



5 December 2011  
EUN/EC/DOC/065

## Main policy lines of international organisations, relevant for education councils State of affairs October - November 2011

### I. European Union

#### 1. Institutional context

##### 1.1 The Annual Growth Survey and the European Semester

November 2011

The Annual Growth Survey sets out what the Commission believes must be the EU's priorities for the coming 12 months in terms of economic and budgetary policies and reforms. Its presentation marks the opening of the second European Semester of economic governance.

The first annual Growth Survey focused on priority actions in 3 main areas: fiscal consolidation and enhancing macro-economic stability, labour market reforms for higher employment, and growth enhancing measures. These priorities were taken into account by Member States in their Europe 2020 National Reform Programmes and translated into country-specific recommendations endorsed by the European Council in June. In addition, in March 2011, the member countries of the Euro area and six non Euro Member States agreed on the Euro Plus Pact. Their national commitments are integrated in the National Reform Programmes and assessed within the framework of the European semester.

The Annual Growth Survey 2012 launches the 2012 European Semester of economic governance and is the basis for building common understanding about the priorities for action at national and EU level, taking up the EU country-specific recommendations and

where relevant the commitments made under the Euro Plus Pact. This Survey puts a strong emphasis on the need for implementation. The social partners will have an important role to play in implementing some of these recommendations.

For 2012, the Commission considers that efforts at national and EU level should concentrate on the following 5 priorities (The sentences in *italics* are those directly relevant for education and training).

1. Pursuing differentiated growth-friendly fiscal consolidation

*The Commission considers that Member States should give particular attention to prioritising growth-friendly expenditure, such as education, research, innovation and energy which are an investment in future growth, and ensuring the efficiency of such spending.*

2. Restoring normal lending to the economy

3. Promoting growth and competitiveness for today and tomorrow

4. Tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis

*Already before the crisis, performance of Member States in terms of participation of all age groups in employment, as well as in terms of education, training and lifelong learning, varied widely and the overall EU average was falling behind in international comparison.*

*Restricting access to early retirement schemes and other early exit pathways while supporting longer workers lives by providing better access to lifelong learning (...).*

*One out of seven (14,4 %) currently leaves the education system with no more than lower secondary education and participates in no further education and training.*

*Member States should give priority to engaging with social partners to implement commitments to promote quality apprenticeships and traineeship contracts (...). And give priority to further adapting education and training systems to reflect labour market conditions and skills demand, while reinforcing their efficiency and quality, and focusing on sectors and occupations that experience the most pronounced skills or labour shortages (...). And give priority to reviewing the quality and funding of the universities and considering measures such as the introduction of tuition fees for tertiary education, accompanied by student loan and scholarship schemes, or alternative sources for funding, including the use of public funds to leverage private investment.*

5. Modernising public administration.

*Next steps*

In the coming weeks and months, the different Council formations will discuss the AGS and report to the March European Councils so that it can adopt appropriate policy guidance for the Member States. This guidance should be incorporated into Member States' National Reform Programmes and Stability or Convergence Programmes presented in April/May. Having analysed these programmes, the Commission will issue its country specific recommendations in time for these to be endorsed by the June 2012 European Council. The Member States should then incorporate this policy guidance in their national economic and budgetary decisions.

In an annex the Annual Growth Survey foresees a list of EU–level specific proposals with substantial growth potential and an indicative timeline. In the section ‘fast-track future proposals that the Commission will propose in the coming months’, we find amongst others

- Legislation modernising the system for recognising professional qualifications (to be adopted by the Council and the Parliament by end 2012)
- A youth opportunities initiative to boost youth employment, in particular access to a first job, apprenticeships and internships (Commission proposals by the end of 2011, agreement by Council and Parliament by end June 2012)

[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/ags2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/ags2012_en.pdf)

Frequently asked questions

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/821&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## **1.2 The Commission Work Programme 2012 ‘Delivering European renewal’**

