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CONTEXT

Education and training are seen as key actors in the development of a knowledge society. Therefore, both the EU and the member states put forward daring targets to energize the sectors of education and training making them more performing.

A SHORT HISTORY OF EUNEC

In order to give these innovation policies a broad societal support, governments mobilize the educational and social-economic stakeholders such as representatives of school boards, teacher trade unions, parent and student organizations and social partners to participate actively in the conception and the implementation of policies and activities in education and training.

Therefore most of the member states have set up national or regional formal institutions of consideration and consultation, bringing together all these stakeholders or part of them, in some cases together with experts, to formulate their recommendations.

Education councils have diverse statutes, but they all function as an advisory body towards governments on future education policies.

In 1999, some councils decided to work together on European educational subjects, and, to encourage a closer and more intense cooperation, the education councils created in 2000 EUNEC, a **European network of national and regional education councils**, with the support and the help of the European Commission, and in particular of Mr Domenico Lenarduzzi.

In 2010, EUNEC celebrated its tenth anniversary, during a

conference on stakeholder participation held in Brussels, and organized by the Flemish Education Council and “Le Conseil de l’Education et de la Formation” of the French Community in Belgium, two founding members of the network.

In 2008, EUNEC was recognized and granted as **European organisation acting at European level in the field of education and training under the Jean Monnet programme** (DG EAC N° 28/07). Within this programme, EUNEC obtained a Framework Partnership agreement for 2008-2010.

In 2011, for the second time, EUNEC was granted under the same programme for 2011-2013. This grant will allow the network to continue its efforts to enhance cooperation on education and training in Europe and to aim for more sustainable results.



MISSION

EUNEC is convinced that all those involved in education (the European Commission, the governments of the Member States, the education councils, the stakeholders and all European citizens) can benefit from this European network where major evolutions and reforms in educational systems can be discussed thoroughly and prepared for a successful implementation.

EUNEC aims to discuss the findings and recommendations of all European projects in education and training, to determine points of view and to formulate statements on these issues. EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively towards the European Commission, relevant DGs and other actors at European level, and to promote action by EUNEC members and participants at national level. EUNEC has the objective that the councils should put the main international policy lines high on the national agenda.

EUNEC wants to work in two directions:

They want to disseminate and discuss – at the national and at the European level - all documents, texts, studies... that are launched by the European Commission within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Bologna process, the Copenhagen process, Education and Training 2020.

With sound and coherent statements, the members of EUNEC want to influence the discussions and the decisions on the major European issues in education and training both on the European and on the national level.

Ten years later, EUNEC is a valuable partner for the European institutions, as **José Manuel Barroso**, president of the European Commission, states in his congratulations for the tenth anniversary:

*"Just as Education Councils are key advisers to their national governments, their **European network has become a significant stakeholder in our Europe-wide cooperation in education and training.***

This pivotal role cannot be underestimated. European bodies carry important messages both ways. They are a vital channel for informing educationalists in their home countries about European policies and about the results and progress that come about from the cooperation between Member States. They also keep the European Commission up to date on the needs of the education and training sector throughout Europe, and help us to direct our work to the maximum benefit of our citizens, of our member countries, and thus of Europe as a whole."

In the **Conclusions of the Council of the EU** and the

Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, **on enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and social partners, in particular employers, in the context of lifelong learning (May 2009)** we read the following text:

*"The Council emphasises that education and training institutions should seek greater openness and responsiveness to the wider world and **actively communicate with other partners in society at large**. Existing national models for the consultation of all relevant stakeholders and social partners are very valuable to the ongoing development of education in its role to prepare our citizens for the challenges of life in the 21st century.*

*The Council invites the Member States to **actively encourage the development of platforms for mutual dialogue between education and training institutions and employers and other relevant stakeholders at national and regional level** (...). The Council also invites Member States to tackle any unjustified barriers that may exist to the development of such partnerships. Member States are invited to promote close cooperation with employers and other stakeholders at the systemic level (with regard to the recognition of learning outcomes, the improvement of labour market forecasts, the implementation of European tools..)"*

More recently, in the **European Commission Communication on 'Rethinking Skills' (November 2012)**, we read:

For education and training, a reinforced partnership approach means becoming more active in the development of skills strategies, rather than being just a 'supplier'. To be sustainable, partnerships need to be built on clear objectives and should be a systematic part of the policy approach. They must involve all stakeholders, including representatives from teachers' organisations, social partners and student bodies.

This point of view is also supported by other international organizations. We read, in the background document preparing the **'Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education'** of 26-27 April 2013:

Participation is considered not only as a major dimension of governance, but also as an element that will contribute to 'quality' through shared concerns and responsibilities of all stakeholders. The emphasis on participation also underlines that while democratic institutions are important, they will not function in practice without the active participation of citizens - in this case by the members of the education community.

We are convinced that the activities of EUNEC in 2012 contributed to the implementation of these policy lines.

TARGET GROUPS

Through the members, education councils, EUNEC reaches stakeholders, experts and policy makers in the field of education and initial training in Europe.

EUNEC members are education councils. An education council must meet the following criteria (Statutes, Chapter II, art. 6.1):

- The council operates as a permanent body
- The council acts independently from any single interest through the presence of a range of members from different social groups, political affiliations and/or academic perspectives.
- The council has as principal goal to provide advice on educational and training policy.
- The advisory role is embedded in the policy making process at the level where the main competences on education and/or training policy are attributed.

If a council is competent for two or more education levels in the system or is operating at a national level, it will be given priority to become a member when candidates of the same EU member state also apply for membership.

Corresponding members can be accepted at the decision of the general assembly at the proposal of the executive committee (Statutes, Chapter II, art. 6.2).

Corresponding members are permanent institutions with an advisory role in the policy making process on education and training. The membership of a corresponding member comes to an end at the moment that an education council (art 6.1) from the same country is accepted as a member'

The composition of the education councils guarantees the involvement of all the principal stakeholders in education in a region/country. This way, EUNEC wants to reach all stakeholders (policy makers, social partners, parents, students, teachers, providers...) in education throughout the European Union.

