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**Attended events October 2015 – February 2016**

1. **The Education, Training and Youth Forum**

Brussels, the Square, 19-20 October 2015, hosted by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

The Education, Training and Youth Forum brings together key stakeholders for discussions on implementing the [new priorities for European cooperation](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/0901-et2020-new-priorities_en.htm) under [Education and Training 2020](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm) and the [EU Youth Strategy](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/index_en.htm), including ideas on how education, training and youth work can contribute to the follow-up to the [Paris Declaration](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/0316-paris-education_en.htm).

A first meeting with the civil society organisations active in the field of education and training took place before the actual Forum, on Monday morning. This event marked the launch of a reinforced cooperation with civil society.

On the programme:

* Welcome by president Juncker (videomessage); focus on employability, and the role of education and training for growth.
* Welcome by deputy director of DG EAC Jens Nymand-Christensen
* TED-like talks, performed mostly by members of the European Commission Thematic Working Groups

**Marco Snoek** (University Amsterdam) informs about a policy guide, to be released in November 2015, as a result of the activities of the EU Working Group on School Education. He uses the image of the teacher having to be ‘Superman’. The main message related to teachers’ profession is the need for a continuum of professional development, and the need for a collaborative approach.

**Mitja Jermol** (Centre for knowledge transfer at Jozef Stefan Institute, Slovenia) talks about open educational resources. He insists on the need for open education to be personalized (not mass education); this is being made possible thanks to artificial intelligence, analysing and interpreting what is available in open resources in all languages, in all alphabets, through all sources.

**Florian Pecenka**, Austrian Permanent Representation, Brussels, Belgium, is part of the Thematic Working Group on the Modernization of Higher Education. He focuses on the question of dropout in Higher Education. What is the definition of a drop out? There is no uniform European definition. Why does someone drop out of university? There is a lot of data available, but it is not comparable. When does someone drop out? Most drop out in their first year, and next in the fourth year! The main recommendation of the working group and of the study is that talking brings people together: need for cooperation with stakeholders.

**Lisa Serero**, Responsible for development, CoExist, France, talks about racism, acts of violence, stereotypes. The aim of CoExist is to breakdown stereotypes in school classrooms.

* Panel discussions

The first panel reflects on the follow-up of the Paris Declaration and focuses on enhancing inclusion, fundamental values and active citizenship and the role for education, training and youth work. Role of faith based organizations in a merely secular society.

**Jagdish S. Gundara**, President of the International Association of Intercultural Education, United Kingdom. Importance of lifelong learning, of connection of urban and rural communities, the importance of education, training and skills. Education has its own intrinsic value; we should not miss out this larger importance of education. Need for teacher training and education has to be intercultural. Now, knowledge is centric; knowledge has to be universally embedded.

**Youssef Himmat,** Vice-President of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations, talks about interfaith or interbelief dialogue. They provide, as an NGO, training to teachers; attention for the impact of young pupils themselves. Young people can be actors of change, within formal education.

**Robin Sclafani,** Director at CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe
Belgium. Education has always been key for Jewish integration. Education can contribute to create equitable and safe environments.

**Yvonne Heselmans,** Executive Director of the International Debate Education Association IDEA-NL, The Netherlands. Paris declaration has to support youth workers in a professional way. Teachers should be empowered to conduct debate in the classroom on sensitive issues (f.i. Mohammed cartoons). Critical thinking skills!

**Christer Mattsson,** University of Göteborg. Founder of the Tolerance Project
Sweden. The Paris declaration is a step in the right direction.

