



17 November 2013

EUN/EC/DOC/031

Attended events May 2013 – October 2013

1. Panel discussion on 'Work based learning' and the 'Alliance for Apprenticeships' and panel discussion on 'Erasmus for All'.

Brussels, offices of Nether, rue d'Arlon, 11 June 2013

Koen Stassen attended this event.

EUNEC was invited to participate at this panel discussion organized by international affairs section of the MBO council in the Netherlands (MBO is secondary vocational education).

The panel was composed by

- Koen Stassen (EUNEC)
- Sigve Bjorstad (European Commission)
- Marko Grdoši (EURASHE)
- Fred van Vliet (GLR/EUproVET)
- Maria Theresa Lein (Business Europe/Industriellen Vereinigung Austria)

Participants introduced their organization and its viewpoints on a good cooperation between employers, VET institutions and authorities. The main theme of the discussion was the debate on the possible benefits of the dual system, nowadays promoted by the European Commission, as well as the balance between specific skills, general knowledge and transversal competences.

Input by EUNEC was mainly based on the statements on 'New skills and new jobs' (Lisbon 2011), on 'Bildung' (Budapest 2011) and on 'education and training in a period of economic crisis' (Limassol 2010).

EUNEC did not participate at the discussion on 'Erasmus for all', but the recommendations on this topic have been sent to MBO before the panel discussion.

2. European launch of Education at a Glance 2013: OECD indicators

Brussels, European Commission Berlaymont building, 25 June 2013

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, participated at this event.

The launch was hosted by Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture, European Commission and by Mr Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director of the OECD's Education and Skills Directorate.

Education at a Glance provides key information on the output of educational institutions; the impact of learning across countries; the financial and human resources invested in education; access, participation and progression in education, and the learning environment and organisation of schools.

The 2013 edition includes new indicators on the links between education levels and employment. The main message is clear: it is a person's education that determines whether he/she will be

extremely or only moderately exposed to the economic and social risks in times of crisis: the value of education increases during an economic crisis.

www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm

3. Encuentro Latinoamericano de Participacion Social

Mexico city, 6-7 June 2013

Manuel Miguéns, member of the EUNEC executive committee and secretary general of the CNE, the Portuguese Education Council, was invited to participate on behalf of EUNEC at this event.

This conference is an initiative of CONAPASE, the 'Consejo Nacional de Participacion Social en la Educacion' from Mexico.

In his presentation, Mr. Miguéns explained, amongst other things, the mission of EUNEC, presented the structure and the members of the network, and insisted on the working methods and objectives. He also came back on the study commissioned by EUNEC that was released in December 2010, 'Education councils in the EU' (Marleen Brans & Jan Van Damme, University of Leuven).

Read [the presentation](#) of Mr. Miguéns.

4. Information session on the priorities of the Lithuanian EU Presidency in the field of education and training

Brussels, 2 September 2013

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, and Boglarka Budai, intern, participated at this event.

Milda Spelyte-Letuliene, Education attaché Lithuania

The main objectives of the Lithuanian Presidency are the following: "Credible Europe", "Growing Europe" and "Open Europe". The priorities in the field of education and training are based on the national priorities and focused on quality and efficiency.

Priorities

- Internationalisation of higher education
Conference: European Higher Education in the world (5-6 September 2013, Vilnius)
Main points: cooperation between higher education institutes, discussion about how to make European education more attractive for all the other countries, dialogue on the different tools available to further internationalization processes
- Efficiency in Financing of HE
Conference: Meeting of Directors General of Higher Education (23-24 September 2013)
- Leadership in education
Conference: Leadership in Education (9-10 September 2013)
- Vocational Education and Training (VET)
More inclusive VET system, tackling early school leave, supporting adults to stay at the labour market, European Alliance for Apprenticeship
- Open educational resources

Presentation

5. Results of the Irish presidency of the EU in the field of Education and Training

Brussels, 2 September 2013

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, and Boglarka Budai, intern, participated at this event.

Jelle Reynaert, Education attaché Flanders

Results

- Erasmus+, Programme for education and training which also includes youth and training for now on
- Review of the guidelines of the European Professional Qualification System
Make the recognition of professional qualification system more efficient, qualification process faster and easier; creation of a European professional card, review of the Professional Qualifications Directive
- Council Conclusions on investing in education and training (Council meeting Brussels, 15 February 2013) as a response to Rethinking Education
- Council Conclusions on the social dimension of Higher Education
- Agreement on youth guarantee schemes ensuring that young people under the age of 25 who lose their job or do not find work after leaving education quickly receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

Presentation

6. Stakeholders meeting on educational support to newly arrived migrant children (NAMS) in Europe.

Brussels, 13 September 2013

Patrice Caremans attended this event

This meeting is an initiative of SIRIUS, European policy network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background.