EUNEC MEMBERS IN 2012

Members are national councils, or regional councils, such as in Belgium where education and initial training are exclusively regional matters. Both Belgian councils were founding members of EUNEC.

All the members receive the information and the reports, take part in the networking and are involved in the meetings such as the seminars and conferences. EUNEC has different categories of members according to their involvement or not in the daily work and/or management of the network.

Members of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly

Those members are entitled to take part in all the activities of the network. They have a full responsibility in the network as described in part III and IV of the Statutes (competences of the general assembly and the executive committee).

FLEMISH COMMUNITY (BELGIUM): Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (VLOR)

FRENCH COMMUNITY (BELGIUM): Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CEF)

THE NETHERLANDS: Onderwijsraad

PORTUGAL: Conselho Nacional de Educação (CNE)

SPAIN: Consejo Escolar del Estado (CEE)

LITHUANIA: Lietovous svietimo taruba (LST), the Lithuanian Education Council

CYPRUS : Symvoulío Paideias, the Cyprus Education Council

FRANCE: Haut Conseil de l'Éducation (HCE)

Members of the General Assembly

Those members are entitled to take part in the general assembly, in the seminars and conferences and other initiatives they are invited to by the executive committee. They receive information produced by EUNEC on European, international and national policy lines.

ESTONIA: Estonian Education Forum (EEF)

WALES: General Council for Teaching

HUNGARY : National Council for Public Education

GREECE: Ethniko Symvoulío Pedas (ESYP) - National Council of Education

Network members

NORTHERN-IRELAND: Southern Education and Library Board

New members

At the executive committee of 10 December 2012, the application for membership of the following organizations has been accepted:

CZECH REPUBLIC: Union of School Associations

QUEBEC: Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT THE EDUCATION POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The objective is to

- enhance the cooperation on these issues between the EUNEC members
- disseminate European proposals and tools on national/regional level; EUNEC disseminates European documents and initiatives to the members of its councils and tries to clarify them by summaries, comments or translations.

A REVIEW OF THE MAIN POLICY LINES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

the 'State of Affairs'

In 2012, the EUNEC secretariat prepared three overviews of the main policy lines in education and training, the so called 'state of affairs'. These documents present an overview of the documents that education councils need to integrate the European common policy lines and frameworks in their recommendations towards national Ministers of Education and governments.

These synthesis documents describe in a very concise and accessible way the new policy documents. They summarize the main lines of the documents and offer links to the full texts. They take into account all documents linked to education and training and transversal domains (youth, culture, welfare, concurrence..) by all relevant decision making organisations (Parliament, Council, Presidency, Commission). The main policy lines are also

paying attention to other international organisations working in the field of education and training, such as OECD (a.o. CERI studies), UNESCO, UNICEF and the Council of Europe.

In 2012, the following themes were given major attention:

- The institutional context

Recent developments in the economic governance of the EU have a major impact on education and training policies. The consequences of the linking of the benchmarks on participation in tertiary education and early school leaving to the economic and monetary situation, is a more regular reporting proved with national action plans and feedback from the European Commission, in the framework of the so-called European Semester.

The European Commission published the Communication 'Action for stability, growth and jobs' (May 2012).

The heads of State or Government endorsed the country-specific recommendations to guide Member States' policies and budgets and decided on a 'Compact for Growth and Jobs'.

The third European Semester was launched with the 'Annual Growth Survey 2013'.

- Education and Training 2020:

- Council conclusions on the employability of graduates from education and training (a new benchmark)
- Council conclusions on literacy as a focal point in providing quality education for all
- Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs
- Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning
- The European Commission Communication 'Rethinking education'

- The Bologna process: Ministers responsible for Higher Education took stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process and agreed on future policies in the Bucharest Communiqué
- The Copenhagen process. Organisation of the first European Business Forum on VET
- Lifelong Learning Programmes: the new 'Erasmus for All' programme from 2014 on
- Culture – Youth – Employment – Internal market: conclusions and communication that are linked to the field of education and training
 - The EU Youth Report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy
 - Special attention for youth mobility and for the modernization of the Professional Qualifications Directive
 - The Council Resolution on the overview of the structured dialogue with young people on youth participation in democratic life in Europe
 - The Council Conclusions on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people
 - A proposal for modernization of the professional qualifications directive 2005/36/EC
 - Employment package: 'Towards a job-rich recovery'
- Education for all: towards the millennium development goals (UNESCO)
- The annual report of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
- UNESCO guidelines for recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning
- UNESCO series on mobile learning

- The UNESCO Global Education Digest on the impact of grade repetition and early school leaving
- Citizenship education in Europe (Eurydice)
- Key competences at school in Europe (Eurydice)
- Entrepreneurship education at school in Europe (Eurydice)
- The OECD strategy 'Better skills, better jobs, better lives. A strategic approach to skills policy'
- The OECD report 'Education at a glance'
- OECD quality toolbox on early childhood education and care
- Evidence from TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey)
- The PISA results (OECD)

All these documents have been presented and discussed at executive committee meetings. These discussions are important, as an instrument for in-service training of the presidents and secretary generals of national and regional education councils. They pull the attention to new developments, to possible links between EU frameworks and national policies, to new approaches for ongoing and future advisory work. They offer a basis for common work and collaboration on new recommendations.

These documents are also important for determining emerging themes and fixing the themes EUNEC will work on in the following year.

The 'main policy lines' are translated if necessary and disseminated by all members among the staff and members of their own councils.

Education councils offer platforms to local stakeholders such as school boards, school heads, teacher unions, student organisations. Through the channel of the council a lot of

stakeholders get an insight in the European education policy. The states of affairs play an important role in raising the awareness and the understanding of advisers of Ministers and local education stakeholders of the common European reference frameworks. By taking them into account in preparing national recommendations, the education councils contribute highly to the national implementation strategies of these frameworks.

