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**Attended events June – October 2014**

# STEM in a European context. Europe needs more researchers.

Imec, Louvain, 14 May 2014

Mia Douterlungne, EUNEC secretary general and Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event

## Key note presentation by professor Gago

## 1.1 Biography.

Former Minister of Portugal, in charge of Science and Technology, Information Society and Higher Education (1995-2002; 2005-2011).

Professor José Mariano Gago is an experimental high energy physicist and a Professor at IST (Instituto Superior Técnico, and LIP, Lisbon). He launched the Ciência Viva movement to promote science and technology culture in society. He was responsible for the reform of Higher Education and for the policies leading to the fast development of science and technology in Portugal.

## 1.2 Introductory remarks

Promoting STEM has to do with politics, with bringing together people in society, with engaging with others in society, with bringing together scientists and non-scientists.

A key issue is the social appropriation of science. This is difficult, because most of the pupils, most of the people will never work in a STEM-profession or in a STEM-context.

There is the perception that there are not enough students in STEM. This is not through. The fact is that there is a lack in certain STEM-areas; this niche problem is relatively easy to solve. The perception that there is a general shortage in STEM shows that society is anxious about the future of science. This anxiety can be transformed into positive energy.

## 1.3 Presentation

Professor Gago presents the 2004 report he coordinated for the European Commission ‘Europe needs more scientists’, and the Ciência Viva programme, started up in 1994 as the contribution of the Ministry of Science and Technology to the promotion of a scientific and technological culture among the Portuguese population.

[The report ‘Europe needs more scientists’](http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2004/sciprof/pdf/final_en.pdf)

Professor Gago presents a summary of the recommendations of this report, still applicable and relevant today. He suggests to check the recommendations and to see if they are recognizable and applicable.

[The Ciência Viva programme](http://www.cienciaviva.pt/home/index.asp?accao=changelang&lang=en)

Launched in June 1996, the Ciência Viva programme is the contribution of the Ministry of Science and Technology to the promotion of a scientific and technological culture among the Portuguese population. Ciência Viva was established as an open programme, promoting alliances and fostering autonomous actions. It is a support programme, aimed at the experimental teaching of science and at the promotion of scientific education in the school. Ciência Viva elected the school as its intervention priority, focusing its efforts on strengthening the experimental teaching of science and on mobilising the scientific community and its institutions to work towards the improvement of scientific education. For this purpose three main lines of action were launched:

* An annual national project competition in the field of scientific education, a programme fostering the twinning between schools and scientific institutions
* A programme for the scientific occupation of students in research laboratories
* A National Network of Ciência Viva Centres, designed as interactive spaces aimed at creating an awareness of science among the population. The network of Science Centres has already attracted more than 4 million visitors.

Comments during the Questions and Answers session

The project started from a governments decision, and grew into a large scale national movement for science and technology culture. Professor Gago has put a lot of personal investment in this project, being the minister of research and science. He insists on the fact that he would not have been able to realize this if he would have been Minister of education.

The relationship with the Minister of education was not easy. A major problem is that, in the curriculum, there is not sufficient time for real experimental work with the pupils. Professor Gago calls this lack of room for experiments a ‘continental European disease’. In continental Europe, the idea is that experimental work is just one of the tools to teach science. Professor Gago is convinced that it is the only tool that will permit socialization to science in compulsory education. If science is taught without experimental work it is better just to skip it. And if you don’t have the means to do it in schools, you have to do it out of school.

If a country/region wants to reach society at large and to promote a culture of science, politics are needed. Prof Gago had the opportunity to work, for instance, under two Prime Ministers who were totally committed to the promotion of science culture. The Parliament agreed to allocate 5% of the research business to these activities promoting a culture of science.

In order to create a culture of science, it is necessary to create in society a culture of proximity between scientists and non-scientists. Professor Gago has witnessed an evolution in this field in Portugal. An example: at the time, a man wanting to become major, would never have taken up in his programme the fact that he wanted to promote activities related to science. This would not have been helpful for winning the elections. This has now changed. Science has become part of the cultural offer, families use this offer to construct their holidays. This was made possible thanks to a wide campaign (TV-spots, banners on planes above the beaches, a free phone number, a website, ..)

Ciência Viva organized a broad range of out of school activities. But the money was also used for science projects in schools. The mechanism used is the call for proposals. Teachers can apply, describe their project; it is evaluated by an external agency, the teacher gets money and has to report back. This mechanism is a good means of empowering the science teacher. The teacher (not the school) is responsible for the management of the project. This way of working was a kind of atomic bomb in education. The first years were difficult, with only few applications; however, after 6 years, already 5000 teachers were engaged in Ciência Viva projects, supported by scientists.

Cooperation between schools and scientists is key. Schools benefit from this cooperation, research benefits also. An example: in a project, high school students work at a lab during summer holidays, they were really part of the team. After this period in the lab, the student took back to the school his experiences and a new attitude towards science and research.

It is important that the science teacher has a kind of prestige, and he can obtain this prestige through contacts with high level scientists. This also contributes to the empowerment of the science teachers.

How to motivate scientists to work together with schools? Professor Gago is against financial incentives for the scientists. He calls for their sense of public service, their conviction that it is good for society.

What about impact? Investment in science cannot be subject of an easy short term impact assessment. After analysis of GDP per capita, of the number of scientific publications, of the number of higher education graduates in science, of the investments in research and development, there are systemic correlations. It has been discovered that, after ten years, the increase in STEM was enormous, with an important rise of participation of women and girls. It is difficult to say however if this was a consequence of the Ciência Viva movement, or rather a consequence of a larger movement in society. Moreover, a lot of important aspects don’t come back in the statistics, such as the rate of empowerment of the science teacher. Easy impact assessment has to be avoided.