Communication from the European Commission, 15 November 2011

Overarching objectives for the Work Programme are:

- Building a Europe of stability and responsibility  
This part refers to Europe 2020, recognizing the interdependence of the Member States and setting out how EU and national levels can work together to deliver agreed goals and to return the economy to growth and job creation, while laying the foundations for a sustainable future. It also refers to the country specific recommendations and to the second annual Growth Survey that will set the frame for the 2012 European Semester.
- Building a Union of growth and solidarity  
This part mentions, a.o. ‘Erasmus for All’, the new programme on education, training and youth, that will boost the modernization of Europe’s education systems. It is also stressed that job creation remains one of the greatest challenges for Europe today. The Europe 2020 flagship initiatives ‘Youth on the Move’, the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs have highlighted the need to direct European renewal to the most in need. Erasmus for All will support strategic partnerships between higher education and business to ensure that young students can acquire the mix of skills that the labour market demands.
- Giving the EU an effective voice in the wider world.

Full text of the communication

[http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2012_en.pdf)

In the field of education, only two roadmaps are presented:

- Internationalisation of higher education

[http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned\\_ia/docs/2012\\_eac\\_019\\_internationalisation\\_higher\\_education\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/2012_eac_019_internationalisation_higher_education_en.pdf)

- Rethinking skills in Europe

[http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned\\_ia/docs/2012\\_eac+\\_014\\_rethinking\\_skills\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/2012_eac+_014_rethinking_skills_en.pdf)

### 1.3 The Danish Presidency of the EU

The priorities of the Danish presidency have not been laid out yet and will first be presented in December shortly prior to when Denmark takes over the presidency on 1 January 2012. It is, however, possible to get a general impression of the agenda during the presidency, since many of the issues are already on the legislative agenda in Brussels.

It is expected that the following issues will be of major importance during the Danish presidency:

- Creating economic growth in the EU and ensuring a sound economy
- Climate, energy, environment and agriculture
- Justice and Home affairs
- A strong global role for the EU
- Negotiations on the EU's long-term budget

In 2012 Europe will still be on its way out of the economic and financial crisis. This will be reflected by the agenda of the presidency where focus will be to create economic growth and ensure improved economic coordination between member states.

During the EYCS Council of 28 November 2011, the Danish delegation informed that priorities for the coming semester in the field of education and training will be

- Examination of the 'Erasmus for all' proposal
- Benchmark for employability
- Entrepreneurship and innovation

Provisional calendar of the presidency at <http://um.dk/en/~media/UM/English-site/Documents/Politics-and-diplomacy/Denmark-in-the-EU/110609%20EU%20Kalender%20FINAL.ashx>

### 1.4 The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (28-29 November 2011)

The following items (in the field of education) were on the agenda of the November EYCS Council (see for more details point 2):

- Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning
- Conclusions on the modernisation of higher education
- Conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility
- Conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility

Ministers discussed on investing effectively in education and training in a time of crisis. The debate was preceded by a presentation of a study developed by the EENEE network (European Expert Network on Economics of Education) on the cost to society of low educational achievement.

Most Member States acknowledged the crucial importance of investing in education in order to foster growth and employment at medium term. A number of them didn't cut their education expenditure, some even increased it.

The following issues were underlined:

- Successful investment in education and training don't depend so much on the amounts but primarily on quality. Some ministers argued in favour of a more results-based allocation of resources.
- Collaboration with business sector and other private institutions should be strengthened
- Preschool and tertiary education should be a priority for investments.
- VET plays a crucial role to foster inclusion and employment.
- Formal and non-formal education should be valued and recognized.
- The key role of teachers and their training and motivation is stressed.

Press release of the council (provisional version)

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126424.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126424.pdf)

## **2. Education and training 2020**

### **2.1 Language competences to enhance mobility**

EYCS Council, 28 November 2011

The Council adopted conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility. They re-emphasize that language learning is a key factor in promotion economic growth and competitiveness, as well as in enhancing mobility and employability. In addition to the social and cultural benefits it brings, multilingual citizens are better placed to take advantage of educational, professional and economic opportunities.