These states of affairs are also available for a broader audience: they are published on the website (www.eunec.eu) and in the newsletter reaching about 380 correspondents, individual citizens as well as organisations.



EUNEC PARTICIPATES IN THE DEBATE ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

EUNEC insists on the importance of (more) stakeholder involvement in European policies. For that reason, EUNEC uses every possible occasion to express its viewpoints on relevant matters in education and training on the European level.

Participation in Presidencies of the European Union



DANISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2012

EUNEC participated at the info session on the priorities of the Danish Presidency of the EU in the field of education and training by Ms Mette Mork Andersen, attaché at the Danish Permanent Representation at the EU.

EUNEC president Adrie Van der Rest participated at the Cyprus Presidency Conference on literacy in Nicosia in September 2012.



CYPRUS PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

EUNEC organized its own conference in Cyprus, with the support of the Cyprus Presidency, in October 2012, on the topic of 'Migration and Education'. Participants were welcomed by Ms Olympia Stylianou, Permanent Secretary of the Cyprus Ministry of Education.

Answers to public consultations by the European Commission

EUNEC, the European Network of Education Councils, welcomed the **consultation on a quality framework for traineeships**.

It was not possible for EUNEC, given the variety of the member organizations and the specific character of some of the questions, to formulate a common answer to this consultation. However, as the objective of the consultation is linked to the concern for a smooth transition from education to work, the statements of EUNEC on 'New skills for new jobs. Challenges for VET in the 21st century' can be of relevance for the work in this field, and have been sent to the European Commission.



These statements are the result of a conference organized by the network in cooperation with the Portuguese Education Council in Lisbon in October 2011. They have been discussed and agreed on by education stakeholders and policy makers from 13 European countries.

EUNEC general secretary Mia Douterlungne participated at the Symposium on **'Measures to Combat Educational Disadvantage'** on 8-9 December 2011, which is designed to collect expert advice and empirical evidence that will directly feed into the preparation of a new European Commission's initiative on education and inequalities. As a follow-up of the symposium, and as input to prepare the 2012 Staff Working Paper, the Commission invited EUNEC to send post-symposium advice. The network sent the statements on equity, agreed on after a conference in Lisbon in 2007, and updated after discussions in more recent debates: the conference on Guidance in Budapest 2009, the seminar on education and training in a period of economic crisis in Limassol in 2010, and the seminar on 'Bildung' in Budapest in 2011.

EUNEC agreed on common recommendations on **'Erasmus for all'**, the new EU Programme for education, training, youth and sport proposed by the European Commission on 23 November 2011.

EUNEC is preparing a common reaction on the **European Commission communication 'Rethinking Education'**, published on 20 November 2012. The communication is an impressive set of policy recommendations that have to reinforce the cooperation between EU Member States and give a new impetus to education policy in the EU Member States.

Cooperation in European studies and working groups

The European Commission selected the consortium of the European Service Network and the Migration Policy Group to carry out a scientific analysis of and to organize a series of European reports and seminars around the **European indicators of migrant education**. The consortium works with researchers from the Free University of Brussels and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). EUNEC participated actively (as a discussant in a workshop) at the second seminar, related to education indicators in Budapest, 17-18 September 2012. The outcomes of the seminar will be a key building block in the development of these indicators.

EUNEC worked together with Ms Maria Golubeva, who works for the Migration Policy Group on a study that wants to capture stakeholders' activities and interest in migrant education. The first contribution to this work is a first **mapping of how migration and education stakeholders address the education of migrant pupils**. GHK Consulting was appointed by the European Commission to undertake this study in order to support the free movement of workers between EU countries. Ms Golubeva conducted an interview with the EUNEC secretariat, based on the EUNEC position paper on 'Migration and Education'.

Since then, MPG has assumed the role of communication officers of the SIRIUS network, the EU's recently funded Policy Network of researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers with the aim to exchange and promote a migrant education agenda at EU level and within the Member States. MPG's role is to reach out to a broader group of stakeholders to take part in this discussion.

The European Commission, DG Education and Culture, organized a conference on 'Reducing Early School Leaving', on 1-2 March 2012. This conference launched an expert group in the field of Early School Leaving, which will meet regularly to exchange experiences and good practice. A EUNEC expert is member of this **stakeholders group on early childhood education and care (ecec) and early school leaving (esl)**, and active at the online community library.

Contributions of EUNEC representatives at EU conferences and the stakeholders' forum

European events organised by the institutions

EUNEC participated at the **stakeholders' forum of the European Commission**.



As part of its consultation efforts in the field of education and training, the European Commission has hosted an annual event since 2008. The Forums gather a broad group of European-level stakeholders and social partners to discuss transversal issues in education and training. Each event produces a general report with a set of key messages. This edition has been prepared through an online consultation of more than 2000 stakeholders' organizations.

This edition of the Forum, organized by the European Commission in cooperation with EUCIS-LLL and the European Youth Forum, allowed European stakeholders (350 participants) to give their views in two workshops. A first round focused on policy cooperation challenges and the role of stakeholders; a second round focused on the potential of 'Erasmus for all'.

A representative of EUNEC participated at the following other stakeholder events:

- Comenius Partnerships – helping schools team up across Europe, Brussels, 3-4 May 2012.
- International Conference on Education : 'Diverse talents for the future of Europe', Brussels, 5-6 March 2012.
- First meeting of the Group of Stakeholder organizations working in the related fields of Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving, Brussels, 26 June 2012.
- Literacy for all, Cyprus Presidency conference, Nicosia, 5-6 September 2012.
- Expert seminar on 'Education indicators for migration', Budapest, 17-18 September 2012.
- Jean Monnet conference. 'Sustainable growth in the EU. The role of education and training', Brussels, 13-14 November 2012.
- One step up in later life: learning for active ageing and intergenerational solidarity, European Commission, Brussels, 20 November 2012.

Other international or European events

When EUNEC is invited to an international event (conference, debate, workshop, seminar, survey), the secretariat forwards the invitation to the members by e-mail.

