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Attended events December 2012 – May 2013

1. **Information sessions on the presidencies of the EU**

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended these events.

* 1. **Outcomes and results of the Cypriot presidency of the EU in the field of Education and Training**

Brussels, 18 December 2012

Jelle Reynaert

Four topics were formally on the agenda of the November 2012 Council of EU Ministers for Education

* Erasmus for All. A partial general approach has been reached during the May Council under the Danish presidency of the EU. The European Parliament (CULT Committee) voted on 27 November 2012. The Cypriot Presidency attempted to reach agreement on Erasmus Master loan guarantee, but made no real progress under the presidency, due to the fact that there is not yet a decision on the budget, on the Multiannual Financial Framework.
* Literacy. At the agenda during the conference in Nicosia (September 2012) and during the informal meeting of EU Education Ministers in Nicosia in October 2012. Council Conclusions in November 2012.
* Europe2020, the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs. The role of education and training in Europe 2020 is growing, in the context of the European Semester (as it appears in the Annual Growth Survey 2013).
* Validation of non – formal and informal learning, urging Member States to set up a national system by 2018. (The Commission proposed 2015 as deadline).

But also…

* Ministerial debate on improving status and quality of teachers in times of fiscal constraints on 26 November 2012
* Equity and excellence in VET (conference in Nicosia on 12-13 November 2012)
* Conference on Lifelong Guidance (Larnaka, 24 October 2012)
* Conference on improving skills: evidence from secondary analysis of international surveys, Limassol
* Ministerial conference on ‘Opening up education through technologies: towards a more systemic use for a smart, social en sustainable growth in Europe’ (Oslo, 9-11 November 2012)
  1. **Irish Presidency of the EU**

Brussels, 18 December 2012

Julie Anderson, permanent representation of Ireland to the EU.

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

The main objective, across all areas, is ‘**Promoting sustainable jobs and growth, restoring confidence in the European economy and securing the EU future budgetary and policy framework’**. Within that focus, the education main theme is **‘quality and equity’.**

Legislative proposals (to be negotiated with the EU Parliament)

* Erasmus for All is a key priority in the education committee. Progress in the negotiations depends on the agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework (8 February or mid March?). Even without agreement on the budget, negotiations on the non-financial elements go on. The Irish Presidency faces the challenges to look for an agreement between the two existing positions (Council and Parliament) and the Commission proposal. There are differences (on budget reallocations, for instance) but there is a good basis for agreement.
* Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications. The objective is to amend this 2005 Directive in order to make some aspects of it work better. It is a technical topic, related to the Single Market Act.

Skills agenda

In January – February 2013, the Irish Presidency will focus on the role of education and training in tackling unemployment crisis. The February Education Council deals with the EU semester and will look on how to tackle unemployment, looking at the Annual Growth Survey 2013. This Survey deals with economic and employment issues and, this year, includes a lot of topics related to education and training.

The Council will also have ‘Rethinking education’ at the agenda. Rethinking education is a strategy statement from the European Commission The Ministers will not go into the details of this Communication, but will deal with the aspects of the Communication that correspond to employment and skills and look at the aspects that most link with the Annual Growth Survey:

* How can EU Member States work more efficiently in education and training?
* How to raise the performance of education systems?
* Facilitating transition from school to work
* Cooperation with other Commissions (employment)
* Improve cooperation under the open method of coordination, linked to the wider framework of the European Semester
* ….

The DGVET meeting, 20-21 May 2013, in Dublin will focus on the theme of quality insurance (fits into the general quality and equity theme).

Teacher and schools

On 18-19 February 2013, the Irish Presidency organises a conference on integration, innovation and improvement – the professional identity of teacher educators. The Irish Presidency closely works together with the Lithuanian Presidency, which will focus on teachers.

At the Education Council in May 2013, there will be Council Conclusions on ‘Improving policy support for the teacher education profession’ (cf. staff working paper in ‘Rethinking education’). Another conference, on ‘better assessment and evaluation to improve teaching and learning’, 19-20 March 2013, is more related to another staff working paper in ‘Rethinking education’, the one on key competences.

