Main Policy Lines in Education and Training

(November 2014 – April 2015)

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

## Europe 2020 and the European Semester

The European Semester process makes sure that Member States keep their budgetary and economic policies in line with their EU commitments (debt and deficit commitments under the Stability and Growth Pact, economic reform plans enshrined in their 2014 country-specific recommendations, and the long-term growth and jobs targets in the Europe 2020 strategy).

The discussion on the European Semester is also important in view of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which will be presented in time for discussion at the Spring 2015 European Council.

For more information on the European Semester, we refer to the [presentation](http://www.eunec.eu/event/european-semester-and-education-governance-and-case-belgium) by Steven Engels, European Semester Officer, for the EUNEC executive committee on 2 December 2014.

Education and training policy is part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and is thus also monitored in the European Semester. In the documents below, the focus is on elements that are directly linked to education and training policy.

### Annual Growth Survey 2015

28 November 2014

This Annual Growth Survey sets out what more can be done at EU level to help Member States return to higher growth levels. To strengthen and sustain the recovery the Commission proposes to pursue an integrated approach to economic policy built around three main pillars, all of which must act together:

* **Boosting investment.** Weak investment hampers Europe’s recovery. For example: education and innovation systems are less well equipped and less funded than those of our key competitors. The Commission is putting forward an Investment Pan for Europe which should mobilize at least EUR 315 billion of additional public and private investment over the period 2015-2017 and improve the overall investment environment; this additional money should be focused, a.o. on education, research and innovation (one of the areas where clear needs exist and where progress is expected to bring large economic and societal returns);
* **Accelerating structural reforms**. This is essential for countries to grow out of the debt and to stimulate the creation of more and better jobs. It is stressed that the digital single market is essential for jobs, growth and innovation. Digital technology introduces new ways of producing, goods, of delivering services, of reshaping the way we work and learn. Being well-positioned in the digital economy will determine the EU’s future competitiveness and pathway to growth.

For 2015, the Commission recommends focusing attention to a number of key reforms, relevant for all Member States. Education and training play a crucial role in the following key reforms

* Improving the dynamics in labour markets and tackling the high level of unemployment. The EU needs a skilled workforce in growing sectors such as the digital economy, green sectors and health care. Education has a key role to play to ensure the responsiveness of skills to labour market signals. Vocational training and dual education systems should be upgraded to provide young people with the necessary skills sets. Lifelong learning should become a central priority, through the mobilisation of both public and private actors, with broader access at all ages and for those most in need. A better assessment of the skills needs at regional and sectoral levels is also necessary.
* Modernising social protection systems. There is a need for simplified and better targeted social policies complemented by affordable quality childcare and education, prevention of early school leaving, training and job assistance (…).
* **Pursuing responsible growth friendly fiscal consolidation.**

The adoption of the Annual Growth Survey kicks off the European Semester of economic and budgetary policy coordination. It proposes to **streamline the process**, with a view to increasing political ownership, accountability and acceptance of the process, to strengthening its credibility and comparability across Member States and to improving the implementation of the country-specific recommendations. It is stressed that an increased involvement of national Parliaments, social partners and stakeholders in the European Semester is necessary to strengthen national ownership and accountability.

Annexed to the Annual Growth Survey, the Commission sets out which measures will be taken in order to streamline and reinforce the European Semester:

* **Simplifying Commission outputs and allowing for more feedback on Commission analysis**. The practice of presenting the Annual Growth Survey and the Alert Mechanism Report jointly in autumn works well. A comprehensive single economic assessment per Member State with the recommendations to be addressed would improve the coherence of the process; and an earlier publication date, for instance in March, would allow greater transparency and more feedback.
* **Streamlining reporting requirements of Member States.** They should follow a ‘tell only once’ approach. National Reform Programmes can play an important communication and ownership role at national level if they are refocused, if national Parliaments and social partners are involved in their formulation.
* **Enhancing the multilateral nature of the process.**
* **Opening up the process and increasing engagement with other actors**. The democratic legitimacy of the Semester has been called into question. In spite of positive developments there is room for wider dialogue with the Parliaments and the social partners (at European level and for country-specific issues).

