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Main Policy Lines in Education and Training

(May 2014 – October 2014)

1. **European Union**
2. **Institutional context**

## European Semester

### ‘Building growth’, Country-specific recommendations within the 2014 European Semester

Communication from the European Commission, 2 June 2014

Over the last four years, the annual country-specific recommendations proposed by the Commission have been used as a compass to exit from the crisis and re-build growth. In this document, the Commission summarizes its analysis of progress made over the last year, as spelled out in the recommendations.

These country-specific recommendations outline reform priorities in individual Member States for the coming 12-18 months and, where relevant, take account of the need to tackle imbalances.

The Communication has two annexes.

* Annex 1 gives an overview of the recommendations;
* Annex 2 sets out the state of play regarding Member States’ Europe 2020 targets.

More detailed information on each Member State is given in the analytical staff working document. Comparative background information is available on the [Commission’s website](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020index_en.htm).

## Presidencies of the EU

### The Greek Presidency of the EU

January – June 2014

In the document ‘Together we’ve sailed further’, the Greek Presidency presents a list of agreements reached during the Greek Presidency, ‘over 65 agreements impacting and improving almost every aspect of European citizen’s daily life’. In the document, there is no specific chapter dedicated to education and training.

Achievements in the field of education and training:

* Council conclusions on efficient and innovative education and training to invest in skills – supporting the 2014 European semester;
* Council conclusions on quality assurance in education and training (see also point 2.2);
* Council conclusions on effective teacher education (see also point 2.4);
* Council conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences (see also point 2.3).

[The report](http://www.gr2014.eu/sites/default/files/Scoreboard_New_Eng_0.pdf)

### The Italian Presidency of the EU

July – December 2014

From 1 July 2014, the three presidencies of the European Council over the next 18 months (Italy, Latvia and Luxemburg) have one ultimate goal: fully overcoming the economic crisis and returning to a job rich growth, as well as seizing the opportunities of the digital economy.

In the field of education and training, the presidency intends to propose a political discussion on the future role of education and training in the national and EU growth agendas, highlighting the impact of investment in education on economic sustainable growth and the role of education in fostering competitiveness and job creation. The presidency will

* Focus on vocational education and training;
* Focus on the inter-relationship between education and employment;
* Focus on entrepreneurship education;
* Support the discussion on the role of education in the digital area, taking stock of the progress made on the EU ‘Opening up Education’ agenda and drawing attention to the role played by education in the transmission of values and in facilitating an educated and conscious citizenship;
* Explore better use of Erasmus+ to enhance international cooperation among higher education institutions and to promote student mobility programmes;
* Propose for discussion the following subjects: wellbeing at school and early childhood education in foreign languages;
* Organize an event to relaunch the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training;
* Act in favour of third-sector organizations involved in programmes of learning support, school drop-out preventive and broadening access to higher technical and academic education.

There will be one European Council for ministers of education, on 12 December.

* The Council will adopt Conclusions on Entrepreneurship in Education and Training.
* There will be a public debate on ‘The Economic Case for Education’.
* The Ministers of Education of the Trio Presidency will participate to the EPSCO (11 Dec) and the Ministers of Employment of the Trio Presidency will take part of the EYCS (12 Dec).
* During lunch, ministers will debate on the topic of wellbeing at school.

Planned events (according to the presentation by Marcello Limina, Director General International Affairs, Ministry for education, Universities and Research in Brussels on 9 September 2014):

* European High Level Dialogue “Education in the Digital Era” – Brussels, 11 December 2014
* High Level Group on Education and Training – Rome 12-13 June
* European Day of Languages – Florence 25-26 September
* Conference on the new generation of researchers and the quality of education - Trento 18-19 November
* Forum on the European Doctorate – Padua 20-21 November
* Bologna Process Meetings – Rome 18-19 September; 27-28 November
* Meeting of DGs for Higher Education – Palermo 20-21 October
* Meeting of DGs for Schools – Verona 20-22 November
* Meeting of DGs for VET – Rome 13-15 October

