Main Policy Lines in Education and Training

(March 2018 – January 2019)

1. **European Union**

# General EU policy

## Education and training high at the general policy agenda

Already in November 2017, European leaders met in Gothenburg 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 in the framework of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth. As a contribution to this meeting, the European Commission prepared a Communication on ‘A European Education Area by 2025: Fostering a European Identity through Education and Culture.

The European Council (December 2017) adopted conclusions on education, which is exceptional. In the conclusions, the Council states that education and culture are key to building inclusive and cohesive societies, and to sustaining competitiveness.

This has led in 2018 to several initiatives linked to the ‘European Education Area’ (see further in this document).

In the same context, the Commission pleads for more money for mobility. The Communication ‘A modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends’ (2 May 2018) is the Commission proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. The Commission asks to double the budget for Erasmus+ and for the Solidarity Corps.

## The European semester

Introduced in 2010, the European Semester enables the EU member countries to coordinate their economic policies throughout the year and address the economic challenges facing the EU. Find out more about the goals of the European Semester and the role of the different EU institutions.

**Goals of the European Semester**

* ensuring sound public finances (avoiding excessive government debt)
* preventing excessive macroeconomic imbalances in the EU supporting
* structural reforms, to create more jobs and growth
* boosting investment.

**Role of the Commission**

Each year, the Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of each country's plans for budget, macroeconomic and structural reforms. It then provides EU governments with country-specific recommendations for the next 12-18 months.

It also monitors EU countries' efforts towards the Europe 2020 targets.

On 21 November 2018, the **European Semester Package** has been published.

The Autumn package represents the beginning of the 2019 European Semester cycle of economic and social policy coordination. It includes:

* [The 2019 Annual Growth Survey](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-annual-growth-survey_en)
* [The 2019 Alert Mechanism Report](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-alert-mechanism-report_en)
* [The 2019 draft Joint Employment Report](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2https:/ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-draft-joint-employment-report_en019-european-semester-draft-joint-employment-report_en)

The Annual Growth Survey (AGS) sets out the general economic and social priorities for the EU and offers policy guidance for the following year. The 2019 AGS comes in a context of sustained, but less dynamic economic growth in Europe. This provides an opportunity to implement the reforms needed to address pressing challenges, which is even more urgent given rising global uncertainty and possible internal risks.  These include:

* delivering high-quality investment and targeting investment gaps in research and innovation, in education, training and skills and infrastructure;
* focusing on reforms that increase productivity growth, inclusiveness and institutional quality;
* ensuring macro-financial stability and sound public finances.

The so-called "six-pack" legislation adopted in 2011 introduced a system to monitor broader economic developments, to detect early on problems such as credit and property bubbles, issues in external sustainability or falling competitiveness. The Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) is integrated in the European Semester and is kicked-off by an Alert Mechanism Report (AMR) which identifies Member States for which the Commission should undertake in-depth reviews to assess whether they are experiencing macroeconomic imbalances. The analysis in the AMR is based on the economic reading of a scoreboard of agreed indicators. The 2019 AMR finds that the correction of macroeconomic imbalances in the EU, including the easing of some persisting challenges in the financial sector, is progressing on the back of sustained, but moderating, growth. On the basis of the analyses in the Alert Mechanism Report (AMR), it is proposed that 13 Member States should be covered by an in-depth review in 2019. As is customary in this procedure, these include each of the Member States identified as having imbalances in the previous round of the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP): Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. In addition to these Member States, Greece and Romania will also be subject to IDRs. The Commission will present the in-depth reviews as part of the Country Reports to be published in early 2019.

The Joint Employment Report (JER) provides an annual overview of the main employment and social developments in the EU. In addition, the Joint Employment Report 2019 monitors Member States' performance in relation to the Social Scoreboard accompanying the European Pillar of Social Rights. The current draft version, presented by the Commission, will be discussed with the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee, with a view to final adoption by the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) in March 2019. The main finding is that economic recovery of recent years has been particularly job intensive. Unemployment levels are reaching historic lows. The number of people in employment has reached the highest level ever recorded. Particularly steady progress is being made in increasing employment rates of women and elderly workers. The total number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has fallen below pre-crisis levels. However, not all Member States and groups within society are reaping the full benefits of the current positive economic environment. Unemployment remains unacceptably high in a number of Member States. Labour market integration remains difficult for specific groups, including the low-skilled workers, the youth, people with disabilities and people with a migrant background.

