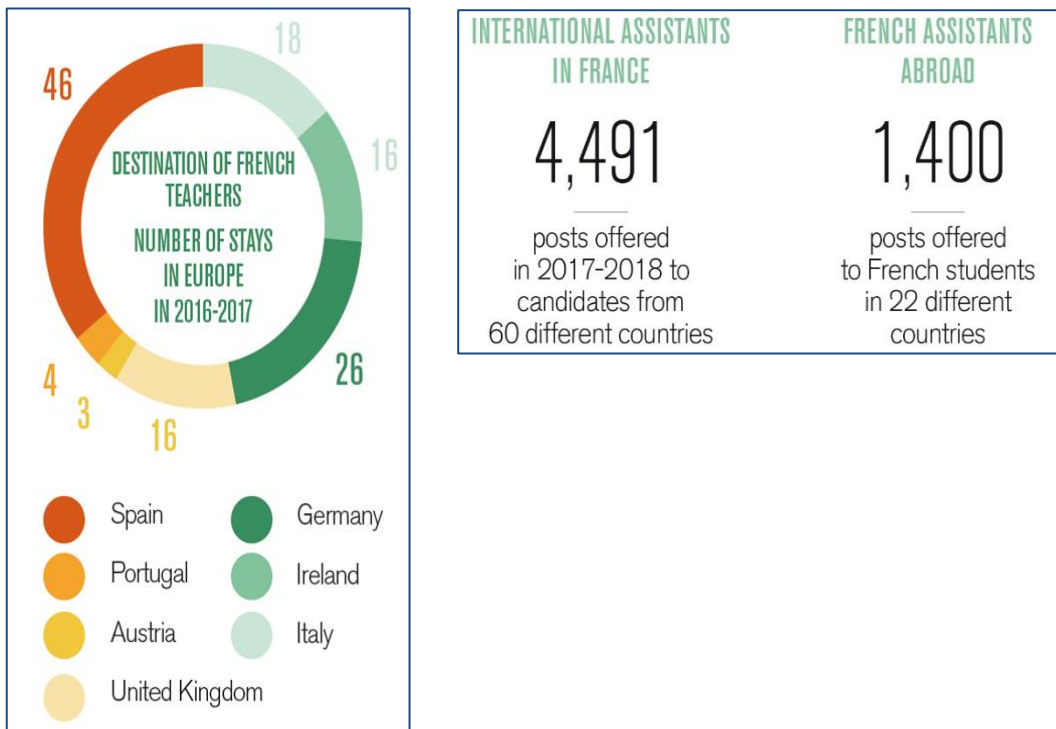
- redesign of two modules out of four from the PROFLE+ digital package and creation of distance training modules on CIEP+, a new digital platform;
- 10 years of the 'Qualité français langue étrangère' certification and 50 years of the BELC University;
- several training courses and expert missions with stakeholders from the education systems in French-speaking countries;
- support for new demands, particularly in the field of bilingualism.

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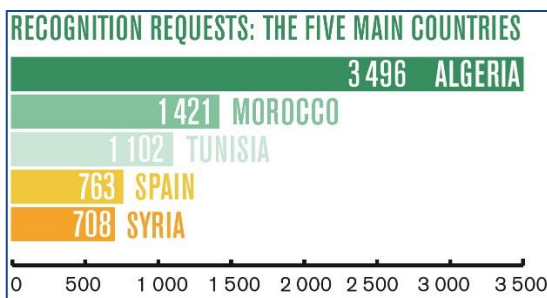
In the field of assessment and certification, CIEF does the administrative and pedagogical management of national French as a Foreign Language certifications (DILF, DELF, DALF and TCF). It developed a placement test for businesses and language training centers, Ev@lang. And the CIEP Quality and Expertise Unit controls diplomas and tests.

International links

CIEP manages international teacher and student mobility, as demonstrated in the graphs below:



The French ENIC-NARIC Centre is the national expertise and information centre for academic recognition of foreign qualifications. It promotes international mobility by enabling the interpretation of academic qualification. It actively contributes to the construction of the European Higher Education Area.



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CIEP is also hosting foreign delegations. In 2017, CIEP hosted 115 people from Asia/Oceania (36 %), from Africa and the Middle East (28 %), from Europe (28 %) and from the Americas (8 %). The themes addressed were related to school education, higher education and research, or cross-cutting issues.

The Reunion Island local centre, created in 2000, aims to represent the institution and relay its assignments in the Indian ocean and in southern and eastern Africa. The objective is to promote French expertise abroad in the field of education and training, and to contribute to France's positive appeal. The centre offers its expertise and skills in two main areas of activity: support for teaching in French and teaching of the French language, and international cooperation in education.

Publications and resources

CIEP publishes the 'Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres'. Most of the authors are foreign and take a research approach. 970 authors from 110 countries have been published since 1994. In 2017, the review has been visited at the website www.revues.org by more than 530000 visitors from 100 countries.

Last issues focused on conflicting truths at school, on the fragmentation of national school systems, on music and education, and on beginning teachers.

CRID, the 'Document and Resource Centre' offers a range of extensive services, such as a library, the production of desk reviews and bibliographies, a strategy watch group and knowledge management. The three main projects in 2017 focused on the replacement of the current documentary catalogue with a new documentary portal, the production of country infographics and the introduction of an information system.

The 'Carnets de l'expertise' are published in collaboration with the research team 'Education, Ethics, Health' of François Rabelais University (Tours). They shed light on the professional practices and the knowledges used by experts in international cooperation in education.

A historic setting for symposia and seminars

Finally, CIEP is a historic setting for conferences. It is housed in a former royal porcelain factory in Sèvres, dating from 1756. It offers high quality reception infrastructure and services, with a 125 seats conference room, a prestigious room (the Grande Bibliothèque) with 100 seats, a historic room (the Salle des Gardes) for 70 persons, 12 smaller meeting rooms, a restaurant, a coffee lounge and a relaxation area, and 90 bedrooms.

www.ciep.fr



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Nathalie Mons is president of CNESCO

Nathalie Mons welcomes the participants on behalf of CNESCO (Conseil National de l'Évaluation du Système Scolaire).

CNESCO is a young organisation, dedicated to carry out a scientific and independent evaluation of the way in which the school system functions and the results it achieves. CNESCO also disseminates the results of evaluation and research and assesses the evaluation methodologies employed by both the Ministry of Education and international bodies.



One of the methodologies used by CNESCO are the international comparisons conferences. Based on scientific evaluation, French and international decision-makers are brought together to engage with one another on a public policy topic for the purpose of proposing a way forward. Last year, CNESCO organised an international seminar on how to disseminate this methodology and to enhance its impact.

Nathalie Mons is happy to see so many familiar faces, although CNESCO only recently became a member of the network. She thanks EUNEC for the fruitful and pleasant cooperation, and is proud that CNESCO and CIEP host this seminar. She wishes all the participants a lot of intellectual fun.

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Manuel Miguéns is president of EUNEC and secretary general of the Portuguese Education Council

Manuel Miguéns welcomes the participants on behalf of EUNEC. He thanks the speakers for their contribution, the secretariat of EUNEC for the preparation, the president and the staff of the CIEP and CNESCO for the welcoming, and all members for their active participation.



EUNEC will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2020. The network is in good shape, active and inspiring. He invites the members to enhance efforts in order to try to largen the network. He offers a special welcome to members or candidate member organisations coming from out of Europe, such as Morocco and Quebec, broadening the network with new insights an enriching points of view.

As a European network, EUNEC is aware of EU policy lines in the field of education and training. We focus our discussions and reflections with those policy documents as a central reference. This approach gives us a common ground. At the same time, we do not forget that every country has its own specific challenges and its own specific solutions.

Education is left to the Member States, from the beginning of the European Union. The principle of subsidiarity is defined in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. It aims to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen. But Member States have much in common. To share experiences leads to better policies.

The concept of the European Education Area, launched in 2018, is for EUNEC an opportunity to deepen our discussions, and to clarify our role as education councils. Last year, in Lisbon, EUNEC invited Stefaan Hermans, Director of Policy Strategy and Evaluation in the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the European Commission. He talked about the Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching. The Recommendation aims to promote common values at all levels of education; foster more inclusive education; encourage a European dimension of education, and support teachers and teaching. The Recommendation seeks to create the conditions for a greater commitment of Member States, and to help build education systems that are more resilient, inclusive and values based. He also referred to this European Education Area.

However, the European Union and its Member States are still struggling with the implementation of the European Education Area. Questions remain. Is this initiative to be seen as an umbrella of already existing policies? Or is it a real new policy, complementing the existing ones? Reason enough to reflect together during this seminar.

A general overview of the European Education Area as a broad policy initiative

Bianca Busuioc



Bianca Busuioc is, since 2015, in charge with the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) at the European Commission, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, overseeing the link between the framework for cooperation and other EU policies (the EU Security Agenda, the Digital Single Market, the New Skills Agenda).

Between 2008-2015 she was in charge with European industrial relations and social dialogue at the European Commission, Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs.

Before the European Commission, between 2002 and 2008, she was Deputy General Secretary of the International Federation of Actors: focus on mobility for artists, training and recognition issues, intellectual property rights, working conditions, including gender equality in the performing arts.

A transition moment

Is this European Education Area a real new initiative, or are we just putting existing policy initiatives together? This question is provocative. Bianca Busuioc will try, during her presentation, to demonstrate that the European Commission is really intending to propose an ambitious programme in the field of education.

This is especially important because we are in a transition moment: there are elections for a new European Parliament, there will be a new European Commission, there are negotiations for a new Multiannual Financial Framework.

Will we be able to make the case for education and training? Bianca Busuioc is optimistic. The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises the crucial role of education. Proposals are being discussed about enhancing substantially the budgets for Erasmus+. The Commission, with the support of the Member States, will try to push education forward. The EEA is launched by the European Commission, but its implementation depends to a large extent on the Member States: they will have to jump in. Education councils and advisory bodies,

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gathered in EUNEC, can play an important role as a mediator between the international level and the level of the Member States, between the level of the policy and the level of the implementation.

Objectives of the EEA

It is in the shared interest of all EU Member States to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for job creation, economic growth and improved social cohesion, as well as a means to experience European identity in all its diversity.

The EEA does not start from a white sheet. It stands on the shoulders of important frameworks, started years before, such as Education and Training 2020 and the Bologna Process.

Mobility and inclusion are key, which is reflected in the objectives of the EEA.

Mobility matters

Erasmus graduates show a 45 % advantage in employability. Those students have acquired the soft skills employers are looking for. They experienced team work, learned to see things in perspective, acquired problem solving skills.