The main objective of the meeting was to look at the central outcomes of the European Commission [study](#) on educational support to newly arrived migrant children (NAMS) and discuss the specific standards/benchmarks that could be used to put its recommendations into practice. EUNEC has been interviewed in the preparation of this report. The input in the interview was based on the network's statements on 'Migration and education' (Larnaca, 2012).

The study was presented by Hanna Siarova, Public Policy and Management Institute, Lithuania.

7. Stakeholders meeting on multilingualism

Brussels, 13 September 2013

Patrice Caremans attended this event

This meeting is an initiative of SIRIUS, European policy network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background.

The main objective of the meeting is to consider Recommendation 3 and Recommendation 7 of the [Language Rich Project Multilingualism for stable and prosperous societies](#) in order to come up with specific standards/benchmarks that could be used to put these recommendations into practice.

[Language Rich Europe](#) is a networking project which brings together 1200 policy makers and practitioners from 24 countries and regions in Europe to discuss and develop better policies and practices for multilingualism. Network members are drawn from the fields of education, business, public services and the media.

8. Meeting of the Stakeholder Group on Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving

European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Brussels, 9 October 2013

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, Boglarka Budai, intern, and Koen Stassen, Flemish Education Council, participated at this event.

8.1 State of play in the field of early childhood education and care

Presentation by Nora Milotai, European Commission, DG Education and Culture

European cooperation in E&T is possible through three strands:

- Programmes and funding
- Political cooperation, within the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Education and Training 2020 Strategy. New governance under the European Semester.
- Open Method of Coordination (soft law): common objectives, EU reference tools, monitoring of progress, peer learning activities.

The basis of the work on ECEC is the Communication of the European Commission (February 2011) and the Council Conclusions on ECEC (May 2011). In these documents, the focus is on improving accessibility and quality. There is a holistic approach to children, from birth to compulsory school age, the whole spectrum of early years.

State of play of the thematic working group on ECEC:

- Participation of 25 Member States (+ Norway and Turkey).
- Participation of representatives from different backgrounds, including ETUCE, Eurydice and strong links with OECD.
- The group will be active until Spring 2014.
- 6 peer learning activities have been organized, 2 are forthcoming.
- Methodology: look at the existing international research and do additional mapping and analyses.
- Different subgroups.

The main aim is to make a proposal for a EU policy framework on ECEC, to provide a tool that can help to generate a culture of providing accessible high-quality ECEC at European level. The group wants to describe policies that work and provide guidance in implementation. The framework can help to monitor the Member States in the future, when they have to respond to recommendations (European Semester).

The difficulty in the work on ECEC is how to identify exactly those quality aspects that really make a difference for children. In the mean time, five broad priority areas have been identified:

- Access
- Professionalization of the ECEC workforce
- Curriculum
- Evaluation and monitoring
- Governance involving all interested stakeholders

For each of the five priority areas, the working group is aiming to produce statements.

The state of play of the work of the thematic group is demonstrated for two quality-related features, for which a set of statements is already elaborated: accessibility and curriculum.

1. Accessibility

Literature review, results of a survey and results of the peer learning activities show low universal access for the under three years old, and better universal access for the over three years old (in most countries there is an additional compulsory year; other countries increase access in terms of entitlement). For both groups there are often specific policies for disadvantaged groups.

Five main barriers for access have been identified:

- Financial barriers
- Training level of staff
- Cultural barriers

- No coherence between the levers of power (good local projects are not upscaled)
- Lack of data and monitoring

Building on these results, a number of statements are identified, and discussed during this meeting.

- The ECEC system should promote attendance and inclusion; collaborate with parents whilst respecting and reflecting their beliefs, needs and cultures; cooperate with other organizations in the neighbourhood or community in order to reach this goal.
- The ECEC system should be regulated and monitored systematically and progress should be reported regularly.
- The ECEC system should be available to all children and affordable for all families.

2. Curriculum

In a similar way, a number of statements are identified in the field of curriculum, and discussed during this meeting.