<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2015/ags2015_en.pdf>

### Alert Mechanism Report

28 November 2014

This report identifies Member States that may be affected by imbalances in need of policy action and for which further in-depth reviews should be undertaken; it is a screening device for economic imbalances, based on a scoreboard of indicators (since last year also a number of relevant employment and social indicators). To prepare the in-depth reviews, the Commission will base its analysis on a richer set of data. On the basis of the IDRs, the Commission will then conclude whether imbalances exist and prepare the appropriate policy recommendations for each Member State.

The Commission finds that IDRs are warranted for 16 Member States.

* For Croatia, Italy and Slovenia (previously Member States with excessive imbalances)
* For Ireland, Spain, France, Hungary (previously Member States with imbalances in need of decisive policy action)
* For Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, then Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, UK (previously Member States with imbalances)
* For Portugal, Romania (for the first time)
* For Greece and Cyprus, the surveillance and monitoring takes place in the context of their programmes.

One of the most striking conclusions at EU-level is the fact that youth employment affected 5.6 million young people in 2013 (23.6 % in the first quarter of 2013; 23.1 % at the end of 2013). The share of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) increased significantly in nearly half of the Member States over 2013. There is thus an urgency for all Member States to deliver on the Youth Guarantee.

<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2015/amr2015_en.pdf>

### Commission proposals for integrated guidelines for economic and employment policies

2 March 2015

These guidelines, to be adopted by the Council, are presented as two distinct but intrinsically interconnected legal instruments:

* A Council Recommendation on broad guidelines for the economic policies of the member states and of the Union (Part I);
* A Council Decision on broad guidelines for the employment policies of the member states (Part II).

The guidelines frame the scope and direction for the member states’ national programmes (to be delivered mid-April) and serve as a reference for the development of the country-specific recommendations. The guidelines will be discussed by the Parliament before the adoption by the Council.

Overview of the guidelines, with attention for guidelines related to the field of education and training:

Part I: 4 guidelines for economic policies

1. Boosting investment;

It is mentioned that close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders is key, in order to ensure smooth carrying out of operations, adequate risk taking and maximum added value.

1. Enhancing growth by member states implementation of structural reforms;
2. Removing key barriers to growth and jobs at Union level;
3. Improving the sustainability and growth-friendliness of public finance;

In designing and implementing budgetary consolidation, strategies should prioritise growth-enhancing expenditure items within areas such as education, skills and employability, research and development and innovation and investment in networks with positive impacts on productivity.

Part II: 4 guidelines for employment policies

1. Boosting demand for labour;
2. Enhancing labour supply and skills;

Member states should promote productivity and employability through an appropriate supply of knowledge and skills. Member states should make the necessary investments in education and vocational training systems while improving their effectiveness and efficiency to raise the skills level of the workforce, allowing it to better anticipate and meet the rapidly changing needs of dynamic labour markets in an increasingly digital economy. Member states should step up efforts to improve to adult learning for al land implement active ageing strategies to enable longer working lives.

Youth unemployment needs to be comprehensively addressed including by equipping the relevant institutions with the necessary means to implement their national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans.

Structural weaknesses in education and training systems should be addressed to ensure quality learning outcomes and prevent and tackle early school leaving. Member states should increase educational attainment and consider dual learning systems and upgrading professional training while at the same time increase opportunities for recognising skills acquired outside the formal education system.

Access to affordable quality early childhood education and care must be ensured.

1. Enhancing functioning of labour markets;
2. Ensuring fairness, combatting poverty and promoting equal opportunities.

There is need for simplified and better targeted social policies complemented by affordable quality childcare and education, training and job assistance (…) and for action to prevent early school leaving and fight social exclusion.

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/europe2020\_guidelines\_part1\_en.pdf

<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/europe2020_guidelines_part2_en.pdf>

### Communication from the European Commission on the results of the public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

2 March 2015

This Communication sets out the main findings of the public consultation (May – October 2014) and is accompanied by an up-to-date report on the state of play regarding the Europe 2020 targets (Eurostat, see point xxx)

Context of the public consultation

In March 2014 the Commission published a Communication ‘Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’. It is clear that the crisis has affected progress towards the Europe 2020 headline targets. Despite the crisis, the EU is on course to meet or closely approach its targets on education, climate and energy. This is not the case for employment, research and development and poverty reduction.

