Main policy lines of international organisations, relevant for education councils State of affairs June – October 2011

I. European Union

1. Economic and financial governance and the impact on education and training

1.1 The European semester

The meeting of the European Council of 23-24 June marks the conclusion of the first ever European Semester, allowing for a collective assessment of the measures planned by the Member States. The European Council considers that this European Semester can become an effective governance method: the simultaneous presentation of stability and convergence programmes and national reform programmes enables the European Union to assess together the national growth and fiscal strategies.

More information on the timetable of the European Semester
http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/articles/euro/documents/com_367_european_semester _en.pdf

On the basis of the assessment of the European Commission, the European Council discussed the national reform programmes presented by the Member States. They offer a good starting point for the support of recovery in Europe, and for the guidance of more

ambitious reforms at national level. The Council adopted the country specific recommendations.

These recommendations mean a EU input in national policy. The Member States remain responsible for the implementation of their economic governance and their national finances, but have agreed on a set of common economic priorities at EU level.

The country specific recommendations:
http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/communication_en.pdf

The conclusions of the European Council of 23-24 June 2011:
http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st00/st00023.en11.pdf

1.2   The budget of the European Union

At the end of June 2011 the European Commission presented its Communication on 'A budget for Europe 2020'.

The Commission proposes to allocate €15.2 billion in the area of education and training and €1.6 billion in the area of culture for the 2014-2020 period.

This funding will be complemented by important support for education and training in the Structural Funds. For example, in the period 2007-2013 around €72.5 billion was spent on education and training across Europe's regions and similar levels of spending can be expected in the future.

The Europe 2020 headline targets on increasing tertiary education and reducing early-school leaving will not be reached without a stronger investment in human capital. The biggest financial contribution from the EU budget in investing in people comes from the European Social Fund. Beyond its activities, there is scope to increase EU support for all levels of formal education and training (school, higher, vocational, adult) as well as informal and non-formal education and training activities. One of the main successes of the current Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Erasmus Mundus and Youth programmes is the growth of transnational learning mobility. In order to raise skills and to help tackle the high levels of youth unemployment in many Member States the actions currently supported by the Leonardo programme will be boosted in the next period.

However, the current architecture of the programmes and instruments is fragmented. They have been characterized by a proliferation of small-scale projects and some of them lack the critical mass to have a long lasting impact. There are also some overlaps between actions – this has led to increased management costs and has confused potential applicants. Therefore, the Commission proposes to rationalize and simplify the current structure by proposing a single, integrated programme on education, training and youth. The focus will be on developing the skills and mobility of human capital.

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/biblio/documents/fin_fwk1420/MFF_COM-2011-500_Part_I_en.pdf

2. Institutional context

2.1 The Polish Presidency of the EU

2.1.1 The programme of the Polish Presidency

In the field of education, the Presidency's priorities are education for mobility and the modernisation of universities. The context for the implementation of the above priorities includes the following EU strategic documents:
- Europe 2020 Strategy and its flagship initiatives 'Youth on the Move' and 'Agenda for New Skills and New Jobs'
- The strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training ET 2020
- The European Commission Communication on the modernization of universities (see further in this document)

The debate on priority areas for the second cycle of European cooperation in the field of education and training for the years 2012-2014 is also an important part of the Presidency's agenda.

The Presidency aims to advance work on developing competencies among young people and adults in the context of lifelong learning, including language competencies, thereby helping to make studying or working abroad more widespread.

http://pl2011.eu/sites/default/files/users/shared/o_prezydencja/programme_of_the_polish_presidency_of_the_council_of_the_eu.pdf

2.1.2 The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (28-29 November 2011)

The following items are on the provisional agenda of the November EYCS Council:
- Promoting language competencies to enhance mobility (Adoption of Council Conclusions)
- Modernisation of universities (Adoption of Council Conclusions)
- An agenda on adult learning, including action plan (Adoption of Council Resolutions)
- (Poss.) Learning mobility benchmark (Adoption of Council Conclusions)
- Priorities for the second cycle of European cooperation under the strategic framework Education and Training 2020 (policy debate)
- Report on events during the Polish Presidency
- Work Programme of the (incoming) Danish Presidency

http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st12/st12324.en11.pdf (provisional agenda's of all Council meetings, page 84)

2.2 The trio Presidency Poland – Denmark – Cyprus

The 18 months programme of the Council was presented at the European Council of June 2011.