- The ECEC system should set high expectations for children's care and education. These expectations should be supported by actions which promote children's growth, development, learning and overall well-being in a holistic and continuous way.
- The ECEC system should be subject to on-going improvement based on the outcomes from self-monitoring and external review, based on the views of children, parents and staff.
- The curriculum should be relevant, support children as they move from home to ECEC and from ECEC services to school, and meet the current and future needs of children and their families.
- The curriculum should be designed and developed collaboratively.

Next steps

In the near future, the working group will

- try to identify good practices
- finalize a glossary
- make country fiches.

The results of the work of the group will be presented at a Presidency Conference under the Greek Presidency in June 2014.

8.2 State of play in the field of early school leaving

Presentation by Suzann Conze European Commission, DG Education and Culture

The recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (June 2011) is the basis for all the activities. A lot of elements of the recommendation are in the report of the working group. The recommendation defines a common framework for comprehensive policies to reduce early school leaving, and invites Member States to ensure that such strategies are in place by the end of 2012 (!).

Basic facts about the group:

- 27 Member States plus Norway, Turkey and IS, with the involvement of national and EU stakeholders
- 7 meetings in Brussels
- A big conference in March 2012
- A peer review in March 2013
- Two peer learning activities

The group has come up with a report, which is not finalized yet.

Structure of the report:

- Key policy messages

- Early school leaving in Europe: data on the current situation, the progress
- Conditions for successful policies against early school leaving
- Evidence-based policies against early school leaving
- Prevention, intervention and compensation measures
- Annexes: a checklist on comprehensive policies (= a tool on which member states can assess, measure their progress and analyze their situation) and a series of practice examples (not necessarily evaluated to be good examples).

The key messages

- Ensure long-term political and financial commitment to reducing ESL, and keep it high on the political agenda.
- Put children and young people at the centre of all policies aimed at reducing early school leaving. Ensure their voice is taken into account when developing and implementing such policies. There is little information on the motivation why youngsters drop out (= relevant for the approach during the EUNEC conference).
- Develop and implement a sustainable national strategy to reduce ESL addressing all levels of education and training and encompassing the right mixture of preventative, intervention and compensation measures.
- Invest in the knowledge base of ESL, through regular and timely collection of reliable and accurate data and information. Ensure that data and information on ESL is accessible and used effectively in policy development. Ensure monitoring and evaluation of measures steers policy development.
- Ensure policy development and implementation is based on strong, long-term cooperation between national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders and between different policies, for example through establishing a coordinating body or organization. Cross-sectorial cooperation!
- Remove obstacles within the school education system that may hinder young people in completing upper secondary education. Ensure smooth transition between different levels of education, the accessibility and availability of high quality education (including ECEC), and the provision of high quality VET.
- Support schools to develop conducive and supportive learning environments focusing on the needs of the individual pupils.
- Promote a curriculum that is relevant and engaging. Promote multi-professional teams in schools to address ESL.
(The last two recommendations are crucial, and not fully covered yet by the work of the thematic working group.)
- Support cooperation between schools, local communities, parents and pupils in school development and in initiatives to reduce ESL. Promote strong commitment of all stakeholders at local levels, including local employers and businesses, to reduce ESL.
- Promote the understanding of ESL in initial education and continuous professional development of school staff and especially teachers. Support their efforts to provide differentiated learning support for pupils in an inclusive and individualized way.
- Strengthen guidance and counselling systems to ensure that young people are aware of the different study options and employment prospects available to them.
- Reinforce accessibility to second chance schemes for all young people. Make second chance schemes distinctive and ensure they provide a positive learning experience. Support teachers in second chance in their specific role and needs.

In the thematic working group, participants discussed aspects that are missing in these key messages.

Issues which need further reflection

- VET and ESL
- Targeted support for children with migrant/minority background
- Involvement of parents
- Support of teachers

Next steps

- Dissemination of the report
- Continuation of the discussion within a new technical working group on school education
- Report from the Commission of the Recommendation and on policy development in the Member States (end 2014 or 2015)

8.3 Thematic working groups under the Open Method of Coordination

There is a discussion to improve work under the Open Method of Cooperation. At the moment, there are about 11 or 12 thematic working groups, but they are not so well coordinated; their work has to be streamlined. Moreover, there is no clear view on how these groups promote policy development in the Member States

As a result, the decision has been taken that there will only be five technical working groups from the end of 2013 that will cover the four main strands in education.