The Council refers to the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council meeting (2002), which called for further action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age.

The Council agrees that, whilst general language programmes help to develop essential communication skills for everyday use, methodologies such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), in both general education and VET, can be particularly effective. In order to promote CLIL teachers should be encouraged to acquire high quality language competences and should have access to high quality teaching resources.

A broader choice of languages, including less-widely used languages and the languages of neighboring countries should – where possible and appropriate – be offered at all levels of education in a lifelong learning perspective, and greater information and guidance about these should be made available by appropriate language and cultural institutions.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st16/st16744.en11.pdf>

### **2.2 Modernisation of higher education**

EYCS Council, 28 November 2011

The Council adopted conclusions on this subject, in response to a communication from the European Commission (September 2011), stressing the need for reform in higher education.

The conclusions acknowledge that higher education plays a crucial role in achieving the Europe 2020 strategy goals (share of 30-34 years old completed tertiary education at least 40% by 2020), given the estimate that by 2020 35% of all jobs in the EU will require high-level qualifications (Cedefop report 2010).

The Council invites the Member States to develop clear progression routes into higher education from vocational and other types of education, as well as mechanisms for recognizing prior learning and experience gained outside formal education and training.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st16/st16746.en11.pdf>

### **2.3 A renewed European agenda for adult learning**

EYCS Council, 28 November 2011

The Council adopted a resolution on an renewed agenda for adult learning, which aims to bring fresh impetus to this important area and sets out a long-term vision up to 2020, with also a number of short-term priorities for 2014.

The crisis highlighted the major role which adult learning can play in achieving the Europe 2020 goals, by enabling adults – in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society. Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or re-skilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

The term adult learning, in the text of the conclusions, covers the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

It is acknowledged that adult learning has an important role to play in terms of employability and mobility, as well as in enhancing social inclusion and personal development, in particular since Europe is confronted with the challenges of an ageing working population, accelerating technological change and an increasingly competitive global economy.

Member States have set the target that 15% of the working age population should participate in some form of adult learning by 2020. It is thus necessary to provide continued skills development and further education for the high number of low skilled Europeans. A first step would consist in improving literacy, numeracy and digital skills and enhancing second-chance measures.

Annexed to the conclusions, there is the agenda for adult learning, priority areas for the period 2012-2014. The focus is put on priorities in five areas:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning
- Enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments
- Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st16/st16743.en11.pdf>

## 2.4 A benchmark for learning mobility

EYCS Council, 28 November 2011

The Council adopted conclusions on developing a benchmark for learning mobility, to complement the five existing benchmarks agreed under ET 2020.

The Council acknowledges that learning mobility contributes to both the personal and professional development of young people and enhances employability and competitiveness. A European benchmark on learning mobility accompanied by relevant indicators could help to encourage and monitor the progress of Member States towards the already agreed objective of increased mobility.

The Council invites the Commission to report back to the Council by the end of 2015 with a view to reviewing and, if necessary, revising the European benchmark on learning mobility.

In order to establish the benchmark, the Member States examined the proposals contained in the Commission staff working paper (May 2011) and agree now on a benchmark for learning mobility, which differentiates between two main areas: higher education and initial VET. This benchmark, as the five others, should not be considered as concrete targets for individual countries to reach by 2020. Rather, Member States are invited to consider, on the basis on national priorities and whilst taking account of changing economic circumstances, how and to what extent they can contribute to the collective achievement of the European benchmark in the areas outlined below through national actions.

In the annex the benchmarks for learning mobility are detailed

- Learning mobility in higher education.

By 2020, an EU average of at least 20% of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of three months.

Shorter periods may be taken into account providing these are recognized by the individual Member State within the context of a quality mobility scheme and are recorded separately.