* Interactive workshops on the priority areas:
1. Basic skills for all
2. **High-level skills for the knowledge society**
3. Towards more inclusive learning environments
4. Promoting active citizenship and fundamental values, such as tolerance, non-discrimination and respect of diversity through education
5. Innovation in education: better ways to learn, teach and build partnerships in the digital age
6. Empowering teachers and trainers for better learning outcomes
7. Making learning pathways more flexible: recognition and validation of all forms of learning
8. Innovative and sustainable investment in education and training
9. Cohesive communities: promoting youth participation in democratic life
10. The impact of sports and culture related activities on learning outcomes

Main findings of the workshops:

* Need for multiannual funding of projects in order to allow sustainable growth;
* Stop focussing on innovation as a goal in itself, rather value continuity:
* More attention for wellbeing of teachers and learners:
* Develop critical thinking, media literacy, digital literacy.
* High-level round table including political representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and current and future Council Presidencies to look ahead on how to take forward the conclusions of the Forum in the context of EU policies and programmes.
* **Tibor Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. Insists on the two main pillars in education: employability and citizenship, mutually reinforcing. The role of the European Commission in the field of education is to set the agendas (through roadmaps such as ET 2020), to allow exchange (through organization of conferences) and to support financially.

**Silvia Costa**, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education, European Parliament. Rather pessimistic speech: insists on the high number of NEETs, on the evolution of Europe in two different velocities, on the lack of money. Tools such as the Youth Guarantee or dual system might help, but will not resolve all the problems. Need to open up the views, to value ‘other’ talents, such as transversal competences, understanding, arts, ..

**Claude Meisch,** Minister for National Education, Children and Young People and Minister for Higher Education and Research, Luxembourg. Main message: the learner has to be at the center.

**Jet Bussemaker**, Minister for Education, Culture and Science, Netherlands. Because there is less money, cooperation is needed. Cooperation between education and business; cooperation withing education in transitions from one level to another. Prioirities of the Dutch Presidency: development of skills in informal, formal and non-formal learning; digital learning; follow up of the Yerevan conference; education for migrants/refugiees.

[The report](https://education-training-youth-forum.teamwork.fr/docs/forum-report-for-publication.pdf)

[The workshop synopsis and presentations and TED like talk videos](https://education-training-youth-forum.teamwork.fr/en/)

1. **Education and the Investment Plan for Europe Conference**

Brussels, 5 October 2015

This event was organised to raise awareness on the existing and new funding possibilities for the education and training sector, and to help to mobilise potential project promoters.

The basics of the Plan were explained and a number of projects were showcased to inspire others.

Commissioner Navracsics emphasised that together we can reverse the alarming trend of underinvestment in education and get fresh money flowing into the sector across Europe. He also highlighted that the private sector can play its part in investing in education and that there are ample opportunities to combine the European Fund for Strategic investments (EFSI) with the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

[Background, highlights and supporting documents](http://ec.europa.eu/education/events/2015/1005-education-investment-plan_en.htm)

1. **Higher VET in the European Union**

**2.1 Presentation of the Cedefop report**

Brussels, Flemish Parliament, 27 October 2015

Simon Broek (consultant Ockham/IPS Netherlands) presented the [Cedefop report on qualifications at level 5 in countries with a National Qualifications Framework](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/node/12008).

**2.2 Analysis of Higher Vocational Education and Training in the EU. Expert Workshop.**

Brussels, 3 November 2015

This workshop is being organised as part of study commissioned by the European Commission, DG Employment on the topic of vocational education and training at higher levels.

The working definition used for this study was: Higher VET is vocational education and training provided beyond upper secondary level. For further discussion, see subsection on how can higher VET be defined.

The study was designed to address these main questions:

* RQ 1: How can Higher VET be defined and how is it embedded in the national qualification landscape?
* RQ 2: What are the main features of Higher VET programmes/qualifications in each of the countries analysed?
* RQ 3: What are the main trends related to demand, pathways, prevailing sectors, and outcomes of Higher VET?

