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CONTEXT

Education and training are seen as key actors in the development of a knowledge society. Therefore, both the EU and the member states put forward daring targets to energize the sectors of education and training making them more performing.

A SHORT HISTORY OF EUNEC

In order to give these innovation policies a broad societal support, governments mobilize the educational and social-economic stakeholders such as representatives of school boards, teacher trade unions, parent and student organizations and social partners to participate actively in the conception and the implementation of policies and activities in education and training.

Therefore most of the member states have set up national or regional formal institutions of consideration and consultation, bringing together all these stakeholders or part of them, in some cases together with experts, to formulate their recommendations.

Education councils have diverse statutes, but they all function as an advisory body towards governments on future education policies.

In 1999, some councils decided to work together on European educational subjects, and, to encourage a closer and more intense cooperation, the education councils created in 2000 EUNEC, a **European network of national and regional education councils**, with the support and the help of the European Commission, and in particular of Mr Domenico Lenarduzzi.

In 2010, EUNEC celebrated its tenth anniversary, during a conference on stakeholder participation held in Brussels, and organized by the Flemish Education Council and "Le Conseil de

l'Education et de la Formation" of the French Community in Belgium, two founding members of the network.

In 2008, EUNEC was recognized and granted as **European organisation acting at European level in the field of education and training under the Jean Monnet programme** (DG EAC N° 28/07). Within this programme, EUNEC obtained a Framework Partnership agreement for 2008-2010.

In 2011, for the second time, EUNEC was granted under the same programme for 2011-2013. This grant allowed the network to continue its efforts to enhance cooperation on education and training in Europe and to aim for more sustainable results.

MISSION

EUNEC is convinced that all those involved in education (the European Commission, the governments of the Member States, the education councils, the stakeholders and all European citizens) can benefit from this European network where major evolutions and reforms in educational systems can be discussed thoroughly and prepared for a successful implementation.

EUNEC aims to discuss the findings and recommendations of European policy documents in the field of education and training, to determine points of view and to formulate statements on these issues. EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements proactively towards the European Commission, relevant DGs and other actors at European level, and to promote action by EUNEC members and participants at national level. EUNEC has the objective that the councils should put the main international policy lines high on the national agenda.

EUNEC wants to work in two directions:

EUNEC wants to disseminate and discuss – at the national and at the European level - documents, texts, studies... that are launched by the European Commission within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Bologna process, the Copenhagen process, Education and Training 2020.

With sound and coherent statements, the members of EUNEC want to influence the discussions and the decisions on the major European issues in education and training both on the European and on the national level.

In the **European Commission Communication on 'Rethinking Skills' (November 2012)**, we read:

*For education and training, **a reinforced partnership approach** means becoming more active in the development of skills strategies, rather than being just a 'supplier'. To be sustainable, partnerships need to be built on clear objectives and should be a systematic part of the policy approach. They must involve all stakeholders, including representatives from teachers' organizations, social partners and student bodies.*

This point of view is also supported by other international organizations. We read, in the background document preparing the **'Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education'** of 26-27 April 2013:

*Participation is considered not only as a major dimension of governance, but also as an element that will contribute to 'quality' through shared concerns and responsibilities of all stakeholders. The **emphasis on participation** also underlines that while democratic institutions are important, they will not function in practice without the active participation of citizens - in this case by the members of the education community.*

In her opening speech at the European Education, Training and Youth Forum **'Working together for reforms'** (17 October 2013), Ms Androulla Vassiliou stated:

*Of course, it will take a broad based cooperative effort to improve skills levels in Europe. I made it very clear in my strategy on rethinking education that **a large range of players and stakeholders have to work together in partnership** to modernise educational and training systems in Europe.*

We are convinced that the activities of EUNEC in 2013 contributed to the implementation of these policy lines.

TARGET GROUPS

Through the members, education councils, EUNEC reaches stakeholders, experts and policy makers in the field of education and training in Europe.

EUNEC members are education councils. An education council must meet the following criteria (Statutes, Chapter II, art. 6.1):

- The council operates as a permanent body
- The council acts independently from any single interest through the presence of a range of members from different social groups, political affiliations and/or academic perspectives.
- The council has as principal goal to provide advice on educational and training policy.
- The advisory role is embedded in the policy making process at the level where the main competences on education and/or training policy are attributed.

If a council is competent for two or more education levels in the system or is operating at a national level, it will be given priority to become a member when candidates of the same EU member state also apply for membership.

Corresponding members can be accepted at the decision of the general assembly at the proposal of the executive committee (Statutes, Chapter II, art. 6.2).

Corresponding members are permanent institutions with an advisory role in the policy making process on education and training.

The composition of the education councils guarantees the involvement of all the principal stakeholders in education in a region/country. This way, EUNEC wants to reach all stakeholders

(policy makers, social partners, parents, students, teachers, providers...) in education throughout the European Union and beyond.

EUNEC MEMBERS IN 2013

Members are national councils, or regional councils, such as in Belgium where education and initial training are exclusively regional matters.

Members of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly

Those members are entitled to take part in all the activities of the network. They have a full responsibility in the network as described in part III and IV of the Statutes (competences of the general assembly and the executive committee).

FLEMISH COMMUNITY (BELGIUM): Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (VLOR)

FRENCH COMMUNITY (BELGIUM): Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CEF)

THE NETHERLANDS: Onderwijsraad

PORTUGAL: Conselho Nacional de Educação (CNE)

LITHUANIA: Lietovous svietimo taruba (LST), the Lithuanian Education Council

CYPRUS : Symvoulío Paideias, the Cyprus Education Council

Members of the General Assembly

Those members are entitled to take part in the general assembly, in the seminars and conferences and other initiatives they are invited to by the executive committee. They receive information produced by EUNEC on European, international and national policy lines.

ESTONIA: Estonian Education Forum (EEF)

WALES: General Teaching Council

HUNGARY : National Council for Public Education

GREECE: Ethniko Symvoulío Pedas (ESYP) - National Council of Education

CZECH REPUBLIC: Union of School Associations

QUEBEC: Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation

SPAIN: Consejo Escolar del Estado (CEE)

ROMANIA: Institute of Educational Sciences (IES)

Network members

NORTHERN-IRELAND: Southern Education and Library Board

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT THE EDUCATION POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The objective is to

- enhance the cooperation on these issues between the EUNEC members
- disseminate European proposals and tools on national/regional level; EUNEC disseminates European documents and initiatives to the members of its councils and tries to clarify them by summaries, comments or translations.

A REVIEW OF THE MAIN POLICY LINES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In 2013, the EUNEC secretariat prepared three overviews of the main policy lines in education and training. These documents present an overview of the documents that education councils need to integrate the European common policy lines and frameworks in their recommendations towards national Ministers of Education and governments.

These synthesis documents describe in a very concise and accessible way the new policy documents. They summarize the main lines of the documents and offer links to the full texts. They take into account all documents linked to education and training and transversal domains (youth, culture, welfare, employment..) by all relevant decision making organizations (Parliament, Council, Presidency, Commission). The main policy lines are also paying attention to other international organisations working in the field of education and training, such as OECD (a.o. CERI studies), UNESCO.

