Main Policy Lines in Education and Training

(April 2015 – September 2015)

1. **European Union**
2. **Institutional context**

## Europe 2020 and the European Semester

### European Semester 2015 Country Specific Recommendations

The Commission has made a number of changes to the running of the 2015 European Semester. These were designed to focus on top priority areas for action in each Member State, to promote greater implementation of the recommendations and to increase ownership at national level and with social partners and stakeholders. Changes include:

* Focusing the priorities in the Annual Growth Survey
* Publishing the Commission’s country-specific and euro area analysis three months earlier than in previous years to enable discussion in advance of the conclusions to be drawn from the ananlysis
* More intensive outreach at political level and deeper discussion between Members of the Commission, national authorities and social partners on implementation of past recommendations and potential areas for future recommendations.

These are the key objectives of the 2015 recommendations:

* Removing barriers to financing and supporting investment
* Improving the business environment and productivity
* Adapting public finances to make them more supportive to growth
* Improving employment policy and social protection

Education and training is explicitly mentioned in the fourth objective. Efficient and effective vocational education and training programmes, including targeted adult learning, play a key role in improving employability.

<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm>

## Presidencies of the EU

### The Luxembourg Presidency of the EU

July – December 2015

The programme of the Luxembourg Presidency is placed in the context of the implementation of the [**Strategic Agenda for the Union in Times of Change**](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-79-2014-INIT/en/pdf) adopted by the European Council of 26 and 27 June 2014 and which outlines the key priorities for the European Union over the next five years. The programme takes also account of the [**policy orientations of the President of the Commission**](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/docs/pg_en.pdf), the [**annual work programme of the Commission**](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp_2015_en.pdf) and the [**work of the 'Trio'**](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2011258%202014%20INIT) made up of Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg.

The priorities of the Luxembourg Presidency for the second semester of 2015 are based on seven pillars:

* Stimulating investment to boost growth and employment
* Deepening the European Union's social dimension. A primary objective in the field of **education** will be to take better account of students' (linguistic) diversity. The Luxembourg Presidency will focus in particular on the provision of schooling and high-quality childcare during early childhood.
* Managing migration, combining freedom, justice and security
* Revitalising the single market by focusing on its digital dimension
* Placing European competitiveness in a global and transparent framework
* Promoting sustainable development
* Strengthening the European Union's presence on the global stage

<http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/index.html>

1. **Education and training**

## Education, Youth, Culture and Sport council

18-19 May 2015

Ministers expressed their views on the achievements of European cooperation in education and training and in which direction it should develop. The debate took place in the context of the mid-term stocktaking and the 2015 Joint Report (see point 2.4).

The main outcomes of the debate:

* ET2020 strategic objectives remain relevant but the priority areas should be streamlined, focusing on a few headline priorities with clear European added value;
* ET2020 work cycle should be extended from three to five years, enabling better synchronisation between ET2020 and the broader Europe 2020 strategy;
* Cooperation and closer synergy between the education and training sector and the employment policy sector should be pursued and strengthened, acknowledging the role of quality education in promoting employability and competitiveness;
* VET must be developed in parallel with formal education;
* Education cannot only be limited to finding a job; it should also promote personal development, critical thinking and active citizenship, focusing on European common values. Minister stressed the importance of ensuring a concrete follow-up to the declaration adopted at the informal meeting in Paris in March 2015 on education for citizenship and ways of countering radicalization.

The Council adopted conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence (see point 2.2).

## Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence.

18 May 2015

Education and training systems, together with non-formal and informal learning, have a fundamental role to play in developing creative and innovative capacities from an early age as key factors not only in enhancing future economic competitiveness and employability, but equally importantly in promoting personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion and active citizenship.

Teachers and ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) professionals have a fundamental role to play in stimulating children’s curiosity, imagination and willingness to experiment. Digital tools, while they cannot be used to replace essential classroom activities, experiences and materials, can contribute to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning processes, as well as to increasing pupils’ motivation, understanding and learning outcomes.

All of this has important implications in terms of modernising pedagogical approaches, teaching resources and the learning environment, as well as in terms of teachers’ and ECEC professionals’ initial training and continuous professional development.