## Presidencies of the EU: general programmes

### The Bulgarian Presidency of the EU. ‘United we stand strong’

January 2018-June 2018

Common priorities of the Estonia-Bulgaria-Austria Trio:

* A Union for jobs, growth and competitiveness
* А Union that empowers and protects all its citizens
* Towards an energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy
* A Union of freedom, security and justice
* The Union as a strong global actor

[Main results](https://eu2018bg.bg/en/59)

Eu2018.bg

### The Austrian Presidency of the EU. ‘A Europe that protects’

June 2018-December 2018

Main [accomplishments and challenges](https://www.eu2018.at/latest-news/news/21-21-The-Austrian-Presidency-of-the-Council-of-the-EU--Accomplishments-and-challenges.html)

<https://www.eu2018.at>

### The Romanian Presidency of the EU. ‘Cohesion, a common European value’

January 2019-June 2019

The Romanian Presidency’s work agenda will focus on four main pillars, which will be reflected in the specific actions of the various decisional configurations of the Council of the European Union, as well as in the events that will take place within its mandate.

* Europe of convergence: ensuring convergence and cohesion for a sustainable and fair development for all citizens and Member States, by enhancing competitiveness and closing development gaps, social progress, promoting connectivity and digitization, stimulating entrepreneurship and strengthening industrial policy.
* A safer Europe: making Europe safer by increasing cohesion among Member States facing new security challenges that threaten citizens’ safety and by supporting cooperation initiatives in this area.
* Europe, a stronger global actor: enhancing Europe’s global role by continuing the work on

the implementation of the Global Strategy, ensuring the availability of the resources required at EU level, and promoting the enlargement policy, EU action in its neighbourhood and the

implementation of the EU’s global commitments.

* Europe of common values: stimulating EU solidarity and cohesion by promoting policies

to fight discrimination, encourage equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and

women, and increase citizens’ involvement in European debates.

In the field of education and training, the central theme of the programme of the Romanian Presidency is ‘Connecting Education’, pursuing three major dimensions: mobility, inclusion and excellence.

The Romanian Presidency will aim at strengthening the European identity through education and culture, and at advancing high-quality, inclusive education, paying special attention to key-skills learning, acquired in a lifelong learning process.

Learning mobility is one of the most important tools that contributes to the development of professional competences and skills, as well as to increasing employment opportunities. The Presidency will continue discussions on the proposal for a Regulation on the **Erasmus+ Programme**, with a view to agreeing a programme that favours inclusion and that will contribute to increasing the mobility of pupils, student, teachers and administrative staff, as well as to promoting European values through education. A special attention will be given to establishing and developing European universities’ networks and centres of excellence in vocational and technical education.

At the same time, one of the files that will be subject to debate concerns the proposal for a Council Recommendation on **high-quality early childhood education and care** systems, with the objective of its adoption, emphasising the importance of early education and care services for strengthening inclusion and cohesion, as well as the European dimension and the integration of families and children from third countries. Through this Recommendation, Member States will be supported in their efforts to improve the accessibility and quality of the early education and care systems.

Regarding the contribution of education to the European Union’s cohesion and competitiveness, the Romanian Presidency will act to reach a consensus of the ministers of education on the Council Recommendation on a **comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning**. Foreign-language learning may be stimulated by the use of digital tools, aiming to increase pupils’, students’ and staff mobility and developing an inclusive cultural environment.

[Programme of the Romanian Presidency](https://www.romania2019.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/en_rogramme_ropres2019.pdf)

The Romanian Presidency is part of the trio Romania (January-June 2019) – Finland (July-December 2019) – Croatia (January-June 2020).

## Work programme of the European Commission: Delivering on promises and preparing for the future

23 October 2018

Since the start of the Juncker Commission, the annual Work Programmes have been focused on a limited number of key initiatives, where EU added value is clear. With all legislative proposals already tabled to deliver on the ten priorities of the Juncker Commission, the priority for the year ahead will be to turn them into legislation and then to implement them effectively.

The Commission Work Programme consists of a political Communication and five annexes.