In 2013, the following themes were given major attention:

The EU institutional context

- Recent developments in the economic governance of the EU have a major impact on education and training policies. The consequences of the linking of the benchmarks on participation in tertiary education and early school leaving to the economic and monetary situation, is a more regular reporting with national action plans and feedback from the European Commission, in the framework of the European Semester.
- The agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU (February 2013).
- The Heads of State or Government endorsed the country-specific recommendations to guide Member States' policies and budgets.
- Communication from the European Commission 'Moving Europe beyond the crisis'.
- The Communication of the Commission on the Economic and Monetary Union.
- Information about the programmes and the outcomes of the Irish and the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU.

Education and Training 2020

- Council Conclusions on investing in education and training, response to 'Rethinking Education' and to the education aspects of the 2013 Annual Growth Survey (February 2013)
- Council Conclusions on the social dimension of higher education

- Council Conclusions on effective leadership in education
- European Commission Communication on ‘Higher Education in the World’ and council conclusions on the global dimension of European higher education.
- European Commission Communication ‘Opening up education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new technologies and open educational resources’
- The U-Multirank, a new university ranking
- Ministerial debates at the occasion of the EU Councils for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport: on ‘ensuring a teaching profession of the highest quality to underpin the achievement of better learning outcomes’ and on ‘Education and skills for jobs, stability and growth’ and on ‘open educational resources and digital learning’.
- Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe for people, organizations and countries (CEDEFOP)
- Labour market outcomes of VET in Europe. Evidence from the European Union Labour Force Survey.
- The Education and Training Monitor 2013
- Physical education and sport at school in Europe (Eurydice)
- Funding of education in Europe 2000-2012: the impact of the economic crisis (Eurydice)
- Key data on teachers and school leaders (Eurydice)
- Government education expenditure in the EU during the economic crisis (2008-2011) (Eurydice)
- Teachers’ and school heads’ salaries and allowances in Europe in 2012-2013 (Eurydice)
- National student fee and support systems 2012-2013

(Eurydice)

- The structure of European education systems (Eurydice)
- Mapping European stakeholders on migrant education (SIRIUS study)
- Educational support to newly arrived migrant children
- The new European Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport Erasmus+

Developments in other policy domains

- Culture – Youth – Employment – Internal market: conclusions and communications that are linked to the field of education and training
- The Youth Employment Package of December 2012 including a recommendation to members states on introducing the Youth Guarantee, and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships
- European Commission Communication 'Working together for Europe's young people'
- The Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs
- Entrepreneurship education: a guide for educators (DG Enterprise and Industry)
- Council Conclusions on the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

UNESCO publications and policy documents

- Education for all: towards the millennium development goals (UNESCO)
- Youth and skills. Putting education to work. Education for all global monitoring report 2012.
- Transforming TVET: building skills for work and life (UNESCO) and the Shanghai consensus
- Promoting inclusive teacher education (UNESCO)

- Envisioning education in the post-2015 agenda (UNESCO)

OECD publications and policy documents

- Mental health and work
- PIAAC, the OECD Survey of adult skills
- Trends shaping education (third edition)
- Education policy outlook
- Immigrant students' reading skills (PISA)
- International student mobility
- Art for art's
- Innovative learning environments (CERI)
- The report 'Education at a glance'
- The PISA results

All these documents have been presented and discussed at executive committee meetings. These discussions are important, as an instrument for in-service training of the presidents, secretary generals and members of national and regional education councils. They pull the attention to new developments, to possible links between EU and international frameworks and national policies, to new approaches for ongoing and future advisory work. They offer a basis for common work and collaboration on new recommendations.

These documents are also important for determining emerging themes and fixing the themes EUNEC will work on in the following year.

Education councils offer platforms to local, regional and national stakeholders such as education providers, school boards, school heads, teacher trade unions, student organizations, parents organizations. Through the channel of the council a lot of stakeholders get an insight in the European education policy. The states of affairs play an important role in raising the awareness and the understanding of advisers of Ministers and local, regional and national education stakeholders of the common European reference frameworks. By taking them into account in preparing national recommendations, the education councils contribute highly to the national implementation strategies of these frameworks.

These states of affairs are also available for a broader audience: they are published on the website (www.eunec.eu) and in the newsletter reaching individual citizens as well as organizations.

EUNEC PARTICIPATES IN THE DEBATE ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

EUNEC insists on the importance of (more) stakeholder involvement in European policies. For that reason, EUNEC uses every possible occasion to express its viewpoints on relevant matters in education and training on the European level.

Participation in Presidencies of the European Union



ARCHIVE
eu2013.ie

EUNEC was present at the information session on priorities of the Irish Presidency by Julie Anderson, permanent representation of

Ireland to the EU, in Brussels on 18 December 2012 and at an interview with Lucinda Creighton, Irish Minister for European Affairs, in Brussels on 29 January 2013. EUNEC attended the information session on the results of the Irish Presidency in Brussels on 2 September 2013.

Professor Vilija Targamadze, president of the Lithuanian Council and member of the EUNEC executive committee attended the Irish Presidency conference on 'Better assessment and evaluation to improve teaching and learning', Dublin, 19-20 March 2013.

Drs Adrie van der Rest, EUNEC president, participated at the Irish Presidency conference on 'Integration, Innovation and Improvement – The Professional Identity of Teacher Educators'.



Lithuanian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union 2013

EUNEC was present at the information session on the priorities of the Lithuanian EU Presidency in the field of education and training by Milda Spelyte-Letuliene, education attaché, in Brussels, 2 September 2013.

The EUNEC conference on 'Early School Leaving' took place in the Seimas (Parliament) in Vilnius on 18-20 November 2013 and was included in the programme of the Presidency, parliamentary dimension. Participants were welcomed by Mrs Audronė Pitrėnienė, Chair of the Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture.

Answers to public consultations by the European Commission

EUNEC published a common reaction on the **European Commission Communication 'Rethinking Education'**, published on 20 November 2012. The communication is an impressive set of policy recommendations that have to reinforce the cooperation between EU Member States and give a new impetus to education policy in the EU Member States.

EUNEC decided to react as soon as possible on the broad package of proposals issued by the European Commission on the societal role of education in the current economic crisis.

The proposals are not only broad from a content point of view. They also plead for a stricter follow-up and governance of the engagement of the Member



States to implement common and national objectives. In order to realise this follow-up, more education benchmarks are linked to the European Semester.

The current statements are to be considered as a first reaction on behalf of EUNEC. As a next step, EUNEC intends to formulate statements on more specific themes that are part of this European Commission Communication.

The reaction is published at www.eunec.eu.

On 17 December 2013, the European Commission published a consultation on a **'European Area of Skills and Qualifications'**. EUNEC decided to work on a common position paper in the first half of 2014 (deadline for submission is 15 April 2014).

Cooperation in European studies and working groups

The European Commission selected the consortium of the European Service Network and the Migration Policy Group to carry out a scientific analysis of and to organize a series of European reports and seminars around the European indicators of migrant education. Already in 2012, EUNEC participated actively at the second seminar, related to education indicators in Budapest, 17-18 September 2012. EUNEC also delivered input in the MPG study aimed at mapping of how migration and education stakeholders address the education of migrant pupils.