# Apprenticeships and work based learning: there is work to be done

Brussels, Vleva (Flemish-European Liaison Agency), 21 May 2014

Mia Douterlungne, EUNEC general secretary, Roos Herpelinck, EUNEC executive committee, and Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

## 2.1 Presentation by Sigve Bjorstad, European Commission, DG EAC, B2

Broad policy context

Youth unemployment in the EU is up to 23 %, with an important share of long term employment and big differences between Member States. Youth employment has become a top priority for the European Union.

Key problems and possible remedies

* Problem: Young people dropping out of education or work, low skilled youth most at risk of unemployment and exclusion in the longer term. Remedy: Youth guarantee schemes.
* Problem: Difficult school-to-work transition. Remedy: Increase supply of high-quality traineeships and apprenticeships.
* Problem: Growing skills and geographical mismatches. Remedy: Enhance mobility.

Work based learning

In Member States where there is a considerable amount of Work Based Learning (WBL) in VET, there is lower youth unemployment. This is one of the reasons why the Commission looks into WBL. However, with the economic down-turn, the number of apprenticeships is being reduced.

The Commission provided Country Specific Recommendations to 16 Member States calling for reform on VET systems.

DG EAC works closely together with DG Employment, focusing on developing high quality VET. During the crisis VET has been revalorized, it has become clear that medium level skills have become important in the Labour Market.

The Youth Employment Package is one important initiative (5 December 2013) including the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Youth Guarantee.

European Alliance for Apprenticeships

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships is a multi-stakeholder initiative to see how each one can contribute regionally, nationally and across borders. What is an apprenticeship? An apprenticeship is part of Initial VET (IVET), a formal combination and alternation between WBL and school based education; it leads to a nationally recognized IVET certification. The Alliance focuses on quality, on supply and on image of apprenticeships.

On 15 October 2014, Member States agreed the council declaration on the Alliance. Since then, the Commission received 21 commitments from Member States (will be published online soon).

The EC invites all stakeholders to come with pledges to showcase what kind of initiatives can be taken (template available at the EC website).

Quality framework for traineeships

There is a difference between apprenticeships and traineeships. Apprenticeships are part of formal IVET; traineeships are about open market traineeships, not within the education system. They can also increase the employability of young people.

Two key points of the quality framework: ensure good learning content and safe working conditions. There should be a written agreement. The quality framework provides guidelines on limitation of duration, on proper recognition and validation, more transparency, and active involvement of social partners, education and training providers, employment services and other key stakeholders. The implementation is foreseen by the end of 2015.

Towards a EASQ (European Area of Skills and Qualifications)

It is important to recognize skills and qualifications of learners and workers, at home and abroad, to raise skills levels, improve mobility, combat unemployment and complete the single market.

Tools: Europass, EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, QF EHEA, ECTS, ESG. The aim is to coordinate, to simplify, to improve. Work is only at initial stage, and depending on the results of the public consultation on EASQ there might be a European Commission initiative in the first half of 2015.

## 2.2 Presentation of two cases

### 2.2.1 Work based learning in München and Oberbayern (Fabbian Uebbing)

Dual training is mainly provided in the company and supported by teaching in a vocational school. Learning at both venues is governed by different but coordinated regulations.

Arguments in favour of dual training:

* Advantages for industry: secures the skills needed by the labour market; reduces cost of settling-in; increases motivation and loyalty to company; job-specific qualification; productive performance of trainees.
* Advantages for young people: good prospects on the labour market, open to all school leavers, mainly financed by the companies.

### 2.2.2 Work based learning in West-Brabant (Marco Verschure and Alex de Jongh, Regional Training Centre West-Brabant, Netherlands)

A new policy in the Netherlands is called ‘Focus op vakmanschap’ (focus on skills).

There have been some pilots on individual learning approach. The students are indeed better trained if they go to companies they really want to go to. The pilot is over, but the principles from the pilot are being implemented at large scale in colleges. It is complicated, a lot of change management is needed, but the implementation is going well.

There are two learning routes in the Netherlands for VET, leading to the same qualification

* The school based pathway (BOL) for about 65 % of the pupils
* The work based pathway (BBL) for about 35 % of the pupils (= dual learning)

### 2.2.3 Panel discussion moderated by Koen Stassen, Flemish Education Council

The panel agrees on the benefits of WBL: it has to be a number one priority. It eases the transition from education to labour market. Education updates the knowledge of what the labour market is. It motivates pupils who are lost in traditional education

A number of challenges are identified.

* If we raise the expectations, we have to make sure that there are enough good quality places available (the panel confirms that, in some sectors, the offer is already considerably higher than the demand by pupils).
* In order to ensure good quality, there will have to be more skilled trainers in the companies. A good technician is not per definition a good trainer.
* The sectors have to take up responsibility for the quality assurance.
* Big companies already invest in WBL. It is not part of the culture of small enterprises yet (maybe due to the administrative barriers). However, a lot of directors of small companies are in favour of WBL, as they often have started as an apprentice themselves. In order to motivate small companies to invest in WBL, there is need for more structured communication between schools and companies at an intermediate level.
* Teachers play an important role in motivating pupils for WBL. At the moment, a lot of teachers don’t know well the WBL possibilities, or have a wrong image and don’t see the added value.
* Companies will not invest in WBL for two or three weeks; short term apprenticeships don’t offer advantages to the companies. A minimum of two months is required.
* For international mobility of apprentices, the variety of regulations from country to country is an obstacle.
* Need for more standardization. At the moment there are many different forms of apprenticeships, with different conditions.
* Need for clear agreements on who pays what (for instance: mobility, insurance, ..)