It is also noted that, in a world where many children tend to be quite comfortable with digital media, education and training also have an important role to play in promoting the safe and responsible use of digital tools and in developing media literacy.

## Riga conclusions

22 June 2015

European ministers responsible for vocational education and training (VET) endorsed the Riga Conclusions, a new set of priorities to improve VET for the period 2015-2020, as a result of the review of short-time deliverable defined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué, as part of the overall Copenhagen process launched in 2002.

The Riga conclusions present the role of VET in the context of the growth and jobs agenda and ET 2020. Compared to the deliverables for 2011-2014 they are streamlined and reduced in number; at the same time the continuity with previous deliverables is maintained.

The medium-term deliverables:

With a view to developing high quality and labour market relevant vocational skills and qualifications, based on the learning outcomes approach:

* Promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurships
* Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET in line with EQAVET and, as part of quality assurance systems, establish continuous information and feedback loops in I-VET and C-VET systems based on learning outcomes

For people’s informed choice of pathways and long-term employability and adaptability to evolving skills needs

* Enhance access To VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning
* Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire or develop those skills through I-VET and C-VET.

In support of successful implementation of reforms and to raise the overall quality and efficiency of VET:

* Introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work based settings.

The Riga conclusions present three annexes:

* Annex 1 The context for defining the medium-term deliverables
* Annex 2 EU-level support to the implementation of the medium-term deliverables
* Annex 3 Examples of policy options linked to the new medium-term deliverables 2015-2020

## Draft 2015 Joint Report on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)

Draft joint report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020). New priorities for European cooperation in education and training.

29 August 2015, to be adopted by the Council by the end of the year.

In 2014, the Commission and Member States started a mid-term stocktaking exercise to assess progress made since 2012 and to help prepare the next priorities for cooperation in education and training at European level.

**Context**

* A strong economic case for education and training as a growth friendly sector to play a critical role under the Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change
* Education and training have an important role in fostering inclusion and equality, cultivating mutual respect and embedding fundamental values in an open and democratic society (outbursts of extremism)
* Education and training make a substantial effort to several Eu strategies, including
* Europe 2020 Strategy
* Digital Single Market initiative
* European Agenda on Security
* Investment Plan for Europe

The main policy conclusions of the stocktaking exercise:

* The great value of an integrated framework covering education and training at all levels is confirmed
* The ET2020 four strategic objectives and benchmark remain valid
* The role of ET 2020 as contributor to the overall EU agenda for jobs, growth and investment needs to be further deepened

**Main challenges and future priorities**

These challenges and priorities underpin the identification of the new priority areas and concrete issues for the further work up 2020.

* Quality and relevance of learning outcomes is key for skills development
* Education must contribute to social cohesion, equality, non-discrimination and civic competences
* Relevant and high-quality learning requires a more active use of innovative pedagogies and digital skills and tools; strong support for educators; facilitating learning mobility; strengthened and simplified EU transparency and recognition tools; filling the investment gap.

**Governance and working methods**

The stocktaking indicates a consensus on the following approach for the next work cycle:

* Strong analytical evidence and progress monitoring are essential for the effectiveness of the framework (cooperation with Eurostat, Eurydice, Cedefop, OECD,…)
* Streamlining and rationalising reporting in ET 2020 remains a priority (five years cycle)
* Stronger links between education, business and research, and involvement of social partners and civil society needed to strengthen the impact of ET2020

The ET toolbox will be strengthened:

* The Commission together with the Members States will prepare an ET 2020 indicative rolling Work Plan (with overview of peer learning events, key activities of working groups, ..)
* A new generation of Working Groups will work on the ET 2020 priority areas (as of 2016)
* Strengthening of ET 2020 peer learning activities, peer reviews, tailor-made peer counselling..
* Dissemination of good practices will be enhances
* ET Monitor will be used systematically
* Full use of the potential of Erasmus+

**Annex 1: Priority areas for European cooperation in education and training**

The four strategic objectives are confirmed:

* Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
* Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
* Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
* Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training

Priority areas for action are reduced from 13 to 6 priority areas. The priority areas are declined into concrete issues. These areas reflect a common challenge for the Member States and show an added value in tackling them at European level.