General Affairs

The Headline Targets which have been set by the European Council, will guide the efforts of the Member States in achieving their individual national targets. National Reform Programmes will be submitted to peer review and multilateral surveillance. Each January, the Commission will present a Annual Growth Survey which will be the main input for discussions at the Spring meetings of the European Council. These Annual Growth Surveys will include both a review of progress and a forward-looking part proposing strategic policy guidance for Member States. The three Presidencies consider the successful implementation of this strategy as a core task in the coming years. They will accordingly work closely together to ensure the follow-up to the second Annual Growth Survey in the relevant Council formations and a smooth implementation of the European Semester during the first half of 2012.

The present Multiannual Financial Framework will expire in 2013. Negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework must be concluded in good time in order to enable the future programming of the EU activities.

Education and Training

A continuing task for the Presidencies will be to monitor education's contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy and its associated flagship initiatives, particularly in the light of the two targets set in this field by the European Council, namely reducing the earl-school leaving rates to less than 10% and increasing the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%. The first progress report under the new strategic framework will be considered for adoption in early 2012, with attention for the priorities of the first work cycle and the main priorities for the second work cycle (2012-204).

The following themes are in the programme:

- Lifelong learning and mobility (successor to the current LLL Programme which will expire at the end of 2013; attention for commission proposals on the creation of a European benchmark on mobility and employability (see further) as well as languages; continued focus on VET, cf. the Bruges Communiqué.
- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for Lifelong Learning (evaluation of the implementation phase is scheduled during 2012 in preparation for the drafting of a report to the European Parliament and the Council by spring 2013)
- Non Formal and Informal Learning (work on a Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation)
- Higher Education (follow-up of the Communication of the Commission on the modernisation of higher education (see further); ministerial conference in April 2012 in the broader context of the Bologna Process, which will consider the establishment of a new work plan and the setting of new priorities for 2012-2015.
- Schools (promotion of education for democratic citizenship, counterbalancing some of the more skills- and employment-related issues and taking as starting point one of the eight key competences defined in the 2006 Recommendation 'social and civic competences'.
- Entrepreneurship (at all levels of education, in line with the flagship initiative under Europe 2020 'An agenda for new skills and jobs')

http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st11/st11447.en11.pdf

3. Education and training 2020

3.1 New benchmarks for employability and for mobility
Commission Staff Working Paper, 24 May 2011

The European Commission presents its plans for two new benchmarks. The paper stresses that the Council Conclusions of May 2009 clearly set out the role that benchmarks should play as 'reference levels of average European performance'. They should not be considered as concrete targets for individual countries to reach by 2020. Rather Member States are invited, on the basis of national priorities and whilst taking account of changing economic circumstances, how and to what extent they can contribute to the collective achievement of the European benchmarks through national actions.

'Employability' has been defined as the combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during their career.
Education and training's support for employability can be seen in three distinct phases:
- Preparation for employment
- Transition from education to employment
- Stay in employment and progress in career.
The first and third phase are already monitored by existing benchmarks. The phase related to the transition from education to work is not yet addressed; it is therefore the phase upon which the work on a possible benchmark on education for employability has been most heavily focused. A relevant European benchmark could focus on the success of young people's transition from education to employment, as measured by their employment rate during their early years in the labour market. Ideally, it should also take into account the relationship between educational attainment level and the quality of the first job; however this will only be possible if there is a better matching of ISCED classifications for educational qualifications with the ISCO job classification.

Possible approach to framing a benchmark on education and training for employability

By 2020 there should be an increase by at least 5 percentage points in the employment rate of graduates (20-34 years old) having left education, measured as an average of employment rates 1, 2 and 3 years after graduation.

For 'mobility' the paper distinguishes higher education, VET and general education.

Possible approach to framing a benchmark on Learning Mobility for tertiary students

Confirming the target established within the Bologna Process in 2009, a benchmark could envisage that by 2020, at least 20% of EU graduates from higher education should have had a study or training period abroad.

Possible approach to framing a benchmark on Learning Mobility in VET

> Taking into account the commitment of the Education Council that opportunities for mobility in Vet should increase significantly, a benchmark could envisage that by 2020, at least 10% of EU graduates from initial VET should have had a study or training period abroad.