Website of the Italian presidency: <http://italia2014.eu/en/>

[Programme of the Italian presidency](http://italia2014.eu/media/1349/programma_en1_def.pdf)

Common [programme of the trio-presidency](http://italia2014.eu/en/presidency-and-eu/programme-and-priorities/the-trio-programme/)

## The new EU Parliament

Composition of the Education and Culture Committee (CULT) in the European Parliament:

Chair:

Silvia COSTA, (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Italy Partito Democratico)

Vice-Chairs:

Andrea BOCSKOR (EPP HU)

Mircea DIACONU (ALDE, RO)

Helga TRÜPEL (Greens/EFA, DE)

Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ (EPP, CZ)

[List](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/cult/members.html#menuzone) of all the members and substitutes

## The new European Commission

On 10 September, president-elect Juncker unveiled his team and the new shape of the next European Commission. A first vice-president (Frans Timmermans) will be the right-hand of the president. This is the first time that there is a commissioner dedicated to a better regulation agenda, guaranteeing that every Commission proposal is truly required and that the aims cannot best be achieved by Member States. The Commission will concentrate its efforts on those areas where only joint action at European level can deliver the desired results. The first vice-president will also act as a watchdog, upholding the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law in all of the Commission's activities.

Jean-Claude Juncker has presented to the European Parliament on 15 July 2014 political guidelines for the new Commission. In these political guidelines he set out a new agenda for jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change. He considers the guidelines as a kind of political contract he concluded with the Parliament to mark the beginning of a new mandate and to prioritise the work of the new Commission.

The ten policy areas to be tackled under the agenda for jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change are the following:

1. A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment
2. A Connected Digital Single Market
3. A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy
4. A Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base
5. A Deeper and Fairer Economic and Monetary Union
6. A Reasonable and Balanced Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.
7. An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust
8. Towards a New Policy on Migration
9. A Stronger Global Actor
10. A Union of Democratic Change

## The new college will have seven vice-presidents, six in addition to the High Representative of the Union for foreign policy and security policy (Federica Mogherini), each leading a project team.

## They will be steering and coordinating the work of a number of commissioners in compositions that may change according to need and as new projects develop over time. These project teams mirror the political guidelines. This will ensure a dynamic interaction of all members of the college, breaking down silos and moving away from static structures. The vice-presidents will all act as real deputies to the president.

## Education and training is under the direct responsibility of two commissioners:

## Tibor Navracsics, Hungary, is the commissioner for education, culture, youth and citizenship. He will contribute to the projects steered and coordinated by

* the vice-president for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness
* the vice-president for the Euro and social dialogue
* the vice-president for the digital single market

He is asked to contribute to, amongst other things,

* the jobs, growth and investment package to be presented within the first three months of the mandate of the Commission (notably for aspects related to education infrastructure);
* the European Semester (the vehicle for pursuing the modernisation of education systems including with a view to progressing towards the Europe 2020 education targets);
* promoting excellence and networking among European universities and supporting the mobility of students through Erasmus+;
* reinforcing the knowledge triangle between education, business and research (European Institute for Innovation and Technology; Joint Research Centre);
* supporting the work of the commissionner for employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility on youth employment, development of skills and strengthening of lifelong learning.

**Marianne Thyssen,** Belgium, is the commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility. She will contribute to the projects steered and coordinated by

* the vice-president for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness
* the vice-president for the Euro and social dialogue

She will work closely together with the vice-president for the Euro and social dialogue and with the commissioner for economic and financial affairs, taxation and customs to drive the European Semester.

She is asked to contribute to, amongst other things,

* the jobs, growth and investment package to be presented within the first three months of the mandate of the Commission (including Youth Guarantee);
* the European Semester (the vehicle for pursuing the modernisation of labour markets and social protection systems including with a view to progressing towards the Europe 2020 targets in the fields of employment and social inclusion;
* mobilising EU-instruments to further develop the skills level of the European workforce, by promoting VET and lifelong learning;
* maximising the performance of EU-programmes (e.a. synergies with Horizon 2020).