Since then, MPG has assumed the role of communication officers of the **SIRIUS network, the EU's Policy Network of researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers with the aim to exchange and promote a migrant education agenda** at EU level and within the Member States. EUNEC closely works

together with SIRIUS. The Vlor is member of EUNEC as well as of SIRIUS and disseminates the results of SIRIUS activities in 2013 towards its member organizations.

EUNEC is member of the European Commission **stakeholders group on early childhood education and care (ECEC) and early school leaving (ESL)**, and active at the online community library. The group met in Brussels on 9 October 2013. At the agenda: the state of play in the field of ECEC and of ESL, and the reorganization of the thematic working groups under the Open Method of Coordination.

Contributions of EUNEC representatives at EU conferences and the stakeholders' forum

European events organized by the institutions

EUNEC participated at the **stakeholders' forum of the European Commission**.



As part of its consultation efforts in the field of education and training, the European Commission has hosted an annual event since 2008. The Forums gather a broad group of European-level stakeholders and social partners to discuss transversal issues in education and training. Each event produces a general report with a set of key messages.

Each event produces a general report with a set of key messages.

This edition of the Forum, organized by the European Commission in cooperation with EUCIS-LLL, took place in Brussels on 17-18 October 2013. In the focus: the new Erasmus+ programme, the

results of the Education and Training Monitor 2013, the European Commission Communications on 'Opening up Education' and on 'European Higher Education in the World'. EUNEC participated at the workshop on cooperation and synergies between formal and non-formal learning to reduce early school leaving.

A representative of EUNEC participated at the following other events organized by the institutions:

- European conference on Quality in VET, Brussels, 17-18 January 2013
- Integration, Innovation and Improvement - The Professional Identity of Teacher Educators, Dublin, 18-19 February 2013
- Better Assessment and Evaluation to Improve Teaching and Learning, Dublin, 19-20 March 2013
- European launch of Education at a Glance 2013, Brussels, 25 June 2013 (European Commission and OECD)
- Meeting of the Stakeholder Group on ECEC and ESL, Brussels, 9 October 2013
- Launch of the results of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), Brussels, 8 October 2013
- Presentation of the European Commission Communication 'European Higher Education in the World', by Mr Harald Hartung, European Commission, DG EAC, Brussels, 5 December 2013
- Presentation of the Education and Training Monitor 2013 by Mr Stan Van Alphen, European Commission, DG EAC Brussels, executive committee meeting, 11 December 2013

Other international or European events

When EUNEC is invited to an international event (conference, debate, workshop, seminar, survey), the secretariat forwards the invitation to the members by e-mail.

In accordance to the members' expertise and interest, a EUNEC member or the secretariat represent the network at these events. Positions taken during these conferences are based on the common understanding laid down in the statements. At conferences and workshops, EUNEC representatives are the voice of the network.



The EUNEC representative spreads the information throughout the network. The executive committee insists on the multiplying effect of participation in conferences on behalf of EUNEC.

Every representative is expected to make a report and send it to the secretariat. The secretariat makes a compilation of these reports in a document 'attended events' that is presented and commented on executive committee meetings and published on the website www.eunec.eu.

This is an overview of such attended events:

- Info session on the priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency and on the results of the Irish Presidency, Brussels, 2 September 2013
- Info session on the Irish Presidency, Brussels, 29 January 2013

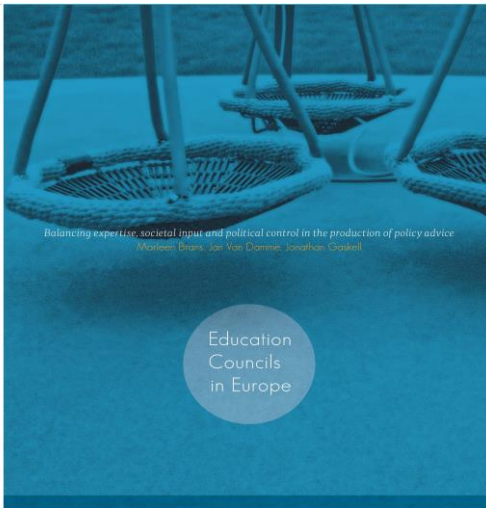
- International conference on Urban Multilingualism and Education, Ghent, 6 March 2013
- Future Classroom Lab Course: Teaching STEM in the future classroom, Brussels, 8 March 2013 (European Schoolnet)
- Discussion on 'Work based learning', the 'Alliance for Apprenticeships', and 'Erasmus for all', Brussels, 11 June 2013 (Nether)
- Stakeholders meeting on educational support to newly arrived migrant children in Europe, Brussels, 13 September 2013 (SIRIUS)
- Stakeholders meeting on multilingualism, Brussels, 13 September 2013 (SIRIUS)

IMPORTANT THEMES ON THE AGENDA IN 2013

THEME 1

STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING

Since 2008, EUNEC has been working on a more complete overview of the existing education councils and advisory bodies through Europe, in order to reinforce the network and to strengthen stakeholders participation both at national/regional level and on the European level.



EUNEC commissioned a study on education councils and advisory bodies in the EU. This study was executed by the IVO (Instituut voor de Overheid or Public Management Institute, Catholic University of Louvain).

The results of this study are used for the enlargement of the network: it is disseminated towards new members in 2013 and organizations that consider membership.

It is also used for informing countries without organized stakeholders participation on the features and effects of education councils and for information towards the European Commission on how education councils can offer platforms for closer collaboration between stakeholders in education and training and the broader world.

The results of the study have been presented at the 'Encuentro Latinoamericano de Participación Social' in Mexico, 6-7 June 2013.

THEME 2

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



The spring seminar of EUNEC dealt with the theme of 'community schools'. The concept of community schools links excellence in education with many other pedagogic and social challenges, such as equal opportunities, social cohesion, informal learning, parental involvement in schools, partnerships with the community, policy making capacity of local schools.

The event was hosted by the Flemish Education Council (Vlor), and took place in Brussels, on 24-25 May 2013. Representatives of education councils from 12 European countries participated actively in this seminar.

Professor Alan Dyson (Centre for Equity in Education, University of Manchester) presented an overview of international experience and evidence on community schools. Three EUNEC member councils offered insights in policy related to community schools in their country (Wales, Romania, Netherlands). Participants discussed their findings in preparation of common statements.

The second day of the seminar was dedicated to a school visit. Participants were warmly welcomed by the director, parents, pupils, teachers and partners of Sint-Joost-aan-Zee, a community school in Brussels' city center.

All participants adopted **statements** on the subject.

A **report** of the seminar including the statements, was sent to all

participants, to all EUNEC members, to the European Commission and Parliament, OECD and other international organizations active in the field of education and training. It was published on the website.

THEME 3

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS
SEIMAS



ŠVIETIMO
IR MOKSLO
MINISTERIJA

Reducing Early School Leaving is one of the headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

On 18-20 November 2013, EUNEC organized a three-day conference on the theme of early school leaving, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Parliament (Presidency of the EU) and the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. About 80 participants, coming from 14 different countries, gathered in the Seimas (the Lithuanian Parliament) to discuss strategies and to find ways to reach the target set by the European Commission to reduce the school drop-out rate to 10 % by 2020.