Possible approach to framing a benchmark on the mobility of the youth population in general

> A future benchmark, to be set following further exploration of the data, could envisage that by 2020 the share of young people aged 15-34 with learning mobility experience could double to reach 25 to 30%

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/sec670_en.pdf

3.2   An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020
Communication from the Commission, 5 April 2011
Council Conclusions, 19 May 2011

During the Hungarian Presidency there has been a lot of attention for the societal position of the Roma. Within the Europe 2020 Strategy, a global strategy has been developed. This policy has also been linked to the policy lines on early school leaving and on early childhood education and care (see point 3.3.1 and 3.3.2).

EU Roma integration goals should cover, in proportion to the size of the Roma population, four crucial areas: access to education, employment, healthcare and housing.
In the area of education, Member States should ensure that all Roma children have access to quality education and are not subject to discrimination or segregation, regardless of whether they are sedentary or not. Member States should, as a minimum, ensure primary school completion. They should also widen access to quality ECEC and reduce the number of ESL from secondary education (see Europe 2020 Strategy). Roma youngsters should be strongly encouraged to participate also in secondary and tertiary education. In this context, the potential use of innovative approaches such as ICT based access to learning and skill acquisition should be actively explored.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf
(Communication from the Commission)
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122100.pdf
(Council Conclusions)

3.3   Specific policy lines within Education and Training

3.3.1   Early School Leaving
Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving, 28 June 2011

The Council recommends that Member States make use of the framework set out in the annex, according to national circumstances, in order to identify the main factors leading to ESL, to ensure that comprehensive strategies on ESL are in place by the end of 2012, and that they are implemented in line with national priorities and the Europe 2020 objectives. Member States have to ensure that those strategies include appropriate measures for groups at increased risk of ESL in the Member State.

In the annexed 'framework for comprehensive policies to reduce ESL', strategies on ESL should comprise prevention, intervention and compensation elements.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlywp_en.pdf (the Commission Staff Working Paper)

http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlyrec_en.pdf (the Council Recommendation)

3.3.2   Early Childhood Education and Care
Council Conclusions, Council of Education Ministers, May 2011

The Council recognises that high quality early childhood education and care provides a wide range of short- and long-term benefits for both individuals and society at large. High quality ECEC is beneficial for all children, but particularly for those with a socioeconomically disadvantaged, migrant or Roma background, or with special educational needs, including disabilities.
Further efforts are needed in order to reach the objective of a 95% rate of participation by 2020 agreed under the "ET2020" strategic framework10, and in particular to ensure greater access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
A systemic and more integrated approach to ECEC services at local, regional and national level involving all the relevant stakeholders - including families - is required, together with close cross-sectoral collaboration between different policy sectors, such as education, culture, social affairs, employment, health and justice.
Increasing the proportion of men in ECEC is important in order to change attitudes and show that not only women can provide education and care.
Measures to meet the dual challenge of providing generalized equitable access to early childhood education and care, while raising the quality of provision, could include the following:
- Providing equitable access to high-quality, inclusive ECEC
- Designing efficient funding models
- Promoting cross-sectoral and integrated approaches to care and education services
- Supporting the professionalisation of ECEC staff
- Promoting developmentally appropriate programmes and curricula which fosters the acquisition of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, whilst recognizing the importance play, which is also crucial to learning in the early years.
- Supporting parents
- Promoting quality assurance
- Promoting European research and data collection on ECEC

http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st09/st09424.en11.pdf

3.3.3   Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education system

Communication from the Commission, 20 September 2011

Higher education institutions are crucial partners in delivering the EU strategy to drive forward and maintain growth. Yet, the potential of European higher education institutions to fulfil their role in society and contribute to Europe's prosperity remains underexploited. While 35% of all jobs in the EU will require high-level qualifications by 2020, only 26 % of the workforce currently has a higher education qualification.

The main responsibility for delivering reforms in higher education rests within Member States and education institutions themselves. However, the challenges and policy responses transcend national borders.

In order to maximise the contribution of Europe's higher education systems to smart, inclusive and sustainable growth, reforms are needed in the following key areas:
- To increase the quantity of higher education graduates at all levels
- To enhance the quality and relevance of human capital development in higher education
- To create effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence
- To strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and business
- Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border co-operation

Section 2 of the Communication identifies key policy issues for all five areas. Section 3 presents specific action that the EU will take, bringing its added value to support the modernisation efforts of public authorities and institutions (for instance the launch of the U-Multirank, a new performance based ranking and information tool for profiling higher education institutions)

The Communication of the European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/com0911_en.pdf

The Commission Staff Working Paper
http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/wo0911_en.pdf

Eurydice study: 'Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Funding and the Social Dimension'
This report looks at national policies on access to higher education, funding and student support. The study focuses on three key topics:
- Policies to widen participation in higher education
- Funding trends
- The impact of student fee and support sytems.