This division of responsibilities has important consequences for DG EAC (Education and Culture) and for DG EMPL (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). The parts of Unit EAC A3 (Skills and Qualification Strategies; Multilingualism Policy) dealing with ‘Skills and Qualification’, and of Unit EAC B2 (Vocational Training and Adult Education; Erasmus +) dealing with ‘Vocational Training’ and ‘Adult Education policy’ move from DG EAC to DG EMPL.

In a next step, the European Parliament has to give its consent to the entire College of Commissioners, including the President and the High-Representative Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission. This is preceded by hearings of the Commissioners-designate in the relevant parliamentary committees. Once the European Parliament has given its consent, the European Council formally appoints the European Commission.

[More information](http://ec.europa.eu/about/juncker-commission/index_en.htm) about the Juncker Commission (the structure, the commissioners and their portfolio, ‘mission letters’ from Juncker to each commissioner)

Juncker [political guidelines](http://ec.europa.eu/about/juncker-commission/docs/pg_en.pdf) for the next European Commission

# Education and training

## Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting

20-21 May 2014

The Council adopted conclusions on:

* effective teacher education (see also point 2.2)
* multilingualism and the development of language competences (see also point 2.3)
* quality assurance supporting education and training (see also point 2.4).

It also held, in public deliberation, a policy debate on the subject: "Education crossing borders: new opportunities and challenges".

[Press release](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142704.pdf)

## Council conclusions on quality assurance supporting education and training

20 May 2014

The Council adopted conclusions on effective teacher education, addressing concrete issues such as how to attract and retain the best candidates, how to ensure the relevance of teacher education programmes and how to better exploit the potential of new technologies and resources.

The conclusions highlight the importance of identifying the professional competences which teacher educators themselves need, as well as the knowledge, skills and attitudes which they should be helping future teachers to develop. Member states are invited to promote the development of comprehensive professional competence frameworks for teachers, which define the competences and qualities they require at different stages of their careers or in different teaching situations (drawing on the July 2013 report of the former Thematic Working Group on Teacher Professional Development). Such frameworks should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing needs and be discussed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

Member states are also invited to use the funding opportunities in EU instruments, such as the Erasmus+ Programme and, where appropriate, the European Social Fund.

See also point xxx, the results of TALIS 2013.

[The conclusions](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%208883%202014%20INIT)

## Council conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences

20 may 2014

The Council adopted conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences, inviting member states to adopt and improve measures aimed at promoting multilingualism and enhancing the quality and efficiency of language learning and teaching.

Linguistic diversity is a fundamental component of European culture and intercultural dialogue and being able to communicate in a language other than one's mother tongue is a key competence that contributes to the mobility, employability and personal development of European citizens, in particular young people, in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs.

However, a recent European survey showed that the level of foreign language learning in Europe is generally poor: too many pupils fail to reach even a 'basic user' level and almost half of Europeans report that they are unable to hold a conversation in any language other than their mother tongue.

The Commission recalled its preference for a European benchmark in this area, but was aware of the complexity and diversity of the linguistic landscape in the EU, where many national factors influence language policy .

The Commission proposes to organize a EU-wide survey of language competences in 2016-17 and which will be funded mainly through the Erasmus+ programme.

In the annex to the conclusions, an assessment of language competences is proposed based on the percentage of pupils aged 15 or, where appropriate due to national circumstances, 14 or 16 years old, who attain the level of independent user (B1) in the second language studied. Each member state shall determine the languages which are to be considered as first and second languages in its case. Only official EU languages may be considered as second languages.

[The conclusions](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209513%202014%20INIT)

## Council conclusions on effective teacher education

20 May 2014

In addition to taking stock of quality assurance initiatives already taken in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors, these conclusions address specific issues such as the quality of cross-border education and the extent to which quality assurance arrangements could be developed in other areas of education and training such as schools, work-based learning and non-formal learning.

