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**Attended events April 2015 – September 2015**

1. **The NEETs need us**

This conference is organized by the four Belgian employment services and by the European Commission

Brussels, 23 April 2015

*Key note by Fons Leroy, director of Synerjob (Federation of public employment and vocational training services in Belgium: VDAB, Forem, ADG (Arbeidsamt der DG), Actiris, Bruxelles Emploi).*

This conference is a clear signal that Belgium, its regions and the EU want to tackle youth unemployment focusing on the low- or unemployed young jobseekers.

Need to build strong partnerships between

* public employment services and employers:
* between education and labour market;
* between public and private employment services;
* between youth organisations and local organisations and employment services.

Synerjob is a good example of building bridges and of cooperation. It is, for the European Commission, the contact platform for following up Belgian efforts regarding the Youth Guarantee.

The ambitions are high:

1. Prevention of youth unemployment:

* Introduce information on job perspectives in the study orientation process;
* Enhance knowledge of the labour market (as part of the curriculum?);
* Introduce dual learning leading to qualifications.

2. Remediation of youth unemployment, through the implementation of the youth strategy.

The strategy for reducing the percentage of NEET in Belgium (12,5 %) is to ‘Find, Mind and Bind’.

*Key note speech Michel Servoz, DG Employment, Social Afffairs and Inclusion*

Mr Servoz speaks also on behalf of Marianne Thyssen (on mission in Riga and Krakow dealing with the topic of mobility of workers).

Youth unemployment in Belgium is high (about ¼), but decreasing. The causes of the problem are related to job creation on the one hand and to a skills mismatch on the other hand.

The European Commission has issued the Youth Guarantee in order to fight youth unemployment. The start has been difficult, is was not easy to enter the YG in the member states. Providing young people with a job or training opportunity within four months might seem simple, but involves indeed a lot of reorganisations. But now the results become clear.

Education systems are not well organised to guide young people towards employment; the link between education systems and employment services are generally not strong enough. The education systems are working too much on their own, in autonomy. Employability is not high on the education agenda. On the other hand, employment services are not good at counselling individually the job seekers.

Next to the youth guarantee, the European Commission is taking other initiatives:

* Promoting dual learning to avoid the skills mismatch. Need for financial and intellectual investment by the enterprises (participating in the construction of the curriculum);
* European Alliance for Apprenticeships. At this moment, the European Commission sees the limits of the Alliance; there is need for something more structural, more systemic.
* Entrepreneurship in education.
* Mobility is key in the fight against youth unemployment.

The European Commission is strongly investing in the fight against youth unemployment, especially in the member states with more than 25 %. The prefinancing of 1% has been enhanced to 30 %, which will allow member states to accelerate measures against youth unemployment.

Mr Servoz insists on the relevance of today’s conference, given the fact that the Commission is preparing countryspecific recommendations for Belgium.

*Panel discussion with Kris Peeters, Eliane tillieux (Minister of Employment and Training, French Community), Rudi Vervoort (Minister President Bruxelles Capitale), Didier Gosui (Minister Employment Bruxelles Capitale), Philippe Muyters (Flemish Minister of Work).*

*Muyters*

Disagreement on the facts and figures. Muyters agrees with the 25 % of youth unemployment in Belgium, but the situation in Flanders is much better: 16 % (which is still reason enough to take measures).

In Flanders, 92% of the young people is being proposed a job or training offer within 4 months (youth guarantee); the aim is to have 100 %.

In order to avoid the skills mismatch: let’s stop looking at degrees and diploma’s, but focus on what people know and are capable of, and see if this matches with the job. Screen on talents and competences.

Importance of dual learning, and cooperation between education and work.

In the ‘bind, mind, find’ strategy, a first step can be to contact the young people at an earlier stage, when they still are at school.

*Gosuin*

Disagreement on the facts and figures. The NEETs problem is very high in Brussels, but the Eurostat data are not correct.

Education is to blame. A lot of young people leave school without basic competences; education is reinforcing inequality. There is work to be done here, and cooperation between education, training and employment is key.

Brussels is also working on the youth guarantee, but it is not easy to set up individualized trajectories for about 10000 young job seekers per year. Involving enterprises remains a challenge; a lot of enterprises are reluctant to engage with young job seekers, because their attitude does not fit within the company.

*Rudy Vervoort*

Brussels is facing the paradox that job creation is rising, whilst these jobs opportunities do not benefit young people who live in Brussels. A lot of youngsters are not ‘employable’. All actors are now working together to implement the youth strategy (employers, social partners, ...). The big challenge is at the same time an opportunity for cooperation. We are trying towards synergies; the complexity of the system should not be an issue for the citizen.