* Annex I includes the key initiatives to be presented in the year ahead, which focus on concrete actions to implement the ten political priorities of the Juncker Commission and actions and initiatives that have a more forward-looking perspective, as the new Union of 27 shapes its own future for 2025 and beyond;
* Annex II contains 'REFIT' initiatives (REFIT is the European Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance programme. Its objective is to review the existing stock of EU legislation to ensure it remains fit for purpose and delivers the results intended.)
* Annex III lists the priority pending legislative files where the Commission wants the co-legislators in the European Parliament and Council to take swift action ahead of the European elections;
* Annex IV contains a list of intended withdrawals of pending proposals;
* Annex V contains a list of existing legislation which the Commission intends to repeal.

[The work programme](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar%3Ada6e3b4b-d79b-11e8-90c0-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

# Education and Training: main policy lines

## Meetings of the Council for Education

### Council of 15 February 2018

The Council held a debate on the mid-term evaluation of **the Erasmus+ programme** and future orientations for post-2020.

The Council held a policy debate on how to take forward the Education aspects of the December 2017 European Council conclusions and step up efforts in education and culture.

### Council of 22 May 2018

The Council adopted a revised recommendation on **key competences for lifelong learning**.

The Council also adopted a recommendation on **promoting common values**, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching, as well as conclusions on moving towards a vision of a **European Education Area**.

### Council of 26 November 2018

Ministers reached an agreement on a partial general approach on a proposal for a Regulation on the **Erasmus+** programme.

The Council also adopted a Recommendation on **promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad**.

Ministers held a policy debate on the establishment by 2025 of a **European Education Area**, based on trust, mutual recognition, cooperation and exchange of best practices, mobility and growth. The debate was based on a Presidency discussion paper.

## Recommendation on key competences

May 2018

The Education Council adopted a recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, the aim of which is to update the current recommendation from 2006 and take account of changes such as digitisation and constantly evolving labour markets.

[Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8299-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

## Promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching

May 2018

The recommendation recognises the need to promote a European dimension of teaching in order to increase understanding of the common European heritage and awareness of the cultural and social diversity of the EU and its member states. The recommendation also highlights the importance of inclusive education in all learning environments, including all levels and types of education and training in a lifelong perspective.

The initiative is a follow-up to the 'Paris Declaration' of March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. In the declaration member states were invited to reinforce cooperation at EU level in four areas:

* ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship;
* enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to all forms of discrimination and indoctrination;
* fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs;
* promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.

[Council recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8015-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

## Further work towards a European Education Area by 2025

Most of the initiatives aim to contribute to the idea of a European Education Area by 2025. Ministers held a policy debate at the Education Council of November 2019 on the establishment by 2025 of this **European Education Area**, based on trust, mutual recognition, cooperation and exchange of best practices, mobility and growth. The debate was based on a Presidency discussion paper.

### Building a stronger Europe: new initiatives to further boost role of youth, education and culture policies

22 May 2018

The Council adopted conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area (EEA) . 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 to continue reflecting on a shared vision of an EEA, including its possible goals, objectives and scope, and its links with the post-2020 strategic framework for cooperation in education and training. Special emphasis is placed 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.

[The Council Conclusions](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8701-2018-COR-1/en/pdf)

The Council adopted its conclusions on the same day that the European Commission adopted a new package of measures aiming to bolster the implementation of the EEA by 2025.

The new initiatives aim to enhance learning mobility and educational opportunities in the EU, empower young people, in particular by encouraging them to participate in civic and democratic life, and harness the potential of culture for social progress and economic growth in Europe.

More attention needs to be devoted to education, training, youth and culture at the EU level to enable young people to reach their full potential. Investing in skills, competences and knowledge drives innovation, competitiveness and resilience. The initiatives presented today will help give young people of all backgrounds more promising prospects and help them take a more active role in society.

The Commission presented a package including:

* an overarching Communication on [**'Building a Stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies'**](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A268%3AFIN) which outlines how the Commission is taking forward the Gothenburg agenda and the European Council's mandate;
* a **Youth Strategy** for the period 2019–2027 to empower Europe's youth and give them a stronger voice in EU policymaking, reflecting the importance the Commission attaches to investing in young people and their future;
* proposals for Council Recommendations on
  + High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems to lay the foundations for later success in life;
  + on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Diplomas and Learning Periods Abroad to facilitate learning mobility in Europe;
  + and on improving the Teaching and Learning of Languages to ensure that more young people become proficient in foreign languages;
* a **New Agenda for Culture** to raise awareness of Europe's shared, diverse heritage. It aims to use the full potential of culture in building a more inclusive and fairer Union, supporting innovation, creativity, sustainable jobs and growth and in reinforcing the external relations of the EU.