It concludes that there is an urgent need to address the social dimension of higher education more forcefully and coherently, particularly in view of the economic downturn across Europe.
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies.en.php

4. Developments in other policy domains

4.1 Promoting the learning mobility of young people
Council Recommendation, Council of the EU, May 2011

This Council Recommendation aims to enhance the learning mobility of young people in all learning and training context, i.e. at school, in VET (school-based or apprenticeships), in short-cycle programmes and within bachelor, master and doctoral degrees, as well as in youth exchanges, voluntary activities or internships, inside or outside the EU. Learning includes formal, informal and non-formal learning.
The Council makes recommendations to the Member States in the following fields:
- Information and guidance on opportunities for learning mobility
- Motivation to participate in transnational learning mobility activities
- Preparation of opportunities for learning mobility, particularly with regard to foreign language skills and intercultural awareness
- Administrative and institutional issues relating to the learning period abroad
- Portability of grants and loans
- Quality of learning mobility
- Recognition of learning outcomes
- Disadvantaged learners
- Partnerships and funding
- Role of multipliers
- Monitoring process

The European Commission should study the feasibility of developing a methodological framework – referred to in the Commission Communication on Youth on the Move as a 'Mobility Scoreboard' - for monitoring progress in promoting and removing obstacles to, learning mobility.
(Italy made a reservation here, on explicitly naming a possible future European instrument prior to its creation).
http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st09/st09036.en11.pdf

5. Studies

5.1 Teaching Reading in Europe: Contexts, Policies and Practices
Eurydice, July 2011

This study offers a comprehensive picture of reading literacy and identifies some of the key factors impacting on the acquisition of reading skills for 3-15 year olds. It addresses four key topics:

- teaching approaches,
- tackling reading difficulties,
- teacher education and
- the promotion of reading outside school.

This Eurydice study shows what countries are doing to improve reading literacy – and where they are falling short. The study, which covers 31 countries reveals that while most have made progress in developing literacy policies, they often lack focus on the groups most at

risk, such as boys, children from disadvantaged households and migrant children. EU Education Ministers have set a target to reduce the share of poor readers from 20 % to less than 15 % by 2020. Only Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, Estonia, Poland and Finland have already achieved this target.

The Eurydice report is an important input to the work of the [High Level Group of experts in the field of literacy](#), set up by Commissioner Vassiliou in January 2011. The group is examining how to support literacy at all ages and which policy initiatives and programmes have been successful. The group will make policy proposals by mid-2012.

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/130EN.pdf

5.2   Key data on learning and innovation through ICT at school in Europe
Eurydice, June 2011

This report focuses on the evolution of ICT use in education and the changes it has brought about in national policies and practices concerning teaching methods, contents and evaluation processes. It examines the EU key competences as well as the promotion of transversal skills and the role of ICT in this process. It also sheds light on the strategies used in countries to train and support teachers in the use of ICT.
The 2011 edition provides a set of indicators and insights which can be used to strengthen the impact of ICT use to promote innovation in educational processes and to foster the creative development of students and their digital competences. The latter is one of the priority areas of the EU's Education and Training 2020 strategy.
It appears that efficiency has less to do with the technology itself than with the way it is used in order to support learning.
Whilst 60% of the youngsters in Europe use ICT daily for leisure, only less than 15% use ICT for schoolwork at home.

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/129EN.pdf

5.3   Lifelong learning

5.3.1   Lifelong guidance across Europe: reviewing policy progress and future prospects

This Cedefop report reviews progress made across Europe in 2007-10 in developing guidance policy coordination, quality assurance mechanisms, access to services and career management skills.

The review shows that the EU policy framework and changing economic conditions have encouraged closer collaboration between policy makers, guidance professionals and researchers. Together they are locating assets and resources, identifying and engaging stakeholders, defining and completing joint goals and objectives, and balancing a diverse range of interests. These partnerships help everyone involved – education and employment sectors, various policy levels, and practitioners - to work more efficiently.   The challenge is now to agree on what needs to be done to create a truly lifelong guidance system across all sectors, life situations and countries. Such services will support not just lifelong learning, but social inclusion and active citizenship for all.