Recognition of learning outcomes and proficiency in foreign languages

For some professions, there is automatic recognition of qualifications at EU-level. The intention to expand this to all professions is new, as well as the intention to work towards recognition of learning outcomes at the level of secondary education. This is unknown territory, to be discussed thoroughly with the Member States.

This recognition, as well as language proficiency, are part of the mobility equation.

Inclusive education

Everyone should have access to high quality, inclusive and innovative education. There is work to be done, given the fact that across the EU, underachievement is predominant in pupils coming from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds.

Challenges

The actions proposed by the EEA are certainly ambitious. Are they also adequate to the current challenges in education?

Equity and **excellence** are two of those challenges. There is no contradiction between equity and excellence. Equity in education is not only about giving access, but also about accompanying young people to complete their education,

to address the needs of every learner. Excellence is about pushing the potential of every learner, crucial if the EU wants to be competitive with Asia and the US.

Support to teachers is another challenge. All over the EU, the Member States experience problems in attracting and retaining teachers. The problem is perceived as very urgent by the EU, and this is reflected in the last edition of the Education and Training Monitor, where teachers are the main topic addressed. The Monitor will be launched at the occasion of the Education Summit in Brussels, on 26 September 2019, and the central theme will be 'Teachers first: excellence and prestige for the European Education Area'. The EU complements Member States actions by elaborating the eTwinning network, which is the largest teachers' network in the world from pre-primary to upper secondary schools. This network is financed by the EU, but run and powered by teachers. And a brainstorm is being set up towards a European Teachers Academy. This Academy would not be a big new agency, but a structure linking the national centers for initial teacher training and continuous professional development for teachers.

Providing **digital literacy for all** is also crucial. Young people are very familiar with digital devices and with the use of social media, but this does not mean that they are digitally literate. Digital skills are basic skills, at the same level as reading and mathematics. 95 % of the employment places in the EU will need digitally skilled employees in the near future. The Commission has already adopted a Digital Education Action Plan which includes 11 actions to support technology use and the development of digital competences in education. But the EEA wants to go even beyond this plan.

Besides digital literacy, **transversal skills** such as critical thinking and teamwork will be key.

Achievable?

The actions of the EEA are ambitious, and adequate to the current challenges in education. Are they also achievable?

Bianca Busuioc gives an overview of initiatives already taken. With the support of the Member States, those initiatives will contribute to push forward the EEA.

- Doubling of the Erasmus+ budget is under discussion;
- Automatic recognition of learning outcomes. The Council Recommendation is there. Expert groups are set up at EU-level to explore how to best implement this automatic recognition, especially at the level of secondary education, where this is completely new.
- 20 European Universities. A pilot was presented within the Erasmus+ programme. It was very successful, which shows in the very high number of applications. The first European Universities will start this year, thanks to a budget of 60 millions of euros.
- A good start with high quality childhood education. The EU benchmark of 95 % is achieved. This is positive, but the fact that so many young

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children are within ECEC is not sufficient. Now the EU will look how to enhance and assure the quality. The Council is about to adopt, on 22 May 2019, a recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems, with the objectives to develop a common understanding across the EU of what constitutes good quality service provision with regard to early childhood education and care. The Commission will support EU Member States in their efforts to improve access to and the quality of their early childhood education and care systems.

- A true commitment to foreign languages. The aim is that, at the end of the schooling, every graduate has high level proficiency in one foreign language, and good proficiency in a second one. The Commission will work together with OECD and with the Council of Europe, looking for ways to determine benchmarks and to assess language proficiency.
- A solid support to key competences.

What do we need next?

The Commission will offer strengthened support to Member States. But involvement of stakeholders in education will be key. Networks such as EUNEC are good examples of how to involve stakeholders in education policy making.

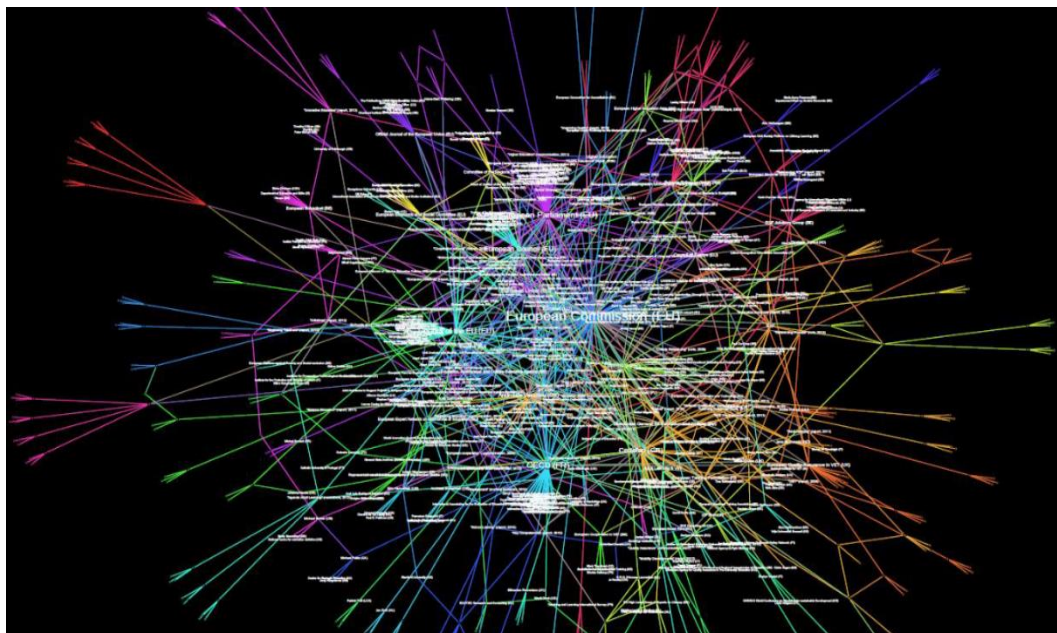
When talking about European cooperation post 2020, there will be need to balance core education issues (such as inclusion, quality, skills development, mobility) and more forward-looking development addressing the known megatrends (such as technological change, demography, sustainability). The EEA, with a 2025 horizon, and the follower of ET2020, with a horizon beyond 2025, will go hand in hand, sharing the same objectives.

After a public consultation in 2019, and based on the results of the stocktaking in 2018, the Commission will come with a proposal for a future framework for cooperation, expected in 2020.



Picture from the website of the European Commission

The next image fascinating. It gives an overview of all actors involved in education policy making, and their interlinkages, showing the complexity.



The European Education Area presents a vision for 2025: a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent in which people have a strong sense of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity. A tension is clear between this 'global' Europe, without borders, and, on the other hand, a 'local' Europe, with a lot of differences, locally. This tension relates to the title of the presentation: 'The learning of Europe. Where and how to land/settle?' A lot of frameworks have been developed, and are being developed; now we need places to land, to settle.

In advance

From 'modernisation' to 'globalisation'

Both concepts are distinct, and express a different way of thinking about our future.

Modernisation assumes a historical/institutional dimension: what are we going to do now to go to the future? It is linked to the idea of progress: the present is the moment to make decisions with impact on the future. It is linked to the idea of emancipation and social mobility: breaking with the past in order to go to a more free future. It includes tensions between conservative and progressive visions, which both share a linear view on time.

Globalisation refers to another kind of experience. It is no longer about linear time, but about the experience here and now, at this moment. In the presentation of Bianca Busuioc, the reference to Europe lagging behind Asia, is more framed from a 'globalisation' point of view than from a 'modernisation' one. It is not about progress, but about how to use the resources differently now. It is not about emancipation, later, but about empowerment, now. It is not about conservative vs. progressive, but about pro-active (with the intention to design the future) vs re-active (such as, for instance, the Brexit).

from 'modernisation' to 'globalisation'	
Historical/institutional	Momentary/ecological
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• past-present-future• nature-culture• change concept: progress, reform• emancipation (social mobility)• employment• education as bridge between past/future• virtues: conservative vs. progressive• issue of tradition• instrumentation: watch/clock, CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• here and now/instant• resources-production• change concept: innovation• empowerment (learning mobility)• employability• learning as investment in human capital (eternal present, Castells)• virtues: pro-active vs. re-active• issue of context• instrumentation: GPS (mobile), portfolio

Besides the 'global' Europe, also the 'mondial' Europe

Other speakers already referred to the 'global' Europe, a Europe of 'floating frameworks', with focus on frameworks, standardisation, uniformization,... and a need to be complemented by local implementation.

Professor Simons is not against this 'global' Europe, it has merits. But it has to be completed by a 'mondial' Europe, a Europe of 'unique entanglements', with focus on critical zones, diplomacy, ways to 'land'. In this Europe, there is room for localized deliberation and settlements.

'Mondial' is a difficult word in English. It refers to the French 'mondial'. 'Global' Europe refers to the Europe that looks at the world, at the globe, from a distance. Whilst 'mondial' Europe refers to a Europe within the world it is part of. These concepts are at the heart of Bruno Latour's book 'Où atterrir? Comment s'orienter en politique' (2017).

Two examples

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Professor Simons elaborated two examples to demonstrate his point of view. For each example he starts with the assumptions, describes the implications and defines the challenges: where and when to land?

Frameworks

The first example elaborated is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a common European reference framework whose purpose is to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems.



→ Assumptions

The assumptions of the EQF are to focus on qualifications, outcomes and (trans)portability. This is one way of looking at education.

→ Implications

This way of looking at education implies personalisation: the focus is on the learner, and on objectifying what he/she has learned. Another implication is de-institutionalisation, dismantling the integration of education, evaluation, recognition and qualification. And it leads to re-institutionalisation, to a new concentration of power, with new actors at European and national level.

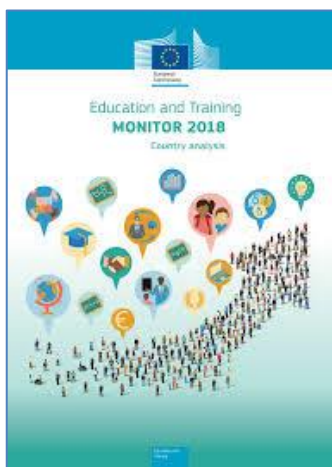
→ Challenges

Where and how to land? How to deal with non-qualification aspects of learning and education? Learning is not the same as studying; studying implies taking a distance. Learning a language is completely different from studying a language, for instance.

A second challenge is the societal meaning and role of schools, universities, adult education, youth work..., apart from the services they offer to an individual.

And, third challenge, what are the new sources of authority and credibility? Do we want to evolve in the direction of a qualification market? If not, where will we locate authority? At the level of the Member States? At the level of EU-actors?