Higher Education

Launch Conference on U-Multirank Project 30-31 January 2013. This new university ranking tool is a favourite topic of the Irish Education Minister. It will allow a more holistic way of looking at universities (now the focus in rankings is too narrow, focusing on research output).

The DG HE meeting in April 2013 will discuss the value of regional clusters of HE institutions in optimising regional engagement.

In May 2013 there will be Council Conclusions on the social dimension of higher education, linked to the Europe 2020 target.

Conferences that focus on quality and equity

* 12-13 March Quality Assurance in Qualifications Frameworks
* Bologna Follow up group in 14-15 March
* Conference on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (organised by the European Commission on 9-10 April 2013)
* DG Schools, 16-17 April (jointly chaired with the European Commission)

Associated events (more..)

* International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans- and Intersexual Association Europe (ILGA europe) 20 February 2013
* ELGPN, Dublin, 27 February 2013
* EQAVET , Dublin, 14-15 March 2013
* ENTEP, Galway, 23-24 May 2013
* Peer learning event building on the work of EU thematic working group on ECEC, Dublin 29-31 May 2013.

More information at [www.eu2013.ie](http://www.eu2013.ie).

* 1. **Info session on the Irish Presidency**

On Tuesday,29 January 2013, Mr. Axel Buyse, Government of Flanders Representative to the EU, interviewed interview Mrs. Lucinda Creighton, the Irish Minister for European Affairs, on the occasion of the Irish EU presidency that started on 1 January 2013.  
   
The information and networking event took place in The Counters (De Loketten), Flemish Parliament, IJzerenkruisstraat 99, 1000 Brussels.  
  
Europe @ The Counters is an organisation of the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Flemish Parliament and the Liaison agency Flanders-Europe.

Mrs Creighton expressed the hope that the Irish Presidency will be able to obtain an agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework, and insisted on the focus of the presidency on 'stability, growth and jobs'. As the restore of trust in economy is the main objective, most policy lines will be economical.

1. **European Conference on Quality in VET**

Brussels, 17- 18 January 2013

Roos Herpelinck, Flemish Education Council, attended this event.

The aims of the conference:

* Offer an overview of the results of the work of the five pilot EQAVET projects
* Share methods and tools elaborated by the projects and consider how best to extend their use to a European scale
* Take stock of common challenges and build on the experiences to overcome and address them
* Reflect on needs for further development of EQAVET

Read the conference [report](http://eqavetprojects.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2797_conferencereport_web.pdf) and find more information at the [conference website](http://eqavetprojects.eu/conference-main-page/).

1. **U.S. Department of Education International Education Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement’**

Brussels, Flemish Education Council, 5 February 2013

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

Christopher Medalis, Regional Director Northern and Central Europe, EducationUSA

(for the Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs U.S. Department of State) presented the U.S. Department of Education International Higher Education Strategy 2012-2016: ‘Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement’ (November 2012).

Education USA provides information on the U.S. Higher Education system to students and operates through more than 400 advising centers. Mr Medalis insists on the fact that the governing bodies for U.S. Higher Education are decentralized and very complex: there is no Federal/National Ministry of Education or any other centralized authority. The U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for quality control over postsecondary educational institutions. Accreditation of higher education institutions is carried out by private, non-profit organizations.

Actors in the U.S. Higher Education international engagement are the federal government, the state governments and the private sector.

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/internationaled/international-strategy-2012-16.pdf>

1. **Irish Presidency conference: Integration, Innovation and Improvement – The Professional Identity of Teacher Educators**

Dublin, 18-19 February 2013

Adrie van der Rest, EUNEC president, attended this event.

This conference, hosted by the Teaching Council of Ireland, seeks to make the professional identity of all teacher educators explicit and addressed the following questions:

* Who is the teacher educator? What do they do?
* How can we develop the professional identity of teacher educators?
* How can we identify policies that will enable teacher educators to support a high-quality teaching workforce?