These are some of 2013 data (related to education)

* Employment rate 68,4 %
* Investment in research and development 2,02 %
* Early School Leavers 12 %
* Tertiary education attainment 36,9 %

The crisis has also led to a gap between the best and the least well performing member states instead of the desired convergence; the gap between regions inside and across member states has widened.

The Communication insists on the fact that the targets are political commitments, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. However, for most of the areas, national targets are not sufficiently ambitious to cumulatively reach the EU level ambition.

Main outcomes of the public consultation

755 respondents took part in the consultation, reflecting the broad range of stakeholders on the strategy.

1. The scope and objectives of the strategy are still relevant
2. The current five headline targets are relevant and mutually reinforcing

Some respondents (it is not indicated which or how many) question the relevance of the target related to tertiary education, and underline the importance of adapting skills to labour market needs in order to avoid mismatches.

1. The flagship initiatives have served their purposes.

However, 32 % of the respondents deliver a mixed assessment: the added value of the flagship initiatives has been overshadowed by a lack of awareness and overlapping policy actions.

1. Improving the delivery and implementation of the strategy would be important and desirable.

40 % underline implementation gaps. The successful implementation has been affected by weaknesses in terms of awareness, involvement and enforcement.

Next steps

The Commission will consider these results together with contributions from the European Parliament and Council, national Parliaments, EESC, the committee of the Regions and will present proposals for the review of the strategy before the end of 2015.

<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/europe2020_consultation_results.pdf>

### Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Overview of trends in the Europe 2020 headline indicators.

Eurostat report, March 2015

This 2015 edition aims to shed light on the trends in **the headline indicators** over the past five years, from 2008 up to 2012 or 2013.

Employment (20-64 year olds)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2008 | 2013 | 2020 target |
| Total percentage | 70,3 | 68,4 | 75 |
| Female | 62,8 | 62,6 | - |
| Male | 77,8 | 74,3 | - |

Research and development expenditure (percentage of the GDP)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2008 | 2013 | 2020 target |
| Total percentage | 1,85 | 2,02 | 3,00 |

Early leavers from education and training (18-24 year olds)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2008 | 2013 | 2020 target |
| Total percentage | 14,7 | 12 | Less than 10 |
| Female | 12,6 | 10,2 | - |
| Male | 16,6 | 13,6 | - |

Tertiary education attainment (18-24 year olds)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2008 | 2013 | 2020 target |
| Total percentage | 31,2 | 36,9 | More than 40 |
| Female | 34,4 | 41,2 | - |
| Male | 28 | 32,7 | - |

Poverty and social exclusion (population at risk)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2008 | 2013 | 2020 target |
| Total number | 116,6 million | 121,4 million | 96,6 million |

More detailed data on indicators related to **education** are available in a separate chapter (pages 104-133).

Some highlights, next to the data for the two headline targets on early school leaving and higher education attainment.

* Early childhood education and care

The target is that by 2020, 95 % of the children between 4 year and the starting age of compulsory education would participate in ECEC. This was the case for 87,8 % of the children in 2002, and for 93,9 % of the children in 2012. Integration of the foreign born population and ethnic minorities remains a challenge.

* Basic skills

The target for 2020 is to reduce the share of 15-year olds achieving low levels of reading, mathematics and science to less than 15 %. PISA 2012 data show that there are 16,6 % low achievers for science, 17,8 % low achievers for reading and 22,1 % low achievers for mathematics. There is an important gender difference for reading, where the percentage of low achieving boys is about twice the percentage of low achieving girls.

* Adult learning

The 2020 target is to raise the share of adults participating in lifelong learning to at least 15 % (definition: 25-64 year olds having participated in education and training in the four weeks before the survey). The percentage in 2002 was 7,1 %, the percentage in 2013 is 10,5 %. Women and migrants are slightly more involved in lifelong learning; there is a clear gradient of participation in lifelong learning and a person’s educational attainment. In 2013, 4,4 % of the persons with maximum lower secondary education attainment participated in lifelong learning; 8,7 % of those with maximum upper secondary education attainment; 18,6 % of those with tertiary education attainment.

* Not in education, employment, training

Data on the number of NEET’s show that there were 13,9 % of NEET’s in 2008, and 17 % of NEET’s in 2013.