*Kris Peeters*

Kris Peeters welcomes the fact that the topic of NEETs is high on the European, and on the Belgian federal and regional agenda. He insists on the need for support of young people by the authorities; but also on the responsibility of the young people themselves, efforts are needed.

Belgium is also tackling the challenge of bridging transition between education and labour market. The focus is on dual learning. The government has decided to invest more in order to enhance job opportunities for young people (8000 new jobs for young people before summer), and counts on the efforts and the cooperation of the sectors.

Other efforts aim at enhancing economic growth (index jump, lower salary costs).

*Eliane Tilleux*

Ms Tilleux insists on expressing her gratitude for all the professionals working with young people; they are important role models.

In the French Community, percentages of youth unemployment are decreasing, but the figures are still unacceptably high (30,5 %).

The FOREM is intensifying efforts of guidance of youngsters: they are followed from an earlier stage and the follow up is more intense and individualised. Young people are more involved thanks to social media. In addressing the NEETs challenge, working together across sectors is key (youth, social affairs, work, ..). Ms Patricia De Smet (European Commission) expresses her concern that the education sector is not explicitly mentioned here.

The audience insists on the need of efforts from the side of the employers. Mr Peeters agrees: salary costs will be lower, this has to lead to more jobs.

*Masimiliano Masscherini (Eurofound) and Michel Vandekeer (Observatoire de l’Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l’Aide à la Jeuness) give a presentation on the sociological and statistical context of the NEETs.*

In the afternoon, parallel workshops are organized:

* An efficient transition between education and labour market;
* Innovative strategies to reach young people that are far away from the labour market;
* Good practices to give vulnerable young people a place in business.

Programme and presentations at <http://www.theneetsneedus.be/fr>.

1. **Delivering strong school leaders: trends and inspiring practices**

Report of the conference organised by Vleva (Flemish European Liaison Agency) and by GO! (Flemish Community), 29 May 2015

*Introduction by Raymonda Verdijck (head GO!)*

GO! focuses on:

* Providing a learning continuum for principals
* Regional alliances between schools so that principals can focus on their core task (pedagogical)
* Investing in shared leadership and teams of teachers

Quote: A teacher’s job satisfaction is twice as high when he feels supported by a principal.

*The GO! perspective, Frank Vercleyen, pedagogical advisor*

The GO! has developed a new programme for the training of school leaders, based on the recommendations by TALIS (mainly that training has to take place in a professionalization continuum).

Four phases:

* Talent well. School boards locally take the initiative to select teachers, and provide them with a realistic view on the job of school leader. This part of the training leads to a final report, with is the entrance ticket for the next phase;
* Training programme (basic competences for school leaders, some legal, pedagogical, organisational content), based on blended learning (2 webinars with flipped content, 8 day face to face training, 3 practica, 2 tutorials). There is no final test; participation is sufficient.
* On the job training, locally organized by the school boards, part of H&R management.
* Professionalization, to stay abreast with new developments.

*Insights on leadership from recent OECD educational analysis, David Istance, OECD*

Four sources:

* TALIS
* Improving School Leadership 2008
* Leadership for 21st century learning
* The ILE framework (innovative learning environments)

Quote: There is a very wide variation in the perception of school leaders of what their responsibilities are.

Amongst the recommendations:

* Distribute leadership
* Make school leadership attractive
* Good school leadership asks for creativity and courage; is social and connected
* Involve non-formal partners
* The main challenge for future school leaders will be how to deal with learning settings out of formal schools.

*EFEE-project ‘Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient leadership’, Sjoerd Slagter (Netherlands)*

Information from the LISA project ‘Leadership improvement for students’ achievement’, based on PISA-results. Good school leadership is a cocktail of different styles:

* Participative style
* Entrepreneurial style
* Structuring style
* Instructional style
* Professional development style

Insists on the role of governments, unions and employers in stimulating the effectiveness of school leadership.

*Presentation of cases (UK, Germany, France)*

Programme and presentations at <http://en.vleva.eu/leadershipineducation>

1. **Closing conference of the Comenius project ‘Together is better’, to build a school for all.**

Vleva (Flemish European Liaison Agency), 3 June 2015

*The* [*state of play of inclusive education*](http://en.vleva.eu/sites/en.vleva.eu/files/events/attachments/agalianos_03062015_0.pdf) *in Europe is presented in an introduction by dr. Agalianos from the European Commission.*

Challenges

* How quality mainstream provision can be balanced with individual learning programmes
* Teacher education and continuing professional development
* Need to strengthen support systems and to secure the necessary funding
* Need to protect investment in education
* EU funding is available: European Structural and Investment Funds; Erasmus+
* Need for shared defini8ons and comparable data

*Marleen Clissen and Luc Bosman (coordinators) present the project.*

The 7 European schools who embarked on a joint learning adventure on inclusive education present the results and guide the attendants through their experiences in collaboration and inclusive practices. The project website and the Collaboration Toolbox to build a school for all is presented.