Monitoring



A well-known example of monitoring in the field of education and training is the Education and Training Monitor. The Monitor gathers a wide range of evidence to indicate the evolution of national education and training systems across the European Union. The report measures countries' progress towards the targets of the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) strategic framework for European cooperation in these fields.

→ Assumptions

The assumptions of this kind of monitoring are the focus on performance, the focus on feedback (benchmarking) and the focus of improvement (performativity). In measurement, there is always an (implicit) evaluation, in relation to the performance of other Member States.

→ Implications

These assumptions lead to a new way of governing, a new mode of power: governing through feedback, not through rules and norms. It assumes that feedback makes you real; it is about looking at yourself through others' eyes. Those who monitor can steer during the process. Steering is about manipulation: should the study efficiency be 30 %, or rather 50 %, for instance.

→ Challenges

Where do rankings land? Professor Simons is not against ranking, but pleads for time and space between the observations and what we do with them. The rankings have to land, need to be deliberated: there is need for (round) tables, gathering. We need other spokespersons, apart from those from the rankings.

Conclusion ... or a new introduction

We are moving towards a 'global' Europe, with a mobile, freelance learner in need of credibility. This learner is dependent on the frameworks, and independent from the institutions.

There are, at least, two dominant ways to deal with 'globalisation'.

→ A pro-active way

This is the way scenarists deal with it, preparing scenarios for 2030, for 2050. They want to design a 'future proof' education. Power is proliferated horizontally, in networks. There is a netarchical distribution of power.

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- A re-active way

This is the re-discovery of vertical power, of territory (Brexit...). There is a hierarchical distribution of power.

Both ways have difficulties to face real public issues. It is a matter of concern because it divides us.

Towards 'mondialisation'

Probably, there is a third way, the way towards 'mondialisation'. Europe is (also) the name for 'unique entanglements'. Europe is not just an 'idea', not just a 'territory', but a meaningful place with critical zones, sites of conflict. It is better to go beyond the tensions between the global EU and the local implementation level, and to look for and invent new ways to live, work, learn together, and to govern together.

When it comes to education, these are the critical questions: How do we relate to new generations? What schools do we prefer? How do we define good education? How do we fund good education? How do we deal with freedom and equity in education? What should be the instruction language?

These are obvious questions, but the main thing is that we have to assume that they are real questions, that these question indicate a real battle/fight, not just a difference in opinion. People can really disagree. Different values are at stake.

These questions need time/place to become 'issues of public concern', to land/settle. Public voices need to be heard, because these voices often disappear in hierarchies of the political class or expert lobby and the netarchies of multi-stakeholder fora. The logic of local implementation of global policies needs to move towards a logic of localized deliberation and settlements.

What is needed to realize this?

- The organisation of public gatherings (not just interests);
- Diplomacy (acknowledging possible war);
- And deliberative inquire (study and decision making).

Professor Simons invites the education councils, gathered within EUNEC, to reflect if they can respond to those three criteria.

Current education priorities and converging policies in France and in the EU

Patricia Janissin



Holder of a diploma of advanced English and North American studies, Patricia JANISSIN was assistant of French in Scotland (1982-1984), before being professor of English in the academies of Nancy-Metz and Paris (1984- 2002). She worked in the Directorate General of School Education-DGESCO, from 2002 to 2017 in the Office of European and International Relations; she was at the same time a national expert on languages and employment at the European Commission (2010-2015). Before joining Dreic as Deputy Director of European and Multilateral Affairs on April 16, 2019, Patricia JANISSIN was, since September 2017, Inspector of Academy - Regional Pedagogical Inspector of English at the Creteil Academy. She was also coordinator of the disciplinary group of modern languages since September 2018 and assessor of the Dean of Inspectors of Academy - regional pedagogical inspectors of the Creteil academy since November 2018.



This is the text of Patricia Janissin's presentation.

Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, both were driven by a strong European spirit, built in very different contexts but which brought them together in action. If Europe has given its educational exchange programmes the names of Erasmus and previously Comenius, it is to pay the tribute it owes to the great humanists of the Renaissance.

Our research is the same today, we who are trying, through our education systems and their comparisons to make our pupils citizens capable of adapting to a changing world of new skills for new jobs but also bearers of values to be shared within Europe and more broadly in the world, which we are aware is more than ever 'a common homeland' according to Erasmus.

The French President, in his speech on Europe in La Sorbonne University, said: '*The strongest cement that binds the European Union together will always be culture and knowledge*'. Our Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer when he presented his current law for a school of trust insisted as well to open the classroom to the world, to let in cooperation, collaborative pilot projects and showcase the French system abroad.

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This is the purpose of the high school reform, which is currently taking place at the moment in France. It aims at better adapting to the times and the world in which we live in order to better prepare each student for his or her studies and then for his or her professional life in the perspective of lifelong learning: to ensure social justice by providing equal opportunities for all and upskill our pupils.

One of the key measures - in addition to customized guidance and support throughout the school year - is undoubtedly the opening of schools to various partnerships capable of promoting access for all to culture, developing pupils' sense of responsibility - and promoting school partnerships exchanges with our European neighbours but also with countries in more distant spheres.

The upper secondary school reform therefore places the emphasis on language learning, high school students capable of communicating in two foreign languages in addition to the language of instruction, an ambition that we share with the European Union.

To give us the means to achieve this ambition, we rely on several drivers:

- early years education;
- continuity of learning from primary to the end of secondary school;
- the use of language levels to be validated during schooling, in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR);
- the development of the teaching of a subject in a foreign language.

If I refer to la Sorbonne speech our President showed us the route that is

- Europe must be a place where all students can speak at least two European languages by 2024;
- In 2024, 50% of a given age group should have spent at least six months in another European country by the time they are 25, whether they are university students or learning a trade;
- The creation of European Universities – a network of universities across Europe developing programmes to facilitate access for their students study abroad. The objective is to create at least 20 of them by 2024 delivering with real European diplomas;
- On the model of the Bologna Process, create a European secondary-school system.

Converging policies is the word since.

In the context of the Social Summit in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, the Leaders' Agenda was devoted to education and culture. Political support was established for a number of specific work strands, mainly on the basis of the Commission communication on 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture' that presented the idea to work together, in full respect of subsidiarity, towards a shared vision of a European Education Area based on

trust, mutual recognition, cooperation and exchange of best practice, mobility and growth, to be established by 2025.

The construction of the European Education Area

Post-2020 European cooperation must be closely linked to the construction of the European Education Area, which our ministers called for in the conclusions of 22 May 2018. It is now up to all of us to work to ensure that our reforms have a European dimension in education. The future post-2020 Education and Training strategy should support us in this by focusing on the four challenges identified: learning mobility, learning of languages, recognition of diplomas and European universities. France welcomes the stated objectives, which overlap with French educational priorities. Some French reforms illustrate the point.

School education

The very recent reform of the baccalaureate gives more room to international strategies. Each student will be assessed in two modern languages, written and oral using the levels of the CEFR. In accordance with European standards, an external language certification is offered to students who follow courses with an international dimension (international sections, European sections, etc.) in order to enable them to have better access to mobility.

Concerning the automatic mutual recognition of diplomas, France has signed three agreements: one with Germany (Abibac), one with Spain (Bachibac) and one with Italy (Esabac). In these binational sections in which several subjects are taught in a foreign language, students obtain 2 diplomas abitur and the Baccalaureate recognised equally in both countries and which allows access to all higher education courses provided in both countries.

France is also developing a label called Euroscol for schools deeply involved in European projects, in the organisation of mobility for their pupils and staff, in the organisation of international and European projects such as the Week of Languages, the programme 'Back to school', or Erasmus Day; thus contributing to the construction of European citizenship.

Vocational Education and Training

In order to promote mobility, France set up in 2016 for vocational baccalaureate students an optional mobility module, which allows students not only to take advantage of the opportunity to enrich their skills with this experience abroad, but also to have the acquired knowledge of this experience recognised in order to obtain their qualification, a contribution to the ECVET recommendation. This same spirit drives the campuses of trades and qualifications, which build pathways that increasingly include teaching or internship opportunities abroad, and enter into partnerships with schools abroad.

Higher education

France is particularly committed to ensuring the success of the European Universities' initiative, in particular by allocating additional national financial support (up to €100 million over 10 years). It also includes a pilot project on the European student's card.

The post-2020 education and training strategy

France recognizes the added value of the ET2020 strategy: the definition of common consensual objectives and common standards encourages dialogue between Member States and contributes to the establishment of a coherent European Education Area. In recent years, the EU has developed a range of 'soft policy' tools to support Member States in the reforms of national education and training policies. The Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training, in operation since 2000, has set common objectives and benchmarks, allowing the Member States to assess the development of their education systems. Furthermore, in 2010 the EU set itself two education targets under the Europe 2020 Strategy, resulting in real progress. Early school leaving has been reduced from 14.7% in 2010 to 10.7% in 2016, targeting 10% by 2020, while tertiary educational attainment is up to 39.1% in 2016 from 31.1% in 2008, targeting 40% by 2020.

If we look at the indicators for France in relation to European objectives, we see that France has exceeded the target for the rate of higher education graduates (40%); concerning the objective of less than 10% drop-outs France is also well positioned in relation to the European average and in relation to many other countries. It has exceeded the target.

Concerning the objective of early childhood education, on the target audience (children from 4 years old to the age of entry into infant schools): 100% are at infant school in France, 95% for the EU average.

In addition, it is very useful and enriching for decision-makers, to build upon results of working groups and PLAs, allowing a better information and coherence between the technical and political levels, the themes of the groups being directly linked to the priorities that the Member States have established in the Council of the EU through the OMC.

The objectives and priorities defined by the ET2020 strategy are broadly in line with the orientations established at national level: initial teacher training, digitization of schools and higher education, reform of the professional path, promotion of common values:

- integrate digitalisation as a factor of mobility;
- to strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education, through European universities;
- facilitate the convergence of education systems across Europe through the mutual recognition of diplomas;

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- strengthen teacher training, in particular through the deepening of European exchanges on pedagogical practices ('European Teachers' Academy');
- pursue ambitions related to inclusion, citizenship education and the development of common values.

I would like to stress how the previous working group outputs came into life in our national system. To this end, I would like to describe the Qualeduc project that was a deliverable of the 2016-2018 group on quality insurance.

Qualeduc is an evolutionary and adjustable self-assessment tool based on the PDCA (plan, do, check, act) cycle that results from the European project QUALEP conducted in 2011 with Austria, Hungary and Romania on the concept of quality assurance. 8 years after it was launched, the guide is used in 25 of our 30 education authorities.