[Presentations](http://www.vleva.eu/event/documenten-apprenticeships-and-work-based-learning-there-work-be-done) at the website of the Flemish-European Liaison Office

# Turning targets into action. Addressing inequalities in education and training (EUCISLLL), 3 June 2014

Brussels, EUCIS-LLL, 3 June 2014

Roos Herpelinck, EUNEC executive committee, attended this event.

This conference is organized in the context of the ET 2020 review by EUCIS-LLL in partnership with the ‘Learning for Well Being Consortium’, to reflect on what has to be achieved by 2020 and how to do it.

Report of the working group

There is need for communication and dialogue with civil society, at the level of the member states as well as at the classroom level, with a combination of a top-down and a bottom-up approach.

There is need for coherence between the objectives of ET 2020 and Europe 2020, between objectives related to creativity and entrepreneurship. Terminology also has to be coherent.

The benchmarks don’t show aspects related to equity and access. Equity and access have to be mainstreamed as a policy line.

EUCIS-LLL viewpoints on what has been achieved:

* Soft power in education is growing;
* Common understanding and common approaches;
* Learning outcomes as a paradigm;
* Consultation on skills and qualifications;
* Education is taken up in the countryspecific recommendations.

The remaining challenges:

* Different objectives are reached in a different way;
* Utilitarian approach;
* Too much focus on the quantitative level;
* Terminology;
* Education being seen as a cost rather than as an investment.

Conclusions

There is need for structured dialogue between stakeholders and the Commission; the actual stakeholders’ forum is a top down event, messages are not always well understood. There is need for a framework for exchange of views, for building bridges between education and training providers and other stakeholders. A coalition of stakeholders can enhance impact.

The flagship on ‘new skills for new jobs’ is to be broadened to the pedagogical mission of education and training.

In the field of lifelong learning, there is need for a genuine LLL strategy with approaches in formal, non formal and informal learning at all levels, taking into account the learning outcomes approach and recognition of prior learning, through enhanced peer learning.

In the field of citizenship, there is not enough attention for active citizenship and social cohesion: multicultural, social and civic competences need to be stressed.

In the field of social inclusion, challenges remain. There is not enough focus on inclusive growth. Social issues are not enough present in the targets. A flagship initiative on inclusive learning could be developed.

[Background information](http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/EUCIS-LLL_Background_ET2020.pdf) by EUCIS-LLL

# The impact of Europe on Vocational Education and Training

Brussels, Flemish Education Council, 4 June 2014

Mia Douterlungne, EUNEC general secretary, Roos Herpelinck and Jean-Pierre Malarme, EUNEC executive committee, and Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attented this event.

Carlo Scatoli, European Commission, DG EAC, presented the European frameworks for Vocational Education and Training, from the The Copenhagen Declaration (30 November 2002) to the European Area of Skills and Qualifications (2014), an initiative to boost transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications in education and training and the labour market.

Three cases have been presented:

* The European Qualification Structure: learning outcomes as building blocks, by Lucien Bollaert, Netherlands
* The implementation of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in the French Community of Belgium, by Alain Bultot
* Education quality and quality assurance in the Netherlands, by Eric Luijten

[Powerpoint presentations](http://www.vlor.be/verslag/stuurt-europa-het-beroepsgericht-onderwijs)

# European Commission conference on skills and qualifications

Brussels, 17 June 2014

Given the limited number of participants, EUNEC did not have the opportunity to participate at this event.

The seminar’s discussions centred on the questions whether the existing European policies and tools serve the purpose and support the European learners and workers in order for their skills and qualifications be recognized within and across national borders and support employability.

A new Eurobarometer survey on the 'European Area of Skills and Qualifications' was presented. It shows also that around a quarter (23%) of EU citizens feel that their education or training has not provided them with the skills to find a job in line with their qualifications. While over half of the respondents (56%) think their qualifications would be recognised in other Member States, 6% tried to work or study in another Member State but were unable to do so, either because their qualifications were not recognised by their prospective employer or education institution, or because the respondents lacked information about recognition of their qualifications abroad.

Programme, presentations and background documents at the [conference website.](http://conference-easq.teamwork.fr/en/gallery)

# Teachers as learning specialists – Implications for Teachers’ Pedagogical Knowledge and Professionalism

Brussels, 18 June 2014, hosted by OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation and the Flemish Department of Education and Training

Roos Herpelinck, EUNEC executive committee, attended this event.

A full [report](http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/Summary%20report%20of%20the%20Symposium%20Teachers%20as%20Learning%20Specialists%20Brussels%202014.pdf) of this conference has been published by OECD.

# Technical briefing on the TALIS results for the EU

Brussels, European Commission, 25 June 2014

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), first launched in 2008, asks teachers and schools (ISCED level 2) about their working conditions and the learning environments. It covers important themes such as initial teacher education and professional development; what sort of appraisal and feedback teachers get; the school climate; school leadership; and teachers’ instructional beliefs and pedagogical practices.

TALIS provides cross-country analysis that helps countries identify others facing similar challenges and learn about their policies.

Michael Davidson, Head of Early Childhood Education and Schools Division in the OECD’s Education and Skills Directorate, presented the key findings; Jan Pakulski, Head of Unit for Statistics, Studies and Surveys for Education and Culture in the Commission, elaborated the relevance of the findings for European policy making on teaching.

Three main recommendations:

* Teachers are more likely to feel prepared for their job when their formal education includes a combination of content, teaching and learning methods, with classroom practice for the subjects they teach.

