



Education and Culture DG

Fourth European Stakeholders' Forum. Report.

Brussels, 26-27 September 2011

Simone Barthel, EUNEC president, and Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat attended this event.

This forum, co-organized by DG EAC and EUCIS-LLL allowed European stakeholders (70 participants) to give their views on progress made during the first cycle of the strategic framework ET 2020 (2009-2011) and to make concrete proposals on the priority areas of the second cycle (21012-2014).

Gina Ebner, president of EUCIS-LLL, welcomed the participants.

On the first day **Pierre Mairesse**, Director of Directorate A, DG EAC outlined progress made during the first cycle, clarifying the linkages between ET 2020 and the overall Europe 2020 strategy.

EUROPE 2020

Before Europe 2020 there was the Lisbon Strategy. Not only the names have changed, we are witnessing a complete change in governance. Never before education has been judged that important for the European societies. Never before education objectives were taken up in the overall strategy, approved by the heads of State. Two out of the six headline targets of Europe 2020 are linked directly to Education and Training (the early school leavers and tertiary attainment); two flagship initiatives link directly to education and training ('Youth on the move' and 'New skills for new jobs').

For the first time a new governance is introduced: the European semester.

- In January the European Commission presents the Annual Growth Survey
- In March, the European Council identifies the general orientation
- In April-May, Member Countries submit their National Reform Programmes (NRP)
- On the basis of these NRP, and on deeper analysis, the Commission proposes country specific recommendations (CRP) and gives assessment and guidance to the Member States
- The European Council endorses in June and adopts in July

This 'European semester' only takes six months; the six following months Member States can adjust budgets, the Commission can do more detailed analysis (asses the policy responses Member States give to the CSR and the progress made in implementing the NRP) in order to prepare the next semester, starting in January of the following year.

The European Commission made CSR to 16 Member States, related to five domains in Education and Training (Lifelong Learning, Vet, Skills; Early School Leaving; Tertiary Education; pre-school; school education).

ET 2020

2011 is the third year of ET 2020, the end of the first cycle. The European Commission is preparing three documents:

- The Draft Joint Report, that takes stock of the implementation of ET 2020 and sets out priority areas for the second cycle, in line with the Europe 2020 priorities (input from this forum will be taken into account).

In this DJR six thematic chapters are addressed:

- Education budgets
- Transversal Lifelong Learning Policies: the concept of LLL is accepted by all, but only 3-4 countries have a real LLL strategy
- Early School Leaving: in 2010 14.1 % ESL (18-24 years); reaching the 10% benchmark by 2020 will be difficult
- Tertiary Education attainment: in 2010 33%; reaching 40% will be difficult (estimation: 38%)
- Mobility
- Skills and the labour market

The DJR will be ready by February 2012

- A staff working document setting out a cross-country assessment of the progress achieved in key thematic areas since the last joint report
- A staff working document setting out the situation country by country

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

Mr Mairesse suggests the following priority areas for the second cycle, linked to the four strategic objectives that will remain unchanged:

1. Lifelong learning

Implementing the existing tools (EQF; ECTS, ..) with a sense of convergence

2. Quality and efficiency

Implementing everything that is already in the pipeline: literacy, modernization of higher education, VET

3. Equity and efficiency

The most important priority!

4. Creativity

Education should allow people to develop creativity.

Reacting to a statement of Solidar, saying that education should not only focus on labour market promotion but also on empowerment of people, Pierre Mairesse states that a dual approach is necessary, but now, at this moment of crisis, giving access to the labour market is a clear priority, in the European Commission and in the Member States.

In four **workshops** (linked to the four strategic priorities of ET 2020) participants were invited to take stock of the progress made, to consider the impact on the national/regional systems, to identify gaps and challenges, to propose priority areas for the second cycle. In the plenary session rapporteurs of the four groups presented the main conclusions. It is important to see that there is a consensus that lifelong learning should be more than preparing new workers. Employability is one thing, but cannot be the final end of education. Education must not forget to focus on soft skills, life skills, social skills, personal skills, transversal competences.

On the second day, after discussions in small working groups and a summary by Joke Van Der Leeuw-Roord, vice-president of EUCIS-LLL, **Michael Teutsch**, Head of Unit A.1, DG EAC, gave feedback on the key messages. He insists on the fact that, given the crisis, the main message for education and training is to show how cooperation in Education and Training can really help Member States to get back on track. As far as the problem of low achievers is concerned, Mr Teutsch sees no tension between preparing these young people for employment, or for citizenship or personal development. He also insists on the fact that benchmarks are helpful monitoring and communication tools, but are only a starting point: policy makers will have to look what is behind the figures. Finally Mr Teutsch thanks the stakeholders for the messages at European level, but asks them to share this agenda also on the national/regional level, where educational decisions are taken.

Dorota **Lewandowska** presented the work and priorities of the Polish Presidency, mainly in the field of mobility, of modernization of higher education and of adult education.