The general aim of the project is to promote [inclusive education](http://comeniustoolbox.weebly.com/definition-of-inclusion.html) and lifelong learning for all learners. Evolving towards a “School for All” involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies. This change requires support for all partners in education. Inclusion will benefit from good collaborations between mainstream schools and special schools or centres.   
  
Project partners (schools from Flanders, Austria, Sweden, Slovenia and Finland) have built up expertise in the fields of special needs, special needs education, inclusion and inclusive education. Partners aim at improving their current models of practise. Partners share a common belief in the importance of collaboration; mainstream schools working together with special schools or learning centres with the mutual objective of equality and a high standard of education for all.

<http://comeniustoolbox.weebly.com>

<http://en.vleva.eu/sites/en.vleva.eu/files/events/attachments/agalianos_03062015_0.pdf>

1. **Technical briefing on results of Eurydice’s and CRELL’s reports on teachers**

Madou, 25 June 2015

Eurydice report ‘The teaching profession in Europe. Practices, perceptions and policies’.

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/184EN.pdf>

This report goes a step further than the TALIS report: it puts information in context, namely into national contexts. It relates impressions and perceptions of teachers to the existing legislation.

*Sources and methodology*

The report is based on a secondary analysis of TALIS data, Eurydice data (information on legislation and policies that regulate the profession), Eurostat data. In addition to analyzing these data, the report also tries to make correlations.

*Scope*

Two million teachers that work in lower secondary education, for the reference year 2013/2014. Eurydice data cover public schools (private only in BE, IE, NE), TALIS data cover public and private schools.

*Content*

Five chapters

* Demographics and working conditions
* Initial teacher education and the transition to the profession
* Continuing professional development
* Transnational mobility
* Atrractiveness of the teaching profession

*Some findings*

**Gender**

Teaching at lower secondary education level is a job largely executed by women. In the Netherlands, there is balance; in some other countries less than one in five teachers are men. If we split the data by age groups, the situation is even worse: there is a bigger share of men for teachers older than 60 years, and a lower share of men in the section younger than 30 years. The balance will get worse in the years to come.

**Initial teacher training**

Teachers feel better prepared in the content, theory and practice of teaching when they have completed initial teacher education. This is quite good news, it means that teaching is finally considered a profession. Whatever model is used (concurrent model or consecutive model), there is always place for professional training and school placement. Nevertheless, practices are still very different per country.

Induction is compulsory or recommended in almost all countries; sometimes it is limited to mentoring. Still, in many countries, structured induction programmes do not exist.

**Continuing Professional Development**

We find a pattern: teachers feel better prepared in the content than in the practical aspects of teaching. Needs are expressed in the field of diversity, ICT skills, individualised learning, .. Teachers feel the need for modern tools that can at the same time modernize their teaching and make it possible to individualize and tailor teaching. There is low or no need for CPD in subject content. Teachers feel prepared for the content, but less for how to teach the content.

There is a mismatch between the need of teachers and the offer. The demand outnumbers the offer in the field of multicultural classrooms, pupils with special needs, new technologies… There is too much provision in the field of knowledge of the subject.

Different actors intervene in the provision of CPD. Ministries (or top level education authorities) have a key role; they share this role with schools, local authorities, teachers (except in Greece). As the top level authorities play an important role, there is need to voice the teachers’ needs.

**International mobility**

International mobility of teachers in lower secondary education is under 40 % on average. It varies according to the subject (far more language teachers, but still only 60 %). The most important funding scheme is Erasmus+. The percentage of mobility in initial teacher education is very low (6%).

**Attractiveness of the profession**

TALIS shows that teachers’ perception of value by society is low. Teachers think that society does not value their profession. But surveys show that society values the profession better than what teachers think. Job satisfaction and perception of value of profession are positively influenced in countries where there is meaningful feedback and appraisal (not only administrative evaluation), collaborative practices, and teacher-student relation.

CRELL report ‘Teaching Practices in Primary and Secondary Schools in Europe: Insights from Large-Scale Assessments in Education’

<https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/JRC95601.pdf>

The report offers a description of teaching practices at the primary and secondary levels and it explores relationships between teaching practices and other factors such as student achievement and class size. The results are based on data from TIMSS and PIRLS (2011), PISA 2012 and TALIS 2013.