Dr Paul Downes, Director Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin City University presented a

key note presentation on 'A holistic approach to early school leaving prevention in Europe: Key strategic priorities for system level development'. Dr Downes is Member of the European Commission Network of Experts on the Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET).

His presentation was followed by workshops presenting cases for Quebec, Portugal, Flanders and Austria. The European Commission commented on the results of the working group on Early School Leaving.

Participants visited Gabijos Gymnasium in Vilnius city center.

All participants adopted statements on the subject.

A report of the conference including the statements, is sent to all participants, to all EUNEC members, to the European Commission and Parliament, OECD and other international organizations active in the field of education and training. It is published on the website.

THEME 4

A TRANSVERSAL ATTENTION TO THE PROMOTION OF CITIZENSHIP WITH AN EMPHASIS ON VULNERABLE GROUPS AND SOCIAL COHESION

Given the composition of the education councils, with all stakeholders in education and training, this is one of the overall aims of the network. This concern is prominent in the "acquis commun" in the different statements of EUNEC.

Relevant documents are summarized by the secretariat, discussed at executive committee meetings and disseminated.

Representatives of EUNEC attended conferences putting emphasis on vulnerable groups and social cohesion. Reports of the conferences are presented at executive committee meetings, and disseminated through the website and the newsletter. We refer to the list of attended events supra.

A EUNEC expert is actively involved in the EU stakeholders working group on early childhood education and care and on early school leaving. In the follow-up of the EUNEC conference on 'Migration and Education' (October 2012), the Vlor, member of EUNEC, became member of SIRIUS, the EU's Policy Network of researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers with the aim to exchange and promote a migrant education agenda at EU level and within the Member States. The Vlor is SIRIUS national coordinator for Belgium.

MANAGEMENT OF THE NETWORK

Organization of the network

All the members of the organization are allowed to be represented in the **General Assembly**. The responsibilities of the General Assembly include the right to:

- amend the statutes;
- elect the President of the network;
- nominate and discharge the members of the Executive Committee
- determine the status of members and acceptance and exclusion of a member
- approve the budget and the annual account

- discuss and decide on matters concerning the operation, activities and working programme of the network;
- discuss and decide matters concerning the existence of the network;
- approve or amend the internal rules of procedure
- dissolve the organisation;

In 2013, the General Assembly met on 23 May in Brussels, Belgium and on 17 November in Vilnius, Lithuania. The minutes of these meetings are published at www.eunec.eu (management section).

The **Executive Committee** is the board of the network. The executive committee has to prepare the proposals that are submitted to the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee must:

- implement the decisions of the General Assembly;
- announce the meetings of the General Assembly and the other network activities;
- approve new members
- appoint the auditor
- prepare the accounts after receiving the auditor's report
- decide on the budget
- take decisions in accordance with the statutes of the network, in accordance with the interests of the network or with the policy of the General Assembly;
- report to the General Assembly on its activities and its financial management
- nominate the general secretary
- decide on the annual fees

The executive committee is at the same time also the place of real exchanges and networking about the national and European priorities in the field of education, the place to discuss new European policy documents, the place where the state of affairs is presented.

Composition of the Executive Committee in 2013: Adrie van der Rest, (president), Mia Douterlungne (general-secretary), Antonio Frias del Val, Ana Maria Bettencourt/Manuel Miguéns, Roos Herpelinck, Jean-Pierre Malarme, Ona Čepulėnienė, Olympia Stylianou, Juozas Augutis.

In 2013, the Executive Committee met on 22 May in Brussels, Belgium, on 17 November in Vilnius, Lithuania and on 11 December in Brussels, Belgium. The minutes of these meetings are published at www.eunec.eu (management section).

The **EUNEC secretariat** is composed by the President, the General Secretary, two experts and the secretary.

They coordinate the project and assume the daily management of the network; they keep the contact with the European institutions and the agency (Jean Monnet grant). They also represent the network in a lot of European events organized in Brussels, where the secretariat is based.

In 2013, the presidency was taken up by the Dutch Education Council; the General Secretariat and the secretariat are assumed by the Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (Belgium, Flemish Community).

Networking between members for shared activities

EUNEC members regularly work together in subgroups on specific themes in the field of education and training, according to their own national agenda or to the European agenda.

Executive committee meetings, seminars and conferences are excellent occasions to see which colleagues from other education councils could offer help or work together on specific themes.

In order to prepare a specific event or a specific document, the members of the executive committee decide to organize temporary working groups:

A working group (Flemish Education Council, Lithuanian Education Council, Spanish Education Council, Portuguese Education Council) has finalized a revision of the EUNEC statutes, formally approved by the General Assembly on 17 October 2012 and formally modified at the General Assembly meeting of 23 May 2013 in Brussels, and published in the Belgian Law Gazette.

The secretariat, the Flemish Education Council, the Cyprus Education Council, the Lithuanian Education Council and the CEF (Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation, Belgium) worked together to organize the seminar in Brussels.

The secretariat, the Flemish Education Council, the 'Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation' and the Lithuanian Education Council worked together to organize the conference in Vilnius.

Proposals that are prepared in those small working groups, are sent for comment and active input to all the members of the network. The same working process is applied in the preparation of common statements on 'Rethinking Education'.

In 2013, EUNEC closely worked together with partner organizations

The results of the seminars and conferences are sent to the European Commission, to the national governments or the national representatives in the European Institutions (Parliament, Education Council, ..).

EUNEC often works together with experts from partner organisations:

In 2013, EUNEC worked together with

- The European Commission, DG EAC. European Commission representatives are invited as speaker at our seminar/conference. EUNEC participates in European Commission events.
- OECD. EUNEC participates at OECD conferences. Publications by OECD are in the main policy lines, discussed at executive committee meetings and disseminated.
- SIRIUS. The Vlor is national coordinator for Belgium of the SIRIUS network, and disseminates SIRIUS results among EUNEC members. This membership is the results of first contacts during the EUNEC conference on 'Migration and Education' in Cyprus, October 2012.
- As a follow-up of the cooperation with the EPA, European Parents Organisation in past conferences, we keep each other informed about our activities.
- EUCIS LLL. EUNEC is invited at the stakeholders forum and participates at other events organized by the civil society platform.

- European Schoolnet (EUNEC participated at Future Classroom Lab)

We send our newsletter with up to date information on our network to the other organizations that are granted under the Jean Monnet Programme, key activity 3; we had the opportunity to meet and to network with these organizations that share our objectives on the Coordinators meeting organised by EACEA, in 2009 and 2010.

EUNEC and third countries

EUNEC is making progress in building contacts and enhancing its impact in countries out of the European Union.

Manuel Miguéns, member of the EUNEC executive committee and secretary general of the CNE (Portugal), was invited for the second time in Mexico. He spoke at the 'Encuentro Latinoamericano de Participacion Social en la Educacion', organized by CONAPASE, the 'Consejo Nacional de Participacion Social en la Educacion', México, 6-7 June 2013. Mr Miguéns presented the network, its mission, working methods and objectives. He came back on the results of the study on education councils in the EU, executed by the Public Management Institute, commissioned by EUNEC and released in December 2012.