In accordance to the members' expertise and interest, a EUNEC member or the secretary represents the network at these events. Positions taken during these conferences are based on the common understanding laid down in the statements. At conferences and workshops, EUNEC representatives are the voice of the network.



The EUNEC representative spreads the information throughout the network. The executive committee insists on the multiplying effect of participation in conferences on behalf of EUNEC.

Every representative is expected to make a report and send it to the secretariat. The secretariat makes a compilation of these reports in a document 'attended events' that is presented and commented on executive committee meetings and published on the website www.eunec.eu.

This is an overview of such attended events:

- Learning for Wellbeing, a policy priority for children and youth in Europe, organised by the Learning for Wellbeing Consortium of foundations in partnership with Eurochild, Brussels, 27 February 2012.
- Public hearing on 'Social Innovation in education and training', organized by EUCIS-LLL, Brussels, 6 March 2012.
- Understanding education policies with key data in hand, Eurydice, 26 April 2012.
- Social innovation for active inclusion: lifelong learning contribution for a better tomorrow, annual conference of EUCIS-LLL, Brussels, 14 May 2012.
- Eurydice report on key competences, Brussels, 5 June 2012.
- Congress on freedom in education in Flanders and in the Netherlands, Tilburg University, 14 June 2012.
- European Launch of Education at a Glance, Brussels, 11 September 2012.
- Teacher Education for Inclusion. Profile of inclusive teachers, Brussels, 9 October 2012.
- Presidencies of the EU: outcomes of the Cypriot Presidency and programme of the Irish Presidency, Brussels, 18 December 2012.

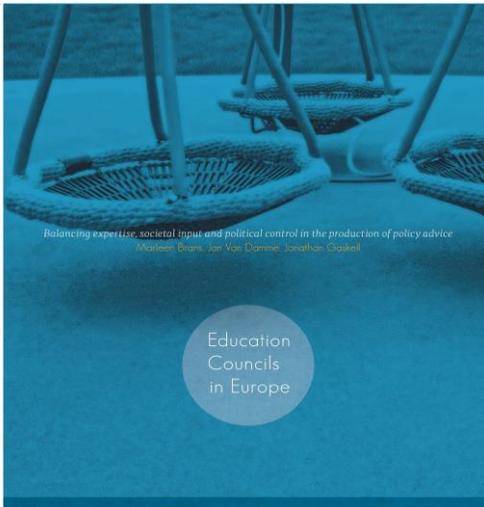
IMPORTANT THEMES ON THE AGENDA IN 2012

THEME 1

STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING

Since 2008, EUNEC has been working on a more complete overview of the existing education councils and advisory bodies through Europe, in order to reinforce the network and to strengthen stakeholders participation both at national/regional level and on the European level.

This working process is a multiannual project of EUNEC made possible by the grant. The working process consists of a study, the dissemination of that study and a follow up of its results.



EUNEC commissioned a study on education councils and advisory bodies in the EU. This study was executed by the IVO (Instituut voor de Overheid or Public Management Institute, Catholic University of Louvain).

The results of this study are used for the enlargement of the network: it is disseminated and discussed with organizations that apply for EUNEC membership in 2012.

It is also used for informing countries without organized stakeholders participation on the features and effects of education councils and for information towards the European Commission on how education councils can offer platforms for closer collaboration between stakeholders in education and training and the broader world.

Two important issues came back during the workshop held in December 2011:

- The notion of boundary work. It seems that boundary skills are extremely important for the staff and the members of a council
- The challenge of involving the Parliament, of crossing that bridge.

A report of this workshop is made available to all members and published at the website in the first weeks of 2012. During the first executive committee in 2012, members discussed how to go on with this work.

THEME 2

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

The spring seminar of EUNEC dealt with the emerging paradigm of excellence in education. The main theme of the seminar was how education deals with excellence i.e. how it stimulates, recognizes and strengthens the development of learners' talents.

The event was hosted by the colleagues from the Dutch Education Council.



Twenty participants, experts and representatives of education councils, from 10 European countries, met in Amsterdam. The first day of the seminar was dedicated to expert presentations, reflection and in depth discussion on the topic. The second day linked theory to practice: participants visited an "excellent school", the Ignatius Gymnasium, in the city center of Amsterdam, listened to a project presentation and had the opportunity to discuss the theme with school leaders, teachers and pupils.

All participants adopted **statements** on the subject.

A **report** of the seminar including the statements, was sent to all participants, to all EUNEC members, to the European Commission and Parliament, OECD and other international organizations active in the field of education and training. It was published on the website.

THEME 3

MIGRATION AND EDUCATION

EUNEC discussed the new challenges for migration and education, together with experts and representatives of stakeholders from the member countries. The event was hosted by the colleagues from the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute within the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture. The European councils gathered in Larnaca, from the 15th - 17th October 2012.

Olympia Stylianou, secretary general of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, welcomed about fifty participants, coming from 14 European countries and from Québec. The first day was dedicated to an overview of migration policies in Europe, and to the presentation of migrant and education policies in EUNEC member countries. The second day, participants had the opportunity to visit two schools in the Educational Priority Zone in Larnaca. The last morning, Miquel Essomba, coordinator of the EU network on migration and education, presented the network for the first time.



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
www.moec.gov.cy

All participants adopted **statements** on the subject. A **report** of the conference including the statements, was sent to all participants, to all EUNEC members, to the European Commission and Parliament, OECD and other international organizations active in the field of education and training. It was published on the website.

THEME 4

A TRANSVERSAL ATTENTION TO THE PROMOTION OF CITIZENSHIP WITH AN EMPHASIS ON VULNERABLE GROUPS AND SOCIAL COHESION

Given the composition of the education councils, with all stakeholders in education and training, this is one of the overall aims of the network. This concern is prominent in the “acquis commun” in the different statements of EUNEC.

Relevant documents are summarized by the secretariat, discussed at executive committee meetings and disseminated.