Recommendation: Teacher education should cover all these areas to better prepare teachers for their career. In terms of their professional development, there should be more focus on using ICT in the classroom and the skills required for teaching pupils with special needs.

* Nearly 40% of school leaders report that no formal induction or early career support programme is offered at their school; the availability of such programmes is particularly low in PT, PL and ES.

Recommendation: Member States should ensure that Initial Teacher Education is followed up by systematic early career support. EU Education Ministers recently agreed to strengthen teacher education and to develop competence frameworks that clearly state the skills and qualities required from teachers at different stages of their careers.

* 15% of teachers report that they did not participate in a professional development activity over the previous year; around 50% of teachers never observe each other's classes; nearly 20% never take part in collaborative learning.

Recommendation: Member States should put more emphasis on effective professional development and collaborative learning as it encourages teachers to use innovative teaching and learning methods (e.g. teaching small groups; use of ICT) and also increases job satisfaction for teachers. Varied learning methods better prepare pupils for further studies and the job market, as illustrated by the European Commission's policy initiatives on Rethinking Education and Opening up Education.

[www.oecd.org/TALIS](http://www.oecd.org/TALIS)

# The education priorities of the Italian Presidency of the EU

Brussels, co-organized by Vleva (Flemish-European Liaison Office) and by the Flemish Representation at the EU, 9 September 2014

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

## 8.1 Session 1: Presentation of the education priorities of the Italian Presidency of the EU

By Marcello Limina, Director General International Affairs, Ministry for education, Universities and Research

There will be one European Council for ministers of education, on 12 December.

* The Council will adopt Conclusions on Entrepreneurship in Education and Training.
* There will be a public debate on ‘The Economic Case for Education’.
* The Ministers of Education of the Trio Presidency will participate to the EPSCO (11 Dec) and the Ministers of Employment of the Trio Presidency will take part of the EYCS (12 Dec).
* During lunch, ministers will debate on the topic of wellbeing at school.

Planned events:

* European High Level Dialogue “Education in the Digital Era” – Brussels, 11 December 2014
* High Level Group on Education and Training – Rome 12-13 June
* European Day of Languages – Florence 25-26 September
* Conference on the new generation of researchers and the quality of education - Trento 18-19 November
* Forum on the European Doctorate – Padua 20-21 November
* Bologna Process Meetings – Rome 18-19 September; 27-28 November
* Meeting of DGs for Higher Education – Palermo 20-21 October
* Meeting of DGs for Schools – Verona 20-22 November
* Meeting of DGs for VET – Rome 13-15 October

The presentation focuses on entrepreneurship education. Education has to convince the economic sector that investing in education is rewarding. But this is not the only goal of entrepreneurship in education. Entrepreneurship education is not only about taking initiative and gaining money. Social entrepreneurship, inclusiveness and sustainability are included. Entrepreneurship cannot be understood with a narrow definition, only linked to profit.

Entrepreneurship is about to be ready to take an initiative, to be an actor, to be able to take risks, to make choices. This concept of taking risk is not very well accepted in Europe compared to the USA and the East. People can learn from failure, this has to be accepted.

## 8.2 Session 2: Entrepreneurship and Education

 by Elin Mac Callum, European Commission, DG EAC.

The starting point is the EU Key Competence Description from 2006 with key words creativity, innovation, risk-taking, plan and manage projects, seize opportunities, contributing to social or commercial activity, awareness of ethical values..

How is EU supporting the stakeholders in implementing this? Entrepreneurship is at the heart of policy.

* Political background: Europe 2020 and ET 2020: creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship is one of the key priorities;
* 2013 Annual Growth Survey;
* Rethinking Education is about increasing the economic impact of education; entrepreneurship is coming in in all three priorities (building skills for the 21st century, stimulating open and flexible learning; funding and partnerships for education);
* The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plain is re-igniting the entrepreneurial spirit across Europe.

Is it too much of emphasis on the economic aspects of education? We talk about skills for work and for life.

There are three strands of activities: policy, action and knowledge.

* Policy

The TWG (Thematic Working Group) on entrepreneurship education is about to publish its report, identifying key success factors (a.o. stakeholder engagement) for entrepreneurship education. A new Working Group on transversal skills is now starting up and will take this work further.

* Action

Erasmus + is the most important action. Entrepreneurship is being supported and prioritized in all three key actions.

Entrepreneurship 360 is a project commenced in January 2014 (piloting stage with about 100 schools). It is a collaborative project with OECD about improving entrepreneurial outcomes from education and training in Europe. The output will be an online tool, a self-assessment guidance framework to support more entrepreneurial education institutions.

* Knowledge

Country reports, data and indicators, reports and studies. The TWG identified that there is not a lot of data on entrepreneurship education and set up an expert group trying to bring together good practices; a brief framework of indicators will be published soon, focusing on the impact on the learners. The TWG identified that learning outcomes were crucial. An action in the new working group will be to develop a tool which will illustrate the different competences (2006) and map them against the EQF framework. This work will be done together with the Joint Research Center from European Commission.

## 8.3 Session 3: Empowering Youth through Entrepreneurship Education in Austria

by Professor Johannes Lindner, University of Austria

In Austria the term ‘entrepreneur’ is most of the time not translated. It is important to stress that entrepreneurship is not only linked to business. The accent on social entrepreneurship is especially important in schools.

Professor Lindner considers four aspects of entrepreneurship:

* Self-employer
* Citizen: being able of managing their own life
* Vocational independance
* Entrepreneurial independance

In the anatomy of an entrepreneur skills, knowledge and competences are important, but also fire and passion.

Professor Lindner goes into the details of the timeline of the project in Austria (see ppt).