As part of the initiatives announced today, work continues on other aspects of developing the European Education Area by 2025. The overarching Communication on 'Building a Stronger Europe' outlines plans for a **European Student Card** which is designed to boost learning mobility by reducing administrative burdens and costs for students and education and training institutions. The Commission plans to implement it by 2021 as a visible symbol of European student identity.

The Communication also highlights the work being carried out with Member States and the education sector to develop **European Universities**. These European Universities consisting of bottom-up networks of existing universities will boost cross-border cooperation through long-term institutional strategies. They will promote innovation and excellence, increase mobility for students and teachers and facilitate language learning. This should also help to make European higher education more competitive. The Commission aims to launch pilots in 2019 and 2020 under the Erasmus+ programme before the full roll-out of the initiative in 2021.

Other actions to support a lifelong learning and innovation-driven approach to education and training will also be developed. The Commission will for instance propose to support the establishment of **Vocational Education and Training Centres of Excellence** which would promote an active role for vocational education and training in local and regional economic development.

### Erasmus+

At the Education Council in February 2018, ministers underlined that Erasmus+ is one of the most successful Union programmes and an added value for Europe. Over the last 30 years more than 9 million young Europeans have had the chance to study, train, teach or volunteer in another country.

Erasmus+ should be made more inclusive and accessible, bringing in secondary school pupils, students in vocational education and training, and young people from vulnerable social groups or remote regions. For this to happen, the programme will require adequate funding.

Erasmus+ should promote mobility and innovation. It should create synergies and be complementary with other Union instruments such the European Social Fund. Administrative procedures should be simplified and harmonised.

At the Education Council of 28 November 2018, a partial general approach on the proposal for a Regulation establishing Erasmus+. A ‘partial’ general approach excludes budget-related issues/figures which are currently being discussed as part of the negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework. The aim of the proposal is to enable the programme to become more inclusive by increasing its accessibility, e.g. for small scale or grass-roots organisations or young people with fewer opportunities, and by extending its scope to all levels of education and training.

In this proposal, the Commission asks a budget of 30 billion euro for Erasmus+. This proposal goes hand in hand with the aim to reach a European Education Area by 2025.

[Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Erasmus](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13943-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

### Mutual recognition

This Recommendation is intended to ensure that any higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the results of learning periods spent abroad that are awarded by an accredited institution within the Union are automatically recognised for the purposes of further learning in all Member States by 2025.

[Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13955-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

# Studies, conferences and tools

## Education and Training Monitor

16 October 2018

Launch in Brussels by commissioner Tibor Navracsics.

The ET Monitor is a flagship publication for the European Commission. This year is the 7th edition.

The topic for this year is citizenship education (in view of the upcoming European Parliament elections), an often-neglected aspect of education policy, as the focus is often more on employability. It is however, not only about economy, it is about society. Only 50 % of students have trust in civic institutions. Schools’ practices can influence civic attitudes (open classroom climate, promoting critical thinking, …).

Three parts in the Monitor:

* Citizenship education and civic competences;
* Progress towards the ET2020. Two headline targets (Early Leavers from Education and Training and Tertiary Educational Attainment) + other targets: Early childhood education and care; underachievement in reading, maths and science; recent graduates on the labour market and in VET; adult learning; learning mobility.
* Investing in education and training.

A second volume of the Monitor presents country reports. The Monitor is accompanied by a leaflet with progress towards the EU targets for 2020, and by factsheets per country.

The Monitor shows progress towards the benchmarks. Benchmarks on ESL and ECEC are practically met. But a major worry remains: negative tendency in basic skills, with increasing numbers of underachieves revealed by PISA. Another problem remains the accessibility of education for all (inclusive education). Investment on education is recovering, but with average of 10,2 % in the EU, Europe stays behind. It is not only about investing more, but about investing smart and efficiently.

Now is a momentum: EU engages to work towards a European Education Area by 2025, puts education high on the agenda, and this is reflected in the budget. This will be further discussed during the European Education Summit (probably September 2019).