- School education (first topics in the focus will be ESL and teachers)
- VET
- Adult education
- Higher education
- Transversal skills (languages, entrepreneurship and digital skills)

There will be a different understanding on how to establish a stronger link between the work of these groups and Europe 2020. The basic idea is that the groups will look more concretely to the recommendations under the European Semester, and the groups will support the Member States to implement the recommendations.

The groups will be more focused on cooperation with Ministries than in the past. Participation of stakeholders in these groups will be limited. At the moment, the Commission sent out invitations to the Ministries and to social partners to nominate the representatives. This procedure has to do with the European Semester, and the governance linked to Europe 2020 (which is a governmental programme).

One of the main questions is now how to make sure that nevertheless the stakeholders view is taken into account. The working group discusses on how to consider a parallel process of consultation and debate in order to complete the work of the technical working group.

Some elements of the discussion:

- A parallel process? Back to back meetings of the technical working groups and the stakeholder groups, followed by bigger events, with the participation of both groups.
- Stakeholders would have to be involved at the beginning of the process (setting the agenda) and at the very end.
- Face to face meetings can be combined with online consultations. In both cases preparation is key. Meeting documents have to be communicated well in advance so that the network can be consulted for input; for online consultation a realistic delay for responding has to be respected.
- Why will social partners be involved in the technical working groups, and 'school partners' not?

- Please use the potential of the stakeholders in reporting progress, instead of just taking into account the progress report made by one single person within the Ministry?

9. Launch of the results of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)

Brussels, 8 October 2013

Carine De Smet, EUNEC secretariat, and Boglarka Budai, intern, attended this event.

The Survey of Adult Skills is the first comprehensive international assessment of the skills of the working age population, covering 24 countries, including 17 from the European Union.

During the briefing event Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director of the OECD's Education and Skills Directorate, presented the key findings of the international survey. Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture in the European Commission, elaborated the relevance of the findings for European policy making.

Seven findings are specifically relevant for EU education and training policies:

- 20% of the EU working age population has low literacy and low numeracy skills
- Education and skills increase employability
- The high-skilled are progressing well through adult learning, but people with low proficiency are easily caught in a low skills trap as they are less likely to participate in learning activities
- There are significant differences between individuals with similar qualifications across the EU: upper secondary graduates in some Member States score similar or better than higher education graduates in others
- 25% of the adults lack the skills to effectively make use of ICT
- The skills of a person tend to deteriorate over time if they are not used frequently
- Sustaining skills brings significant positive economic and social outcomes

The Survey will contribute to the monitoring of the Europe 2020 strategy and to the implementation of the Education and Training Strategy.

The Commission and OECD will launch a new Education and Skills online Assessment tool later this year. This will allow people to test their skills and benchmark their own abilities in an international context.

<http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/surveyofadultskills.htm>

10. European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2013 'Working together for reforms'

Brussels, 17-18 October 2013

The welcome session is chaired by **Xavier Prats-Monné**, Deputy Director General DG Education and Culture.

Androulla Vassiliou, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, refers to important new documents/developments:

- The 'Rethinking education' strategy that puts skills in the spotlights (basic and transversal skills).
- The new 'Education and Training Monitor 2013', a good tool for evidence based policy making.
- PIAAC results, which show that there is an important group of low skilled adults; this undermines social cohesion and competitiveness.

Upgrading skills will require a broad effort, reflected in the title of today's forum 'Working together for reforms'. There are already examples of cross border and cross sectoral cooperative approach (the 'Youth guarantee' and the 'Alliance for Apprenticeships').

The Commission will continue to work together with a broad range of stakeholders in the new programme Erasmus + (is about mobility, but also about cooperation and exchange). Erasmus + will support the EU 2020 strategy, the ET2020 framework and the youth strategy. Cooperation is not an end in itself, it is a means to achieve better education and training systems. Dialogue with social partners is crucial to face the challenges, cooperation needs to become deeper and more focused. On 16 October, a high-level meeting on education and training took place between European Commissioner Vassiliou and the leaders of the European social partners. Common priority areas have been endorsed; proposals have been formulated to guide the way forward for a strengthened cooperation between the Commission's education and training services and the European social partners in the field (ETUC- BUSINESSEUROPE –CEEP - UEAPME – ETUCE – EFFE) (see attached report DOC 042).

The country specific recommendations are to be seen as sound advice, not as criticism or reproaches. The Commissioner stresses that progress has been made towards the benchmarks related to early school leaving and higher education attainment.