## 8.4 Session 4: Results of the Hellenic Presidency of the EU. Achievements in the education field.

Jelle Reynaert, Flemish attaché for education and training.

Two Councils of Ministers of Education have been organized.

The meeting of 24 February 2014 focused on efficient and innovative education and training to invest in skills supporting the 2014 European semester. The conclusions adopted were an input to the Spring European Council. Ministers held a public debate on employability in the light of the PISA and PIAAC results.

The meeting of 20 May 2014 had a much heavier agenda. Three sets of conclusions have been adopted:

* On effective teacher education: how to attract and retain the best candidates, how to ensure the relevance of teacher education programmes, how to better exploit the potential of new technologies and resources?
* On multilingualism and the development of language competences. This is in fact the answer of the ministers to the Commission proposal for a EU-benchmark on language learning. Member States were not in favour of a new benchmark, mainly because of the high cost and the lack of comparable data. Member States are invited to adopt and improve measures aimed at promoting multilingualism and enhancing the quality and efficiency of language learning and teaching;
* On quality assurance in education and training: a stocktaking of quality measures that exist; focus on quality of cross-border education and the extent to which quality assurance arrangements could be developed in other areas of education and training, such as schools, work-based learning and non-formal learning.

Ministers also held a policy debate on cross-border education, linked to the topic of quality assurance. This topic was rather linked to the national agenda of the Greek Presidency (lack of capacity in higher education).

During lunch, the Ministers discussed the role of education and training in Europe 2020.

# The European launch of Education at a Glance – OECD Indicators

Brussels, European Commission, 9 September 2014

Roos Herpelinck, EUNEC executive committee, attended this event.

<http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm>

# Exploring the Belgian, Finnish and Vietnamese recepies for PISA

18 September 2014

Organized by Vleva (Flemish-European Liaison Office) and by VVOB (Vlaamse Vereniging voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Technische Bijstand – Education for Development).

Central questions:

* Is economic welfare no longer decisive for the pupils’ performances at school?
* Why is Finland no longer top performing?
* Does PISA lead to ‘teaching to the test’?
* What about ‘soft skills’, they are not in the PISA tests?

All powerpoints are available at <http://www.vleva.eu/event/belgische-finse-en-vietnamese-recepten-voor-pisa>

## 10.1 Judging the quality of an education system

By Roger Standaert, University Ghent

Every education system is a complex system with an amalgamation of a lot of interwoven factors. The conclusion is that PISA, and other standardized tests, are good instruments for reflection on tendencies. When interpreting the results, it is necessary to take into account the differences between education systems. Taking into account the assumptions and the limits of the tests, they can be useful for learning from each other. It is not possible to make rankings or to pronounce judgments based on the test results. A fortiori, ranking of the system in its totality are not possible.

## 10.2 Jouni Välijärvi, Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä.

Limitations of standardized tests have to be recognized. Nevertheless, existing data can be analyzed and used to analyze what is happened in the Finnish Education System and in wider Finnish society. One of the tendencies of PISA is to move from measuring knowledge to measuring competences and skills. This is positive, but challenging.

Worrying evolutions:

* The top year is 2006, then there is a drop in all three domains (reading, maths, science), especially in mathematics (40 points lower, which means about one year of studies).
* More important: the variation between individual students was amongst the smallest in OECD countries in 2006. In 2012, the standard deviation increased in all three domains.
* The number of pupils at risk has doubled; however, compared to OECD average, Finland is still doing well.
* Differences between boys and girls: boys are lagging behind, the difference is increasing, favouring girls, even for mathematics and science.
* The impact of socio-economic background is growing. Traditionally Finland could be proud because of this small correlation. This evolution indicates that not only things are happening in schools, but also in societies, in families. We have to go back to the basic values of the education system.

The variation in student performance between schools and within schools remains very small. This is one of the cornerstones of the education system.

One of the challenges is how to raise motivation and self-efficacy in maths? Finnish pupils do well, but they don’t feel that they do well. How to develop a pedagogy in the classroom focusing on raising self-confidence and trust of students? Idem for reading: how to motivate pupils to read for fun?

Finland has always invested a lot in teachers initial training (min 5 year studies). However, Finland did not invest enough in in-service training. TALIS shows that Finnish teachers spend less time on professional development, and receive little feedback from principals, students and peers. On the one hand, society is respecting and valuing the teachers’ profession, on the other hand, they are left alone in their classrooms.

## 10.3 EU policy on school education and PISA

By Vladimir Garkov, European Commission.

The EU policy on school education is based on three pillars (within the OMC)

* Acquisition of key competences (key competences; reading literacy; maths, science and technology)
* Equitable education system (ESL; migrant education; ECEC)
* Supporting high-quality staff: teachers, school leaders, teacher educators

The 2010 Commission Communication ‘Key competences for a changing world’ is well represented in national curricula, but more work is needed to focus on skills and attitudes, to integrate learning across all subjects and to use assessment in the learning.

Reading literacy

The number of low achievers (not able to reach level 2 in PISA) drops down.

What has the EU done? A High Level Group on literacy has examined how to support literacy throughout lifelong learning.

The European Commission has launched ELINET to carry out country specific analysis of Member States performance in reading literacy (NGO’s and ministries of education); to organize awareness raising campaigns, to develop a European Framework of good practice and a communication platform.

Maths, science and technology

The EU significantly performs better than the US, but some member states are very low performing.

Finland is still doing very well, but worse than previous edition.

