



14 October 2012

EUN/EC/DOC/026

Attended events June – October 2012

1. Eurydice report on key competences

Madou, Brussels, 5 June 2012

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

Presentation by Teodora Parveva and Isabelle De Coster (Eurydice EACEA), at the invitation of M. Gameiro, DG EAC, in the presence of L. Jakobsen, the new head of Eurydice.

Several recent reports of Eurydice illustrate in how far key competences are being taken seriously in Europe.

- Key data learning and innovation through ICT
- Teaching reading in Europe
- Mathematics education in Europe
- Science education in Europe
- Citizenship education in Europe
- Entrepreneurship education at school in Europe
- Key data on foreign languages

The work on key competences links up with the recommendation on key competences from 2006, with the benchmarks in ET 2020 (and Europe 2020) and with the European Commission Communication on 'Rethinking skills', now under preparation.

Mr Jakobson informs that the JAF Joint assessment framework will be used in the monitoring of the benchmarks. This JAF is developed for tracking progress and monitoring the Employment Guidelines under Europe 2020 jointly by the Employment Committee, Social Protection Committee, and the Commission.

The Europe 2020 governance structure suggested that the main components of JAF - inspired by the economic, social and demographic context and different starting positions in each Member State - should comprise:

- Quantitative and qualitative assessment tools for identifying key challenges,
- A device for tracking progress towards the Europe 2020 headline targets on employment and social inclusion
- An Employment Performance Monitor (EPM)

JAF has been designed to be an analytical tool for evidence based policy-making under the Europe 2020 Employment Guidelines. Its results should be considered as an instrument to promote multilateral surveillance and support an overall assessment of the situation at EU level.

Information in the report comes from Eurydice questionnaires, review of academic research, analysis of data from Eurostat and international surveys, mainly PISA and TIMSS.

Three main policy challenges are addressed:

- Raising performance in basic skills (reading, maths and science)

Only a few countries have achieved the 2020 benchmark of 15% more achievers in the three areas. Eurydice analyses how low achievement can best be tackled, formulates general recommendations and gives examples of good practice. An example: the national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy (2011-2020 – IE).

- Improving motivation and engagement

Students often don't see the relevance of the skills for their future lives. One way to address this is to provide guidance for instance to encourage careers in science. However, only few initiatives are taken.

Again, Eurydice formulates general recommendations and gives examples of good practices. For instance: Platform Beta Techniek (NL). We refer here to the presentation of this platform during the EUNEC seminar in Amsterdam in May 2012.

- Implementing transversal competences in teaching and assessment

Eurydice looked at how far they are integrated in the curricula: they feature in all countries. The three most common approaches (mostly combined):

- Cross-curricular
- Integrated in other subjects

- Seperate subjects

Eurydice examines whether guidelines exist on assessing students transversal competences, for instance active participation, attitudes.

The report will be published in November 2012

2. Congress on freedom in education in Flanders and in the Netherlands

Tilburg University, 14 June 2012

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

Participants were welcomed by prof. Dr. P. Eijlander, rector magnificus of Tilburg University. He insisted on the importance of safeguarding academic freedom in times of striving for economic benefits.

Prof. Dr. J. De Groof was chair of the day and stated that freedom of education is crucial but under pressure. If education is a task of authorities, what about autonomie of schools and educational communities? What about ownership?

Micheline Scheys, secretary general of the department of education and training in Flanders, presents a short historical overview of the history of freedom in education in Flanders. A recent new element is the fact that education is now seen as a key lever to find our way out of the economic and social crisis. What about the role of government? As governments have the duty to guarantee the quality of education, how can this government do that without affecting the freedom of education? This is for her the central question of this congress. Two new elements have to be taken into account:

- Growing diversity
- The way in which education policy and practices are shaped, using valid data.

In this debate on responsibilities for authorities and education providers, it is important to work in strong partnership.

Professor dr Paul Scheffer insisted on the effects of secularisation in the debate on freedom of education. He explained differences between a neutral and a normative approach of equal treatment, the latest based on equal reciprocity. This reciprocity is now under pressure.

Panel members had the opportunity to reflect on the key notes, and participants discussed in depth during workshops.

As a follow up of this congress a publication will be sent to all participants and will be made available on line.

3. First meeting of the Group of Stakeholder organisations working in the related fields of Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving

Brussels, Madou, 26 June 2012

Roos Herpelinck, EUNEC expert from the Flemish Education Council, attended this event.

Two Thematic Working Groups (TWG) have been set up to organise peer learning on these key issues, within the context of the "Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)". Their work will support countries in their reform efforts in these fields and will feed into possible future developments at European level.

The Commission has now decided to establish this Stakeholder Group in order to better involve as many stakeholder groups as possible in the process and collect their views on the themes and priorities identified in the TWGs' work programmes.