Doris Pack, Chair of the Culture and Education Committee of the European Parliament insists on the good cooperation ('Freundshaft') between Commission, Council and Parliament in the preparations of Erasmus+. She is happy that the brand names have been maintained, and that there is a separate youth chapter. She stresses that the strong elements from the lifelong learning programme have to remain strong (exchanges for school pupils under Comenius, e-Twinning, Grundtvig exchanges).

Dainius Pavalkis, Minister of Education and Science, Lithuania, says that education is so much more than acquiring skills and knowledge. It is critical to foster democratic values and to strive to social equity. Education is a unique source of strength. Investing in education leads to more self confidence, creativity, innovation. He suggests to concentrate not so much on education outcomes, but on impact of these results on society.

Pierre Mairesse (Director Europe 2020 policy development and country analysis) presents the results of the 'Education and Training Monitor 2013'.

To be able to produce country specific recommendations, a good evidence base is needed. We cannot make policy based on intuition and emotion.

→ The results

The rate of ESL is down to 12,7%: a limited progress for the last 8 years. But: some Member States show recent increase, and the unemployment rate of ESL is very high (40%) and participation rate in non-formal education is very low (1%).

For tertiary education attainment, progress is bigger: over 8% in the last 8 years, to 35,7%.

Pierre Mairesse refers to the PIAAC results: 20% of the adults fail in basic literacy and numeracy skills; transversal skills are lagging behind.

→ The impact

Education and training contribute to growth and competitiveness, but there is a mismatch between the worlds of education and the world of work.

→ Investment

There is a tension: more than 5% of the GDP is spent on education, but public debt is higher than 90% in 2014 and economic growth is expected to remain modest. Conditions for investment in Europe are thus difficult. In 16 Member States educational investments decreased from 2008 until 2011.

→ Reforms

Three areas are identified in which reforms are crucial: work-based learning, the teaching profession, and opening up education (Only 20% of the students are taught by digitally confident and supportive teachers).

Xavier Prats-Monné presents Erasmus +: new funding opportunities for 2014-2020. He states that there should be no more discussion on the priorities: priorities are clear and set in the Europe 2020 Strategy and Education and Training 2020 framework. The new programme is one single programme, which allows simplicity and efficiency. It is crucial that the beneficiaries of the programme will work towards EU added value.

The three key actions are equally important, although this is not reflected in the budget (mobility is by far the most expensive action).

To conclude the morning, a panel of experts debates on how cooperation between stakeholders can contribute to modernising education and training systems and youth policies.

The president of EUCIS-LLL presents the outcomes of the online consultation that ran from July until October 2013.

EUNEC participated at the workshop on cooperation and synergies between formal and non-formal education to reduce ESL. Introduction by **Maria Bognar** (Hungary), presenting the programme Dobbanto and by Professor **Howard Williamson**, Professor of European Youth Policy from Wales, presenting the case study Pen-y-dre High School.

Main conclusion of the workshop: Cooperation between non-formal and informal learning is needed, bridges have to be built, but not only in the field of tackling early school leaving. The issue of recognition is crucial: do outcomes of non-formal and informal learning activities have to be recognized? Is recognition in formal education a guarantee for quality?

On the second day of the conference, the European Commission presents two recent EU policy documents:

- Opening up education
- European Higher Education in the world

The closing roundtable discusses how programmes (Erasmus +, European Structural and Investment Fund) can contribute to the objectives of Europe 2020 regarding education, employment and social inclusion through partnerships at European, national and regional level: a stronger link between policy and programme. All participants stress the importance of learner-centered approach.

The representative of the European Commission recommends that participants should not wait for the legal adoption of Erasmus + before starting to prepare the applications. The Commission is, from her side, preparing the calls for proposals; it is possible that they will be published before legal adoption.

Conclusions of the conference by **Xavier Prats-Monné**. Bringing different perspectives to the same challenges, to come to better understandings of each others' needs is the key message of this conference. Don't only prepare people for the labour market, but also concentrate on inclusion for disadvantaged groups. The lesson for all is to get to know and to take into account each others' needs.

Where are we going to be in seven years? It is very likely that the world will be very different by then. There are important disruptive changes. We have to work towards a massive upgrade of quantity and quality of skills, in partnership and with collaborative effort. Our future will be good or bad depending on how much we base our future on education. We have the certainty of a seven year budget, and we will have a new Parliament and a new Commission in one year. This is an opportunity to do much more for education.