Representatives of EUNEC attended conferences putting emphasis on vulnerable groups and social cohesion. Reports of the conferences are presented at executive committee meetings, and disseminated through the website and the newsletter. We refer to the list of attended events supra.

A EUNEC expert is actively involved in the EU stakeholders working group on early childhood education and care and on early school leaving.

In 2012, the attention to vulnerable groups has been particularly in the focus of the network, through the organization of the conference on ‘Migration and education’ in Larnaca and through the cooperation with the Migration Policy Group and with the SIRIUS network.

MANAGEMENT OF THE NETWORK

Organisation of the network

All the members of the organization are allowed to be represented in the **General Assembly**. The responsibilities of the General Assembly include the right to:

- amend the statutes;
- elect the President of the network;
- nominate and discharge the members of the Executive Committee
- determine the status of members and acceptance and exclusion of a member
- approve the budget and the annual account
- discuss and decide on matters concerning the operation, activities and working programme of the network;
- discuss and decide matters concerning the existence of the network;
- approve or amend the internal rules of procedure
- dissolve the organisation;

In 2012, the General Assembly met on 17 October 2012 in Larnaca, Cyprus. The minutes of this meeting are published on www.eunec.eu.

The **Executive Committee** is the board of the network. The executive committee has to prepare the proposals that are submitted to the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee must:

- implement the decisions of the General Assembly;
- announce the meetings of the General Assembly and the other network activities;
- approve new members
- appoint the auditor
- prepare the accounts after receiving the auditor's report
- decide on the budget
- take decisions in accordance with the statutes of the network, in accordance with the interests of the network or with the policy of the General Assembly;
- report to the General Assembly on its activities and its financial management
- nominate the general secretary
- decide on the annual fees

The executive committee is at the same time also the place of real exchanges and networking about the national and European priorities in the field of education, the place to discuss news on European projects, the place where the state of affairs is presented.

Composition of the Executive Committee in 2012: Adrie van der Rest, (president), Mia Douterlungne (general-secretary), Antonio Frias del Val, Ana Maria Bettencourt/Manuel Miguéns, Roos Herpelinck, Jean-Pierre Malarme, Ona Čepulėnienė, Olympia Stylianou, Christian Vulliez

In 2012, the Executive Committee met on 22 May in Amsterdam, on 14 October in Larnaca, and on 10 December in Brussels.

The **EUNEC secretariat** is composed by the President, the General Secretary, two experts and the secretary.

They coordinate the project and assume the daily management of the network; they keep the contact with the European institutions and the agency (Jean Monnet grant). They also represent the network in a lot of European events organised in Brussels, for budgetary reasons.

In 2012, the presidency was taken up by the Dutch Education Council; the General Secretariat and the secretariat are assumed by the Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (Belgium, Flemish Community).



EUNEC secretariat at the offices of the Flemish Education Council, Kunstlaan 6, Brussels

Networking between members for shared activities

EUNEC members regularly work together in subgroups on specific themes in the field of education and training, according to their own national agenda or to the European agenda.

Executive committee meetings, seminars and conferences are excellent occasions to see which colleagues from other education councils could offer help or work together on specific themes.

In order to prepare a specific event or a specific document, the members of the executive committee decide to organise temporary working groups:

A working group (Flemish Education Council, Lithuanian Education Council, Spanish Education Council, Portuguese Education Council) has finalized a revision of the EUNEC statutes.

The secretariat, the Flemish Education Council and the Cyprus Education Council worked together to organize the conference in Larnaca.

The secretariat, the Dutch Education Council, and the Flemish Education Council worked together to organize the seminar in Amsterdam.

Proposals that are prepared in those small working groups, are sent for comment and active input to all the members of the network. The same working process is applied in the preparation of common statements on 'Erasmus for all' and on 'Rethinking Education'.

In 2012, EUNEC closely worked together with partner organisations

The results of the seminars and conferences are sent to the European Commission, to the national governments or the national representatives in the European Institutions (Parliament, Education Council, ..).

EUNEC often works together with experts from partner organisations:

In 2012, EUNEC closely worked together with

- The European Commission, DG EAC. Professor Miquel Essomba, coordinator of the SIRIUS network, participated at the EUNEC conference in Larnaca on behalf of the European Commission.
- CEDEFOP. EUNEC participated in their conference on 'The role of social partners in implementing European tools and principles' and disseminates conclusions and studies through the document 'Main policy lines in education and training'
- As a follow-up of the cooperation with the EPA, European Parents Organisation in past conferences, we keep each other informed about our activities.
- EUCIS LLL. EUNEC is invited at the stakeholders forum and was present at the annual conference 'Social innovation for active inclusion: lifelong learning contribution for a better tomorrow', Brussels, 14 May 2012.

- OBESSU (the Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions): Kjell Nygard from OBESSU participated at the EUNEC conference in Lisbon, in order to explore possible future cooperation between the networks.
- CARDET (Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology), Cyprus participated at the conference in Larnaca

We send our newsletter with up to date information on our network to the other organisations that are granted under the Jean Monnet Programme, key activity 3; we had the opportunity to meet and to network with these organisations that share our objectives on the Coordinators meeting organised by EACEA, in 2009 and 2010.

EUNEC and third countries

EUNEC is making progress in building contacts and enhancing its impact in countries out of the European Union.

An important step in the realization of this objective has been the presentation by Manuel Miguéns, member of the EUNEC executive committee and secretary general of the CNE (Portugal) at the VIII Encuentro Nacional de Participación Social en la Educación in Cancún, Quintana Roo, México, 31 March – 1 April 2011. Mr Miguéns presented the network, and the results of the study on education councils in the EU, executed by the Public Management Institute.

As a follow-up of this first contact, EUNEC keeps in touch with the Mexican organization. A new presentation by EUNEC is foreseen in April 2013 during the conference of the 'Encuentro Latinoamericano de Participación Social' in Mexico. Other countries from South-America will take part in this event.