For the last two years, the Qualeduc mobilities project contributed to enrich the approach in the framework of a new European partnership Key action 1. 105 school leaders and inspectors and quality insurance coordinators had the opportunity to observe and analyse initiatives in the field of quality abroad in 5 different countries: Germany, Austria, Scotland, Italy and Sweden. This led to a guide of transferable good practice.

National issues

At the start of this new school year, from nursery school through secondary school, we are enhancing the perspectives opened last year and rolling out the measures presented over the past months. It is a question of helping all students to better master core skills (reading, writing, counting and respecting others) and receive more effective guidance towards their future. To this end, it is essential to gather the French society around their school.

The school is the backbone of the Republic. It is the matrix of collective destiny and of the success of all. As such, it is the driver for social progress, giving more to those in need of more.

The desire to restore social justice through education, and thus to develop greater social cohesion among citizens, is one of the essential foundations of the construction of the school of trust.

However, today, school does not yet sufficiently reduce social inequalities, since in France 20% of primary school pupils do not master basic knowledge and 22% of young people aged 20 to 24 are neither in employment, nor in education nor in training.

In order to respond to this situation, a whole series of measures are contemplated, to support students from 3 to 18 years old and to help them grow into enlightened citizens aware of their possibilities to succeed.

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- The priority given to mastering basic knowledge (reading, writing, counting and respecting others), implies massive investment in primary school with:
 - more than 2,300 additional teaching positions in a context of demographic decline;
 - the doubling of the two first years of primary schools in deprived areas which will make it possible to offer 300.000 students more intensive monitoring;
 - an improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools in each department of France and at the beginning of each school year from 2017 to 2022 to reach no more than 24 pupils per class.
- Lowering the age of compulsory education to 3 years in order to strengthen nursery school, because it is between 3 and 6 years old that it is possible to effectively tackle the first inequalities and the most predictive of school failure, unequal language proficiency. Combined with the obligation to be in training until 18 years old, this measure will make it possible to offer our pupils educational paths that are better adapted to the diversity of their talents;
- The strengthening of 'inclusive school' with the emergence of a public disability service at school, which will make it possible to achieve the objective of a fully inclusive school with better trained support staff.
- In addition, teachers will be supported in their professional development, with the strengthening of initial and in-service training as well as the right to pedagogical experimentation. New assessment tools will also be made available to teachers, drawing on the latest pedagogical knowledge and providing national benchmarks.

This desire for social justice is also expressed in higher education, where access and, above all, the achievement of graduates still depends on factors of belonging to a social environment. The purpose of the ORE (Orientation and Success of Students) Act of 8 March 2018 is to improve student orientation, access and success. Measures have been adopted for better democratization and equity in higher education in order to:

- guarantee equality in terms of information, through better guidance for high schools by supporting senior high school students in the construction of their study project and the creation of a platform for enrolment in higher education (Parcoursup) which makes it possible to inform all baccalaureate holders about the courses offered, the conditions of access and the expectations for each course;
- ensure equal access to higher education, through the funding of additional places within institutions, the introduction of a minimum percentage of scholarship holders in all higher education courses and a minimum percentage of vocational and technological baccalaureate holders in short higher education studies in order to increase their chances of success;

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- guarantee equality in terms of success, through customized pathways according to the profiles of baccalaureate holders, pedagogical support measures to build pathways adapted to the needs of each student and the establishment of a contract for educational success between students and the host institution to combat the persistence of high failure rates.

These transformations are carried by a state of mind, that of trust. For secondary school students, for example, it means more freedom and time to construct their educational plans, as well as new courses that place an emphasis on digital technology. For teachers, this translates into new tools, including assessments. In first, second and sixth grades that will allow them to adapt their instruction to the needs of their students. The strengthening of their training and above all the constant support of the school will help them to overcome difficulties they encounter. For parents, who are our most important partners, we aim to improve communications through the Parents' Briefcase programme, because mutual trust between parents and schools is the key to student success.

Through the knowledge and values it conveys, school is the foundation of a serene society. That is why the Ministry makes the care of children with special needs a priority. That is also why it is essential to address all forms of discriminations, including the risks posed by digital media. The newly instituted ban on the use of mobile telephones in primary school and lower secondary school will contribute to the smooth running of classes and to the richness of collective life.

In the same vein, the principle of secularism at school and that of equality between girls and boys are crucial values that must be respected.

National cohesion depends on our ability to gather around the essential: the future of students and, beyond that, our country. All of the French territories: urban, peri-urban, rural and overseas, are the subject of careful attention. The commitment of the education community is essential to meeting the challenges of the 21st century in France and throughout the world.

A quick glance at Erasmus +

France gave a very favourable welcome to the project both in terms of the continuity of the programme's structure, the new features/improvements proposed and the doubling of the budget. This significant increase in the Erasmus+ envelope will make it possible, if the negotiations on the Union's future multiannual financial framework do not decide otherwise, to provide an appropriate response to the European political commitments made by the Heads of State and Government, calling for a 'strengthened, inclusive and extended' Erasmus+ programme. In addition, the importance of Erasmus+ in the European political agenda is in line with the French ambitions in the field of education and youth, expressed by the President of the Republic at La Sorbonne in his speech on the future of Europe on 26 September 2017.

In conclusion

I would like to say that the current context in the European and international field places education at the heart of renewed interest. Several major events on the multilateral context for France with its presidency of the G7, the Council of Europe from 19 May and bilateral (Elysée Treaty) fields in 2019 give France and education a prominent place on the European and international scene and have a very strong impact on our Ministry of National Education and Youth.

European and international issues are more than ever an integral part of educational issues. This requires pilot projects, the exchange of good practice and the promotion of our action to meet global challenges. This is the ambition of Minister Jean Michel Blanquer, who wishes to restore France's full place in international standards and 'open the windows', i.e. to integrate international issues more broadly into our education system.

The second European Education Summit will be held in September 2019. It is the place to make proposals, a springboard for collaborative pilot projects to be in the exchange of good practice. So I would like to finish by introducing to you the concept of 'European Academies of Teachers' was mentioned by the French Minister of National Education and Youth, Jean-Michel Blanquer, at the first European Education Summit in January 2017. It is still in a draft form.

This innovative initiative aims to offer European teachers and trainers the opportunity to participate in seminars and sessions for the exchange of good practice between peers. It would be based on partnerships between European institutions for initial and in-service teacher training. It would take the form of summer seminars and/or online exchanges that would be co-financed by Erasmus+.

Emphasis would be placed on the diversity of the audience, both in terms of subjects taught and languages spoken.

These seminars would have three objectives:

- an objective of teacher training, through targeted conferences on common European issues related to education;
- a language training objective for teachers, by allowing them to discuss with their peers in a language other than the one in which they teach;
- a peer learning objective, through workshops that will allow teachers to exchange directly with their peers about their pedagogical practices, as well as the difficulties they may face and the solutions they put in place.

In addition, these 'Academies' would make it possible to promote a European dimension of education among teachers and, by implication, among pupils, to encourage openness to Europe and to make progress towards the construction of a European Education Area by 2025.

Zoom in on actions under the European Education Area

Automatic recognition of qualifications: the BENELUX experience in higher education

Marie-Anne Persoons

Dr Marie-Anne PERSOONS is Advisor International Policy at the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community of Belgium.



She graduated in Oriental Languages and History (section of Indo-Iranian studies) from the Catholic University of Leuven in 1984. More recently she obtained a Master degree in Public Management from the University of Antwerp (2008). In 1996 she joined the Flemish Department of Education and Training. Between 1999 and 2009 she has been an active member of the EU Education Committee and the Bologna Follow-up Group, both constituencies she also chaired in 2001. From 2007 to 2009 she was general coordinator of the Benelux Bologna Secretariat and worked as seconded national expert at the European Commission, DG EAC from Dec. 2009 to Nov. 2011. Currently she is national representative to the Council of Europe's Steering Committee of Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE) and to several OECD, COE, UNESCO and BENELUX working parties, as well as to the UN SDG Education 2030 Steering Committee. She has been Vice-Chair of the OECD's Education Policy Committee (EDPC) and the Group of National Experts on School Resources (2015-2017), before her appointment as Chair of the EDPC from 2018 onwards.

Setting the scene

The Benelux experience is an example of international cooperation, relevant in the light of the developments towards a European Education Area. The vision behind the EEA has been explained in former presentations. This presentation is a way to illustrate how it can work in practice.

The Benelux is a transnational cooperation between Belgians, Dutch and Luxembourgers. We are committed to a region without borders, because this creates more prosperity, mobility, security and sustainability for all. The Benelux, with countries among the founding fathers of the EU, is therefore the ideal testing ground to promote European integration.

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The Benelux area is not the same as the Benelux Union (treaty based). The Benelux area is about ad hoc cooperation. Legal instruments are Decisions, Agreements, Recommendations and Directives. The first legal Benelux decision in the field of education is the 'Decision of the Benelux Committee of Ministers on mutual automatic recognition of the level of higher education degrees M(2015)3, of 18 May 2015.

This matter was settled through means of a Decision, in order to be strong enough to guarantee the right of citizens to automatic recognition of their degree. Citizens can go to Court if this right is not respected. A Decision is a relatively light-weight procedure, without heavy Parliamentary procedures.

Political rationale

The political rationale is an expression of mutual trust in each other's quality between five closely interconnected education systems: the three Communities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, all aligned to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which is wider than the EU.

The background is a common commitment to the instruments of the EHEA: the Lisbon Recognition Convention of UNESCO and the Council of Europe; the Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the EHEA, and to a lesser degree the Qualification Framework for the EHEA.

The Decision is also an expansion of partial arrangements for automatic recognition:

- between the Netherlands and Flanders, who have a common accreditation organisation (NVAO);
- between the three Belgian communities, whose systems converge because of a common Constitution.

There is also a semi-automatic recognition practice in Luxembourg of other EU higher education qualifications.

Scope of the decision

Today, all higher education degrees are within the scope of this Decision. From 18 May 2015, bachelor and master degrees were concerned. On 25 January 2018, short cycle and associate degrees and PhD have been added.

Recognition for all degrees is automatic, which means non procedural. Recognition is a legal right for the citizen.

Moreover, the recognition is generic, which means non specific. It is the level which is recognised. This is relevant, given the fact that often employers, mostly governmental employers, require a certain level of degree.

Finally, the recognition is academic, which is a different angle than professional. Of course, this academic recognition can offer added value at the labour market.

Lessons learnt

Shared commitment to European transparency instruments was helpful as extra support, but it was not a key factor for success. Above all it was the confidence in each other's quality without requiring 100 % identical systems, standards, checks that made the Benelux countries 'jump into the water' together.

What are, next to this mutual confidence, the success factors?

