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**Attended events November 2014 – May 2015**

# The role of home-school relationship in preventing school violence and early school leaving

Bucharest, 28-29 November 2014

Kaarel Haav, Estonian Education Foorum, attended this event.

This is the report that was published at the blogspot of the European Parents Association, who organized this conference. Two key note speakers, Magda Balica and Ciprian Fartusnic, are members of EUNEC (Institute of Education Sciences in Bucharest).

The topics of the conference - school violence and early school leaving (ESL) – are both burning issues in the host country as well as other parts of Europe. Our speakers tried to answer the question how parental involvement help to decrease both problems and how to involve parents, especially those with disadvantaged backgrounds. The importance of the conference was highlighted by the fact that it was greeted by the Minister of Education – on Skype from Senegal -, the General Mayor of Bucharest and a high ranking official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All keynote speakers of the first day offered workhops on the second day to make it possible for participants to share their thoughts and good practices.

The first keynote speaker of the conference, Zakia Akkouh from the [European Wergeland Center](http://www.theewc.org/) (EWC) introduced the No Hate Speech campaign co-organised by EWG and the Council of Europe (CoE). Her powerful speech, accentuated by the fact that it was made by a young woman in a headscarf, concentrated on the internet, a powerful tool for young people to organise themselves, but also a means to organise hate and xenophobia. It means that the internet is a main source of human rights abuse. It is clear that censorship is not a solution to this problem, so EWC and CoE organised an educational campaign built on a network of national teams. While it is clear that you cannot protect your children from everything, so this campaign concentrates on empowerment, to make children change-agents and active citizens. She emphasised that no target of the campaign can be reached without the parents, although parents are often considered as parts of the problem and not the solution. In the workshop Zakia could collect a number of recommendations on how to involve and target parents in the next phase of the campaign. Her full speech and the recommendations can be read at [this link](http://europeanparents.blogspot.hu/2014/11/no-hate-speech-zakia-akkouhs-keynote-at.html).

Ciprian Fartusnic, Director of the Institute of Education Sciences gave a keynote on the influence of family factors on early school leaving. He presented the results of the ‘Education priority area’ UNICEF-funded project partly on parental involvement that involved 300 schools from Romania. In the schools that were part of the project an estimated 20% of the students were at risk of dropout. In Romania the ESL rate is 17% and 6% of primary school aged children are not in education. Those most endangered by ESL are from low socio-economic status families, minorities, disabled children and those living in rural parts of the country. In the projects they addressed the challenges of poverty, psychological barriers, school culture, lack of training and skills and the lack of organised parents. In the area of parental involvement the following challenges were identified and tackled: breaking the ice, opportunities to exchange views, online training and organising parent corners, extracurricular activities. His presentation can be downloaded from [this link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0PqKEIWz5CUcnl6M24tbG1fWUE/view?usp=sharing). He also made a [summary](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0PqKEIWz5CUYl9PZjhHYUo4VnM/view?usp=sharing) of his workshop where participants shared their reflections, ideas and good practices.

Magda Balica, a Senior Researcher from the same Institute made a keynote on violence in the 21st century challenging the common mistake of thinking that violence at school is a recent development. She analysed the difference between aggression and violence, the first being natural, the second a result of a certain education. She put emphasis on the fact that the parties involved have very different views on the problem, parents and teachers tend to blame each other while often there is a lack of communication with children about the issue. While schools teach human history as a history of violence we expect children not to copy these role models for a successful life. One thing was clearly stated in this keynote, namely that exclusion from school is not a solution for violence. To be successful in finding solutions, including proactive and reactive measures alike, is to address the causes, not only the effects. The presentation can be downloaded from [this link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0PqKEIWz5CUMmpGZ2NrUFphNFU/view?usp=sharing).