EUNEC welcomed a new member of the EUNEC general assembly, as from January 2013: the 'Conseil supérieur de l'éducation' from Quebec. The president of this Council, Claude Lessard, presented his organization during the executive committee meeting in October 2012 in Cyprus. Mr Lessard also made a presentation during the conference on 'Migration and education'. At the EUNEC conference on Early School Leaving, in Vilnius, November 2013, a

good practice from Quebec was presented: the 'Trait d'Union' programme.

EUNEC invited the Regional Director of Education USA (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs U.S. Department of State) for a presentation of the International Education Strategy 2012-2016 'Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement' (5 February 2013)

Strategy for monitoring impact and networking

Following the recommendations after a field monitoring visit by EACEA, the EUNEC executive committee of December 2013 decided to implement, as from 2014, a strategy for monitoring impact and networking. The EUNEC strategy on enhanced networking and on follow up of impact will be monitored through a set of 10 indicators.

- 1 The feedback of participants at conferences and seminars (measured through feedback questionnaires)
- 2 The satisfaction of the member organizations about EUNEC as a network
- 3 The cooperation between EUNEC members on a specific topic
- 4 The number of main policy lines issued per year; and the number of policy documents related to education summarized in these documents.
- 5 The number of visitors at the website (number, geographical coverage, duration of visit, ...)
- 6 The number of readers of the newsletter (number, geographical coverage, number of clicks, ...)
- 7 The number of contacts with other EU organizations

- 8 The number of times that statements of EUNEC are used as input for working groups/consultations/studies at EU level
- 9 The number of times that statements/work of EUNEC has influenced recommendations of the member organizations
- 10 The number of times a EUNEC theme/document is at the agenda of member councils

Strategy for enlargement of the network

Thanks to the changed statutes, the definition of a EUNEC member is larger. Not only education councils in the strict sense can apply for membership, the network can also welcome other organizations. Advice remains a key word. Candidate members have to be 'permanent institutions with an advisory role in the policy making process on education and training' (Art 6.2 of the Statutes).

The secretariat will make an inventory of possible benefits of membership of EUNEC. For that aim, the secretariat will question the existing members. The outcome of this questioning will serve as input for a message to address the possible member organizations.

EUNEC will diversify its activities in order to attract more diverse organizations (for instance, include VET in the work programme; include a workshop on the role of an advisory body in the policy making process).

EUNEC annual account 2013

earnings		70607,52
	Membership fees	26000,00
	Grant European Commission	44551,20
	Bank interests and reimbursement	56,30
expenditure		86648,54
	Reimbursement grant 2011 European Commission	18285,01
	Seminar, conference, workshop	50210,31
	Auditor	934,45
	General administration costs	17218,77
balance		- 16041,02

bank account balance 31/12/2012	43305,02
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bank account balance 31/12/2013	27264,00
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ANNEX 1: STATEMENTS ON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

SCOPE AND WORKING METHOD

The central theme for this seminar was the embeddedness of schools in the local society and communities. A community school invests in networking and cooperation with relevant partners in and outside the school in order to broaden the scope of learning, to enlarge the educational time and to raise the quality of the educational offer, with the objective of enhancing the performances of all pupils.

It is a concept that links excellence in education with many other pedagogical and social challenges such as equal opportunities, social cohesion, informal learning opportunities, parental involvement in schools and policy making capacity of schools. In this sense, this seminar relates to former discussions by EUNEC, on 'Bildung from a lifelong learning perspective' (Budapest, 2011), on 'Excellence in education' (Amsterdam, 2012) and on the educational challenges due to migration (Larnaca, 2012)

In order to enrich the debate, EUNEC members were asked to send a contribution from their country, exploring whether the concept of community schools is known, at which policy level it is integrated and from which perspective the issue is raised.

STATEMENTS

1 Community schools are closely associated with new understandings of learning

1.1 A new concept of learning

During the last decade there has been a growing awareness that formal learning processes alone cannot guarantee a high level of

performance in education. Qualitative education starts from an approach based on learning outcomes and involving formal, informal and non-formal learning. As a consequence, the different contexts where learning takes place becomes part of the educational setting. Contexts can include the peer group and the social network of youngsters, their family and socio-economic environment, their cultural heritage and various cultural interests.

In this context, community schools are a very powerful concept to rethink and reshape education as an active partner in society. Involvement in society and cultural environment can support school life and education by enriching the learning processes of the pupil. Community schools are not based on a unilateral demand from education to other sectors. They are built on strong partnerships and good communication with tangible outcomes aimed at strengthening pupils' learning, the school as an organization and the community role in society. The (educational) perspective of community schools reaches far beyond addressing the needs of pupils at risk or providing extra-curricular activities.

Although all community schools aim to broaden the outlook of the school, the actual scope can be diverse. Many aim to build overarching strategies that address tackling social and economic disadvantage whilst others focus on overcoming special needs. Others may focus on improving the competence and motivation level of students by linking with cultural activities, sports, easing the transition into employment and tackling early school leaving. Another focus can contribute to enhancing the environment of major cities with problems such as social cohesion.

1.2 Interrelation between education and other provisions

Often, we witness the compartmentalisation of different services and partners such as child care, school, welfare, police, preschool

services, library, transport, housing providers, health services, local authorities, non-profit organizations, parents' organisations.

When all these partners are brought together, they offer a different perspective of looking at the relationship between education and society. Schools are seen as a social resource in the community and the community feels obliged to contribute an opinion on education such as identifying needs and deficiencies to enhance the life chances and opportunities of the children and youngsters. Therefore EUNEC considers community schools as an important instrument in the global European approach to expose education to the broader world .

2 A clever change strategy

2.1 Clarifying the goals fit for the context

A community school is, given its definition and scope, closely linked to the context and the social and cultural environment of its setting. Therefore, it is neither feasible nor desirable to define community schools from one single viewpoint.

The scope of a community school depends on the level of centralisation or autonomy of the macro educational system. It depends on the local conditions such as the tension between rural areas and big cities. It depends on the composition of the school population and its social and cultural features.

Therefore each school or region should start from a blank canvas and set forward its own purposes based on its mission and an evidence based analysis of the context. Depending on the goals set forward a school can search partners, utilise their experience and knowledge, and develop collaboration.

Different models and scopes are possible.

- Services can work together in a range of different settings such as networks.

- Services can work together in multifunctional accommodation, in the same building, but still working separately.
- Finally, all services can work together in an integrated way - one organisation, one vision, one team that cooperates with the surrounding area.

A community school has to reflect on its focus and on its scope.

The focus can range from tackling disadvantage to enriching lives. The scope can range from an individual approach on children's learning in school to social and community renewal.

Schools and their partners have to consider how different strands of learning can be linked: early childhood, elementary and secondary programmes and programmes for lifelong learning.

Every community school has to be aware of its position within these different approaches. Reflecting on this position will lead to a clear purpose and focus and allows for long term evaluation.