The first meeting of the group focused on the presentation of the work programmes of the two TWGs. The TWG on early school leaving will undertake peer learning on the concept of comprehensive policies against early school leaving and will identify and analyse good practice examples in this area. This work will support countries in their reform efforts to reach the EU2020 headline target on the reduction of early school leaving as well as feeding into possible future developments at European level. The TWG on early childhood education and care will identify core criteria for improving the accessibility and quality of early childhood education and care.

Read the [background paper](#)

4. Literacy for all

Cyprus presidency conference on literacy

Nicosia, 5-6 September 2012

Adrie Van der Rest, president of EUNEC, represented the network at this event.

The conference was opened by the chair of the High Level Group on Literacy, Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands. The report of the High Level Group on Literacy was presented and discussed during the two-day conference, which was attended by the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou, the President and members of the HLG and distinguished experts from abroad.

EUNEC participated at the workshop 'Literacy: what is the big deal? exploring the following issues:

- How can we break the taboo of poor literacy skills in society? How can we raise awareness of this problem and encourage struggling readers to seek support? What actions can we take at the European and at the national levels to tackle this issue?
- What are the main challenges/obstacles to the development of comprehensive literacy policies at the EU level and at the national levels?
- What are the main challenges and opportunities for literacy resulting from new technologies?
- Do you know about good practice examples/projects developed in your country? What are the success factors?

Based on the recommendations of the Group and the conclusions of the conference, the Cyprus Presidency will hold a discussion during the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Education in October 2012 and subsequently will promote the adoption of Council Conclusions in November on this issue, seeking to tackle illiteracy through the provision of qualitative education and training.

Speeches and related documents at

<http://www.cy2012.eu/en/events/presidency-conference-on-literacy>

Download [the report](#).

5. European launch of 'Education at a glance'

Charlemagne Building, Brussels, 11 September 2012

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

This conference was held at the invitation of the European Commission, DG Education and Training. Participants were welcomed by Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director General at the European Commission DG EAC. The report was presented by Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director General for Education at OECD.

The report provides info on the state of play in education and training, including the finances, human resources, student-teacher ratios, investments, graduate numbers,.. Some new indicators focus on the effect of the global economic crisis on educational expenditure. Six EU countries are not covered by OECD (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Romania).

Positive points were highlighted: Early Childhood Education and Care is a success story for Europe; Europe continues to be the preferred destination for students studying outside their country. A lot of challenges remain in the field of education and training:

- Tertiary levels have increased considerably, but socio-economic and gender inequalities in access to tertiary education may temper expansion over the next decade.
- The ageing of the teaching force, with an extremely steep replacement rate, is an increasing concern.
- Intergenerational mobility is problematic.

The EC and the OECD announced that they will work together more closely in the future in order to strengthen the impact of their work.

The EC announced the upcoming communication on 'Rethinking skills', expected in November 2012. The communication will try to provide answers to the challenge how to reform and innovate in times of crisis.

[Read more](#)

6. Expert seminar on 'Education indicators'

Budapest, 17-18 September 2012

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this seminar.

- Background

The European Commission selected the consortium of the European Service Network and the Migration Policy Group to carry out the scientific analysis of and to organise a series of European reports and seminars around the European indicators of migrant integration. The consortium works with researchers from the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

This seminar is the second in a series of three technical seminars on the European indicators on migrant education (one related to employment, one to education, one to social inclusion and active citizenship). The outcomes of this seminar will be a key building block in the development of these indicators. A discussion paper has been prepared for the use of all participants by the Migration Policy Group.

The report of the workshop in which EUNEC participated was presented in a plenary session by Maria Golubeva (PROVIDUS, Latvia)

Objective of the workshop

The workshop engaged participants in the medium to long-term policy implications of the common European integration indicators. Policymakers and stakeholders discussed ways that indicators are and can be used to inform and improve general education policies, in order to distil key policy messages for

future policy improvements. What can be improved as a result of indicators? Can other groups benefit as well? It is important to be able to demonstrate that.

Messages from discussants.

The discussant from Finland (Kaisu-Maria Piironen) presented the Finland strategy for Education and Training which has very distinct equity oriented targets. This commitment can be traced on different levels of the education systems. The key word from this presentation is commitment.

The discussant from Spain (Miquel Angel Essomba) focused on current understanding of educational reform processes in general in terms of complexity, progressivity, and connectedness with leadership. The key word is patience.

The discussant representing EUNEC (Carine De Smet) focused on the importance of stakeholder involvement. Migrant organizations have to be aware of the indicators and of their weaknesses. The key words are participation, and awareness.

Conclusions

The most important message of this workshop can be summarized in two words: participation and critical approach. Stakeholders should have their say on how policies will be adapted based on the interpretation of indicators.

There is a need to empower and build the capacity of migrant stakeholders representing a legitimate part of the education community.

The final recommendation coming from this workshop is the need for indicators on participation of migrants, not only in education, but also in the policy processes concerning education: to which extent have migrant stakeholders been consulted in developing the policies?

[Read more](#)