The conclusions state that approaches to quality assurance should move away from a ‘checklist’ approach towards the development of a genuine ingrained culture of quality enhancement in teaching and learning which can raise standards and improve learning outcomes.

[The conclusions](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209516%202014%20REV%201)

## European Area of Skills and Qualifications

Special Eurobarometer, June 2014

This survey is in line with the stakeholders consultation on the European Area of Skills and Qualifications (run by the European Commission in December 2013 – April 2014). It provides data on a number of issues that are relevant to current policies on education and skills in Europe. The survey was carried out in the 28 Member States of the EU in April – May 2014.

The survey provides important findings that relate to the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications. The survey also examines the resources and instruments available to European citizens. The main variation in responses throughout the survey is by level of education. The survey also identified some broad differences between EU15 countries and New Member States.

[The Eurobarometer report](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_417_en.pdf)

## Results of the public consultation on ET 2020

9-10 October 2014

The results of the consultation have been presented at the Education, Training and Youth Forum on 9 October 2014.

 The priorities that were mentioned most often by the respondents (114 responses):

* Importance of lifelong learning and mobility
* Employability and transition between education and the labour market
* Creativity, innovation and the use of ICT in education
* Equal access to education and training opportunities for all
* Key competences, i.e. social and civic competences, entrepreneurship, basic and numeracy skills
* Entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training
* Quality and efficiency of education and training in general, and of VET in particular
* Improvement of teachers’ training and appreciation of the teaching profession
* Adult education and participation

# Developments in other policy domains

## Youth

### EU Work Plan for Youth

20 May 2014

This document is a medium-term plan for 18 months, with key initiatives in specific youth policy areas, so as to enable the EU and its member states to address urgently the high youth unemployment rates and the consequences of the current crisis for young people.

It sets out three priorities:

* development of youth work and non-formal and informal learning;
* enhancement of cross-sectoral co-operation; and
* empowerment, with a special focus on access to rights, autonomy, participation and active citizenship

It also aims to strengthen cooperation between member states and the Commission and develop synergies with education, training and employment policies in order to ensure youth policy input into the European Semester. The Work Plan will be evaluated in the second half of 2015.

[The Work Plan](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209523%202014%20INIT)

### Conclusions on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion

20 May 2014

The conclusions focus on creativity, innovation and green jobs and invite member states to recognise the importance of entrepreneurial education from an early age, highlighting the role of non-formal and informal learning to ensure the autonomy and the personal development of young people, as well as to facilitate their successful integration into the labour market.

Entrepreneurship competences include transversal skills and attitudes, as well as knowledge, and youth work can be a key tool for developing those skills. In particular, the “social entrepreneurship” model, primarily aimed at contributing to the general good of society, can appeal to young people and give them the chance to provide innovative responses to the current economic, social and environmental challenges.

[The conclusions](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%208378%202014%20INIT)

### Youth Work Study

This EU-wide study brings together existing evidence to facilitate the understanding and appreciation of youth work. The study provides information about the value of youth work, and how it results in a range of positive outcomes for young people, enabling them to:

* develop skills and competences,
* strengthen their network and social capital, and
* change particular behaviours.

Beyond the individual level outcomes, youth work is an important component of our social fabric, offering a space for contact, exchange, and engagement between young people, as well as between generations. The study analyses the specific situation of the 28 EU Member States, highlighting the situation of youth work and its contribution to the well-being and development of young people.

Various actors and organisations are delivering youth work in Europe, such as youth clubs, youth centres and youth associations. In addition to street workers' activities, youth workers are providing support within schools, libraries or hospitals. Despite this diversity, youth work has common core features; it focuses on young people, their personal development, and participation is voluntary.

[Read more](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2014/20140219-youth-work-study_en.htm) about the general report, the case studies and the country reports.