- Legal right making the instrument more powerful and more relevant;
- Spill-over effect from generic to specific recognition;
- Spill-over effect from academic recognition to the world of employers;
- Strong support of the academic community. There was already a lot of exchange between the higher education institutions in the three countries. The Rectors' Conferences pushed the countries to agree on the political Decision. It was not an autocratic governmental decision.

Those four factors of TRUST helped to create a genuine Benelux Higher Education Area, with a modest start in 2015, and an expansion in 2018.

Link to the European Education Area and Schools

Can this model be extended to school education? This is, as always, the big question. Sometimes, things work in higher education, but appear not so easy to be implemented at the level of school education. ECTS, for instance, is very influential in higher education (ECTS is the European Credit Transfer System). The ECVET experiment, in school education, has not been so influential (ECVET is the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and (where appropriate) accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification).

The EU Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition of 2018 is in line with the UNESCO/Council of Europe Lisbon Recognition Convention, on qualifications giving access to higher education. There is an indirect link with school education: if you have a qualification giving the right to go to higher education in one country, you also have the right to go to higher education in another country. The Lisbon Recognition Convention is based on the principle of fair recognition, where the recognising organisation has to prove that there are 'substantial' differences, not the applicant.

But there are obstacles. There is, compared to higher education, a wider divergence in structures and length of compulsory education. And in the field of school education, national governments will be less keen to give up subsidiarity.

The solution lies in the suggestion to put more TRUST in decisions at school level, so that they can take up responsibility for smooth progression between grades for pupils coming from other school systems. The flexibility then lies at the school level, within the limits of the legal mechanisms.

Greater cooperation on curricula development

Alice Micallef

Dr Alice Micallef is Assistant Director at the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes within the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta. She is involved in teacher professional development related to pedagogy and assessment in the area of foreign and second language teaching and learning. During the past years she has organised training in collaboration with the European Centre for Foreign Languages (ECML) as Malta's co-ordinator for RELANG (Relating Language Curricula and Examinations to the CEFR, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). She is presently a member on the ECML governing board.

Introduction and background

Dr Micallef works at the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, where she coordinates the Department of languages (first, second and foreign languages) at primary and secondary school level and the early years department. The discussions during this seminar on the European Education Area are very relevant for the work done in this department, with a direct link to curricula, teachers, schools.

In Malta, there is a curriculum reform going on: the 'Learning Outcomes Framework Reform', across curriculum areas. The process was, at first, put in the hands of experts. It was a rather top down reform, assuming that stakeholders would adapt.

However, it was noticed that the intended curriculum was not automatically translated into the classroom. So in the past year, teachers have been involved much more actively. The government organised professional development for teachers, allowing to discuss the philosophy of teaching and learning, allowing teachers to own their own pedagogical journeys.

Today, it is clear the EU policy lines have implications for teaching, learning and assessment.

RELANG

In May 2013, the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, signed a cooperation agreement to establish a joint action on 'Innovative methodologies and assessment in language learning'. One initiative in this action is: Relating language examinations to the common European reference levels of language proficiency: promoting quality assurance in education and facilitating mobility (RELANG).



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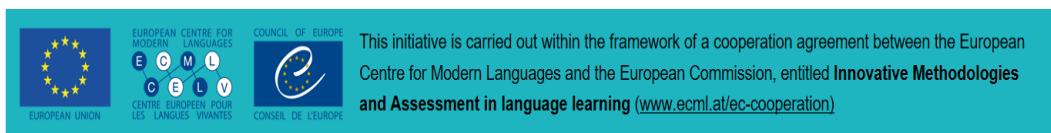
RELANG is a good example of cooperation on curriculum development in the field of foreign languages.

In recent years the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has become a powerful instrument for shaping language education policies. The growing acceptance and use of the CEFR levels of language proficiency has created a situation in which, all over Europe, public bodies, examination institutes, language schools and university departments seek to relate their foreign language curricula and examinations to the CEFR.

The RELANG initiative offers training to stakeholders in the Member States of the European Union and the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in relating language tests and examinations to the CEFR in a valid way and exploring relationships between foreign language curricula and the CEFR. The initiative looks for answers to the following questions:

- To what extent do our foreign language curricula at secondary school level relate to the CEFR?
- How may the CEFR help us align our own curricula in the various foreign language departments?
- What principles of foreign language testing require attention in relation to CEFR notions of foreign language learning and language use?

The results of RELANG will help learners to map their journey of learning and to note down their level of proficiency and to build their language learning profile.



The work has been initiated within the Directorate for Learning and Assessment programmes and Quality and Standards in Education:

- Levels of language competence set for foreign languages within the Maltese secondary school system (years 7-11) for French, Italian, German, Spanish;
- How do programmes of learning relate to the CEFR model?
- Type and content of assessment set for foreign languages for years 7-11, and discussion on specifications for assessment at levels A1 to B.

From 2015 until 2019, participants to the RELANG workshops are prepared to reflect critically on aspects of the curriculum they work with, and on the reform of the Learning Outcome Framework in relation to the CEFR. They identify to what extent their foreign language curricula relate to the CEFR, and understand the CEFR model of language use. Another outcome is to link attainment targets within the curriculum to the CEFR, and to develop formative and summative assessment related to the CEFR.

Improving language learning

Isabelle Leguy

After 27 years as a teacher of English, Isabelle Leguy joined the French General Inspectorate in 2014. Among her topics of interest and expertise are the teaching of subjects through a foreign language and the teaching of foreign languages in primary education.



Language learning in French schools: the situation

In primary schools, the teaching of a first foreign language begins at age 6. In 98 % of the cases, this is English.

In secondary education, a second foreign language is introduced at age 12. In 2017, 99 % of the pupils in secondary education, between the ages of 12 and 18, study two foreign languages.

Recent developments

Foreign languages is now a priority in the French education system. A lot is happening, a lot of initiatives are taken. This is demonstrated by three indications: the review at the demand of the Ministry of Education, the teaching of foreign languages from early years, and teaching content through a foreign language.

Review on foreign language learning and teaching

The Ministry of Education commissioned a review in order to know the state of foreign language learning in France. They wanted to have representations and assumptions on the state of language teaching and learning and achievement in language learning.

The report was handed over to the Minister in September 2018. CNESCO organised a conference on language learning, in March 2019. It shows a combined effort: distinct actions, focusing on the same concern.

Early years

Language learning is expanding, with pressure to start earlier and earlier. One of the recommendations that came out of the review and of the conference, is the importance to start language learning at an early age. Learning of a foreign language already happened in nurseries, now it is becoming more formalised.

Didactic guidelines have been developed for primary school teachers, on how to teach a foreign language.

Teaching content through a foreign language

Language learning is also deepening with the development of school subjects taught in a foreign language (CLIL courses). CLIL is a way to respond to the need to move on to something more substantial than just learning a language in a dedicated course. Everywhere, in or outside the curriculum, CLIL is expanding, at all levels of education.

A wide range of languages are concerned, with English prevailing. Spanish, Italian, German among European languages but also Arabic, Russian and Chinese. As for school subjects, history is the main subject taught in a foreign language but the sciences are on the rise: biology, physics and maths, plus all sorts of technological and vocational subjects. Cooking and restaurant services taught in a foreign language are fast developing, but also electronics. In vocational schools, such courses include work experience abroad.

CLIL can be evaluated as very successful. It went further than the intended objective. Pupils show more interest in the subject taught in the foreign language. CLIL is at the same time a way of overcoming the idea that languages are difficult to learn.

Mainstreaming innovation and digital skills in education

Maria João Horta

Maria João Horta is a science and ICT teacher and she is currently Deputy Director of the Directorate-General for Education of the Portuguese Ministry of Education. She has been developing several tasks as a Teacher Trainer and as a Researcher in the domain of Educational Technology, as well as a Consultant in the area of ICT for Teaching and Learning purposes. She integrates the Digital Citizenship WG at European Schoolnet, the BIK Advisory Board, and the DELTA European Commission WG for Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment. She has a Master degree in Science Teaching and a PhD in ICT and Education. Her main research fields are: Teachers' Professional Training and ICT; Teachers' Training and the ICT Use in Education; ICT in the Educational Curricular System; Science Teaching and Learning.



Concepts

The concepts of innovation and of digital skills are interwoven with the concept of education.

Education 'includes the development of skills, values, attitudes and knowledge that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions and respond to local and global challenges' (UNESCO, 2015).

There is a culture of innovation in education, at the level of the schools, and at the level of the educational system. At the level of schools, innovation relates to the capacity of schools to embed and sustain changes in teaching and organisational practices improving organisational opportunities in order to support the success of all pupils. At the level of the educational system, it relates to the capacity of the system to consolidate change and improvement, to promote experimentation, to monitor, evaluate, learn from failures, to support networking and exchange as well as to design favourable school policies to help embed, tailor and sustain innovation in schools. Innovation is thus not the aim in itself, but a tool for improvement.

The Future of Education and Skills 2030 (OECD) aims to help education systems determine the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values students need to thrive in and shape their future. It is about acting rather than to be acted upon,

shaping rather than to be shaped and choosing rather than to accept choices decided by others.

According to the OECD Innovation Strategy for Education and Training, the innovative capacity of technology is very much conditioned by the level of digital skills of the population (OECD, 2016). The 'innovation imperative in education' and 'the power of digital skills and technologies' have the huge potential to transform education strategies and practices and open up new horizons, but cannot transform education themselves (OECD, 2016).

There are no simple recipes for this 'innovation imperative'. It is much more than putting new technologies in schools. A new educational challenge – as a result of the new nature of relations, jobs and way of life – demands profound educational changes and reforms, where both technical and digital skills, on the one hand, and social, behavioural and creative skills, on the other, play a leading role.

We need digital technology to empower the teaching and learning environments. Education and training systems must empower people to socialize, communicate, work, think time and space differently.

Education for the 21st century must ensure that people/learners do not end up passive technology consumers but active digital citizens.

The industrial model, standardized, with segmented subjects, based on knowledge transfer, on authority, on hierarchy, on dependency, with a curriculum overload, is evolving in the direction of a social model, based on multidisciplinary, differentiation, knowledge construction, collaboration, autonomy, interdependence and quality.