- Learning mobility in initial VET

By 2020, an EU average of at least 6% of 18-34 year olds with an initial vocational education and training qualification should have had an initial VET-related study or training period (including work placements) abroad lasting a minimum of two weeks (= 10 working days), or less if documented by Europass.

Apart from this benchmark, there will be a global mobility indicator which makes it possible to record any kind of learning experience abroad in which young people engage. It covers learning mobility of any duration within the formal ET systems and at any level, as well as learning mobility in non-forma contexts, including youth exchanges or voluntary activities.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st16/st16745.en11.pdf>

## 2.5 Agenda for new skills and jobs

Non-legislative European Parliament Resolution, 26 October 2011

The 'Agenda for new skills and jobs', proposed by the European Commission (November 2010), is subscribed by the European Parliament.

MEPs suggest that emphasis should be placed on human capital and employability through an updating of skills. They stress that more reliable systems are needed to anticipate over a 10 year period future skills needs and deficits in the EU.

The European Parliament points out the importance of

- promoting and recognising both 'hard' (=technical) and 'soft' (=behavioural) skills to improve people's employment opportunities.
- informal learning and skills acquisition through intergenerational cooperation
- increasing participation in LLL.

The resolution encourages Member States to promote workplace-based training (dual system of education-training to introduce young people to the labour market from an early stage). MEP's invite the European Commission to set up a European framework for the quality of traineeship that sets decent working conditions.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2011-0466&language=EN>

## 2.6 Eurypedia, the new European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems in Europe

Eurypedia, to be launched at 5 December 2011, is the new European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems in Europe. It will offer a comprehensive description of European education systems and policies by education level and topic. This resource tool will be regularly updated by the Eurydice network. It involves education experts and national ministries responsible for education.

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurypedia>

## 3. New generation of European programmes

Brussels, 23 November 2011

The European Commission proposed the new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport.

'**Erasmus for all**' would start in 2014 and would significantly increase the funds allocated for the development of knowledge and skills. It is based on the premise that investing in education and training is the key to unlocking people's potential, regardless of their age or background. It helps them to increase their personal development, gain new skills and boost their job prospects.

The programme would replace 7 existing programmes with one: the LLL programmes (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig), Youth in Action, and five international cooperation programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the programme for cooperation with industrialised countries). The main actions will continue, but



activities will be strengthened where the systemic impact is strongest and where there is a clear EU added value.

The programme will support 3 types of actions:

- Learning opportunities for individuals, both within the EU and beyond.
- Institutional cooperation between educational institutions, youth organisations, businesses, local and regional authorities and NGOs, to encourage the development and implementation of innovative practices in education, training and youth activities and to promote employability, creativity and entrepreneurship.
- Support for policy reform in Member States and cooperation with non-EU countries, with a focus on strengthening the evidence-base for policy making and exchange of good practices.

Two new elements will be part of Erasmus for All:

- A loan guarantee scheme to help Master's degree students to finance their studies abroad and to acquire the skills needed for knowledge intensive jobs.
- The creation of 400 'knowledge alliances' and 'sector skills alliances'

#### *Budget*

The Commission is proposing an increase of approximately 70% compared to the current seven-year budget, which would allocation 119 billion euro to the new programme in 2014-2020.

#### *Next steps*

The proposal is now under discussion by the Council and the Parliament who will take the final decision on the budgetary framework for 2014-2020.

Communication from the Commission

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/doc/com\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/doc/com_en.pdf)

Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "ERASMUS FOR ALL", the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, presented at the Council meeting of Ministers for Education on 28 November 2011

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st17/st17188.en11.pdf>

## **4. Developments in other policy domains**

### **4.1 Professional Qualifications Directive**

DG Internal Market and Services of the European Commission commissioned GHK to execute a 'Study evaluating the Professional Qualifications Directive against recent EU educational reforms'

28 October 2011

GHK evaluated the impact of EU educational reforms (notably the Bologna Process and the European Qualifications Framework) on the recognition of professional qualifications under Directive 2005/36/EC.