* Employment rates of recent graduates

The 2020 target is to lift the employment rate of recent graduates to at least 82 %. The % was 82 in 2008, it is only 75,4 % in 2013. This result is far away from reaching the benchmark; it shows that the targeted age group (20-34 year olds- has been affected particularly strongly by the crisis.

[The full report](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/6655013/KS-EZ-14-001-EN-N.pdf/a5452f6e-8190-4f30-8996-41b1306f7367)

## The Commission Work Programme 2015. A new start.

16 December 2014

The new Commission will focus on the ‘big things’, in line with the ten priorities of President [Juncker’s Political Guidelines.](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/docs/pg_en.pdf) The Commission will not present proposals that do not contribute to these priorities, and will take off the table pending proposals that do not match these objectives.

The Work Programme sets out actions for 2015. Annex 1 sets out the new initiatives. Annex 2 sets out the proposals to be withdrawn or modified (in total 452 proposals pending from previous Commissions).

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. The Commission will present a package of measures to support the efforts to help boost integration in the labour market and promote skills.
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 work programme](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/work-programme/index_en.htm)

[Annex 1: Overview of new initiatives](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp_2015_new_initiatives_en.pdf)

[Annex 2: Withdrawals and modifications](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp_2015_withdrawals_en.pdf)

## Presidencies of the EU

### The Italian Presidency of the EU

July – December 2014

[Summary](http://italia2014.eu/media/4605/risultati-semestre-presidenza_it2014eu.pdf) document of the results of the six-month Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, presented by the Italian Prime Minister on 13 January 2015 at the European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg.

Presentation of [the achievements](http://vleva.cedejen.be/sites/www.vleva.eu/files/events/attachments/reynaert_achievements_italian_presidency_26012015.pdf) by Jelle Reynaert (attaché education at the Permanent Representation of the Flemish Government with the EU)

<http://italia2014.eu>

### The Latvian Presidency of the EU

January – July 2015

In the Presidency’s work programme, the following priority courses of action are defined:

* EU competitiveness and growth: ‘Competitive Europe’;

One of the main actions in this field is the commitment to facilitate the well-coordinated and efficient conduct of the European Semester based on the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy;

* Use of European digital potential in the EU development: ‘Digital Europe’;
* Strengthening the EU as a global actor: ‘Engaged Europe’.

The programme in the field of education and training focuses on a closer link with the broader economic and social challenges and to the EU growth and jobs strategy in particular: a new impetus for strengthening the education agenda in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Joint Report 2015 of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework (ET 2020) will assess the overall progress and also have a more forward-looking approach by seeking to establish priority areas and fields of cooperation.

The Presidency will continue working on enhanced cooperation in VET.

The Presidency will further support the internationalisation of higher education.

The Presidency intends to address the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital skills (adoption of Council conclusions).

The Presidency will hold discussions on the accessibility of education and on the effectiveness of investments.

The Presidency intends to facilitate discussions on issues related to transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications for mobility and employability.

The [programme of the Latvian Presidency](https://eu2015.lv/images/PRES_prog_2015_EN-final.pdf) of the Council of the European Union.

Presentation of [the priorities](http://en.vleva.eu/sites/en.vleva.eu/files/events/attachments/bramane_latvian_presidency_education_26012015.pdf) by Liene Bramana, chair of the Education Committee.

<http://www.es2015.lv/en/>

## The European Year for Development

2015 is the first ever European Year to deal with the European Union's external action and Europe’s role in the world. 2015 is also the year in which the Millennium Development Goals that the world agreed to reach in 2000, and in which the international community will agree on the future global framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Every month focuses on a specific theme; the theme of the month in February was education. Education is advanced as the best possible investment against exclusion, inequality and poverty. That’s why development cooperation is so crucial in helping everyone get a good education, pursue their dreams and contribute to society.

<https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en/content/about-2015>

1. **Education and training**

## Education and Training Monitor 2014

November 2014

The Commission published the third annual edition of the Education and Training Monitor in November 2014. The Education and Training Monitor is an annual series that reports on the evolution of education and training systems across Europe, bringing together the latest quantitative and qualitative data, recent technical reports and studies, plus policy documents and developments.