The **socio -economic factor** is the most important. This is important for policy makers; in some countries there is a difference corresponding to two and a half year of schooling. At the same time, from 2009 to 2012, the number of children at risk of poverty has increased, so obviously we are moving in the opposite direction, we will not reach the Europe 2020 headline target on poverty. Education will not be able to solve this!

The **migrant issue** is the second important factor. Non-immigrant kids have a much lower percentage of low achievers in maths. Consistently, in English speaking countries, migrants do not underperform, sometimes they overperform. Why? It is not in the graphs. In Belgium, the Turkish perform 55 points higher than the same students in Finland. Why?

Another factor is **ECEC**, early childhood education and care. This is a powerful factor leading to improvement especially for disadvantaged pupils. Participating in ECEC is not sufficient, quality is crucial. The EU is developing quality framework.

We know the challenges: more than 20 % of 15 years olds lack basic skills, this affects economic growth and social stability. It is crucial to see education as an investment.

The EU has put in place a thematic working group on ECEC and on maths and science education. (peer learning best practices, research, ..) This latest group (report published) concluded which policies are needed to tackle low achievement. Some of the most important recommendations:

* It is important to identify students who need help, to provide help timely and to provide integrated support (within the school hours!)
* Support has to be given to students and to teachers
* Include science in the definition of basic skills
* Use science literacy to combat technophobia
* Work on science appreciation
* Increase parental involvement
* Connect schools with the local community
* Emphasize equity and cooperation, not choice and competition.

## 10.4 Learning outcomes, school quality and equity: what is different about the Vietnamese system?

Caine Rollestone, university of Oxford

Vietnam participated for the first time; it surprises that the overall results are higher than the results of the USA, the UK, and are comparable with BE and Germany, despite of the fact that the average income is very low (similar to India).

PISA shows a high level of parental expectations; high attendance at additional tuition; high amounts of time spent on homework; very low levels of truancy and lateness; low levels of school autonomy, high levels of external accountability; high levels of indicators of quality assurance and of teacher monitoring.

Presentation of the ‘Young lives’ study, an international comparative longitudinal survey of children, households and communitees every three years since 2002 in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

In all four countries: no schooling level at age 5.

At age 8, even the poorest children in Vietnam are performing better than the richest children in the other countries.

At age 15, the gap between Vietnam and the other three is bigger. Vietnam is outperforming even Peru (income much higher). Best results for India (where the most advantaged still don’t do much better than de most disadvantaged in Vietnam)

Explanations?

In Vietnam children make more rapid progress at any stage, regardless the starting point.

Explanations are difficult, but we can look at some key aspects with explanatory power.

First: the curriculum. The basic math skills to be taught are not drastically different; what is different is whether they learn it or not. How come? One explanation could be that teachers are very much aware of the level of their pupils and about the next steps to take.

Equity: test scores vary less in Vietnam. The relationship between test scores and home situation is less important in Vietnam. Childrens home backgrounds explain more of the variance in attainment in India and Peru than in Vietnam. I

Schools explain more of the variance in attainment in India and Peru compared with Vietnam, which means that Vietnam has a more equitable system. School factors and home background factors matter less in Vietnam.

Some schools are more effective than others in Vietnam, but the key finding is that those differences are not strongly linked to the home background of the pupils who attend the schools.

Within the same school, disadvantaged pupils make less progress in Peru, but not in Vietnam. In Vietnam there is even some evidence that the less advantaged, because the attention is given to bringing up the floor. This is probably linked to the socialist system, the Confucian heritage.

What is different about the Vietnamese system?

An equity oriented centralized public school system

High performance for the majority linked to equity orientation (vs elitist British system): focus on fundamental level for the majority, for everybody. Only six basic subjects, very focused (at the expense of arts, foreign language,.. = criticism).

Commitment to mastery by all pupils, emphasis on effort/work not on ability; teacher knowledge is similar between more and less advantaged area.

Absenteism is absolutely low (pupils and teachers).

Caveats:

* Vietnam: by age 15 a lot of pupils have left education; so the PISA result are an overestimation.
* Vietnamese perform poorly on problem solving.

## 10.5 Panel discussion (with the three speakers, moderated by Sven Rooms, programme director at VVOB)

Standardized tests are important for diagnostics. Tests have their value, but the problem is the way they are utilized, especially in public debate.

We can use tests for maths, for reading skills.. On the other hand, you have the 21st century skills (critical thinking, ..). The less democratic the society is, the more the students have problems with this kind of skills, whilst they perform better in standardized tests.

We must know what is the intention of PISA? OECD is an economic organization! They want to know how education can contribute to economic development. Education objectives are much larger (social aspects, ecological aspects,..). You have to accept the limitations of this test.

# Investing in the future of Quality Education

Brussels, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), 22 September 2014

The event is hosted by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), the European region of Education International (EI).

The concern of ETUCE is that, given the risks posed to education and other public services in the TTIP, ETUCE demands that public education in particular, and public services in general be excluded entirely from the negotiations. Education is simply too important to be subjected to the narrow commercial rules of trade agreements.

Director General for Education and Culture at the EC, Xavier Prats Monné, details the EC’s vision about the future of Quality Education; Marcello Limina Chair of the Education Committee of the EU Council of Minister, explains the Italian Presidency’s view for enhancing investments in education.

Marco Düerkop, TTIP Services lead negotiator at the EC, and Mirja Becker, First Secretary responsible for Trade issues at the German Permanent Representation to the EU, explained the threat to quality education posed by TTIP.

# Coordinators’ meeting

Brussels, 24 September 2014, EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency)

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

See DOC 054.

# European Business Forum on Vocational Training

Brussels, 23-24 September 2014

Jean-Pierre Malarme and Patricia Chighini, CEF, attended this event.