Nóra Ritók, the leader of Real Pearl Foundation gave a grim and thorough picture of extreme poverty and showed participants a holistic approach to families in order to support children and give them a hopeful future. The key message of the keynote was that however deprived families are you should never do anything about them without them. The approach of the foundation is trying to help families solve their most urgent problems like the lack of food, heating, electricity, clothes as well as trying to give parents basic skills that make it possible for them to get employment or try to establish small enterprises based on natural resources available (like making jam of wild berries) and their handicrafts. Community development and identity building are very important elements of their work. They are very successful in using arts and crafts for building self-confidence, making self-expression possible and to build other educational activities around that. You can read her keynote following [this link](http://europeanparents.blogspot.hu/2014/12/agents-of-change-fight-against-early.html).

Benoit Guerin presented the approach and website of [EPIC](http://europa.eu/epic/), the European Platform for Investing in Children. His presentation focused on evidence-based practices in the field. Their activities are based on the Flagship initiative by former Commissioner Andor, Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage. It became a Recommendation by the European Commission as part of the Social Investment Package. The presentation can be downloaded from [here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0PqKEIWz5CUYU5CNjdvaWh0Zzg/view?usp=sharing). After learning about how the system works all EPA members and our other readers are encouraged to send them information about good practices that could be shared on the platform.

Antti Reinsalo from EUCIS-LLL introduced the new flagship initiative on equity in education in his short contribution.

Marion Macleod, on behalf of Eurochild, gave the participants a strong message on why it is very important to protect the rights and the future of our children and why it can only be done by and with parents, to raise our voices for putting the social focus and the importance of active citizenship back high on the agenda of the EU.

# Education in the digital era

Brussels, 11 December 2014

The European Commission invited EUNEC to attend the European High Level Conference on "Education in the Digital Era", which took place on December 11, 2014 in Brussels. Sokratis Katsikas (president of the Greek Council) and Carine De Smet (EUNEC secretariat) attended this event.

The conference is organised by the European Commission in close cooperation with the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and brought together Ministers, high level experts, and policy makers from across Europe to discuss the challenges and opportunities that the Digital Era brings to European education.

## Opening session

* S. Gianni, Italian Minister of Education, Universities and Research
* T. Navracsics, Commissioner Education, Culture, Youth and Sport
* S. Costa, Chair of the European Parliament Committee Culture and Edcuation
* Lord David Puttnam, Chair of Atticus Education

In a very inspired talk, Lord Puttnam insists on the unlimited possibilities offered by the digital era (nice example: virtual choir). He pleads in favour of the concept of flipped classroom (discussed during the EUNEC seminar in Athens, May 2014).

The most important role of teachers is to trigger students, make them believe in what they can. Education has to want to be a moral force, an ethical force. In order to be able to do that, education needs to change dramatically.

## Panel 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of learning

Impulse statement by Bruce Dixon, President of the Anytime Anywhere Learning Foundation

The rate of change is increasing; it is time to come out of the malaise and the inertia of education. We are overwhelmed by the opportunities, it is now time to take them. Education has to stay relevant, if not people will look for learning opportunities elsewhere.

The talk starts from three questions:

* How well do existing pedagogies serve the needs of our young learners?

Traditional pedagogies are more about telling than about asking. Orthodox pedagogies deal with certainty and predictability, which makes it impossible to connect with the world of the learners, characterised by uncertainty, chaos, … When we look through the lens of the young modern learner, we see that they have access to digital resources, and the world is their sounding board thanks to social media offering learning networks. Teachers need to adapt their pedagogies to pedagogies of discovery, of deepening ideas that are truly relevant in the learners’ lives.

* Why such low expectations to what the digital revolution makes possible?

The access myth! Plus the fact that there is always more focus in the discussion on technology than on pedagogy.

* What are prerequisites for learning environments in order to allow change?

There is too little flexibility in education. It is time to rethink structures. Is grouping pupils on the basis of their birth date the only/best way? Why not let go the security blanket of traditional curriculum? We are locking young people’s potential up. Discovery and excitement have to be key in education.