While focused on empirical evidence, each section in the Monitor has clear policy messages for the Member States.

The Education and Training Monitor supports the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) by strengthening the evidence-base and by linking it more closely to the broader Europe 2020 strategy and the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) adopted by the Council as part of the 2014 European Semester.

The Education and Training Monitor 2014 is accompanied by twenty-eight country reports, as well as a visualisation tool to evaluate the performance and progress of the Member States in relation to the ET 2020 targets.

This is the situation related to the targets for 2020 in education and training:

* Early leavers from education and training: 12,0 % (target = below 10 %)
* Tertiary education attainment: 36,9 % (target = at least 40 %)
* Early childhood education and care: 93,9 % (target = 95 %)
* Low achievement in reading, maths and science: Reading 19,6 %, maths 22,2 %, science 17,7 % (target = 15 %)
* Employment rate of recent graduates: 75,5 % (target = 82 %)
* Adult participation in lifelong learning: 10,5 % (target = 15 %)

Key findings:

* The case for education
* Strong education performance cannot be expected without sufficient resources and reforms to ensure their effectiveness;
* The focus on employability has to be strengthened within education institutions;
* Education has to live up to its potential to level the playing field, to avoid proactively any form of discrimination and social exclusion, and to provide chances for all learners.
* Qualifications and competences: a key outcome of education
* Reducing the number of early school leavers will save Europe large public and social costs and protect the individual from a high risk of poverty and social exclusion;
* In higher education, broadening access and reducing dropout rates amongst disadvantaged groups remains challenging;
* Targeted policy action is needed to reduce low achievement in key basic competences across Europe;
* For individuals to thrive in a modern and evolving labour market, education needs to equip people with key transversal competences;
* Education policy levers for building growth
* Improving the quality and inclusiveness of pre-primary and compulsory education by reaching out to the most disadvantaged, giving more attention to the teaching profession and better exploiting the potential of innovative pedagogies and digital learning;
* Strengthening the quality and relevance of higher education and of VET, work-based learning and apprenticeships through e.g. better quality assurance, use of labour market projections, career guidance and graduate tracking surveys;
* Promoting, facilitating and incentivising continued learning after initial education and making sure that learning outcomes are transparent and easily recognized across different contexts.

The full report, including key findings and policy relevance, can be downloaded at <http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor14_en.pdf>.

## Education, Youth, Culture and Sport council

12 December 2014

The Council adopted conclusions on entrepreneurship in education and training (see point 2.3).

In the context of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy, education ministers and employment ministers from Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg held a public debate on ‘the economic case for education and training’. Ministers called for rapid and efficient implementation of the Youth Guarantee, in particular to help reduce early school leaving and the high rate of NEETs.

Commissioner Navracsics confirmed that education is a top priority of the new Commission and deplored the fact that many Member States had cut their education budgets in 2012, and called on Member States to prioritize investments in this field.

He acknowledged that education should not be only a means to enter the labour market, but given the worrying high levels of unemployment, a smooth transition between the two should be ensured.

A number of Member States recalled that education has an intrinsic value and should not merely be regarded as a means to find employment, but also as the basis for personal development, citizenship and social inclusion.

The Latvian Presidency presented its priorities for the coming semester (see point 1.3.2).

[Press release of the Council](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/eycs/2014/12/12/)

## Council conclusions on entrepreneurship in education and training

12 December 2014

The conclusions are in line with the June European Council’s call to ‘promote a climate of entrepreneurship and job creation’ in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The Council invites the Member States to

* Encourage the development of a coordinated approach to entrepreneurship education;
* Promote the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills and competences in initial teacher/trainer education programmes and in continuous professional development;
* Encourage synergies between entrepreneurship education and training and career guidance;
* Promote and support student venture initiatives;
* Facilitate and stimulate the involvement of entrepreneurs in the learning process;
* Make use of graduate tracking information;
* Promote practical entrepreneurial experiences;
* Note the work done by the Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education.

Next, the conclusion also contain specific actions to be taken with regard to Higher Education, schools, VET and adult learning.

The conclusions invite the Member States and the Commission to explore the feasibility and usefulness of developing a guiding reference framework for the entrepreneurship key competence.