2.2 A sustainable innovation strategy

To build effective community schools in the long term, there is need for a clever innovation strategy with clear locally defined purpose. Community schools should result from long term, strategic and sustainable policy established in schools and involving the surrounding social, economic and cultural network.

It is critical that schools and administrations are mindful of what they are trying to achieve.

Schools and community should rely on a theory of change. They should start with an analysis of the current situation and formulate a plan of action involving two or three broad strands.

The community school needs to outline the intended impact of its actions and to evidence long term outcomes. The theory of

change model offers the advantage that schools can demonstrate that the achievement of aims has involved thorough evaluation.

The commitment and involvement of the team is crucial. The concept of community schools calls for inspiring school leadership, with all staff members sharing the same vision and showing strong moral commitment resulting in a strong community ethos embedded throughout the school.

In addition to teachers, the involvement of other professionals in the school is crucial in order to broaden the perspective and secure success.

2.3 Balancing between school autonomy and government facilitating

The autonomy of schools is crucial. Legislation should leave space for local policy acknowledging the school and community context. By definition community schools work in a local context.

The government should set out broad principles and purposes, but implementation has to be local. The government has to support schools in planning and provide systems that allow for effective networking. It is the local network that is challenged to develop a local response to the central framework. Authorities can assist schools in strategic planning but strategic planning is the responsibility of the local team/school.

The involvement of all community services and partners is crucial and not solely reliant on education professionals. A good community school should listen to the voice of all participants and involve in particular the parents through appropriate activities. It is crucial to involve and support the valuable contributions and resources of the local people.

3 A community is a good school with a community ethos

During discussions, EUNEC members realized that clear criteria required to classify a school as a community school cannot be outlined. Every school has or should have at least to some extent the characteristics of being involved in the community. All schools organize a number of activities and projects that could be categorized as 'community related'.

According to EUNEC, the most important difference between just a good school and a community school is the perspective: where the perspective of a good school is educational, the perspective of a community school is broader: the community ethos underpins all working practices, policies and procedures. This broader perspective enhances the school culture; education is enriched by the huge influence that is present in the community.

It is reasonable to believe that community schools can be more effective than other schools, and it is important to monitor this effectiveness closely.

ANNEX 2: STATEMENTS ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

1 Early school leaving can be the ending point of a complex educational, personal and societal development

Lack of qualifications penalizes life opportunities on the long term from different angles. One of the causes of a low level of qualifications is early school leaving.

Low qualification levels lead towards weaker job prospects and lower incomes over the whole life span. It results in taking up less learning opportunities and thus endangers the further personal and professional development. People meet more difficulties to participate and assume civic responsibilities in the modern society. Educational failure imposes also high costs to society. It limits the capacity for economic innovation and development, damages social cohesion and imposes additional costs on public budgets when dealing with the social consequences of school failure.

Early school leaving is a phenomenon that can be described from different perspectives. In these statements EUNEC considers early school leaving from a holistic perspective. The focus is on the effect of early school leaving (poor competence levels) and on the different processes related to learning difficulties and school defiance. Early school leaving is one amongst other manifestations of inadequate socialization processes and school failure. For most pupils it is part of many multilevel and multidimensional problems. Being at school without real learning outcomes is a worrying consequence of the same problem.

From an education perspective early school leaving is one aspect of a broader process of school failure. School failure can be defined as when a school system fails to provide services leading to successful student learning, or when a student is failing to

advance to the next grade, and eventually becomes a dropout, both aspects being intrinsically linked (OECD, 2010). Other aspects of school failure are grade retention and lack of substantial learning outcomes. Dead ends in learning pathways and early tracking linked to a lack of social esteem for vocational pathways harm motivation and commitment of students.

Early school leaving is an ending point of a process of pupils letting the school patterns go. This process is caused by a combination of

- accidents in a pupil's personal life and characteristics of his personality;
- push and pulls factors in the school system;
- features rooted in the social, economic and cultural background.

The concrete incident that causes early school leaving is the culmination point of more fundamental and longer lasting phenomena. This is certainly the case if the education system puts the accent on learning or personal deficits. Early school leaving is a process of dropping out from the point of view of the pupil; it is a process of pushing out from the perspective of the education system.

From the labor market perspective a student's choice to leave the school system, can be a rational choice for another career development, a choice for quick gains on the short term. This becomes more rational in the case the school system can no longer guarantee more or broader learning outcomes. The labor market can also offer new learning opportunities by breaking with a school approach and offering settings to learn on a non-formal and informal basis. A workplace based approach can be an alternative for formal professional development.

From the perspective of the individual early school leaving can be a rational choice or the ending of a process of loss of perspective. If the individual experiences a continuing chain of failure, of being not able to experience success and a deficit approach, he loses motivation and enthusiasm to learn and to grow. In some cases there is an overlap between early school leaving and special educational needs. For other students there is a deep socio-cultural rift between the culture at home and the school culture and language. In every case school leaving has severe psychological impact and it induces a culture of social deprivation (the perception to be a "loser").

From the perspective of the society early school leaving has roots in social deprivation and causes deprivation. It is linked to social problems and lack of perspectives in some isolated regions and/or the characteristics of major cities.

2 High quality and inclusive education is the best prevention

It is obvious that prevention of early school leaving and learning thresholds should be at the heart of every policy.

Prevention is a better option than to cure the deficits by intervention and compensation because it effects less the development and identity of the learner, his future chances. It is also more cost efficient from the point of the society. This is the fact from the perspective of the cost efficiency of educational resources, from a macro-economic perspective of societal cost and from the perspective of the individual and his chances on participation in different aspects of the society.

Prevention is above all offering good quality education provisions to all learners. Mainstreaming and inclusion of all learners is a main strategic objective for schools and other educational provisions. Building inclusive education settings with high quality means that education systems have to overcome sterile structural

debates and improve school climate, class climate, learning process. Raising the level of learning of all learners despite of their personal characteristics (special education needs), SES background and life path is at the heart of prevention of early school leaving. Prevention is also based on a wide scope of learning opportunities, including attractive and highly respected vocational education and training. As long as vocational pathways are seen as second choice and as of a lower prestige, pupils will lose interest, wellbeing, self-esteem and commitment necessary for effective learning.

Good quality education focuses on a strong and challenging curriculum appealing towards different talents of learners. But a major factor that keeps students on board at school is the perception of relevance and meaningfulness of the competences learned for the future life and different experiences of success.

For these reasons the curriculum construction is a balance between a development oriented approach and compelling aims. The following aspects are part of such curriculum development. A high level of proficiency in literacy/numeracy is the basis. But these functional approaches are not enough. To function in our society on a durable basis pupils need a mastery of the different fields in key competences. For EUNEC members 'Bildung' should be the outcome of all ambitious curriculum development. 'Bildung' is both content (reference framework) and process (pupils will discover for themselves what they consider to be of value). In that sense extracurricular activities in different sectors offer opportunities for a broad development of the pupil and stimulate multiple forms of intelligence and talents. Professional qualifications and learning by creating or manufacturing offer alternative and for some pupils very motivating strands to learn, to develop and to grow.