[Webpage of the ET Monitor](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en)

## Eurydice publications

### Teaching careers in Europe: Access, Progression and Support

22 February 2018

The comparative overview of national policies on teacher careers across Europe, which covers 43 European education systems, provides an analysis of different aspects of the teaching profession. The report focuses on primary and general secondary education. The main themes include: forward planning and main challenges in teacher supply and demand, entry to the teaching profession and teacher mobility, continuing professional development and support, career development, and teacher appraisal.

[Full version and highlights](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/teaching-careers-europe-access-progression-and-support_en)

### The organisation of school time in Europe

5 September 2018

[The report](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/school_calendar_2018_19_final_report.pdf)

### The organisation of the academic year in Europe

5 September 2018

[The report](https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/53fa576a-c136-11e8-9893-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-77066601)

### Home education policies in Europe

26 October 2018

Does compulsory education mean obligation to attend schools in Europe? Do parents have the right to educate their children at home? Under which conditions can parents exercise this right? Policies and legislation on home schooling vary greatly across Europe. This short report provides a comparative overview on national policies in the 38 countries participating in the Eurydice network.

[The report](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/home-education-policies-europe-primary-and-lower-secondary-education_en)

### National Student Fee and Support Systems in European Higher Education 2018-2019

16 November 2018

The report shows how fee and support systems, including grants and loans, interact in higher education in Europe. It describes the range of fees charged to students in publicly-funded higher education, specifying the categories of students that are required to pay and those who may be exempt. It also explains the types and amounts of public support available in the form of grants and loans, as well as tax benefits and family allowances, where applicable.

[The report](https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1367d516-f1fa-11e8-9982-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-82053839)

### Structural indicators for education

20 December 2018

This document contains more than 30 structural indicators on education policies in five areas: early childhood education and care (ECEC), achievement in basic skills, early leaving from education and training (ELET), higher education and graduate employability.

The Eurydice project on Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe provides yearly data since 2015 to illustrate the main policy developments in education and training systems across Europe.

The next publication providing data for school year 2018/19 is planned for autumn 2019 and will include an overview of policy developments in the past five years.

[The report](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/structural_indicators_2018.pdf)

# Other policy fields

## Youth

### Proposal European Solidarity Corps

Council Youth 27 November 2018

The Council reached a partial general approach (the Council's position) on a proposal for a Regulation on the **European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027**. This excludes budget-related issues/figures which are currently being discussed as part of the negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework.

[Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14079-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

### New Youth Strategy 2019-2027

Council Youth 27 November 2018

The Council also adopted a Resolution on the new **EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027** and held a debate on its implementation. The strategy is expected to develop its cross-sectoral approach by addressing the needs of young people in other EU policy areas.

[Resolution on the new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14080-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

## Employment and Social policy

### A European framework for high quality and efficient training places

15 March 2018

The Council adopted a recommendation setting out a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships. The aim of the framework is to encourage the development of a highly skilled and qualified workforce which is responsive to the labour market.

The text agreed builds on a Commission proposal presented already on 5 October 2017, which in turn was inspired by important contributions from the European Social Partners, a tripartite Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training and valuable input from members of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

The recommendation foresees different criteria for learning and working conditions, including the following:

* a written agreement should be concluded to define the rights and obligations of the apprentice, the employer and, where appropriate, of the vocational education and training institution within a clear and consistent regulatory framework,
* there should be clear results leading to recognised qualifications,
* apprentices should be paid or otherwise compensated,
* apprentices should be entitled to social protection,
* career guidance, mentoring and learner support should be provided to apprentices both before and during the apprenticeship in order to ensure a successful outcome,
* pedagogical support should be provided to teachers, trainers and mentors, specially in micro-, small and medium-sized companies.

[The Council Recommendation](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6779-2018-INIT/en/pdf)

### Integrated early childhood development policies

EPSCO, 21 June 2018

The Council adopted conclusions on integrated early childhood development policies as a tool for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion.

These conclusions were drafted on the basis of a dedicated peer review by the Social Protection Committee, which took place in Sofia on 21 March 2018. They highlight the importance of developing integrated policies in order to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. The focus of the conclusions is in the social field, where much can be done to improve the situation of children.

[The conclusions](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10306-2018-INIT/en/pdf)