The 2nd European Business Forum on Vocational Training organised by the European Commission on 23-24 September in Brussels brought together Business and VET Partners under the heading « Business and VET Partners for Growth and Competitiveness ».

The European Business Forum on Vocational Training 2014 puts the spotlight on how VET providers and businesses can work in partnership to provide the skills needed to spur growth and competitiveness in Europe.

The Forum was centered on the Final Survey Report on VET-business cooperation on skills, entrepreneurship and apprenticeships submitted by ICF GHK in association with the Danish Technological Institute in September 2014.

This survey summarises the findings of 91 interviews conducted among large European enterprises, vocational education and training (VET) providers, SME associations, social partners and sector organisations on challenges and practices related to business-VET collaboration focusing on three main topics:

* meeting skill needs in sectors of key strategic importance to the EU;
* business-VET cooperation on entrepreneurial skills;
* developing high-quality apprenticeships.

The respondents represented eight sectors of key strategic importance to the EU : ICT, Health and Social Care, Energy, Cultural and Creative Sectors, Manufacturing & Engineering, Wholesale & Retail trade, Accommodation & Food service activities/Tourism, Transport.

In parallel to the roundtables, three workshops could be attended. The impulse for the debates was given was the results of the survey.

Workshop 1 : « Meeting skills needs in key sectors »

Companies are generally satisfied with the basic vocational skills of VET graduates ;

* Some companies would like to see more specialisation in VET ;
* Many companies assess that VET graduates lack transversal skills (Application of knowledge ; Attitudes and values at work ; Language and communication ; Social skills and competences ; Thinking skills and competences)

There are not always enough VET-graduates

Collaboration on skills development between companies and VET institutions

* Collaboration is the key to minimising the gap between skills provision and skills demand
* Collaboration is particularly well-functioning in dual VET systems.

Workshop 2 : « Working together on entrepreneurial skills - Developing entrepreneurial skills – in students and in the workforce »

This specific workshop intended to discuss the different ways that companies and VET schools can contribute to improving the entrepreneurial skills and mindset of the European workforce.

1. Who should be responsible for the development of entrepreneurial skills ?
2. Companies employ a wide range of strategies to develop entrepreneurial skills
* Assessing entrepreneurial skills as part of performance management ;
* Cultivating entrepreneurship skills by collecting ideas from the workforce ;
* Organising work so that autonomy is required ;
* Supporting a corporate culture which facilitates entrepreneurship skills ;
* Giving employees opportunities for developing their own projects in the workplace.
1. What VET schools can do – according to companies and their associations
2. Companies and schools cooperating to promote entrepreneurial skills

Workshop 3 : « Developing apprenticeships in companies »

1. The benefits of developing high-quality apprenticeships :
* Apprenticeships develop skills that are relevant to the labour market;
* Apprenticeships lead to quicker transition to the labour market;
* Apprenticeships promote youth employment.
1. Taking on apprentices – why and whom ?
2. Motivations and practices
3. Ensuring quality
* Enabling framework conditions
* Matching the right apprentices to the right companies
* Ensuring quality during the apprenticeship period
1. Business-VET collaboration on apprenticeships
2. Challenges and solutions

[The programme](http://ec.europa.eu/education/events/2014/20140923-business-vet_en.htm)

# Why languages matter: European and national perspectives on multilingualism

Florence, 25-26 September 2014

Manuel Miguéns, EUNEC executive committee and secretary general of the CNE, attended this event.

# Stakeholders meeting on migration and education

Brussels, 29 September 2014

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

The aim of this meeting is to gather stakeholders to discuss SIRIUS recommendations on migration and education. The document, amended based on the input by the stakeholders, will be discussed at the executive committee in October 2014.

# European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2014: Future priorities of the ET 2020 strategic framework’

Brussels, 9-10 October 2014

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, and Roos Herpelinck, EUNEC executive committee, attended this event.

Opening session

*Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth*

Reference to the ambitious agenda of the Juncker Commission. The most important challenge is the ‘29th member state’, the large group of young unemployed. Implementing the agenda will require sustainable funding for education. Reference to achievements of her work as a Commissioner, focusing on the Erasmus+ programme, on the policy paper ‘Rethinking education’ that invited to think out of the box, and on the ‘Opening up education’ initiative. Europe 2020 and the European Semester also address reform needs in education and training; the role of education and training in the strategy has been strengthened.

This year the Commission will take stock of what ET 2020 delivered; this stakeholders forum is a key building block, the Commission is in listening mode.

*Silvia Costa, Chair of the Culture and Education Committee, European Parliament*

This Forum is an important step in defining the future priorities of ET 2020. The European Parliament will be committed to strengthen the role of education and training in Europe 2020.

Future priorities mentioned are languages, accessibility of education, early school leaving, digital skills. Investments in education and training will be necessary, as education and culture are key elements for sustainable development.

The Parliament insists on the need for a holistic approach of education by the future Commissioner.

Challenges and priorities

*Towards a new EU agenda for Education, Training and Youth*

Xavier Prats Monne, DG for Education and Culture, European Commission

This is a personal statement, the priorities are to be defined by the new Commissioner.

The big difference between the EU and the rest of the world, is that, in Europe, there is a lack of confidence in our future, a lack of confidence in our education. If Europe wants to gain confidence in its own future, it has to gain confidence in its own education, and trust in its teachers.

Five clear issues will be priorities:

* Early School Leaving (headline target);
* Tertiary Education attainment (headline target);
* Innovation in education (use of new technologies to improve educational outcomes; U-multirank, importance of interdisciplinarity that is lacking now; not only focus on equity, not only focus on excellence, also focus on the impact of schools and universities in society);
* Funding and efficiency of spending in education;
* Youth (bring together youth and education stakeholders; formal, non formal and informal learning).