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

1. **Irish Presidency conference: Better assessment and Evaluation to Improve Teaching and Learning**

Dublin, 19-20 March 2013

Vilija Targamadze, Lithuanian Education Council, attended this event.

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

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

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

1. **International Conference on Urban Multilingualism and Education**

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended the public lecture, opening the International Conference on Urban Multilingualism and Education, Ghent, Het Pand, 6 March 2013

“Urban multilingualism and educational achievement: Identifying and Implementing Evidence-based Strategies for School Development”

Jim Cummins, professor at Toronto University, is an international authority in the field of research on multilingualism in education.

The starting point of the presentation is the professor’s own experience, learning Irish as a second language through spontaneous immersion at age 8, and losing this fluency through ten years of having Irish as a second language course at school; nevertheless, his exam results were very good.

The major focus is how to improve the educational realities and outcomes for multilingual children from marginalized social groups. The fundamental principle and at the same time the conclusion: If you want students to emerge from schooling after 12 years as intelligent, imaginative and linguistically talented, then treat them as intelligent, imaginative, and linguistically talented from the first day they arrive in school.

Teachers have the power to open up the space in the classroom and encourage the students to use their home language.

**Is linguistic mismatch a cause of underachievement?**

If the answer to this question is yes, this is a problematic interpretation of PISA results. The data are marvellous, but the way these data are interpretated is problematic (even in the recent OECD report 2012 ‘Untapped Skills (…)’. This discourse repathologizes the immigrant pupils.

The data show that there is no relationship between the home language use and achievement in the two countries where immigrants were most successful (Australia and Canada). And: after control of socioeconomic status and other background variables, the relationship disappears. The language switch is only a problem if the school is inactive and provides no support. Thus: the cause of underachievement goes far beyond the switch between the home language and the instruction language.

**What do we know about causes of underachievement, and what are the appropriate instructional responses?**

* The strongest predictor of educational achievement is **reading engagement** (print access and literacy engagement). Engaged reading (in mother tongue or in the school language) can overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement, including gender, parental education and income. Many educators are not aware of the amount of research illustrating this statement.
* Schools have reflected and are reflecting the racism and exclusion that exists in society. Culturally diverse students are disempowered educationally in very much the same way that their communities have been disempowered historically in their interactions with societal institutions. **Devaluation of identity** is a cause of underachievement.

**How do we implement change at the level of the school?**

How to improve the level of achievement of children from a migrant background? First have a collective pedagogical inquiry on what image of the child the school is sketching in its instruction. Change in the school is a collaborative effort by the school (maybe triggered top-down), by creating an identity-affirming school environment validating the home languages and cultures.

**Recommendations**

* for policy makers: need to stop being hypocritical by de-funding innovative programs that work (e.g. Foyer); need to recognize that plurilingualism is just as good for the poor as it is for the rich.
* for researchers: need to be much more rigourous in interpretating data with significant social consequences (e.g. language at home); need to acknowledge the research showing that literacy engagement and identity negotiation are key components.
* for educators: need to be willing to challenge aspects of the societal power.

**Questions and answers**

Schools should have autonomy in implementing the system they need in their specific situation, within a regulatory policy framework (suggestion Fien Moerman, agreement by Cummins). There has to be a strong focus on teachers being able to deal with diversity, to tap into the potential of the pupils.

Final comment by Cummins: One of the groups that is often neglected is the deaf community. A lot of the assumptions presented today also apply to them.

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

1. **Future Classroom Lab Course: Teaching STEM in the future classroom**

Brussels, 8 March 2013

This workshop introduces the participants to European Schoolnet, its science projects and the Future Classroom Lab.

Two examples of EUN’s science projects are presented: Scientix and inGenious.

European Schoolnet (EUN) is a network of 30 Ministries of Education in Europe and beyond. EUN was created 15 years ago to bring innovation in teaching and learning to its key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers and researchers.

European Schoolnet’s activities are divided among three areas of work:

* Policy, research and innovation
* Schools services
* Learning resource exchange and interoperability

[Read more](http://fcl.eun.org/welcome)