EUNEC is happy to welcome a new member of the EUNEC general assembly, as from January 2013: the 'Conseil supérieur de l'éducation' from Quebec. The president of this Council, Claude Lessard, presented his organization during the executive committee meeting in October 2012 in Cyprus. Mr Lessard also made a presentation during the conference on 'Migration and education'.

EUNEC annual account 2012

1 January 2012 - 31 December 2012
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earnings		86253,16
	Membership fees	20500,00
	Grant European Commission	57226,40
	Bank interests and reimbursement	8 526,76
expenditure		77432,57
	Reimbursement grant 2011 European Commission	16774,04
	Seminar, conference, workshop	52055,82
	Auditor	617,82
	General administration costs	7984,89
balance		8820,59

bank account balance 31/12/2011	34484,43
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bank account balance 31/12/2012	43305,02
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ANNEX 1: STATEMENTS ON EXCELLENCE

What is excellence about?

Excellence in education focuses on the development and stimulation of diverse talents of children through education and training.

In the future, society will need open minded scientists able to shape sustainable technological innovation, technicians building the infrastructure and machinery of tomorrow, innovative artists using new and creative approaches, philosophers questioning the mainstream approaches, responsible social and intercultural workers. Furthermore, citizens need to be able to question society and culture critically and permanently, and to think outside the box.

Therefore focusing on development of talents and excellence in pupils is far from a functional and reductive emphasis on instant cognition and knowledge. The concept of talent is not limited to abstract and conceptual thinking but also applies to creating, building, doing, acting. Education should value all these types of talents equally.

New educational approaches do not only focus on this broad spectrum of talents, they also emphasize the quality of the learning process and the learner's ability to perform at a high level in unpredictable environments. We quote professor Volman : *"It is not only the achievement that makes you excellent. It is what you do with it and how"*.

The perspective of learning outcomes or learning achievements (the “what” question) as such should be enriched by the perspective of the quality of the learning activities and processes. Therefore the learner with his learning needs, abilities, motivation, dedication and learning biography should be central to each debate on rethinking education processes. Quality of learning starts with the learner and his abilities to learn.

Excellence: a risky ideal or a promising paradigm for innovation?

Excellence could be seen as contradictory to essential characteristics of the education policy of the last decades such as strengthening the perspective of equity or a broad understanding of quality.

This is certainly the case if the focus is only on cognitive and measurable educational achievements. If excellence is identified with “successful” students in terms of academic achievements, other students will consider themselves having failed. They will lose interest and motivation.

International standardized testing and comparative benchmarking (such as PISA) exercises could entice policy makers and educationalists to narrow the scope on measurable achievements and to ignore less visible underlying educational values.

Education councils consider themselves privileged “spokespeople” to keep the broad humanistic and holistic vision of education on the policy agenda. In this sense education councils are instrumental to get control over the long term perspectives of the education policies. Education policies need to take into account the professional judgment of the teachers and of the school team.

We quote professor Carmel Borg : "The best schools listen to the learners and promote educational resilience for all". Educationalists need to develop a language to communicate on this perspective with the other sectors in society.

If well elaborated, the concept of excellence can enrich the debate on equal opportunities and inclusive education systems, as it opens the debate on better learning outcomes and a higher level of learning. The main challenge for education systems in the present crisis of European societies is to combine higher learning performances with better inclusion of vulnerable (groups of) learners.

With regard to learning needs, stimulating a variety of talents is at the very heart of an equal educational chances approach. Scouting and nurturing talents is especially needed for pupils with a low socio economic background, with special needs or with troubled learning pathways. The lack of experiencing success can be countered by putting different talents and gifts in the limelight. Every talent matters and is relevant for others. Howard Gardner formulated the theory of "multiple intelligences". Talents of youngsters are very diverse, they develop and learn in different styles and at different rhythms. Flexible but demanding learning environments should prevent a culture of mediocrity.

Enhancing the conditions to raise quality of learning for all

From the perspective of the learners

Education is all about enhancing the scope of learning, strengthening learning engagement and stimulating learning motivation in all youngsters. Raising performance levels of all

learners, requires a better theoretical understanding of the relation between social and cultural capital and learning performance.

Soft skills, learning skills and self-management become core competences for each learning process. Talents are also closely linked to soft skills such as cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, communicative skills and dialogue, creativity, meta-cognition, self-esteem, self-management and autonomy. The idea of excellence should in the first place be linked to the core curriculum, the basic skills as an entitlement for all learners.

But basic skills are not sufficient. All children have passions, are eager to learn in some domains to which they feel more attracted. Some children have a passion for the world of science and technique, others for culture and art. Some children are challenged by abstract and theoretical thinking; others are 'shapers' and learn by doing.

In order to raise the quality of learning processes we need to raise the learning motivation and the learner's engagement in learning. Motivation is not only a point of departure and a condition, but also a desirable result. We refer to Monique Volman reminding us of the psychoanalytical line of thought defending the capacity to engage – in a relationship, in work, in a production – as the most important human capacity to achieve happiness.

The quality of learning processes depends to a high extent on the readiness to learn. Learning motivation involves behavioral, emotional and cognitive aspects because it is the result of an interaction between the learner and the environment. Since the

environment can be influenced, learning motivation can also to a certain extent be changed.

The design of pedagogic environments should start from the question why learners want to learn and trigger this motivation to a broad field of interests. Learning environments need to motivate, inspire and stimulate learning. Intrinsic learning motivation should be enhanced by making learning achievements more visible. Learning environments should seduce learners to learn using personal drives and interest domains, trigger them and raising self confidence in their learning and in the outcomes.

We need to establish flexible and tailored pathways, allowing for differentiation, individualization, attending and responding to different gifts and interests.

Creating motivating learning conditions means action at pupil level, at classroom level and at school level.