Comments by

* Anka Mulder, vice-president of Delft Technical University. Intensive use of online courses enhanced quality: bigger impact thanks to enhanced number of students, more competition in education thanks to enhanced visibility of the courses (peer pressure).
* Giovanna Carnevali, Director of Fundacio Mies van der Rohe. The most important change brought by technology to education is the enormous amount of data available. The question now is to use the data to stimulate creativity.
* Roberto Viola, European Commission Deputy DG for Communication Networks, Content & Technology. More realistic approach: innovation has to be related to inclusion. Inclusion is only possible if every classroom is connected to internet (this is by far not the case), and if teachers are trained to use digital technologies.

## Panel 2: Increasing the impact of educators

Impulse statement by Pasi Sahlberg. Sahlberg puts three issues at the agenda:

* Unemployment
* GERM, Global Education Reform Movement (already presented at EUNEC conference in December 2010). Symptoms of this GERM that go against creativity: competition (leads to less cooperation) standardisation, (international) testing.
* The declining status of teachers (and the dropout of teachers)

What could be the way forward?

* Re-professionalization of teachers
* Educating ‘changemakers’; Sahlberg states that it’s no use to focus on labour market skills in education, because there will be no jobs for all. ‘If you want a job, invent a job!’. That’s why young people have to be changemakers.
* New purpose of schooling: to understand the world around them and the talents within them.

Comments by:

* Graham Brown-Martin, founder of Learning Without Frontiers. Education is a structure designed to maintain the status quo (such as mass media, such as religion). The digital revolution (Google, Facebook, ..) did not change capitalism, for instance, it confirmed it. Actually, technology is being used to confirm traditional pedagogies and structures. Teachers have to be liberated, and if technology can help, that’s fine.
* John Higgins, DG of Digital Europe. His advice: don’t impose change; give people the tools and change will happen.

## Awards Ceremony ‘Open Education Challenge’

Lord Puttnam and Xavier Prats Monné hand over the awards for seven projects that were selected from over 600 candidates from 74 countries (www.openeducationchallenge.eu).

## Panel 3: Addressing inequalities through bettet access and lower cost

Impulse statement by Carolina Jeux, CEO of Telefonica Learning Services.

Ms Jeux presents a number of projects developed by Telefonica related to e-learning, digital learning, MOOCs. She is a true believer in digital education; the devices have become cheap, connectivity is becoming a reality, so now is the time for change. She demonstrates the extremely low cost of MOOCs, which makes education more accessible for all.

Comments by:

* Mandia Makhanya, principal of the University of South Africa. Insists on the fact that the quality of the MOOCs depends on the quality of the professors; and on the fact that developing high quality MOOCs is an extra cost for the institutions and thus also for the students.
* Lord Jim Knight, Shadow Employment & Welfare Minister in the House of Lords. Mr Knight insists on the importance of co-creative learning between teachers and learners. It is potentially cheaper, might enhance quality (thanks to learner feedback). Allowing for co-creative learning calls for trust in teachers and in learners. He also remarks that, until now, MOOCs are not really a tool for democratization of education, as research shows that those who use MOOCs are the ones that are already highly educated.
* Alek Tarkowski, Director of Centrum Cyfrowe Projekt Polska. Digital does not always mean ‘open’. Mr Tarkowski pleads for openness: free access to content, and free use of content, allowing co-creation and innovation. Resources that are publicly funded have to be publicly available.

## Ministerial panel: The impact on national policy agendas

Panel of ministers was foreseen with participation of the ministers of Education from Italy (Stefania Giannini), Letvia, Luxembourg (Claude Meisch) and Croatia (Vedran Mornar).

Only the ministers of Education from Luxemburg, from Italy and from Lithuania were present.

The content of the discussion was broader than the digital learning focus. It was also about the role and the task of the ministry in education, the autonomy and responsibility of schools; about the importance of language learning; about the need to build bridges between education and labour market.

The programme and presentations are available at the conference website: <http://openeducationeuropa.eu/en/edu-in-digital-era>.