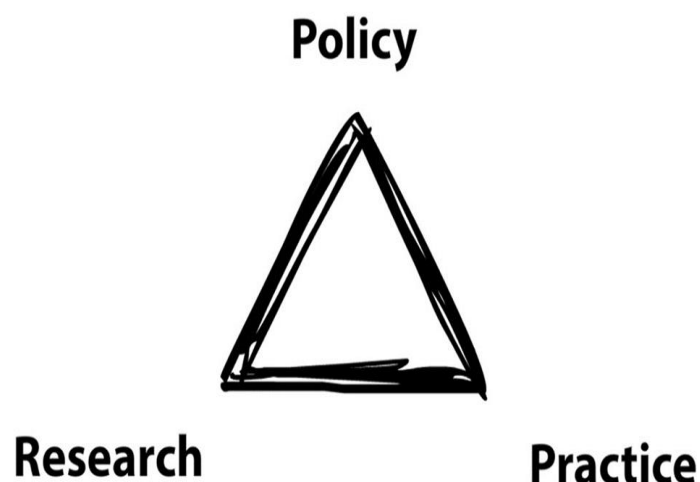
The industrial model implies compartmentalized learning that prepares for the mass production of standardised and low-skilled workers (listeners, followers, conservatives, imitators, dependents, ...). Whilst the social model leads to an organic and social learning, seen as transformative and that prepares for a global world that highlights the difference (concretisers, leaders, innovators, designers, autonomous ...).

Challenges

Many studies have argued for more flexible, open forms of learning and of school organisation. But, still a variety of factors is holding back fundamental change in traditional practices. The inertia of the system tends to attenuate the innovations. Education systems are a social, but change-resistant ecosystem where the distinct stakeholders (curriculum, teachers, trade unions, publishers, parents, evaluation and examinations, policies, school textbooks...) mutually reinforce each other in stable configurations, highly resistant to change.

Schools have weak networking and knowledge sharing among teachers. Application of the research and development is quite limited in education,

spending time on educational research and development is very low in contrast to other sectors of activity characterised by the intensive development and use of knowledge.



Most of the professional knowledge that teachers use in their daily work is tacit. It is rarely made explicit or shared with colleagues. Schools and classrooms are normally isolated one from another, rather than interlinked.

In short, the message is that too many schools still tend to have only rudimentary practices of knowledge management, despite knowledge being education's explicit business.

Reshaping schools for digital education

Schools challenges that educational systems are facing require strategic action in several domains:

- In the domain of the purpose. In the schools' core mission there is a new role for teachers, and room for pupils' agency: they need to be more involved in decision making;
- In the domain of the organisation. Schools need a new structure of time and learning environments.
- In the domain of the curriculum. The new curricula should focus on creativity, critical thinking and other soft skills.
- In the domain of the methodologies. Pedagogical and didactic practices need to move in the direction of collaborative learning, project-based learning, interdisciplinarity,...

The efficient use of digital technology in schools relies on including it in strategic planning and school culture. It implies teachers' proper education and training. It implies proper integration in curricula, methods, content and purposes. It

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implies digital education resources. And it implies a proper infrastructure and funds.

Education systems are large and complex. The time gap between policy conception and implementation is big. There is a lack of reliable and accepted indicators of the quality of outcomes and their value. There is little agreement about what constitutes best practice. Some stakeholders, mainly teachers and school leaders, have enormous power over the reform process and an effective implementation needs their cooperation.

These are the critical conditions for real digital education; they all should work together, as the pieces of a puzzle:

- Technological infrastructure;
- Curricular flexibility;
- Curriculum integration and extension of ICT in the curriculum;
- Digital educational resources;
- Teacher training;
- Projects promoting innovative dynamics.

International mobility of pupils and students

Raymond Kubben

Raymond Kubben is senior advisor in the staff of the Education Council of the Netherlands. He has a background in law and public administration studies, and obtained a PhD from Tilburg University in international legal history, where he has worked as PhD researcher and Assistant Professor for just over 11 years, before entering the civil service. At the Education Council of the Netherlands he



is concerned mainly with higher education, governance of education, and education law. In past years, he has acted as project manager of an advisory report on internationalisation in primary education, secondary education, and VET (2016), as well as of an advisory report on internationalisation in higher education (2018).

The European Education Area and student mobility

'A vision for 2025 would be a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent, where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn, or to work – has become the standard and where, in addition to one's mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm. A continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity' (European Commission 2017).

Within this vision expressed in the plans towards a European Education Area, 'making learning mobility a reality for all' is at the heart of the shared agenda. Most relevant recent policy documents are the Commission Communication 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture' (Gothenburg, 17 November 2017) and the Commission Communication 'Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies' (Brussels, 22 May 2018).

Free movement of learners and mobility are seen as an end in itself, and as a means, leading to better language proficiency, higher chances on the labour market and to a 'European identity'.

The image below shows how different tools and strategies can make this mobility happen:

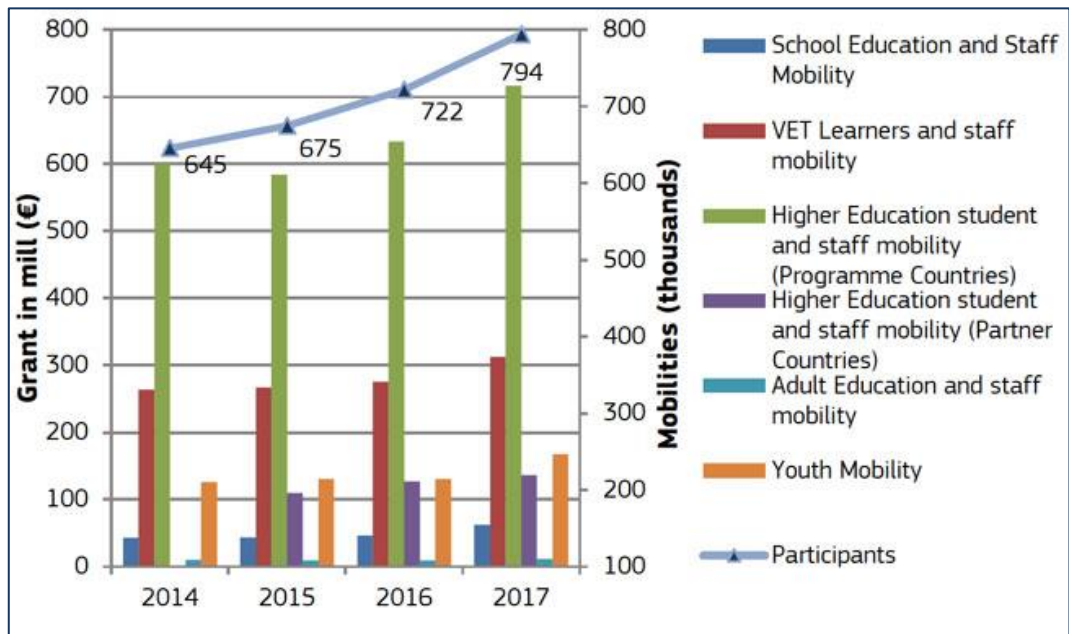
- Improved language learning;
- The European Student Card, as a device to simplify administrative aspects;
- European Universities;

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- Erasmus+, more specifically Key Activity 1 (for individual mobility) and Key Action 2 (for strategic school partnerships);
- Automatic diploma recognition.

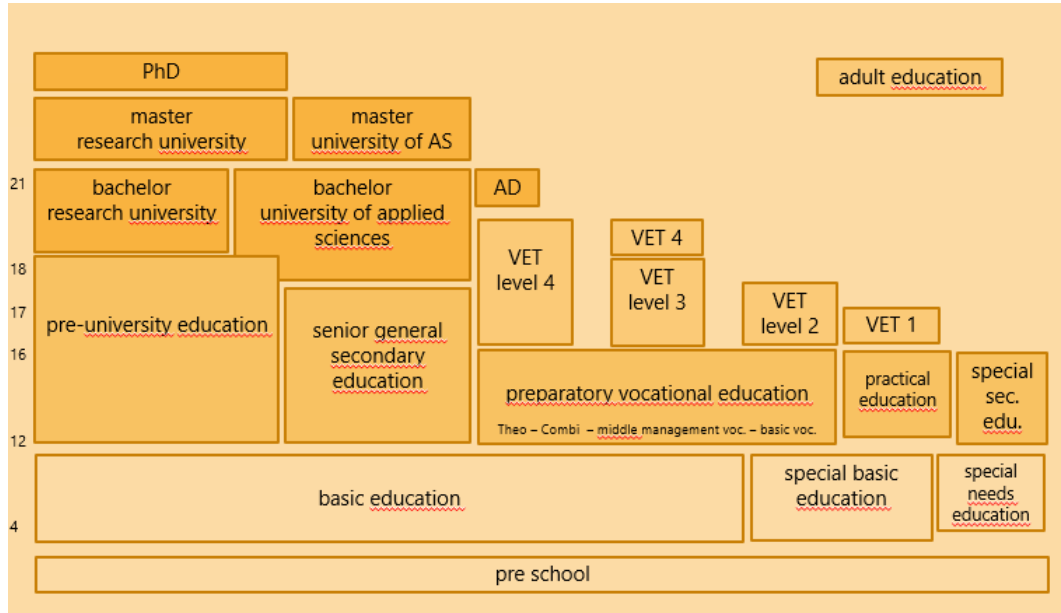


The graph illustrates the growing participation in the programme:



Data in the Netherlands

When talking about mobility data in the Netherlands, it is good to have an overview of the structure of the Dutch education system.

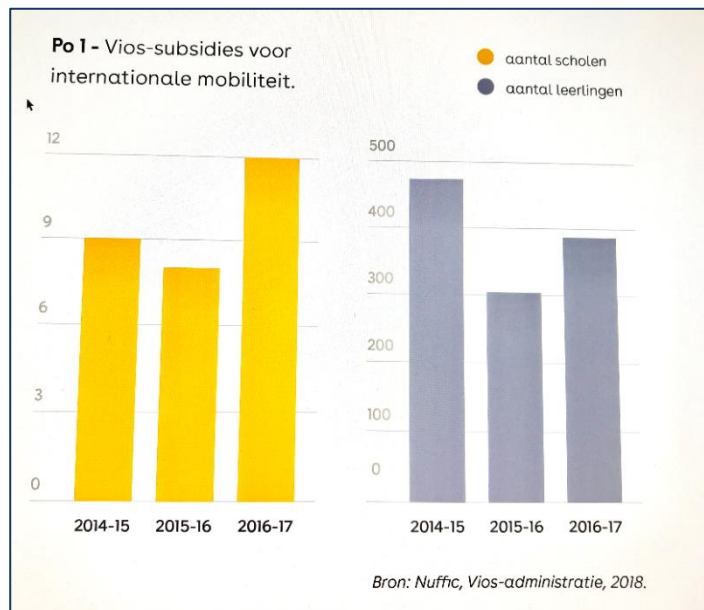


Mobility rates differently according to the level.