## Institutional affairs: Public consultation on the Commission’s Stakeholder Consultation Guidelines

July, 2014

Consultations - together with impact assessments, evaluations and expertise - are a key tool for transparent and informed policy making. The Commission consults widely, at each stage of the policy cycle, respecting principles of openness and transparency and following minimum standards, which are generally acknowledged as appropriate and respond to international best practice. Over the last five years, stakeholders' views were sought through more than 500 open consultations published on the ‘Your Voice in Europe’ website.

The guidelines focus on consultations carried out in policy preparation. They also apply to consultations in the context of evaluations.

While these guidelines are intended for internal Commission use only, stakeholder inputs are an essential element in ensuring the quality of the final product. The Commission therefore encouraged stakeholders to participate in this consultation.

The deadline for the consultation is 30 September 2014.

[Consultation and background documents](http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/en/news/public-consultation-commissions-stakeholder-consultation-guidelines)

# Studies, conferences and tools

## Access to education

May 2014

Dr Paul Downes (key note speaker at the EUNEC conference on Early School Leaving, Vilnius, November 2013) has published [‘Access to Education in Europe: A Framework and Agenda for System Change’.](http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-94-017-8795-6) It is based on a European Commission funded study across 12 countries.

## U-Multirank

13 May 2014

U-Multirank, launched at a conference in Athens, assesses the performance of more than 850 higher education institutions worldwide. The aim is that individual learners will be able to build a personalized ranking based on their particular needs (far from the misleading comparisons between institutions of very different types).

The U-Multirank assessment is based on assessments in five key areas:

* Research performance
* Quality of teaching and learning
* International orientation
* Success in knowledge transfer
* Regional involvement.

[www.u-multirank.eu](http://www.u-multirank.eu)

## EPALE, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

13 May 2014

EPALE is funded by the European Commission and managed through the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency).

The platform is open to teachers, trainers, volunteers, policy-makers, researchers and academics involved in adult learning. The site offers interactive networks, enables users to link with others all around Europe, to exchange good practice and to engage in discussion. Each participating country will contribute information, events, resources and other useful information.

<http://ec.europa.eu/epale/en>

## Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability

Eurydice, 26 May 2014

This report investigates what governments and higher education institutions are doing

* to widen access to higher education (access);
* to increase the number of students that complete higher education (retention);
* to give guidance to students on entering the labour market (employability).

30 countries took part in the study.

One of the conclusions of the report is that data and feedback have to be used more proactively to inform decision making, and to inspire more diversity in the student population.

[The full report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/165EN.pdf)

## Key data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe

Eurydice, 19 June 2014

This report is published jointly with Eurostat. It contributes to informing policy efforts on early childhood education and care by combining statistical data and qualitative information to describe the structure, organization and funding of early education and care systems. It analyses issues such as access, governance, quality assurance, affordability, professionalization of staff, leadership, parental involvement and measures to support disadvantaged children.

This is the second report on the topic, following the 2009 report. It covers 32 countries and 37 education systems.

[The full report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/166EN.pdf)

## Financing schools in Europe: Mechanisms, Methods and Criteria in Public Funding

Eurydice, 1 July 2014

The report explains the financial flows through the various administrative levels involved with the help of diagrams, and it analyses the criteria and principles for allocation various resources to schools. It covers 27 of the 28 Member States.

[Full report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice./documents/thematic_reports/170EN.pdf) and main [highlights](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice./documents/thematic_reports/170EN_HI.pdf)

## Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe, 2013/14

Eurydice, 3 October 2014

The annually updated report suggests that teachers in 16 countries registered a salary increase in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. The report gives answers to the question of teachers and school heads' salaries and allowances as well as a comparable, European-wide overview.

Separate country sheets provide additional information on issues such as minimum and maximum annual gross statutory salaries, salary progression in relation to experience and the different allowances available.

[The full report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/salaries.pdf)

[European Commission Press release](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-1082_en.htm)