[The conclusions](http://www.eunec.eu/european-heartbeat-news-eu/council-conclusions-entrepreneurship-education)

## European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014

This inventory is compiled by Cedefop in cooperation with the European Commission. It includes 36 reports for 33 countries, eight in-depth thematic reports, two case studies and a synthesis report. The report presents information up to January 2014.

Since the last version of the Inventory (2010), the most important development concerning the European context has been the adoption of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in December 201. This Recommendation calls for member states to put in place, by 2018, arrangements to enable individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences acquired via non-formal and informal learning validated, and to obtain qualifications on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences.

Evidence collected suggests that there is an increasing trend towards the creation of national validation strategies since 2010, but most countries need to further develop their practical validation arrangements. Stakeholder involvement has increased. It appears that traditional assessment is often employed for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The Inventory also identifies some challenges that need addressing:

* Access, awareness and social recognition;
* Fragmentation;
* Financial sustainability;
* Coherence;
* Professionalization of staff;
* Data collection.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

## Declaration on tackling intolerance, discrimination and radicalisation

Paris, 17 March 2015

This informal initiative was proposed by France and supported by the Latvian Presidency and the European Commission. It brought together Education Ministers, State Secretaries and representatives from all 28 member states in response to the terror attack in Paris and in Copenhagen.

The declaration calls for combined efforts to prevent and tackle marginalisation, intolerance, racism and radicalisation and to preserve a framework of equal opportunities for all. Education and training 2020 and Erasmus+ are advanced as the main tools to enhance social, civic and cultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy and to foster education of disadvantaged children and young people.

https://eu2015.lv/images/notikumi/2015-3-10\_Declaration\_EN.pdf

1. **Other relevant policy lines**

## The ‘Youth Employment Initiative’: Proposal from the Commission for a Regulation of the Parliament and the Council

5 February 2015

The European Commission has adopted a proposal to make 1 billion euro from the budget of the Youth Employment Initiative available already in 2015. This amendment will substantially increase the pre-financing amount that Member States receive to finance projects boosting youth employment. They will receive now up to 30 times the amount received previously, reaching up to 650 000 young people and helping them get into work, faster. The aim is to speed up the implementation of measures on the ground to help young people into the labour market.

All member states have committed to the "Youth Guarantee": to provide young people under 25 with a quality job offer, an apprenticeship or training. Today's announcement would help make that guarantee a reality, in line with the Commission's commitment in its 2015 Work Programme.

Today's proposal would increase the Youth Employment Initiative pre-financing rate in its 2015 budget allocation from 1-1.5% to up to 30%. The 20 Member States benefiting from this initiative could therefore receive a third of the 3.2 billion euro allocation immediately after the adoption of the Operational Programmes. Member States are expected to make this funding available immediately to project beneficiaries through advance payments for projects, and this will be closely monitored.

Background: The Commission's proposal for a Youth Guarantee was presented in December 2012, formally adopted as a [Recommendation](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-152_en.htm) to the Member States by the EU's Council of Ministers on 22 April 2013 and endorsed by the June 2013 European Council. All 28 Member States have submitted their [Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1090&langId=en) and are putting in place concrete measures. Implementation of national Youth Guarantee schemes is monitored by the Commission within the framework of the European Semester.

[Proposal by the Commission for a Regulation of the Parliament and the Council](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13460&langId=en)

[Factsheet on the Youth Guarantee](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13421&langId=en)

[Infogram](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13419&langId=en)

1. **Studies, conferences and tools**

## Dual education, a bridge over troubled waters?

June 2014

This study was requested by the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education and conducted by ICF International.

The study examines the strengths and weaknesses of dual education/apprenticeships and explores policy developments in the EU-28 in relation to the introduction and/or improvement of apprenticeship schemes. It identifies the characteristics of four main forms of VET delivery in relation to the role of work-based learning and suggests ways that countries could promote apprenticeships within the context of their educational, social and economic frameworks. It provides recommendations to country and European policy makers.

[The study](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/529072/IPOL_STU(2014)529072_EN.pdf)

## Recommendations for a more caring EU

Friends of Europe, final report of the high-level group on ‘Social Union’, Spring 2015

Friends of Europe convened a high-level group of experts to assess the strengths and weaknesses of social policies that have been fundamental to the creation of the EU. The team was headed by former Belgian deputy prime minister and social affairs minister Frank Vandenbroucke. The experts managed to reach consensus on all the recommendations in this report.