The study includes conclusions and recommendations in the following fields:

- The Bologna process and professions falling under the general system

Does convergence under the Bologna Process facilitate (or not) the recognition of professional qualifications? For which economic sectors and related regulated professions would quicker and easier or even automatic recognition be most beneficial by 2020 and respectively 2030? Do alternative approaches to convergence linked to EU educational reforms facilitate (or not) the recognition of professional qualifications?

- Bologna Process and doctors
- Assessing the systems of levels with regard to the recognition of professional qualifications

Do alternative systems of levels facilitate (or not) the recognition of professional qualifications?

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/qualifications/docs/policy\\_developments/final\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/docs/policy_developments/final_report_en.pdf)

## 4.2 Youth

EYCS Council, 28 November 2011

The Council adopted conclusions on the Eastern dimension of youth participation and mobility, supporting cooperation and facilitating mobility for young people, youth workers and youth organisations from the EU particularly with Eastern European countries.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st15/st15952.en11.pdf>

## 5. Studies

### 5.1 Maths and Science Education

#### 5.1.1 Mathematics Education in Europe: Common Challenges and National Policies

Eurydice, 16 November 2011

This report examines the policies and practices that shape mathematics instruction in Europe, and focuses on reforms of mathematics curricula, teaching and assessment methods, teacher education. It explores how countries tackle low achievement and increase students' motivation to learn mathematics.

The study focuses on primary and lower secondary education, for the reference year 2010/2011, covering 31 countries.

The report is relevant in the light of the establishment of an EU benchmark in basic skills (the share of 15-years old with insufficient abilities in reading, maths and science should be < 15% by 2020).

Full version:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/132EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/132EN.pdf)

Highlights:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/132EN\\_HI.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/132EN_HI.pdf)

### 5.1.2 Science Education in Europe: National Policies, Practices and Research

Eurydice, 16 November 2011

This study examines the the organisation of science teaching in Europe, and provides an overview of existing policies and strategies that aim at improving and fostering science teaching and learning today. It looks at support measures available to teachers and schools for boosting students' motivation and interest in science.

The study focuses on primary and lower secondary education, for the reference year 2010/2011, covering 31 countries.

The report is relevant in the light of the establishment of an EU benchmark in basic skills (the share of 15-years old with insufficient abilities in reading, maths and science should be < 15% by 2020).

Full version:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/133EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/133EN.pdf)

Highlights:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/133EN\\_HI.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/133EN_HI.pdf)

## 5.2 Early Childhood Education and Care

### 5.2.1 Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable

Policy handbook, European Commission Staff Working Paper, 7 July 2011

This handbook is directed at Member State authorities and administrations in charge of ECEC and of language education. It is based on the work of a group of national experts convened by the Commission to debate current needs and issues in the field of pre-primary language awareness and acquisition. It contains examples of good practices from different Member States.

[http://ec.europa.eu/languages/pdf/ellpwp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/pdf/ellpwp_en.pdf)

### 5.2.2 Competence requirements of staff in early childhood education and care

European research project jointly conducted by the University of East London (UEL) and the University of Ghent (UGent), September 2011

There is a broad consensus among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers that the quality of early childhood services – and ultimately the outcomes for children and families – depends on well-educated, experienced and 'competent' staff. But what exactly makes a competent early childhood practitioner?

This report presents the findings of the 'study on competence requirements in early childhood education and care'. (CoRe) explored conceptualisations of 'competence' and professionalism in early childhood practice, and identified systemic conditions for developing, supporting and maintaining competence in all layers of the early childhood system. The European Commission DG EAC commissioned the research conducted between January 2010 and May 2011. In the light of the research findings, and intensive consultation with key stakeholders in ECEC in Europe, CoRe has developed *policy recommendations*, which are also part of this report.

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2011/core\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2011/core_en.pdf)