Priority areas:

1. Relevant and high quality skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, innovation and active citizenship
2. Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences
3. Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era
4. Strong support for educators
5. Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility
6. Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency of education and training systems

**Annex 2 is an overview of specific VET and Adult Learning priorities up to 2020**

For VET:

* Promotion of work based learning
* Further developing quality assurance
* Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all
* Further strengthening key competences in VET curricula
* Systematic approaches to initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

For Adult Learning:

* Governance: ensure coherence with other policy areas
* Increase the supply and take up
* Widen access , provide second chance opportunities
* Improve quality Assurance

A staff working document provides the analytical basis for the joint report. It aims at reviewing progress aimed at national levels towards the ET 2020 objectives. For each priority, information is provided under the headings:

* Policy context at EU level
* Reporting
* Remaining challenges
* Priorities for the future

The staff working document has five annexes:

* Annex 1: Synthesis of the national contributions from the EEA and Candidate Countries
* Annex 2: Interim evaluation of ET 2020 by ECORYS (main findings and 22 recommendations)
* Annex 3: Riga conclusions on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for 2015-2020

http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015\_en.pdf

1. **Other relevant policy lines**

## A digital single market strategy for Europe

Communication from the Commission, 6 May 2015

This communication is closely linked to priority n° 2 of the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission (15 July 2014): ‘A connected digital single market’.

The digital single market will be built on three pillars:

* Better access for consumers and businesses to online goods and services across Europe
* Creating the right conditions for digital networks and services to flourish
* Maximising the growth potential of our European Digital Economy

Education and training play a key role when it comes to boosting digital skills and expertise (pillar 3). The Commission aims to support an inclusive digital single market in which citizens and businesses have the necessary skills and can benefit from interlinked and multi-lingual e-services, from e-government, e-justice, e-health, e-energy or e-transport.

The EU has seen improvements in the basic digital skills of its citizens, but still has a long way to go. Digital skills levels need to be raised also among employees in all economic sectors and among job seekers to improve their employability. Change is needed in the way education and training systems adapt to the digital revolution.

The responsibility for curricula lies with the Member States, which need urgently to address the lack of essential digital skills. The Commission will support their efforts and will play its role in enhancing the recognition of digital skills and qualifications and increasing the level of ICT professionalism in Europe. TheCommission will address digital skills and expertise as a key component of its future initiatives on skills and training.

<http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/>

1. **Studies, conferences and tools**

## The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report

12 May 2015 (Eurydice, Eurostat, Eurostudent)

The report gives an overview of the state of implementation of the Bologna Process across the 47 countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), with comprehensive qualitative and quantitative information on all main aspects of higher education reforms. The report has been developed for the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan (14-15 May 2015).

It contains 7 chapters:

* Context of the EHEA
* Degrees and qualifications
* Quality assurance
* Social dimension in higher education
* Lifelong learning
* Effective outcomes and employability
* Internationalisation and mobility

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\_reports/182EN.pdf

## Conference on ‘A Europe of talents: giving new impetus to skills acquisition through mobility for apprentices’

Brussels, 2 June 2015, organized by the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament

Panels discussed on the following questions:

* What different apprenticeship-type schemes are currently available? What are the benefits of apprenticeship mobility for individuals and companies?
* What instruments exist to encourage apprenticeship mobility? Are they used adequately? What are the remaining challenges for apprenticeship mobility and what best practices can be adopted?
* How to overcome remaining barriers to apprenticeship mobility? How does the way forward look for EU policies? The single apprenticeship contract: a possible solution?

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-europe-of-talents>

## Teachers

### The teaching profession in Europe. Practices, perceptions and policies

Eurydice, 25 June 2015

The Eurydice Report ['The Teaching Profession in Europe. Practices, Perceptions, and Policies'](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/184EN.pdf) is a comprehensive overview of the status of lower secondary teaching in Europe, today.

For more detailed information, see DOC 029, attended events

### Teaching practices in primary and secondary schools in Europe: Insights from large-scale assessments in Education

CRELL, 25 June 2015

The CRELL Report ['Teaching Practices in Primary and Secondary Schools in Europe: Insights from Large-Scale Assessments in Education'](https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/JRC95601.pdf) investigates how large-scale international assessments can shed light on the way European teachers work, what goes on inside classrooms and how teachers cooperate with each other.

For more detailed information, see DOC 029, attended events