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6111_en.pdf

5.3.2   Innovative ways for motivating adults for learning
Create-Motivate-Learn Partnership, 2011

This guidebook has been developed as part of the CreMoLe project with the aim of disseminating the innovative strategies, techniques or learning activities developed and tested within the partnership. It offers practical ideas to better motivate adults for learning. The innovative strategies, techniques or learning activities shared in the guidebook were tested on diverse target groups, people of diverse socio-economic background, including disadvantaged groups, as they were intended to be of most use to those educators who work with poorly motivated adult learners.
The examples introduced in this guidebook have resulted from testing the teaching-learning methods, techniques and activities in trainings. Hence, there is a large variety of learning contexts, types of adult learners or content of training programmes that were used in testing. Readers are encouraged to be creative and to adapt the approaches to a certain learning context, specific group of adult learners and content.

http://www.cremole.eu/guidebook.pdf

5.4   Equity

5.4.1   The social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy
A report of the Social Protection Committee (March 2011)

Main messages from the report:
- One in five people in the EU is at risk of poverty or social exclusion; 40 million people are in a condition of severe deprivation.
- Efforts to restore sound public finances and reform social protection systems should aim at ensuring their sustainability and adequacy.
- Active inclusion strategies combining income support, access to the labour market and health and social services are needed.
- Prioritise early childhood intervention in order to break the intergenerational tranmission of poverty.
- Policies require a combination of universal and targeted approaches.
- Ensure future pension adequacy and long-term fincancial sustainability of pensions systems.
- Increasing effectiveness, sustainability and responsiveness of health care and long-ter care
- Integrated and coherent approach between all relevant policy areas.
- Assess social impacts of major policy and spending decisions.

http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/7pc/doc/1311859294_keba11001enc_002.pdf

5.4.2   Fighting education inequalities – a comparative analysis

The project EuroPEP conducted a comparative analysis of policy measures against inequality in education in eight European countries. These policies are usually based on the

allocation of additional resources to students from disadvantaged groups, which are consistently those most at risk of educational failure. The main finding of the study is that in spite of the seriousness of this Europe-wide problem, policies remain fragmented and locked in national contexts.

The study highlights the significant changes that have affected school policies from their start until today, and offers a critical assessment of both their implementation and their results when it comes to addressing problems of equality and equity in education.

The study covers 8 countries: England, Belgium, France, Greece, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Sweden. It is based on compulsory schooling, but also on pre-school institutions where these are not directly concerned by the compulsory period of schooling.

Priority education policies are used in the fight against educational inequalities. They have various names according to national contexts and periods of time (compensation policies, priority education zones, positive discrimination, etc.), but what is common to them is that they are based on a deviation from the principle of formal equality in education.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/sharing-experience/sharing2256_en.htm

5.5 VET

5.5.1 Vocational Education and Training project

Vocational Education and Training is a three-year project of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, with activities beginning in 2010 and running until the end of 2012. The aim of the project is to identify and investigate the relevant key aspects of vocational education and training programmes for students with SEN. Vocational Education and Training is broad concept, usually defined at European level as preparing learners for jobs with a basis in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and entirely related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation.

The Agency member countries involved in the VET project are: Austria, Belgium (covering both the Flemish and French speaking communities), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Grece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland and Wales). In addition, representatives from the European Commission (DG Education and Culture), CEDEFOP, ILO and OECD are involved in the project's activities.

http://www.european-agency.org/news/vocational-education-and-training-vet-project

5.5.2 Attitudes towards VET
Eurobarometer report, September 2011

This report is the result of a survey requested by DG EAC and conducted by DG Communication.
It is encouraging to observe that there is generally no kind of stigma attached to vocational training as an alternative to academic studies, with 71% of all European

respondents saying that VET has a positive image in their country. However, the significant difference between the image of VET in different Member States – only 50% of people in both the Netherlands and Slovenia, for example, say that VET is viewed positively – highlights the fact that making VET a universally attractive option is to be realized.
But in some cases, there is a lack of confidence in VET in certain geographies. In other cases, there is a lack of confidence in VET in certain socio-demographic groups.

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_369_en.pdf