The goal is to help member states identify gaps in available information, identify country profiles and address mismatches.

The report is essentially a mapping of different teaching practices and their relationships with other characteristics of the school environment (such as class size).

Key findings from both reports:

* Countries are taking measures to raise the quality of teaching by enhancing initial teacher education programmes;
* The gender imbalance in teaching is striking and set to increase;
* Mobility for teacher professional development is not widespread;
* Teachers say they need more professional development linked to tailoring, diversifying and innovating teaching practices;
* Teacher collaboration to share and diversify teaching practices is varied;
* Collaboration between teachers increases job satisfaction;
* A diversity of forms of professional development activities is emerging.

Policy implications/recommendations:

* Improve teachers’ working conditions and career opportunities;
* Consider flexible pathways into teaching;
* Provide more opportunities for mobility for student teachers and serving teachers, with a view to supporting effective professional development and increasing motivation for taking up teaching;
* Improve programmes of initial teacher education through regular reviews to identify potential deficits; balance the programmes with a mix of subject knowledge, pedagogical education and teaching practice;
* Increase the efficiency of investments in CPD by addressing mismatches and by introducing a diversity of formats. Focus CPD on the needs as identified in evaluation and feedback processes. Involve teachers more actively in the definition and planning of CPD activities through for example school development plans;
* Critically examine governance processes for teacher education with a view to establishing a continuous development process where each stage builds on the previous ones;
* Look at teacher education in conjunction with broader policies on the organization of schools to strengthen the role of teachers as experts in learning, allowing them to operate in new roles (e.g. mentor, coach, researcher, liaison officer). This could make the profession more dynamic and attractive;
* Involve relative stakeholders and partnerships;
* Increase teacher collaboration by supporting networks, providing physical and virtual spaces, and developing a collaborative school culture between teachers, students and the wider community;
* Include leadership training and collaborative-based approaches in teachers’ professional development and learning.

1. **The EU Presidency (Luxembourg): multilingualism in the picture.**

Vleva (Flemish-European Liaison Office), 4 September 2015

*Language education in practice: a case from Suriname, by Mieke Smits, senior advisor language policy of the Taalunie (Dutch Language Union)*

The Dutch Language Union is a treaty organisation in which the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname work together on their policies on the Dutch language and literature, education in Dutch and the study of Dutch around the world.

Information on multilingualism in the curriculum of Suriname, a project from the government of Suriname, 2009-2012, with the aim to increase knowledge and awareness to reflect critically on their own practice and curricula.

*Multilingualism: initiatives at the level of the Flemish Community, by Sien Van den Hoof, staff member of the Flemish Department Education and Training*

Structural policy: reception education for newcomers

Recent policy initiatives regarding Dutch (language screening, language track, immersion, extra Dutch classes)

Recent policy initiatives regarding foreign languages and linguistic diversity (project on language awareness; any modern language can be taught; mainstreaming of CLIL)

No explicit policy on heritage languages at school

Research project MARS (Multilingualism as a Reality at School)

Also mentioned a number of projects:

* + Oprit 14 (www.viaoprit14.be)
  + Developing school skills through heritage languages (www.pbdgent.be/node/3160)
  + VALIDIV Valorising Linguistic Diversity in Multiple Contexts of Primary Education (www.validiv.be)

Significant actors in Flanders:

* Pedagogical counseling services
* Flemish Education Council
* Research Institutions (CTO Leuven; Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren Gent; Multilingual Research Unit Brussels, CODE Thomas More, ..
* Marnix Plan
* Stichting Lezen
* ………………….

*Results of the Latvian Presidency of the EU and priorities of the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU in the field of education and training, by Jelle Reynaert, attaché education and training at the Permanent Representation of Belgium at the EU*

Looking back at the achievements of the Latvian Presidency:

* + Paris declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through educaion : more emphasis on citizenship competences and social aspects of education
  + Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence
  + Debate on ET 2020 mid-term stocktaking
  + Riga conclusions on VET, with mid-term deliverables on VET for 2020

Looking forward to the Luxembourg Presidency:

* + Early childhood education and care: language development and valorisation of diversity (Conference 10-11 September + lunch debate during November Council)
  + Tackling early school leaving (Symposium July 2015 + November Council Conclusions)
  + Special needs: implementation and quality of inclusive education (debate November Council)
  + Joint Report 2015 ET 2020 (adoption November Council)
  + Conference family learning (22-23 October, Luxembourg)
  + Conference youth guarantee (17-18 November, Luxembourg)

Programme and presentations at <http://en.vleva.eu/Multilingualisminthepicture>