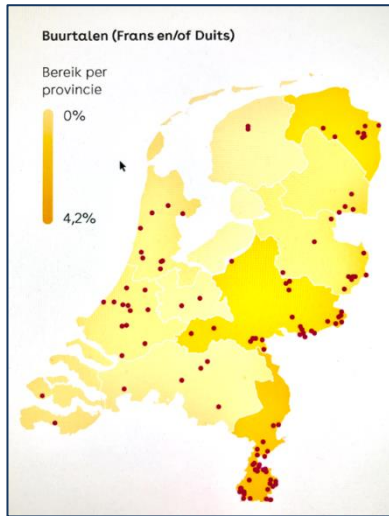
Mobility in primary education

In primary education, mobility is limited, for obvious reasons.

The graph shows the low percentages of pupils (grey) and schools (yellow) that participate.



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However, the foundation is led for more mobility later. There is attention for early language education. There are rather modest mobility experiments, by bike, and to schools just across the border.

This graph demonstrates quite high mobility in those parts of the country close to the neighbour country.

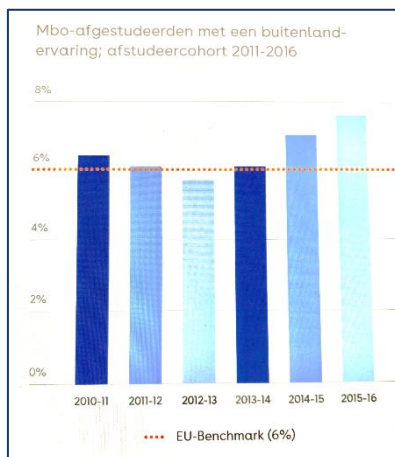
Mobility in secondary education

In secondary education, mobility rates are much higher. 79 % of the schools organise an excursion abroad. 23 % of the schools organise exchange with a school from abroad. Within those figures, the pre-university level has higher percentages than the general secondary education level. And pre-VET is even lower.



The graph shows the number of pupils per country. It demonstrates that mobility experiences take place to countries that are also further away from the Netherlands, such as China.

Mobility in VET



7 % of the pupils in VET took part in mobility in 2015, which is higher than the 6 % benchmark. However, the Dutch minister of education is planning to raise the participation rate to 10 %. In more than half of the cases, the mobility is a 3 to 6 months' internship.

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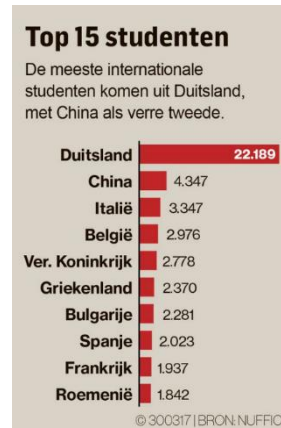
Participation rates for pupils in VET remain rather low, for several reasons:

- The age of the pupils (younger than those at universities);
- A lower language proficiency;
- A more problematic socio-economic status.

This explains why the distribution is uneven, and why the largest part of the participants is in VET level 4.

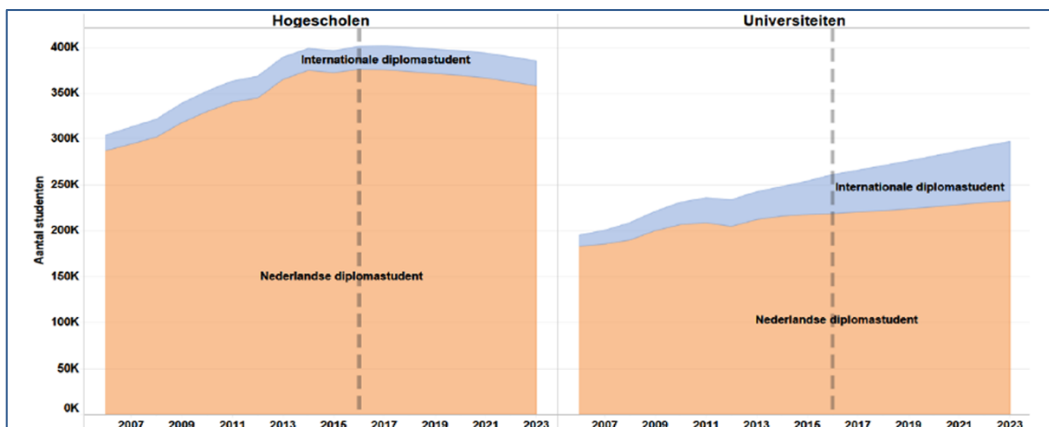
Mobility in higher education

Based on figures from 2015, it appears that outgoing diploma mobility is far below average: 2.0 % (OECD-average: 5.6 %). Incoming diploma mobility is far above average: 11.2 %. As far as credit mobility is concerned, outgoing and ingoing mobility are above average (1.6 and 1.5 %). In 2015 over 80.000 students at Dutch universities came from abroad, mainly from Germany (see top ten of countries in the graph). 50 % of PhD students come from abroad.



Mobility has great success in Dutch higher education.

Numbers of international students are still rising, and expected to rise in the future, as demonstrated in the two graphs below (the first for university colleges, the second for universities). This is putting pressure on the higher education system in the Netherlands. Is incoming diploma mobility out of control?



The success can be explained by a combination of factors:

- The BaMa structure;
- The instruction language: programmes at Dutch universities are often in English;
- The quality of the education;
- The likelihood to find a job;
- The relatively low price;
- The promotion by the universities.

Mobility: challenges for the Netherlands

Mobility for all is simply not possible. That is why turning towards more internationalisation@home could be a response.

Equal opportunities in mobility remains a challenge. Primary education is underrepresented. And there is room for growth in pupil mobility in secondary education, especially in VET.

In higher education, outgoing diploma mobility is below average. Incoming diploma mobility is high, but there is a need to control the diversity and influx.

When academic communities turn international, attention has to be paid to more inclusiveness. These communities will have to deal with intercultural challenges in education.

As a conclusion: the Netherlands don't need just more mobility, but more inclusive mobility and more balanced and controlled mobility. Even quality and even investments across Europe are needed, in order to avoid that students will flow to the 'quality' countries, leading to problems such as brain drain and too little investment in some countries. These are issues that go beyond education.

School visit Collège de Sèvres

The participants had the opportunity to assist to two classes at the international section of the 'Collège de Sèvres'.

The 'Collège de Sèvres' welcomes from the 6th to the 3rd year bilingual students who follow, in addition to the French teaching, a so-called 'international' teaching in German or English. The international sections have about 1300 pupils, including 345 at the Collège de Sèvres.



International education is based on specific binational programs. It covers two subjects:

- 4 hours per week language/literature courses;
- 2 hours per week history and geography courses in English or German.

Pupils follow the traditional curriculum defined by the National Education, particularly in French and maths. They also follow the history-geography in French for 2 hours per week and the teaching of a foreign language from the 6th: Spanish for English speakers and English for German speakers.

After the third year, the pupils continue to the 'Lycée de Sèvres' which also proposes international sections in the continuity of the Collège.

In addition to these courses of language/literature and history/geography, teachers of international sections offer their pupils the opportunity to engage in many extra-curricular activities. The theater workshop is particularly highlighted with a wide variety of plays in English and German including an annual performance in English or German with more than a hundred students on stage. The teachers organize international exchanges and cultural trips to the United Kingdom, Australia and Germany.

All teachers of the international sections are native speakers and have German or English-speaking training (from Canada, the United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom).

International governance and the role of education councils. Reflections from the perspective of the Flemish Education Council.

Roos Herpelinck

Roos Herpelinck is member of the EUNEC executive committee. She is director at the Vlor (Flemish Education Council), and is responsible for the Commission on International Education and Training Policy of the Council.

The role of education councils

The definition advanced by M. Brans, J. Van Damme, J. Gaskell (2013) explains the role of an education council:

'An education council is a (semi-)permanent body. It provides advice on educational policy. Its role is embedded in the policymaking process. It acts independently from any single interest. It combines a range of different perspectives: education partners, society, political affiliations, academic perspectives.'

It is important to be aware of the complexity of the policy making process in education and training. It is about steering, changing and influencing complex realities. Policy making is not a linear process with a clear position of an education council. The following elements illustrate this complexity:

- The wheel of decision making is never turning smoothly. It includes the identification of a problem, the description of a need, finding a solution, making a plan, taking a decision, a concrete innovation in schools, ...
- Policy making involves many actors with an own time table and an own perspective: politicians, school boards, pupils, trade unions,...
- Policy making involves many levels: school administration, municipality, region/country, international cooperation.
- Policy making needs system based information (beliefs in what works, wishes from insiders of the education system) and external information (research, international frameworks). The European Education Area discussed now is one of those frameworks.

According to OECD (as stated in the presentation by Tracey Burns for EUNEC, 2016), these are elements of effective governance of complex education systems:

- Focuses on processes, not structures. It is not so relevant to look at structural change, but rather at processes with different perspectives.
- Is flexible and can adapt to change and unexpected events. We can try to foresee what is going to happen, but, as demonstrated by the financial crisis and by the refugee crisis, this is not always possible.

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- Works through building capacity, stakeholder involvement and open dialogue. This is an important argument that can be used by stakeholders to position themselves.
- Requires a whole of a system approach, aligning roles and balancing tensions.
- Harnesses evidence and research, including at an international level, to inform policy and reform.

Providing strategic advice is the core role of education councils. Providing advice is about sharing information, connecting, bridging, breaking boundaries.

Four elements of quality can be distinguished within strategic advisory work:

- Points of view of national/regional stakeholders. At the Flemish Education Council, we first try to find out what are the perspectives around the table: the convictions and policy interests of education partners, social economic partners, the welfare system.
- Reality check in the classroom/school life. This is about the need, the acceptability, the feasibility. This is quite a new element in the work of the Flemish Education Council: the dialogue with schools can be further and more deeply elaborated. There is often a difference between beautiful concepts presented by politicians, and the daily reality in the schools.
- Evidence based on scientific research. This includes the results of international cooperative research.
- International reference frameworks. This is where the European Education Area comes in. But this is not the only framework. There are other common objectives at the level of the EU, within ET 2020. There is OECD, with regular reviews and comparative research on learning outcomes. There are the Strategic Development Goals of the United Nations. And there are the frameworks developed by the Council of Europe, mainly in the field of languages and civic education.

International frameworks, as well as research, help to open the minds, to think about innovative solutions, to get out of rather 'conservative' visions.

How does the Vlor deal with international education policy?

At the Vlor, there is a 'Commission on international education and training policy'.

The role of this commission is diverse:

- Gathering and sharing information on what is going on in international education policy (EU, OECD, Council of Europe, UN,...). In order to fulfil this role, we consult a variety of sources: written sources/ internet, first hand information from negotiators, public administration and the permanent representation of Flanders at the EU. The input is a

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document, called the 'state of affairs of international education and training policy', which is broadly shared.