# European Cultural Convention celebrates its 60th anniversary

Brussels, 19 December 2014

Carine De Smet (EUNEC secretariat), Isabelle De Ridder (Flemish Education Council) and Jean-Pierre Malarme (Education Council French Community BE) attended this event.

On 19 December 2014, the European Cultural Convention, source of all Council of Europe work on culture and education, was 60 years old.

To commemorate this founding instrument, the Belgian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe has organized a high-level conference which offered the opportunity to look back on the major achievements that mark those 60 years, but above all for looking ahead into the future by reflecting on the medium and longer term challenges to be taken up by the Council and its member states in education, the principal theme chosen for this anniversary.

In his opening statement, Mr Xavier Prats Monné (DG EAC) stated that the main challenge now is that societies ceased to believe in the transformational power of education; it is important to work on going back to the optimism of years ago.

The conference theme was introduced by Mr Jorge Sampaio, former President of the Portuguese Republic (1996-2006). He insisted on the need for a process of self-reflection to construct a European identity (bottom up process). This would counter the current paradox: on the one hand, the EU has impact on its citizens, on the other hand there is little ownership and communication. The main challenge is thus the democratic governance of cultural diversity, in a timeslot of growing polarisation and extremism. Citizenship matters, and the Council of Europe can play a unique role.

A round table was moderated by Professor Jan De Groof (Europe College, Bruges / University of Tilburg). Ms Mirela Kumbaro Furxhi, Minister of Culture of Albania, Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Director General of Education and Culture in the European Commission, Mr Jindřich Fryč, Vice-Chairman of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice, and Ms Elisabeth Gehrke, President of the European Students’ Union (ESU), took part. Themes discussed: the achievements of the Convention; how to democratically govern diversity; the risk of minimalizing the racist discourse.

[Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers](http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/belgianchairmanship) (November 2014 – May 2015)

# Focus group: mainstreaming immigrant integration priorities in practice – the efficiencies and deficiencies of mainstreaming in education policy

Brussels, Residence Palace, 15 December 2014

Carine De Smet (EUNEC secretariat) attended this event.

EUNEC was invited by the Migration Policy Institute Europe, the European partner in the UPSTREAM project.

Milica Petrovic (who attended the EUNEC conference in Prague) presented the UPSTREAM project, with a summary of past research and some preliminary findings. The goal of the project is to investigate the extent to which ‘mainstreaming’ of integration policy has taken place across Europe. Mainstreaming is the prioritisation of a particular policy goal, such as the integration of people with immigrant background, through the use of broader social programming and policies meant for the general population. The project focuses on France, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK.

The brainstorming session during the focus group aimed at investigating the role and impact of European policy frameworks and funding mechanisms on the mainstreaming of integration priorities in the field of education policy in member states. The discussion also explored whether underused opportunities of the EU could support more adequately and more effectively integration needs on the ground.

Input by EUNEC during the discussion was based on the statements on education and migration (Cyprus 2012) and on the results of SIRIUS work.

<http://projectupstream.wordpress.com>

# Prolonger le tronc commun, quels enjeux pour l’avenir des jeunes?

Brussels, 16 January 2015

This conference was organized by the CEF, Conseil de l’Education et de la Formation (BE-Fr), in the Parliament of the FWB (Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles).

Manuel Dony et Jean-Pierre Malarme (CEF) and Carine De Smet (EUNEC secretariat) attended this event.

## Introduction by Joëlle Milquet, Minister of Education

The minister welcomes this initiative of the CEF; the recommendation n° 124 on the common core will be useful for the negotiations on this important topic.

## Introduction by Manuel Dony, president CEF

The CEF is presented as the place ‘par excellence’ of synergy and consultation, working together closely with partners from Flanders and within EUNEC.