The governance of these priorities will be the task of ET 2020. The philosophy of ET 2020 is to contribute to the core business of Europe 2020, on what really matters at EU-level, without ignoring the needs of stakeholders.

Conclusion: Let’s have the courage of embracing change and turning it into an opportunity.

*Results from the stakeholder survey*

Presentation of the results of the survey and of the recent Youth Work Study

The priorities that were mentioned most often by the respondents (114 responses):

* Importance of lifelong learning and mobility
* Employability and transition between education and the labour market
* Creativity, innovation and the use of ICT in education
* Equal access to education and training opportunities for all
* Key competences, i.e. social and civic competences, entrepreneurship, basic and numeracy skills
* Entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training
* Quality and efficiency of education and training in general, and of VET in particular
* Improvement of teachers’ training and appreciation of the teaching profession
* Adult education and participation

*Challenges and priorities for a new agenda – a view from a panel of stakeholders.*

In the panel: Marcello Limina, Chair of the Education Committee, EU Council of Ministers, Italian Presidency; David Lopez, president EUCIS-LLL; Martin Romer, Director ETUCE; Maxime Cerutti, Director of Social Affairs, Business Europe; Allan Päll, Secretary General, European Youth Forum; Caroline Jenner, CEO JA-YE Europe.

Some key ideas:

* Importance of synergy between different sectors: working together with youth will be a key priority for education and training
* Importance of effective investing
* Focus on few priorities in order to be effective
* Priority of YA-YE: not enough access to good entrepreneurship education; need to invest in teacher training and need for cooperation between policy levels
* Priority of the Italian Presidency: the economic case for education
* EUCIS-LLL agrees with the need for a holistic approach, and states that the link between education and social inclusion is not sufficiently addressed; insists on the need for more stakeholder involvement and participation in EU policy making
* ETUCE states that ET 2020 has had a positive impact, but there are huge challenges ahead: poverty, unemployment, low skilled adults, .. We need to concentrate on investments in teachers, on ICT, focus more on how to get a holistic view on education (our discussions now are often too fragmented). We need to adapt our discussions to the reality on the ground. Need to convince government that reforms will not be sustainable in education, if there is no ownership by the stakeholders. Convince governments to invest in education and to build strong social dialogue.
* Business Europe: increase effectiveness of investments in education, focus on the skills mismatch, importance of the global dimension of education, the global race for talent.
* European Youth Forum: it is crucial to be aware of the fact that formal education and training do not have the monopoly for learning
* Main topics discussed are related to entrepreneurship education
* A lot of attention for dual learning and apprenticeships

Questions from the audience deal with

* The role of digital technologies in education and training (also non formal)
* Is it all about entrepreneurship and economy? What about the role of education for building attitudes, for citizenship, ..
* Too little attention for early childhood education and care: investing here is crucial. Spread the money better on only few priorities.
* Huge ambitions by the EU for education and training, whilst in the countryspecific recommendations member states are urged to cut budgets.
* What about the NEET’s (not in employment, education, training)? Is this group not a priority for education? Or does it rather belong to the field of social inclusion policy?
* Linkages between education and youth work

Workshops

1. Promoting excellence and innovation
2. Tackling the low-skills gap
3. Supporting a new generation of educators
4. Recognizing and valuing skills and competences
5. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

EUNEC participated at the workshop on promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. The workshop focused on the main findings from the only survey related to this topic. Impact of ET2020 on this objective is somewhat limited. Many respondents feel that the social dimension of ET2020 has been neglected in favour of other priorities.

Questions for the participants: How can we best reduce inequalities in education systems and tackle disparities in learning outcomes, especially for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs? How can formal education draw greater benefit from experiences gained in youth work towards more inclusive learning? How can education systems adapt to an increasingly diverse learning environment?

On the second day of the Forum, 30 proposals are presented as a result of the workshops, six proposals for each of the five workshop domains.

1. Recognition for excellence & innovation in teaching; systemic mobility non-formal/formal ET; collaboration education and world of work; innovation part of teachers’ training; national best practice EU funded & shared; diverse pathways to tertiary education.
2. Promote community-based learning; prioritise initiatives for lifelong learning; reinforce trans-sectoral cooperation; focus on family (early tracking); holistic cross-sectoral approach.
3. Experiences outside educational organisation; help educators network and collaborate; excellent educators/learners’ diversity; create future schools today; enhance educators to become professional; enable educators to let learners shine.
4. Take stock of validation and recognition tools; common understanding competences: implementation; high-quality label to encourage recognition; validation of non-formal and informal learning in all relevant EU policies; validation of soft/transversal skills; information & guidance to support validation.
5. Flagship EU initiative to address inequality; treat children and young people as competent; educational workforce: equity, diversity and inclusion; family support, parents, early childhood; systematic strategy management of diversity; funding to promote participatory school

The representatives of DG EAC comments on the proposals and insist on the fact that the new structure of the European Commission is not a problem but an opportunity. VET will absolutely not be detached from general education. VET will be at the core of education policies in Europe. Education will be brought into employment.

In the final session, synergies and new approaches coming out of the workshops, are presented.

Questions from stakeholders in the final questions and answers session deal with:

* The importance of adult education. If adult education moves to DG Employment, please don’t forget adult education that is not for employment
* Dealing with failure is crucial, the competence of risk taking is important for entrepreneurship
* If talking about cross-sectoral policy, don’t forget health (Paul Downes)
* The youth perspective is not sufficiently present in this Education, Training and Youth Forum