Europe’s future is threatened by under-investment in people – in their work-oriented education and in their early family life, health, social development and schooling. In response, Europe needs to face up to the challenge of raising education levels, bridging the widening skills and education divide between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. A broad social investment agenda is required.

The report sets out a range of concrete recommendations for EU institutions to reaffirm Europe’s social principles and address competitiveness goals. It calls on Jean-Claude Juncker’s new European Commission to take a far broader approach to social investment, which is essential, the authors argue, to avoiding long-term burdens on economic growth.

It sees a need for greater investment in caring arrangements for the deprived and under-privileged, and in education and training to ensure equal opportunities for all.

These are just some of the recommendations:

* Address the issue of citizens’ participation to create a new public arena that can complement the decision-making process;
* Put public investment in education higher on the agenda to reverse diverging trends across Europe;
* Reform education systems with a view to helping countries most under pressure to deliver basic education; develop key and transversal skills; promote entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy; and improve the transition from education to work by providing a better match between skills and labour market demands.

[The report](http://www.friendsofeurope.org/quality-europe/unequal-europe-recommendations-caring-eu/)

## Assuring quality in education: policies and approaches to school evaluation in Europe

Eurydice, 13 January 2015 (Thematic Reports series)

This report analyses the structures and organisation of school evaluation in primary and compulsory secondary level. It covers all EU Member States, as well as Iceland, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey. Schools form the basic building blocks of education and training systems, and school evaluation is an important way to monitor and improve their quality, as well as to enhance the quality of education at large. The report analyses the two major types of school evaluation: external evaluation, conducted by evaluators who are not staff members of the school concerned, and internal evaluation, performed primarily by members of its staff. The report contains country-specific descriptions and a comparative review of school evaluation in Europe.

[The report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/178EN.pdf)

## National sheets on education budgets in Europe 2014

Eurydice, 8 December 2014 (Facts and Figures series)

Investment in education is a priority area in the Europe 2020 strategy. However, the lack of recent information on public investment in education in Europe makes it difficult to monitor and discuss this topic, to pinpoint the factors explaining changes to educational investments, and to analyse recent reforms undertaken by countries within their budgetary framework. Therefore, Eurydice has produced the National Sheets on Education Budgets in Europe – 2014, which provide the most recent data on planned education expenditure in European countries. National education budgets are presented by type of expenditure and level of education. The publication makes it possible to identify changes in education budgets between 2013 and 2014. Moreover, the national sheets address the reasons for changes in the budgets.

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

## Adult education and training in Europe: widening access to learning opportunities

Eurydice, 10 February 2015 (Thematic Reports series)

Building on priorities of the renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning (2011), this report provides insight into the field of adult education and training in Europe. The report emphasises policies and measures to facilitate access to learning opportunities for adults lacking basic skills or sufficient qualifications. The report examines national policy commitments to adult learning, main types of publicly subsidised programmes, learning flexibility and progression pathways, outreach initiatives and guidance services as well as targeted financial support.

[The report](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/179EN.pdf)

## Modernisation of higher education in Europe

Eurydice, 27 March 2015 (Thematic Reports series)

From analysis of national policies and institutional practice across Europe, this Eurydice Brief shows that:

* Few countries have developed policy initiatives, strategies, targets and measures for improving access for people from groups currently under-represented in higher education.
* Systems to monitor the social characteristics of students could be improved, and data linked to concrete policy purposes - such as improving access and reducing dropout for disadvantaged students.
* The widening participation agenda is not yet followed through by governments and higher education institutions as a coherent policy approach involving access, retention and employability.

The Brief draws on key findings from the report, Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, retention and employability, and covers higher education systems in 34 European countries.

[The Eurydice brief](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/180EN.pdf)

## The School Education Gateway

March 2015

This website will provide information on education initiatives across Europe, and is aimed at teachers, school staff, education sector experts and organizations. The School Education Gateway is funded by Erasmus+ and operated for DG EAC by European Schoolnet, a partnership of 31 education ministries.

[www.schooleducationgateway.eu](http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu)