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Main Policy Lines in Education and Training

 December 2012 - May 2013

**European Union**

# Institutional context

## The European Semester

The European Semester for 2013 is in full swing. Member States are currently submitting their national reform programmes and their stability or convergence programmes and the Commission is assessing them. The national documents are being uploaded at the Europe 2020 website as they arrive in April. The results of the Commission assessment will be presented on 29 May together with proposals for country specific recommendations to be endorsed by the European Council.

<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/>

## The Irish Presidency of the EU

The Irish Presidency works together in an 18 month programme with the Lithuanian Presidency (second half of 2013) and the Greek Presidency (first half of 2014).

### General Affairs

The main priorities of the Irish Presidency are organised along three action lines:

* Securing stability

It is important to establish durable foundations for stability. Those foundations are those set out by successive European Councils, in particular Banking Union, the European Semester process and the next phase of reform to Economic and Monetary Union.

* Investing in sustainable jobs and growth

The next phase of Europe’s recovery must involve a Single Market of the future – notably a Digital Single Market – and must place a spotlight on the next generation by tackling youth unemployment.

* Europe and the world

Europe must look outside its borders and engage with its global partners.

The Irish Presidency will endeavour to ensure a streamlined and inclusive European Semester process, drawing on the lessons learnt from previous European Semester. The findings of the Annual Growth Survey (AGS) will be extensively discussed across several Councils in the first months of 2013. A detailed synthesis report of Ministerial discussions at sectoral Councils will be prepared for the Spring European Council. The response of the European Council, combined with the AGS, will feed into decisions on national economic and budgetary planning, which Member States will set out in Stability and Convergence Programmes and National Reform Programmes in April 2013. These programmes will form the basis for the European Commission’s proposals for Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) in May 2013.

### Education

The importance of education and training for economic recovery is recognised in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Education and training – key drivers to promoting social cohesion and reducing poverty – have a key contribution to make to tackling the current job crisis, especially that among younger Europeans.

The Irish Presidency will prioritise reducing unemployment across the EU by extending access to education and ensuring the quality of education and training. Emphasis will also be placed on integrating the education agenda further into the European Semester process to support jobs and growth. The principles of quality and equity will underpin the Irish Presidency approach to education and training.

* Rethinking Education. The adoption of Council Conclusions on the February 2013 Education Council
* Erasmus for All. Reaching agreement with the Parliament will be a key task on the education and training agenda.
* Other policy areas.
* Providing support for the important role of teacher educators.
* Higher Education, with an emphasis on participation by underrepresented groups, regional engagement role of Higher Education institutions, and the EU University Multiranking project.
* EQF. It is important that education and training leading to qualifications that are referenced to the EQF are supported by robust quality assurance arrangements.

Read more: [the programme](http://eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/EU-Pres_Prog_A4.pdf) and the website of the Irish Presidency: <http://eu2013.ie>.

## The work programme of the Lithuanian Presidency

The work programme of the Lithuanian Presidency has been presented at the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council on 17 May 2013.

It includes the following priorities:

* Quality and efficiency in education;
* Internationalisation and financing of higher education systems;
* Academic mobility;
* Student employability ;
* Eastern partnership dimension;
* Leadership in education;
* Promotion of vocational training;
* Development of ICT in education;
* European Capitals of Culture;
* Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens;
* Return of cultural objects unlawfully removed;
* Cultural agreements with Peru and Colombia;
* Connected TV and TV advertising;
* Digital accessibility;
* European cinema in the digital age;
* The fight against doping and promoting the integrity of sport;
* good governance;
* sustainable financing.

The Council took note of information from the Lithuanian delegation on the future Presidency work programme, which will be mainly focused on social inclusion, in particular concerning the young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET’s).

## The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

European Council, 7-8 February 2013

The European Council reached agreement on the new MFF that will cover the seven years between 2014 and 2020, drawn up for a EU comprising 28 Member States.

The first sub-heading under part I: ‘Expenditure’ is ‘Competitiveness for growth and jobs’. Smart and inclusive growth corresponds to an area where EU actions has significant value added. Given their particular contribution to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the funding for Horizon 2020 and Erasmus for all programmes will represent a real growth compared to 2013 level.

Read more: [the conclusions](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/135324.pdf)

# Education and training

## 2.1 February Education, youth, culture and sport council meeting

Brussels, 15 February 2013

The Council adopted conclusions on investing in education and training, in response to the recent Commission communication "Rethinking Education" (see point 2.2)

It also held a policy debate on "Education and Skills for Jobs, Stability and Growth", in the context of the European Semester and in particular the education aspects of the 2013 Annual Growth Survey.

Ministers were also asked to briefly highlight one practical initiative in their member state, including any action that they may be taking in response to relevant country-specific recommendations. With a view to making the debate more open and interactive, the Presidency invited two guest lead speakers: Lord David PUTTNAM, Chancellor of the UK's Open University and well-known film producer, and Mr Andreas SCHLEICHER, Director for Education and Special Advisor on Education Policy from the OECD.

The Council took note of oral information from the Presidency on the state of play concerning the proposal for a regulation establishing "Erasmus for all": the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. (see point 2.3)

Read more: [Press release of the Council](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/135490.pdf)

## 2.2 Council conclusions on investing in education and training – response to Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey

EYCS Council, 15 February 2013

The Council adopted conclusions on investing in education and training, which are a response to the Commission communication "Rethinking Education" and to the education aspects of the 2013 Annual Growth Survey, as called for by the European Council of 13-14 December 2012.

The conclusions highlight priority areas for education and training reform with particular emphasis on improving overall skills and competence levels in order to boost employability and reduce youth unemployment. Moreover, they aim at strengthening the link between Europe 2020 goals and the open method of coordination (OMC) in the education field, seeking to promote closer collaboration with other relevant policy committees such as the Economic Policy Committee and the Employment Committee.

Member states are in particular invited to:

* restructure their education systems, for instance creating closer links to labour market;
* improve vocational education and training and focus it on potential growth areas or areas with skills shortages;
* identify young people at risk of early school-leaving and provide individualised support;
* reduce the number of low-skilled adults through access to adult training and lifelong learning;
* optimise ICT-supported learning and access to open educational resources.

Read [the conclusions](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/135467.pdf).

## 2.3 Erasmus for all

The Council of 15 February 2013 took note of oral information from the Presidency on the state of play concerning the proposal for a regulation establishing "Erasmus for all": the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport.

Factsheet:

**The Commission** presented its proposal on 25 November 2011, focusing on three types of key actions, namely:

* the learning mobility of individuals
* cooperation on innovation and good practices
* support for policy reform.

The proposed budget for the Programme is €19 billion.

**The Council** agreed a partial general approach in May 2012 which excluded any provisions with budgetary implications, pending overall agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework(MFF).

Although it maintained the overall architecture of the Commission proposal, with emphasis on and on different types of action rather than a purely sectoral approach, the Council did introduce a number of changes to the text, many of which have since been taken up by the European Parliament, in particular:

* a separate chapter and budget allocation for youth
* more flexibility for member states in terms of implementation (allowing for more than one national agency, for instance)
* guaranteeing minimum levels of spending for each education sector
* broadening access ensuring participation of persons with special needs or fewer opportunities.

The **European Parliament** discussed the proposal; main areas of divergence from the Council’s position can be summarised as follows:

* new name: YES Europe
* retention of the current brand names for the sub-programmes
* detailed objectives for education, training and youth chapters.

On 7-8 February 2013, the **European Council** committed to increase the funding for ‘Erasmus for all’ in real terms.

The Council of 16-17 May took note of the information by the Irish Presidency (see point 2.5).

## 2.4 Higher Education

### 2.4.1 U-Multirank

Dublin, 30 January 2013

A new university ranking, set up with funding from the EU, has been launched under the Irish EU Presidency in Dublin. Universities will be ranked according to a broad range of factors in five areas:

* reputation for research
* quality of teaching and learning
* international orientation
* success in knowledge transfer
* contribution to regional growth.

First results are expected to be published in early 2014.

[Presentation of U-Multirank by Don Westerheijden and Frank Ziegele](http://www.umultirank.org/fileadmin/content_uploads/UMR_Dublin_Conference_Jan2013.pdf)

More information at [www.umultirank.org](http://www.umultirank.org).

### 2.4.2 Conclusions on the social dimension of higher education

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council, 16-17 May 2013

The Council invites Member States to adopt national measures to ensure that people from all social groups can access and successfully complete higher education. These measures include improved financial support and counselling for students, providing more opportunities to transfer from vocational training to higher education, and increasing the flexibility of courses to make it easier to combine work and studies.

As a contribution towards reaching one of the Europe 2020 targets for education, the conclusions propose measures to ensure greater access to, participation in and completion of higher education for non-traditional learners and students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

They also call for the development of increased opportunities for more flexible learning using ICT and open educational resources, as well as [or thereby?]enhancing the attractiveness and relevance of higher education courses and adequate learning support.

Read the [conclusions.](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/13/st08/st08574.en13.pdf)

## 2.5 May Education, youth, culture and sport council meeting

16 May 2013

In the programme of the Irish Presidency, two Council Conclusions were foreseen:

* Council Conclusions on ‘Improving policy support for the teacher profession’
* Council Conclusions on ‘The social dimension of Higher Education’

The Council adopted conclusions on the social dimension of higher education. Many countries share the Commission's concern about high drop-out rates and the need for a better alignment between what is being taught in higher education and the diverse learning requirements of students (see also point 2.4.2).

The Irish Presidency updated the Ministers on the negotiations between the Council, European Parliament and Commission on Erasmus for All, the new programme for education, training, youth and sport, due for launch in January. The remaining issues concern in particular the programme's name, the budget and the relationship between the different sectors and key actions, as well as the student’s loan guarantee scheme.

The Council and the Commission remain clearly favourable to the general name 'Erasmus for All', on the grounds that all sectors of the programme could benefit from wider use of what is one of the best known and most popular EU programme names of all. As always in these negotiations, “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”, but the Presidency is confident that an overall agreement will be found before the end of its Presidency.

Ministers debated “Ensuring a teaching profession of the highest quality to underpin the achievement of better learning outcomes”. To ensure a lively and informative debate, the Presidency has invited two guest speakers: Pasi Sahlberg, Finnish Education Expert, and Christine Blower, President of the European Trade Union Committee for Education and General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers.

Read the [background note](http://www.eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/meetingagendasanddocs/brussels/EYCS-Council-16-and-17-May-BACKGROUND-NOTE.pdf) and the [press release](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/137150.pdf) of the Council meeting.

# Developments in other policy domains

## Youth employment package

European Commission, 5 December 2012

Measures to help Member States tackle unacceptable levels of youth unemployment and social exclusion by giving young people offers of jobs, education and training have been proposed by the European Commission.

As requested by the European Council and European Parliament, the Commission's Youth Employment Package includes a proposed **Recommendation to Member States on introducing the Youth Guarantee** (cf. infra point 3.2).

Furthermore, it announces a **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships available by spreading successful apprenticeship schemes across the Member States and outlines ways to reduce obstacles to mobility for young people.

Read [the related documents](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&langId=en&newsId=1731&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=news).

## Youth Guarantee Recommendation

Council of Employment and Social Affairs, 28 February 2013

This recommendation is linked to the Youth Employment Initiative supra amounting to 6 billion euro for the period 2014-2020 to support the measures set out in the Youth Employment Package of 5 December 2012.

The Council recommends that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

Youth Guarantee Schemes should be based on the following guidelines:

* Building up partnership-based approaches (strengthen parnerships between employers and relevant labour market players; develop partnerships between public and private employment services, education and training institutions, career guidance services and with other specialised youth services; ensure the active involvement of social partners at all levels in designing and implementing policies targeted at young people; ensure the consultation of young people and/or youth organisations in designing and further developing the Youth Guarantee Scheme.
* Early intervention and activation
* Supportive measures for labour market integration
* Use of EU funds
* Assessment and continuous improvement of schemes

Read the [recommendation.](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/youth_guarantee.pdf)

## Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs

European Commission, 4 March 2013

Following the Employment Package  of April 2012 VP Kroes called for the formation of a multi-stakeholder partnership, the [Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/document.cfm?doc_id=1575),  to tackle the twin issues of a projected shortfall of up to 900,000 ICT professionals in Europe by 2015, exacerbated by a decline in computing science graduates.

On 4-5 March 2013 the Commission launched the Grand Coalition at a [Conference](http://www.filling-the-gaps.eu/Home.html) in Brussels, which was hosted by  President José Manuel Barroso. Its aim is to increase the overall supply of digitally skilled professionals and to better match supply and demand of digital skills. A number of organizations made concrete [pledges](https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/node/54355) to the Grand Coalition. The Commission has also announced support measures, including € 1 million from the Competitiveness and Innovation programme to support a Thematic Network on the Grand Coalition.  This is only the first round of commitments. The success of the Grand Coalition depends on the involvement of stakeholders.

# Conferences and studies

## Physical education and sport at school in Europe

Eurydice, March 2013

This report is the first attempt by the European Commission to map the state of play of physical education at school across European countries. It covers primary and lower secondary education and provides an insight in the following topics:

* national strategies and large-scale initiatives
* the status of physical education in national curricula
* recommended annual taught time
* pupil assessment
* teacher education
* extracurricular activities
* planned reforms.

The [study](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/150EN.pdf) and the [highlights](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/150EN_HI.pdf) are available on the Eurydice website.

## Funding of education in Europe 2000-2012: the impact of the economic crisis

Eurydice, March 2013

The analysis in this report covers the developments in education funding from pre-primary to tertiary level and provides an overview of the main trends in the adult learning sector in 31 European countries. It includes information on

* the economic context
* the actual public expenditure and national budget developments in education
* trends in funding of human resources
* national budgets for educational infrastructure and support systems
* latest trends in funding and changes to national policies for the financial support of students.

The [study](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/147EN.pdf) is available on the Eurydice website.

## Key data on teachers and school leaders

Euridyce, April 2013

This report presents information for teachers in pre-primary, primary and general lower and upper secondary education. It examines different stages of a teacher’s career from initial education to entrance into the professional development up until retirement. School leadership is addressed in terms of conditions of access to the position of school head and the main required activities of the leadership role. The report also addresses characteristics and conditions of school leaders and teachers, including age, gender, working hours, salaries, mobility, student teacher ratio etc.

[Full report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/151EN.pdf) and [highlights](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/151EN_HI.pdf) are available on the Eurydice website.

## Mapping European stakeholders on migrant education

April 2013

This SIRIUS network study was undertaken with the purpose of mapping the positions of European civil society stakeholders and some stakeholders in EU member states on the education of migrants in Europe. EUNEC has been interviewed by Ms Maria Golubeva, author of the study.

The main research question is: What are the key areas of education policy where European education and migration stakeholders’ positions coincide with each other and with local stakeholders and what are the areas where they diverge?

Read the [full study](http://www.eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/attachment/files/mapping20european20stakeholders20on20migrant20education.pdf) at the EUNEC website.

## Educational support to newly arrived migrant children

April 2013

The study on educational support to NAMS has identified three main messages that policy makers should take into consideration while designing integration policies for NAMS through education. Firstly, an integrated approach to inclusion is important. Targeted policy response to NAMS' needs will only work effectively in an inclusive and comprehensive education system. Secondly, identification of NAMS as a specific target group in education is not a prerequisite for having a good and comprehensive integration policy. Finally, a combination of discretion and national monitoring should be ensured for effective implementation of policies.

Read the [full study](http://www.eunec.eu/european-heartbeat-news-eu/educational-support-newly-arrived-migrant-children-nams) at the EUNEC website.

## International conference on Urban Multilingualism and Education

Ghent, 6-8 March 2013

This conference offers a forum to discuss, compare and exchange knowledge and experiences about the theme of multilingualism. The five central themes:

* Codeswitching, translanguaging and multilingual resources in classrooms
* Language assessment in a multilingual environment
* Education and language learning in a globalized world
* Language acquisition in context
* Multilingual pedagogies and mediation strategies.

Conference book at <http://www.smo-ume.org/file/2>

For a report of the public lecture by professor Jim Cummins on “Urban multilingualism and educational achievement: Identifying and Implementing Evidence-based Strategies for School Development”, see the report of attended events.

## Education conferences under the Irish Presidency of the EU

#### Integration, innovation and improvement – the professional identity of teacher educators

Dublin, 18-19 February 2013

The conference seeks to make the professional identity of teacher educators explicit and addressed the following questions:

* Who is the teacher educator?
* What do teacher educators do?
* How can we develop the profession of teacher educators?
* How can we support teacher educators?

Read [more.](http://eu2013.ie/events/event-items/conference-theprofessionalidentityofteachereducators-20121201/)

#### Conference on Better Assessment and Evaluation to Improve Teaching and Learning

This conference focused on how assessment and evaluation frameworks and practices implemented by schools and educational systems can best promote the acquisition of key competences and improved learning for students.

Delegates considered the implications for policy and educational practice of recent research conducted by both the European Commission and the OECD, and the experience of countries that have successfully combined assessment and evaluation systems to promote better teaching and improved learning.

Read all the [presentations](http://eu2013.ie/events/event-items/betterlearningandteaching-20121201/).