But a challenging curriculum is only one aspect of a quality

strategy of education and of schools. The learning climate, the school organization and the interaction between teachers and learners should contribute to motivation and commitment of learners to their learning and development process. Reflection and self-steering competences need to be developed.

Schools and teachers should facilitate learning processes balancing between challenges and high expectations on the one hand and a realistic and feasible approach on the other hand.

3 Inclusion and intervention at a very early stage

Prevention in the sense of good education is not enough. The preventive action should be closely linked to a policy to pick up early signals of pupils in danger of disconnecting with school and/or learning and of early intervention. It is important to consider both the pull and the push mechanisms within the school to react adequately to these early warnings. Sometimes a policy to tackle early school leaving is too exclusively focused on the factors that initiate problems instead of focusing on the factors that enhance the (intrinsic) motivation of students. For EUNEC it is clear that schools should pay more attention to learning and improvement of learning rather than on the output as such. Learning environments based on the needs of the pupil might be a solution for students with special needs or students at risk. Different countries have realized improvement with stimuli for extracurricular activities and learning outside the school setting (e.g. work place based learning).

This approach should be systemic and coherent and involve all aspects of the school environment. This approach has to be focused on the school level but have an impact at the individual level of students at risk.

Therefore schools need to build strong guidance and counseling provisions. These provisions are aimed at the whole person of the

pupil and support pupils to deal with social problems, emotional and mental health, learning and life choices (study, HE, labor market). Guidance should mediate between the pupil and his needs, the school system and the welfare services supporting the families. A strong guidance and intervention system is also relevant to combine and redefine learning pathways to relevant qualifications.

This counseling and intervention policy should be an obligation for the whole school team. It is not realistic to expect this competence level of every individual teacher. It is part of the human resources policy of the school to attract competent staff members to underpin this approach.

4 Compensatory policies

Once the school is left, it is necessary to tackle the consequences within a global concept of LLL policies. Every country needs second learning facilities to reconnect pupils with learning. This goes beyond learning at school. Because of a negative spiral of experiences of early school leavers, creating other learning facilities out of the traditional school context is necessary: work based learning, time-out settings, ICT related learning.

EUNEC insists on the need for compensatory policies that aim at different perspectives of education both to get a relevant qualification and to reach a relevant level of competence to function at a satisfactory level in social life. Durable social integration is based on numeracy, literacy and key competences such as entrepreneurial skills, reflection, learning to learn and to develop, flexibility.

5 How to realize these key policy lines?

5.1 A broad understanding of quality improvement and school accountability

Quality is more than competence levels, more than academic achievement levels. It should embrace the wellbeing of learners, their development, their inclusion and social promotion and emancipation and lead to a preventive mainstream education policy. The commitment of the school to early interventions and to keep learners on board should be valorized at the same level as academic achievement.

This quality concept should be considered as a mission statement that colors all aspects of school life including planning, didactic processes and evaluation, class organization and school climate, relationship and interaction between members of a school team and between teachers and pupils.

It is necessary to translate these strategic options into concepts of quality and of quality assurance. School quality in this approach is very related to school autonomy and the schools project. The school teams, the national quality assurance agencies (e.g. inspectorate) and the broader society need to invest in a broad common understanding of quality as a balance of high standards and developmental needs of children. It should be integrated in the models, reference frameworks and instruments used by national quality assurance agencies.

5.2 Teacher professionalism remains a key factor

There is hardly a policy debate on innovation in education that can ignore the competences of teachers as a crucial and undeniable factor of success. This is certainly the case for adequate policies on early school leaving and school failure. A warm and supportive relationship between teachers and pupils is identified as one of the most powerful instruments to keep students at risk on board. Teachers should have strong diagnostic competencies to identify thresholds in the learning process and development of a pupil. Dealing with cultural diversity and multiple identities is also a key competence.

Within the roles of the “teacher” it is better not to put all the pressure on one person but to develop a team oriented human resources policy. Competency profiles of teachers should define the role of teachers as part of school teams. Schools should dispose of the autonomy to define a specific HRM-policy that suits the school culture and the project of the school. In this regard investing in high quality school leadership is a necessity.

But innovative teachers practice requires professional autonomy. Teachers should share a common understanding of didactic and pedagogic approaches at school level. They need the space to adapt their acting to the specific environment, context and needs of pupils. Autonomy and shared responsibilities should become more balanced.

Investing in the reduction of early school leaving and the underlying concept of inclusiveness and quality in schools requires strong teacher training (both initial and in service training). There is an urgent need to close the gap between educational research and school practice. Teachers should become more reflective practitioners.

5.3 Participatory policies

A common understanding of what is going on in the hampering development of youngsters is essential for prevention, early intervention and inclusive school policies. The sense giving of youngsters to what is happening in their lives offers solid starting points for every effective support.

Parents are the key persons in the child’s life and they are privileged witnesses of problems of children. Their motivational role cannot be overestimated. Therefore an effective school policy should be based on a partnership between schools, pupils and parents and social actors. A common commitment is essential for success.

5.4 A common commitment to a sustainable social policy

Tackling early school leaving should be part of a multi-institutional and inter-institutional approach that puts the school in the center of a chain of public and social services. It is about a common approach between the society outside the school and the community within the school. Family and social services, community centers and labor market services are involved. An effective policy to reduce early school leaving calls for an active commitment of social partners. Employers should become more aware of their responsibility for sustainable employability of youngsters attracted to quick wins at the labor market.

But this collaboration should not hinder the pedagogic and developmental approach of schools. Schools are no community centers or labor market actors as such: the educational focus is the main one. Social or psychological assistance are subsequent to these missions. A good understanding of each other's professionalism is the basis for a sound collaboration.

ANNEX 3: RECOMMENDATIONS ON 'RETHINKING EDUCATION'

CONTEXT

On 20 November 2012 the European Commission has published an impressive set of policy recommendations that have to reinforce the cooperation between EU Member States and give a new impetus to education policy in the EU Member States. The publication contains evaluations as well as recommendations for policy.

The most important part of the proposal is the Communication 'Rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socio-

economic outcomes'. The Commission takes the opportunity of the long expected Communication on skills to gather all aspects of European Education and Training policy in an encompassing framework and to give some new impetus. The European Commission wants to put Education and Training high on the agenda, in the EU and in the Member States.

The Communication is accompanied by seven annexes that contain important policy recommendations related to the main fields in European and national Education and Training policy.

- The 'Education and Training monitor' presents a state of the art related to the current benchmarks and indicators.
- 'Rethinking education Country analysis' offers for every Member State a report on their progress towards benchmarks and indicators.
- The staff working document on 'Language competences for employability, mobility and growth' analyses the strengths and weaknesses of European language policy. The document proposes to use from now on a double standard to assess language policy.
- The staff working document on 'Partnerships and flexible pathways for lifelong skills development' pleads in favour of a stronger implication of social partners in education policy. Special attention is given to links between education and other settings for learning.
- The staff working document 'Assessment of Key Competences in initial Education and Training' highlights the role of key competences in compulsory education. It presents a state of the art of the progress of Member States towards the reference framework for key competences that has been implemented by the EU during the past years. It insists on the importance of adequate ways of evaluation in order to work with key

competences in a more coherent way.