- Agenda setting. After having gathered all the information available, we try to find out which themes are relevant for our working programme, and for the working programmes of our members.
- Advisory role.
 - The Commission prepares recommendations on main topics at the international policy agenda, influencing the position taken by the Minister at international fora. In the preparation of those recommendations we evaluate whether the international proposals are acceptable, fitting to a real problem, and we reflect on what would be needed to implement the international frameworks in Flanders.
 - The Commission also stimulates to integrate the international policy frameworks in 'regular' recommendations, such as recommendations related to the OECD skills strategy, to higher education, to special needs education, ...

The work of the Commission is important, because it broadens the perspective of the members, stakeholders in Flemish education and training. They look outside the borders, they are confronted with different insights and with inspiring practices in other countries. EUNEC is very relevant in this respect, offering an excellent opportunity for contact with education councils abroad. In the case of the Vlor, there is for instance intensive exchange with the Dutch Education Council.

Moreover, the Commission organises seminars with schools who have coordinated or participated in international projects, in order to translate the lessons learnt out of international cooperation towards policy makers and to disseminate them towards other schools.

Recent European initiatives

What is the value of the Communication discussed in Gothenburg and of the European Education Area, from a Flemish perspective?

- For the first time, there is the recognition of the importance of education for further development of society and as pillar of social security or social protection. Learning is considered as capital for integration in society; this goes beyond the more narrow vision of learning with an exclusive labour market focus.
- Education is now higher ranked as a priority on the policy agenda of the Heads of State, and of the Ministers responsible for finances (for instance, the benchmark for investment in education).
- Trends towards an open area for education are no longer only for higher education, but also for other education levels: lifelong learning, compulsory education, vocational education and training.

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- The perspective is broadened towards common values and shared European identity.
- And finally, there is a tendency towards more transparency in education policy frameworks.

The Flemish education council insists on the need of balance. National and regional stakeholders have to take the international frameworks into account, but not implement them all, and not immediately. This has also been demonstrated in the presentation of professor Maarten Simons.

Balance is needed between the challenges of the national/regional education system, and the international challenges. A profound policy debate is needed on what is at stake, on priorities. Education is about values and deserves ideological debate on core elements. Even if the debate is not leading to consensus, it is relevant to accept dissent in opinions, and to make that visible.

All these international frameworks evolve in a context of uncertainty and transition, What will be happening after the European elections? And what will be happening after the Brexit? And what kind of Brexit will it be?

In any case, education councils have to play their role in raising awareness and in involving the stakeholders in the European debates.

Round table. What can be the role of education councils?

The round table follows the presentation by Roos Herpinck, who reflected from the point of view of the Flemish Education Council. The round table is chaired by Manuel Miguéns, EUNEC president.

All member councils around the table debate on possible answers to the following questions:

- How do education councils position themselves in view of this European Education Area policy plan?
- Are they aware of what is happening at EU-level and of the possible impact on national and regional education policy?
- How can education councils play their role as a mediator, bridging the gap between the European policy level and the school/class level?

The findings of this debate are integrated in the statements below.

Statements

These statements are based on the lessons learnt during the seminar in Sèvres, May 2019. They identify key issues for further debate within EUNEC and within each education council, member of the network.

EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively to the European Commission, the European Parliament and relevant DG's. EUNEC also wants to promote action by its members at national/regional level. These statements can contribute to the national advisory opinions of education councils. They should lead to reflection and action by relevant stakeholders in the field of education and training, such as providers of education, teacher trade unions, social partners, students, parents and experts in the field of education and training.

EUNEC supports the vision of the European Education Area

'A vision for 2025 would be a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent, where spending time in another Member State - to study, to learn, or to work - has become the standard and where, in addition to one's mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm. A continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity' (European Commission 2017).

EUNEC will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2020, after 20 years of consultation and EU-level cooperation. It goes without saying that our network, well aware of the added value of international exchange, supports the vision expressed in the European Education Area. We have always focused our discussions and reflections with the international education policy documents as a central reference. This approach has always given us a common ground, in spite of the specific challenges every country or region experiences in the field of education.

The concept of the European Education Area is for EUNEC an opportunity to deepen our discussions, and to clarify our role as education councils.

During the seminar in Sèvres (May 2019), several EUNEC members testified how they experienced the added value of international cooperation in the field of different policy lines, all at the heart of the European Education Area:

- Cooperation in the field of curriculum design (Malta);
- International mobility (Netherlands);
- Recognition of qualifications (Flanders);
- Improved language learning (France);
- Mainstreaming innovation and digital skills in education (Portugal).

The European Education Area: just an umbrella or an ambitious new vision?

The provocative question that was at the center of our debates and reflections is whether this European Education Area is just an umbrella covering already existing policy lines, or a real new education policy, insuring inclusive quality education for all.

Bianca Busuioc, speaking for the European Commission, confirmed that the European Education Area is **indeed an ambitious new policy plan**.

The European Education Area does not start from a white sheet. It stands on the shoulders of important frameworks, started years before. Over the past decade, the European Union has developed a series of 'soft policy' tools to support Member States in the design of national/regional education policies. Since 2000, Member States have been cooperating under the 'Framework for European cooperation in education and training' (ET 2020) which set common objectives and benchmarks. The Commission believes it is now time to build on these foundations and to greatly step up the ambition.

Within the vision of the European Education Area, for the first time, there is the recognition of the importance of **education for further development of society** and as pillar of social security or social protection. Learning is considered as capital for integration in society; this goes beyond the vision of learning with a labour market focus. The perspective is also broadened towards **common values and a shared European identity**.

Another new element is that education is now higher ranked **as a priority on the policy agenda** of the EU Heads of State, and of the Ministers responsible for finances.

Trends towards an open area for education are no longer only at the level of higher education, but also at **other education levels**: lifelong learning, compulsory education, and vocational education and training.

Tensions between the international and the regional/national level

The primary responsibility for education policies lies with the Member States, at national, regional and local levels. According to this **principle of subsidiarity** education 'belongs' to the Member States, from the beginning of the European Union.

However, the European Union has always played a complementary role, over the years. Member States have their national challenges, but they have at the same time **much in common**. Exchanging experiences has led to better policies.

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International frameworks could be seen as a threat against the principle of subsidiarity. They could be conceived as a way of interfering, by international organisations in 'our' national/regional education policy.

On the other hand, education policy making in the Member States can benefit from international frameworks:

- International policy lines can be used to justify some of the national/regional positions. The trends at international level are one of the backgrounds.
- International frameworks can offer new points of view, and can help to open up conservative views and inspire to think about innovative solutions.

Balance is needed between the challenges of the national/regional education system, and the international challenges. Member States should not take international frameworks for granted, but they can offer added value to national/regional education policy making, taking into account some critical conditions:

- Need for transparency and convergence between international frameworks. Next to the European Union, other international organisations take initiatives in the field of education. There is sometimes overlap, there are sometimes diverging priorities. National/regional education stakeholders need more transparency in the amount of international education policy initiatives.
- Need for focus. International frameworks now sometimes tend to encompass all that is related to education.
- Need for more and better involvement of stakeholders, in the conception and implementation of the frameworks.
- Need for trust. International frameworks can offer guidance, but at the same time there is need for flexibility at the implementation level.
- Need for awareness that international frameworks, by the way they are developing, are steering. It is about a new way of governing, a new mode of power: those who develop the frameworks, those who monitor, steer the process. PISA, for instance, framed the discussion on education to an important extent.

Higher Education has a strong tradition of international cooperation. The EHEA, the European Higher Education Area, is a known and successful concept. Challenges are of course different in compulsory education and in lifelong learning: the principle of subsidiarity plays more, and there is a wider divergence in terms of structure of the systems. However, recent experiences within **higher education can be inspiring** for other levels. There is, for instance, the case of automatic recognition of degrees within the Benelux. This is an example of international cooperation that is very relevant in the light of the developments towards a European Education Area. And there are, even more recently, the new European Universities, an experiment that deserves decent evaluation: does it deliver, in higher education? And can such

experiences be a source of inspiration for international cooperation at other education levels?

How to overcome the tensions? The pivotal role of education councils.

The European Education Area is an initiative that comes from the level of the European Union. It presents a vision for 2025: a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. But in order to make it reality, Member states will have to jump in.

Education systems are large and complex, this is even more the case at the international level. The time gap between policy conception and implementation is big. There will be constant discussions on how to best implement. This is why there is need for time and space between what the international frameworks observe and how they are implemented at national/regional level. The frameworks have to land, to settle. This is where EUNEC and the member councils have a crucial role to play.

Networks such as EUNEC² are good examples of how to **involve stakeholders** in education policy making. According to OECD (as stated in the presentation by Tracey Burns for EUNEC, 2016), one of the important elements of effective governance of complex education systems is that it works through building capacity, stakeholder involvement and open dialogue.

Educations councils³ are **boundary workers**, linking stakeholders, policy makers, international education policy, and society. Education councils can play an important role as a **mediator** between the international level and the level of the Member States, between the level of the policy and the level of the implementation.

Deliberation is a key element in education policy making. We need places with time and space for **localized deliberation**, where education stakeholders can really disagree about the future of education, and talk about that disagreement. When it comes to education, these are the critical questions: How do we relate to new generations? What schools do we prefer? How do we define good education? How do we fund good education? How do we deal with freedom and equity in education? Different values are at stake. Even if the debate is not leading to consensus, it is relevant to accept dissent in opinions, and to make that dissent visible.

Education councils can be those meaningful places for deliberation, **going beyond the tensions** between the global level and the local implementation level, and allowing the **international frameworks to settle, to land**. Visions

² www.eunec.eu

³ 'An education council is a (semi-)permanent body. It provides advice on educational policy. Its role is embedded in the policymaking process. It acts independently from any single interest. It combines a range of different perspectives: education partners, society, political affiliations, academic perspectives.' (M. Brans, J. Van Damme, J. Gaskell, 2013).

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are needed, but at a certain moment, things have to work, at school, in the classroom.

EUNEC, gathering education councils and other advisory bodies in the field of education, is the perfect place to exchange experiences on that role.

In order to fulfil this role, EUNEC insists on the need of structured support by the European Commission. EUNEC has, in the past, been funded under Key Action 3, Support for Policy Reform, Civil Society Cooperation in the field of education and training. Since 2015, this funding disappeared, together with the recognition, due to a change in the eligibility criteria. EUNEC insists on reviewing the criteria, so that our network can fully play its role as a mediator in the implementation of international frameworks.

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