The study was based on the following approach:

* Country templates were developed for each country (2 for Belgium), summarising the main characteristics of higher VET (as understood in the country) as well as trends and national statistics. These templates were based on desk research and stakeholder interviews;
* A selection of types of higher VET programmes/qualifications were analysed in greater depth. Overall 101 programme/qualification templates were prepared by the research team. The programme/qualification templates were standardised, they captured the main features of the type of programme/qualification. Researchers were asked to choose from predefined categories and these answers were accompanied by an explanation. The templates were mostly completed based on desk research. Overall 100 interviews were carried out to complete the country templates and programme/qualification templates; and
* 10 types of programmes/qualifications were analysed in greater depth in form of cases studies. These are presented in the annex of this note. In total 71 interviews were carried out to complete the case studies.

Objectives of the workshop

* Present the preliminary findings and discuss these with an expert audience;
* Provide inputs into the development of the typology of higher VET;
* Provide inputs into the analysis of main trends and challenges influencing the development of higher VET; and
* Help shape the key messages from the study.

The main trends influencing evolution of higher VET are:

* Clarification of the position of higher VET in the rest of the education system. The development of NQFs led to discussions about the relationship between higher VET and other qualifications, in particular those from higher education;
* Growing demand from the side of learners and employers linked to mostly positive employment prospects though the trend here is not unanimous; and
* Development of work-based learning programmes at higher levels.

The main challenges for further development of higher VET are:

* A certain form of competition for learners with higher education, which means that higher VET is sometimes seen as a second choice;
* Linked to the above, lack of clear positioning and profiling of higher VET programmes; and
* Lack of recognition of higher VET qualifications for exemption from higher education.
1. **How can digital learning environments enhance learning outcomes?**

Brussels, 3 December 2015

In this policy seminar, European experts from teachers’ training, ministries of education, digital champions from industry, researchers and regional authorities discuss how to benefit from digital learning environments and elaborate on how stakeholders can join forces to close the digital skills gap.

Mrs. Godelieve Van den Brande, senior policy advisor Unit Skills and qualification DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission and Dr. Marco Marsella, head of unit Inclusion, Skills and Youth, DG Connect, European Commission commented on the European policy context: facing the digital challenges in skills and education.

Professor Päivi Häkkinen (Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä) explained about technology-enhanced learning and pedagogically meaningful practices. Saskia Van Uffelen, CEO Ericsson Belux and digital champion Belgium talked about digital skills for a networked society.

[Presentations, participants list and pictures](https://en.vleva.eu/event/seminardigitallearning)

1. **Dirk Van Damme on adult education**

7 December 2015

The council for lifelong learning of the Flemish Education Council (Vlor) invited Dirk Van Damme, head of the OECD Innovation and Measuring Progress Division.

He reacted on the Vlor recommendation on building blocks for a powerful adult education. He also reflected on the future of Flemish adult education in an international context.

[The presentation](http://www.vlor.be/sites/www.vlor.be/files/rlll-rlll-doc-1516-029.pdf) (in Dutch)

1. **Erasmus+ information meeting for high level public authorities on European policy experimentations**

Brussels, 27 January 2016

The objectives of the call were explained by Ms Fiorella Perotto, DG Edcuation and Culture of the European Commission.

For each set of priority themes, a panel discussion was held with participation of projects’ representatives.

The final session focused on the selection procedure and technical and administrative aspects of this call for proposals.

The ‘Find a project partner tool’ was presented.

[Programme and presentations](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/events/erasmus-plus-information-meeting-for-high-level-public-authorities-european-policy-experimentations_en)

1. **Creative mind-sets. Entrepreneurial futures.**

Brussels, 1 March 2016

This seminar explored the following questions:

* Are European education systems delivering entrepreneurship education?
* How can education build creative and entrepreneurial mind-sets?
* What is needed to support change?

The results of the [Eurydice study on entrepreneurship education at school in Europe](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications%3AEntrepreneurship_Education_at_School_in_Europe_-_2016_Edition) were presented (see also main policy lines).

The seminar also referred to the work of the Joint Research Centre; this Centre is conducting, on behalf of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, a study to address the lack of consensus by developing a European reference framework that defines the key competence for lifelong learning ‘Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship’ (EntreComp). The [EntreComp Conceptual Framework](https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp) is currently available as a working draft.