- The staff working document on Vocational Education and Training looks at the state of the art in the Copenhagen Process and stresses the importance of VET in tackling the economic recession and in innovating labour markets.

- The seventh document focuses on the shortage of teachers, the competences of teachers and the crucial role of school leaders.

There is even more. In the policy documents that are issued by employment policy, the education policy of the Member States is in the picture. In the beginning of 2012, the European Commission launched a 'Youth Employment Package'. It contains, next to other initiatives, an important number of proposals that are relevant for future education policy. In the accompanying document a strong focus is put on the link between 'Rethinking education' and the 'Youth Employment Package'. The main message of the proposals is that, in February 2013, all Member States need to have a Youth Guarantee scheme, in order to offer to all young people a guarantee at the transition from education to employment. Other important issues are qualitative traineeships and stimuli for apprenticeships, to be promoted by a 'EU Alliance for apprenticeships'.

This massive package of policy proposals is the result of the conviction of the European Commission that Education and Training are one of the important levers to respond to the economic crisis. On the one hand, the EU faces a youth unemployment of 23%, and, on the other hand, more than two million vacancies are not being filled in. Too many young people (13,5 % through the EU) leave school without formal qualifications, whilst the knowledge economy is asking for more and more competences.

Another contradiction is that, whilst everybody agrees that Education and Training have a big impact on economical and societal development, the budgets for Education and Training are under pressure of shortages in public funding. Several EU policy makers state that they want to put Education and Training on top of the policy agenda, and therefore also on top of the budgetary priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General approach

EUNEC decided to react as soon as possible on the broad package of proposals issued by the European Commission on the societal role of education in the current economic crisis.

The proposals are not only broad from a content point of view. They also plead for a stricter follow-up and governance of the engagement of the Member States to implement common and national objectives. In order to realise this follow-up, more education benchmarks are linked to the European Semester.

The current statements are to be considered as a first reaction on behalf of EUNEC. As a next step, EUNEC intends to formulate statements on more specific themes that are part of this European Commission Communication.

To start with, EUNEC states that this package of proposals is a clear signal to governments and heads of states of the importance of investing in the talents of young people and adults. These talents offer a solid basis for sustainable societal development and economic well-fare. The European Commission supports the idea that Education and Training have to be considered as a sector in which governments have to invest permanently. For EUNEC, Education and Training remain a public responsibility, for which a public budget has to be available. Therefore, one should be careful when considering input of own means of learners and

commercial initiatives for Education and Training.

EUNEC is pleading for a broad approach of education policy. Sustainability, social cohesion, equal opportunities and a development oriented approach are as important as the labour market orientation. EUNEC cannot support an approach to Education and Training that is exclusively labour market oriented.

In the field of governance mechanisms, EUNEC is pleading for an approach of education policy from a subsidiarity point of view. Decisions on Education and Training have to be taken at the appropriate level. This means that, in the European framework for cooperation, the Member States/regions have the major responsibility for the implementation of the education policy and the translation of the European frameworks into the national/regional education tradition.

EUNEC is concerned about the fact that the European texts pay only little attention to the role that school communities and school groups play in education policy. In every debate on effectiveness of education policy, the local level has to be taken into account and valued.

EUNEC is also concerned about the fact that, at European level and at national level, decision lines are not transparent enough. In the multitude of projects, there is a clear need to make transparent choices and to decide on priorities.

In the European thinking on education innovation, there is too little attention for implementation processes, at the level of the Member States as well as at the level of the schools.

Importance of continuous focus on social cohesion, sustainability and equal opportunities within a pedagogical perspective

EUNEC has noticed that, in recent years, the perspective of European education policy has broadened. As it has been the

case in the wider Lisbon process, the attention for social cohesion and sustainability has been taken on board. However, in this new Communication the European Commission stresses the role of Education and Training in tackling the economic crisis in the European Member States. EUNEC has the impression that the broader vision on education in the EU has again been narrowed.

EUNEC welcomes the fact that this Communication stresses the important role of Education and Training in the economic development of the Member States, because this urges the Member States to invest permanently in Education and Training and gives new impetus to Education and Training policy. But this cannot lead to a lack of attention to social cohesion and sustainability.

It is also important to continue to consider Education and Training as a public responsibility. EUNEC states that Education and Training have to be financed by public budgets. This is the only way to guarantee equal opportunities and sustainability.

EUNEC also stresses the role of education in the development of the personality, and the perspective of the learner. Education takes place in a societal context, and has to be able to react to the societal expectations in a critical way. Education and Training have to fulfill this task taking into account their pedagogical mission. Education guides (young) people in their lifelong development, in society as well as in their personal life. Education teaches the learners to question critically the societal developments and to deal with it in an innovative way. Education teaches learners how to handle consciously values and norms, diversity and sense-giving. For all these reasons, Education and Training need to be able to maintain an assertive autonomy vis-à-vis the multitude of societal expectations and translate them into its own mission and dynamism.

In order to look for answers to important societal changes,

education is part of a global system of diverse actors, such as social partners, stakeholders in care and wellbeing. In this system, every actor has to take his own responsibility. That's why EUNEC appreciates the fact that the European Commission Communication pleads in favour of partnerships between education and societal sectors, although we think that the Communication puts too much emphasis on socio-economic actors; there is too little attention for other relevant policy domains.

The emphasis on economical and societal expectations should never threaten the perspective of the young or adult learner. The perspective of the learner has to remain the starting point of education policy. EUNEC regrets that, in this Communication, issues such as participation of the learner, his wellbeing, motivation and engagement are not enough present.

Partnerships

EUNEC appreciates the emphasis that is put on partnerships. It is important to see these partnerships in a broad way, including all relevant actors: social partners as well as partners from welfare and socio-cultural actors.

On the other hand, EUNEC regrets that there is too little attention for education partners such as teachers, parents and, most of all, the perspective of the learners. EUNEC recommends to put emphasis on structural dialogue with society and with all the education stakeholders.

EUNEC regrets that this chapter does not refer to the added value of education councils and structured dialogue with stakeholders.

Vocational Education and Training

The Commission clearly questions the funding of VET. The Communication pleads in favour of more input of private budgets

and of a link with fiscal policy, mainly for lifelong learning in VET oriented sectors. EUNEC refers here to its recommendations on 'Erasmus for all'.

An EU strategy for excellence in VET implies systematic cooperation on standards, high quality of didactical approach, measuring and comparing results of VET systems and of individual learners. EUNEC thinks that the European institutions have to clarify the coherence of initiatives in the framework of the Bruges process, the Youth Employment Package and Rethinking Education. It is not clear for the partners which is the baseline, and which institutions give impetus for the innovation of VET.

Competences of teachers and the attractiveness of the teaching profession (including school leaders).

EUNEC draws the attention to the fact that, for the first time, the HRM policy in education is part of European education policy. The focus on school leaders is completely new. Before, there was a general reference framework on competences and professionalisation of teachers, but the policy concerning teachers was not the object of any benchmarking or reporting from the Member States. The country-specific recommendations in the field of education staff policy are new.

Member States have to be aware of the fact that interferences between these European frameworks and national/regional debates are possible.