## Policies and research on the common core: international perspectives

Vincent Dupriez first gives an overview of policies in other countries. The debate is relatively new: it started after the Second World War (at least for secondary education; primary education was in fact already the first ‘common core’). It was related to the concern to provide all the pupils with equal opportunities, and was situated in a period of economic growth. The model of the comprehensive school becomes common in the world. In all the countries, the debate is concentrated on the tension between two functions of the school:

* The ‘integrating’ role: schools are for all (based on the premise of the ‘educability’ of all;
* The ‘differentiating’ role: school prepares for different roles in society (based on the theory of the talents).

Next, Mr Dupriez gives an overview of two types of research:

* Research on the arguments for/against the common core: countries that do early tracking show more social inequity during the school career. This is confirmed by research by Hanushek and Woessmann (2006).
* Research on the extent to which the common core has the expected results. What about the level of the pupils? Here the results are less clear (Nathalie Mons, 2007). In her research, N. Mons makes a classification of four types of schools: model of separation; model of integration ‘à la carte’; model of uniform integration; model of individualized integration. Her conclusion is that the model of individualized integration gives the best results. It is thus crucial that, from an early age, the common core is combined with the implementation of systems of individual support (orientation, differentiation, ..).

## Position of the actors

Bernard de Commer presents an overview of the position of the actors (political parties, members of the CEF) related to the common core.

## Recommendation n° 124

Jean-Pierre Malarme presents recommendation n° 124 ‘Refondation des humanités professionnelles et techniques, 10 ans après Avis 80’ (= ‘Re-foundation of vocational and technical secondary education, 10 years after recommendation 80).

The scope of this recommendation is larger than the common core. It is a recommendation that comes back to the recommendation 80 which inspired the reform of the first and of the third degree. Recommendation 124 focuses on reforms in the second degree.

## Workshops

Three workshops were organized:

* The place of orientation? (Marc Demeuse)
* Differentiation in the common core (Laurent Lescouarch)
* Common core or common course, what are the objectives? (Bernard Delvaux)

Eddy Caekelberghs (journalist) led a round table with participation from members from the Parliament, and Latifa Gahouchi, president of the Education Committee of the Parliament, closed the conference.

[Programme and presentations](http://www.cef.cfwb.be/index.php?id=cef_detail&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=4056&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=2010&cHash=dee31927dc6cbbfb6d65eabdc73db6fb) and [full report](http://www.cef.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/sites/cef/upload/cef_super_editor/cef_editor/Publications/Actes/CEF_Actes_2015_01_16.pdf&hash=c6266a8cf237e8d07db7dedf38e8005b19dba042) (in French).

# Educational priorities of the Latvian presidency: midterm review of the Education and Training 2020-strategy in the picture

Brussels, 26 January 2015

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, attended this event.

This information session is co-organised by the Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe, the Flemish Representation of the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU and the Flemish Department of Education and Training.

## Latvian Presidency

Liene Bramane, chair of the Education Committee and counsellor for education at the Permanent Representation of Latvia to the EU [presented the Latvian presidency calendar.](http://en.vleva.eu/sites/en.vleva.eu/files/events/attachments/bramane_latvian_presidency_education_26012015.pdf)

## Mid-term ET 2020

Youri Devuyst, administrator at DG Education and Culture of the European Commission presented the state of play of the mid-term stocktaking of the Education and Training 2020 strategic framework (ET 2020).

The Council conclusions May 2009 launched ET 2020; the conclusions cover the entire spectrum of ET, all sectors, and also informal and non-formal education and training.

Attention for the framework is now relevant for three reasons:

* **Political relevance:** The treaty does not allow the EU to interfere with directives in ET. But Art. 165 does give a mandate to the EU to contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between the Member States. ET 2020 is the tool to steer this cooperation and to contribute, in a soft way, to the modernization of ET in the Member States. It is a contributor to the overall Europe 2020 Strategy. Through the mechanisms of this cooperation, the European Commission tries to assist Member States to deal with issues identified during the European Semester (country-specific recommendations). Another aspect of political relevance is the common challenge of violence and radicalism: cooperation through ET2020 could be useful.
* **It illustrates the way of working of the new Commission**. In the new Commission all the administrative elements that help employability are brought together in one service, Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, headed by M. Thyssen. A number of areas from ET are thus being transferred to this DG (skills, adult learning, ..). At the same time, ET 2020 remains an integrated framework. The idea of Juncker is to break down administrative silos and to work together with different services on a specific project. In December 2014, DG EAC and DG EMPL have concluded working arrangements on how to make cooperation work. The working arrangements are not public, but the two organigrams are. The bottom line is that there will be mutual continuous informal exchanges, and a formal meeting every two months. There was already a strong habit of cooperation (for instance with respect to the Youth Guarantee). Now, after two months, the cooperation is/remains good. In order to know the administrative allocations of the Commission staff, one can check the organigrams. Directorate C of DG EMPL deals with education-related issues. There will be a reshuffling of the DG EMPL organigram in March.
* The Commission is conducting a **mid-term stocktaking.** Most work has been done in 2014: an independent evaluation, contributions in written from Member States, oral consultations with Member States, input from the Stakeholders Forum, consultations with European social partners. The Education Committee will analyse this input together with the Member States, and work to conclusions in the form of an ET 2020 Joint Report (Joint = Council and Commission). During the Latvian Presidency the analysis will be done, with a ministerial discussion during the May Council; the Commission will finish the draft joint report in July, and the Council will adopt the final version of the joint report in the November 2015 Council of under the Luxembourg presidency. Expected content of the report: it will be forward-looking, propose concrete measures and focus also on working methods.

Overview of the content of the ET 2020 framework:

* The four encompassing strategic objectives.
* Each three years: more specific objectives.
* Benchmarks; progress is monitored in the Education and Training Monitor, each year.

The framework is steered at the highest level by the Education Council; at a lower level, there are regular informal meetings of senior officials: director general for higher education, for school education, for VET and the High Level Group on education and training. They meet every six months under the leadership of the Presidency. These meetings are intended to steer the work within the framework of ET 2020 and to identify issues that should be addressed at the level of the Council and at the level of the ‘workers’. There are six ET 2020 working groups (social partners, the most relevant stakeholders). These groups do not prepare legislation, but they do mutual learning, produce for instance policy handbooks, voluntary quality frameworks.

What are the main issues in the mid-term stocktaking?

* Should we keep this kind of integrated framework? Yes!
* Should we keep the strategic objectives? In general, yes! They are broad enough to cover actual challenges.
* There is room for improvement: the Education Council has suggested already twice that it might be useful for ET 2020 to become more operational: the implementation would have to become more concrete.
* What would be the most interesting topics?

Number one issue is reference tools that help with recognition, validation, transparency of qualifications. Next: labour market relevance of VET, work based learning, professional development of teachers, .. The Stakeholders Forum underlined the need for more action in the field of the third strategic framework (citizenship, equity, ..). Finally, the Member States and civil society organizations confirm appreciation for mutual learning, but there was also a lot of criticism: room for improvement, need for more systematic approach, need to translate the conclusions, better dissemination and valorisation of results.

## Italian Presidency

Jelle Reynaert, attaché Education at the Flemish Representation of the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU, presented [an overview of the results](http://en.vleva.eu/sites/en.vleva.eu/files/events/attachments/reynaert_achievements_italian_presidency_26012015.pdf) of the Italian presidency.

The Presidency took place in a challenging timeslot: after the EU elections, and before the start of the new European Commission.

There was one education council meeting on 12/12/2014, back to back with EPSCO-council (employment). The idea was to improve cooperation of education and employment ministers; this was a step forward.

The Council adopted conclusions on entrepreneurship in response to the June European Council’s call ‘to promote a climate of entrepreneurship and job creation’. The conclusions highlight the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills from an early age.

Ministers held a debate during the Council on ‘the economic case of education’. This is a contribution from the EU ministers of education to the review of Europe 2020 Strategy and part of the general input from different Council configurations for the Spring European Council.