- Starting from a positive relationship and connectedness between teachers and pupils. Pupils have a right to an empathic, authentic and active teacher listening to their needs. The teacher should be open for a positive budding interest but also be able to deal with negative emotions and resistance, for experiences of injustice and failing. The needs are integral to the learning process. Education is no longer a one way process. Learners and their needs, motivations and experiences should be taken seriously. This means a supportive rather than a controlling attitude. Education has to involve the emotional dimension of learning.
- Offering learners challenging learning experiences that are ambitious and reachable. This approach is not new. In

the first years of the 20th century Vygotski developed the theory of zones of proximal development which has been shown very useful.

- Creating a safe learning climate built on understanding and at the same time on boundaries, values and an ambitious perspective. This also calls for rewarding efforts and validating learning results. Education systems develop a pedagogy of care in balance with a pedagogy of excellence. Such schools pay attention towards socio-emotional competence, engagement and (self) confidence in classrooms.
- Using subjects, methods and learning activities triggering the interest and the motivation of the learner. However, education is not only about the “natural” interest of the pupil. Learning environments should broaden the scope of learners, acquainting them with different aspects of learning and of the world.
- Empowering students through self efficacy, collective and collaborative learning. In this open learning environments educational technology is used critically and integrated in the whole concept.
- Evaluation systems should raise self awareness of pupils about their own motivational drive and the quality of their learning outcomes. This calls for self-evaluation, reflection and monitoring tools.

From the perspective of the teachers and school teams

Good functioning and competent teachers form a crucial lever. Without excellent teachers, a model of talent development and talent stimulation can never work. Excellent teachers are role models for excellent pupils and for their peers.

Pupils perform better at school if they feel good, if they are challenged and yet experience a sense of safety. These conditions are strongly influenced by their relation with one or several teachers. The quality of the relationship between the pupil and the teachers (team) is a decisive factor for the functioning and the learning of pupils.

Teachers should behave as reflective practitioners, aware of their own learning needs, interests and professional drive. In their behaviour they should reflect the values of excellence and motivation, being aware of their learning needs and learning experiences.

Excellent teachers are teachers with good interpersonal skills, pedagogical competencies and mastery of their subject. They share passion, enthusiasm and learning motivation with their pupils. They act within the organization as responsible team members, open to the outside world. Teachers should behave as agents of change and innovation. The link between classroom practices and practitioner research should be strengthened. The school visit during the seminar showed the merit of mixed assignments for teachers, in secondary education and in research. Teachers should take part in scientific research and networking.

We need to consider teachers professionalization as a continuum starting in initial teacher training but to be continued in a trajectory of lifelong learning for teachers (continuous teacher training, learning on the work floor, collegial coaching and review, ...). Teachers cannot become a role model for pupils if they do not integrate lifelong learning and innovation in their daily functioning. Therefore education systems try to raise the level of entry requirements, which has had positive effects in Scandinavian countries (as highlighted by PISA).

Schools experiment with putting excellent teachers in positions where they can make the difference, where they can coach, and advise colleagues. This creates opportunities to share their competences and skills with the whole staff. It is clear that respect for the autonomy and professional expertise of teachers is crucial for educational innovation and pedagogic excellence.

During the seminar EUNEC members also discussed the opportunities and pitfalls offered by evaluation and appraisal of excellence in teacher behavior: give excellent teachers more freedom, more responsibility, more salary; introduce systems of evaluation and appraisal as they are common in industry; stimulate peer assessment, professional bodies and standards.

Another common concern of the education systems throughout Europe is the need for a sufficient amount of good qualified teachers. In that regard we need to develop also retention policies to keep good teachers aboard.

From the perspective of the school organization

School culture and the school organization are powerful agents of excellence and of raising quality in education. Therefore we need socially inclusive schools and strong early childhood provisions as well as family-schools links involving parents in the learning of their children.

Schools should build a climate characterized by ambitious expectations, a readiness to invest effort. But these schools are also supportive schools with well elaborated counseling and coaching facilities for pupils who (tend to) fall behind. Pedagogies of excellence are characterized by a focus on the learner and learning, task orientation, diversity in all dimensions of the school climate, adequate evaluation procedures. School climate aims at

combining meaningful and relevant knowledge with scopes of interest and broadening of the horizon of learners.

Excellence needs to consider models of accountability of schools. Schools with a high level of self-accountability based on clear pedagogic and humanistic objectives, on well defined quality indicators, ongoing collegial debate and reflection provide the best professional environment for higher professional standards of teachers and learning standards for pupils.

Innovation processes redefined by schools and professional communities. The resilience of the education system in a new perspective

Educational innovation has shown to be extremely efficient if it is oriented bottom-up. Schools are at the centre of the innovation process and should define their own ambitions, shared by school boards and leaders, by school teams and teachers, by the pupils, parents and the wider community surrounding the school. Innovation platforms at a macro level offer support with knowledge, expertise and network but cannot take over. Agreement on ambitions, objectives and measures is required at a macro policy level. A common understanding is also needed on benchmarks and monitoring principles. Exchange of experiences between peers on the contrary is most effective.

Conclusions

Excellence should be looked upon from a holistic and integrated concept on learning, development and education. It needs to

take into account a broad range of talents, the quality of the education process, the engagements of learners and teachers.

Excellence is complementary to equal opportunities and inclusion.

In order to reach excellence, there are critical conditions from three perspectives:

- the competence level of the pupil and his attitudes towards learning and developing: motivation, soft skills, learning skills and self-management are crucial.
- the perspective of the teacher: he has to be strong from a pedagogic-didactic point of view and an expert in his/her subject
- the perspective of the school: schools have to be supporting and challenging for teachers and pupils; the school climate has to focus on ambitious learning results.

ANNEX 2: STATEMENTS ON MIGRATION AND EDUCATION

Migration and diversity: changing concept, new challenges

European countries have moved away from the seemingly culturally homogeneous places they considered themselves to be. Schools no longer have to deal with homogeneous migrant minorities. Migrant pupils come from all over the world and migration patterns are rapidly changing. Moreover, education has to cope with the reality of mobile migration: people don't move from one country to another intending to stay there for the rest of their lives; they often move again several times.

This has fundamentally changed everything in society. We have to move away from the concept of diversity in society, and thus in the classroom, to the concept of 'super-diverse societies' and classrooms. This shift has to be translated in education policies. The challenge for education is how to deal effectively with students from 'super-diverse' backgrounds and turn diversity into educational success.

The theme of migration and education not only concerns immigration but also emigration. We need bilateral policies that share responsibilities between the host country and the country of origin. We need to find ways of cooperation and partnerships that benefit to all.

The policy level

General or targeted policies?

At the EU level, all the issues related to education and migration are framed within the larger framework of targets devoted to the general population. Generally, migrant pupils don't achieve the performance of their native peers. This creates an unequal situation, and a risk for promoting social cohesion. That's why the EU developed initiatives in order to try to bridge the gap.

General education policies do matter. MIPEX III shows that achievements for migrants are related to achievements for natives .

We think too much on migrant specific education and not on general education. In the challenges related to education of migrant pupils, the socio-economic status is a central factor (next to other factors, such as language, age at arrival,..). General policies on inclusive education give birth to good targeted policies for migrant education. Policy measures that are working for disadvantaged pupils in general, also work for pupils from a migrant background: avoid early tracking, establish flexible pathways. ..

Targeted policies for migrants should not be the only answer to the challenges of migrant education, although they are needed to complement the general policies, for instance in the case of newly arrived migrant pupils.

Partnerships

MIPEX reveals that education is an 'area of weakness' in the wider field of migration policies, and that policies related to migration are not linked, and not coherent.

Education will have to work together with society in order to share responsibilities. There is a need for an overall policy including all relevant policy domains: employment, health, housing, welfare. The case of ACIDI in Portugal offers a good example on how a national plan can help mobilize each Ministry to put integration of migrants on the agenda. Those partnerships between policies will facilitate the creation of a capital of trust between the country and the migrant. It helps to create a consensus, and an awareness of the fact that migration does not have to be associated with problems.

At an international level, MIPEX can be used to enhance the understanding of differences and similarities between policies related to migration.

Participation

In the preparation of balanced policies, migrant organizations have to be consulted. It is necessary to get migrants involved in the way forward. This is not enough the case now: MIPEX shows that there are in Europe only few consultation bodies for migrants, and if there are, they come and go and don't show a permanent character.

Importance of research

The evidence base of policies in the field of migrant education policies needs to be constantly updated. There is need for continued research in following the educational paths of students from a migrant background and in evaluating the effectiveness of policy measures and initiatives. Schools have to be involved as more active partners in this research.

School and class level

The curriculum

Intercultural education has to do with how to learn to live together in a democratic and pluralistic society. This intercultural education has to be more than just a subject in the curriculum, it has to be all over. It is important to evaluate and screen the curriculum in order to check whether it reflects the idea of valuing diversity and confronting prejudices and stereotypes.

All those who work with migrant pupils should be taken into account, in the school and in the community, from teachers to cleaning staff, from parents to socio-cultural organizations. Intercultural dialogue is necessary with all the partners in the school and outside the school.

Teachers are crucial

The teacher remains an important catalyst for migrant students' academic success – despite sometimes harsh economic conditions. It is thus important to invest in teacher training and in teacher professional development, so that investments benefit no matter what the general and targeted education policies are.

In order to be able to respond to the challenges of education and migration, teachers need a set of competences (managing diversity, intercultural competences,...). But competences are not sufficient: the attitude of the teacher is a critical condition for success. It is very important that the teacher believes in the 'teachability' of each pupil, as this has an enormous impact on the pupils' sense of futility. If the teacher sees diversity as an asset rather than a problem, this will enhance the self-esteem and

empower the migrant pupil.

It is not easy to deal pedagogically with these challenges. How to translate this attitude into classroom practice? It is important in this respect to explore different, innovative ways of teaching, such as co-teaching in bigger class groups. It is important, in the classroom, to take the socio-cultural context of the learner as a starting point and to increase the contribution of the learner through more interactive, cooperative and problem solving learning.

Educating teachers for diversity has to be an important feature in teacher training. The teacher has to be trained to teach as a 'transformative intellectual', enacting pedagogies that improve the learning of all students, including the typically underserved ones, such as migrants. The professional identity of this teacher is based on strong intellectual self-image; he consciously considers how his or her every day actions might counteract social inequalities.

There is need for incentives to send the best teachers to the most challenging schools.

The language

In a European, international context, multilingualism is seen as an asset. In the case of migrants, their multilingualism is seen as a problem..

As long as education for migrants will only focus on the knowledge of the host language and decline the multilingual repertoires of migrants as an asset, integration policies are doomed to fail. Taking migrant pupils out of the class group in

order to bring them to the level of language proficiency the host country decided to be the norm leads to stigmatization. On the contrary, the plurilingual repertoires of children can be exploited as didactical capital for learning. Attention for the mother tongue and culture will enhance the self-confidence and reinforce the identity of migrant pupils.

Education policies for migrant pupils should not exclusively focus on the proficiency of the language of the host country, but go deeper, and work at the level of identity development of those youngsters that often have to cope not only with different languages, but also with different social and cultural worlds.

Diversity is an asset

Although there is agreement on the fact that society should strive for desegregation, it is a fact that, in certain circumstances such as in big cities, there will be segregation, leading to a certain extent to 'black schools'. It is important to be convinced of the fact that, in these schools, high quality education is needed and possible.

In order to reach this quality level, a shift in thinking is needed. Our fundamental thinking about diversity and education denies diversity as a starting point. Diversity is being recognized, but only as a condition to adaptation. Diversity is thus devaluated into problem, deviation. It is important to move away from this deficit approach which often promotes the implementation of compensatory programmes and segregation measures at schools. Instead, we have to work towards a consensus in society where diversity and migration are not automatically seen as a problem,

but rather as an asset.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge and express our concern that, in times of economic and financial crisis, the most vulnerable groups should not be struck the hardest.

