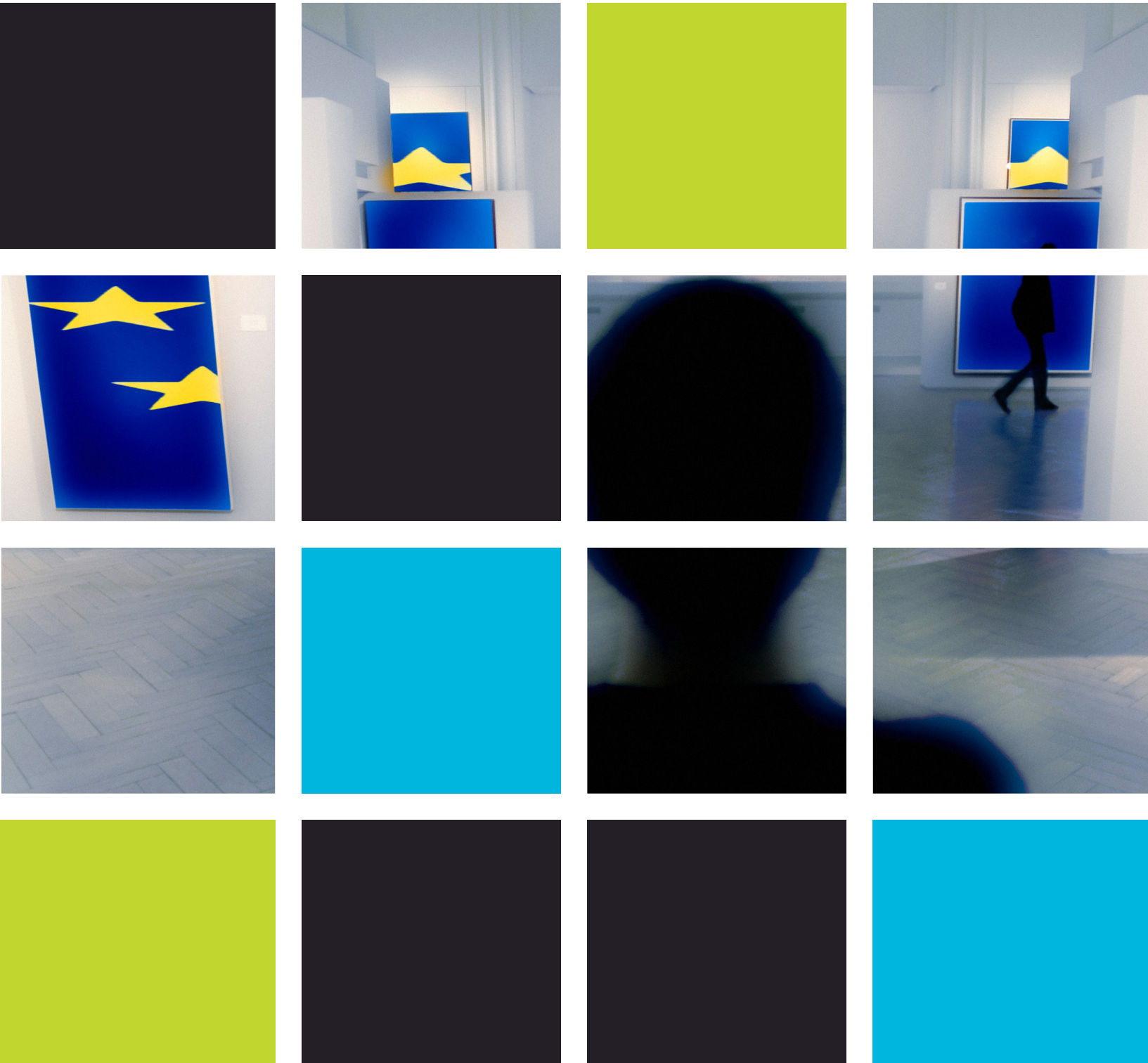# LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

## GUIDEBOOK TO EU DECISION-MAKING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*Guidebook*

*to*

# EU DECISION-MAKING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## Lifelong Learning Platform

## The Lifelong Learning Platform

**The Lifelong Learning Platform (previously EUCIS-LLL) was born in 2005 as a response from civil society organisations to the definition and implementation of a European policy in the field of education and training in the so-called "Open Method of Coordination".**

**In 2001 already, several educational networks had come together to share their experience and expertise around a Europe-wide consultation on the EU "Lifelong Learning Memorandum". This cooperation became systematic when the Platform was established as a permanent organisation in 2005. For 10 years now, the Lifelong Learning Platform has played a key role in structuring and increasing the input of civil society on the "Education and Training 2020" and "Europe 2020" strategies and their predecessors.**

**The Lifelong Learning Platform was acknowledged by the European Commission in 2009 as a "unique representation" of lifelong learning of the various education and training actors organised at EU level, and in 2011 as "in a unique position to support European networks in education and training to work collectively at European, national and local levels and to contribute to a structured policy dialogue within the open method of coordination in education and training".**

**Gathering 39 organisations, the Lifelong Learning Platform is today the most legitimate interlocutor of the EU institutions in the field of lifelong learning. It continuously defends the need to implement a dialogue across educational sectors and between stakeholders and public institutions at all levels, regional, national and European.**
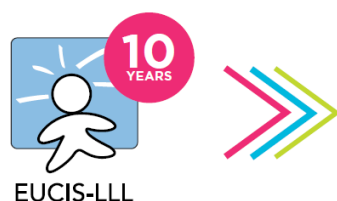
## Values

The platform fosters a vision of lifelong learning that promotes equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. It believes that the objectives of education and training should not only be described in terms of employability or economic growth but also as a framework for personal development. It is essential to raise awareness on the fact that lifelong learning should include a large range of learning settings and create more complementarity and continuity between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

## Vision

The Lifelong Learning Platform promotes a holistic vision of lifelong learning, from cradle to grave, that is not limited to formal education but integrates non-formal and informal learning. By bringing together actors from all sectors and levels of education and training, The platform contributes to an increased flexibility between systems. By encouraging an exchange of knowledge, it aims to build a citizen's voice on education and training issues but also to propose concrete solutions to make lifelong learning a reality for all.

## Objectives

- Pursuing an active dialogue with European institutions
- Enabling exchanges of best practice, experiences and expertise
- Disseminating information on key issues in the lifelong learning sector

EUCIS-LLL

LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

# INDEX

# EDITO

# Why a European guide on EU advocacy in education?

## David Lopez
*LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM PRESIDENT*

This guide has been produced for our members, to have a **better understanding of the complexity of Europe**. We find this complexity in policies, in the number of programmes or in the difficulty to find different funding schemes. We want to offer our members the keys to understand the mechanisms and find their way in the so difficult pathways to become an expert, or just understand the place where they live. Europe seems to be very far from citizens, even those that have the most important consciousness of European realities.

We have tried to reach exhaustiveness in our field of activity: education and lifelong learning.

One of the relevant points of the guide is the Open Method of Coordination in education and training (OMC). This method is very relevant for our work. It is within this framework that civil dialogue can happen and where civil society can play a role. The

Lifelong Learning Platform is not only a tool for its members. It does not just offer services. We are a strong representative of civil society in our sector. We want to be active and conscious citizens, preparing and participating in decision-making processes.

More than the creation of experts groups, we want to foster a total expertise for all citizens. The gap between citizens and Europe will come to an end, when all the citizens will consider that they have a real role to play in Europe.

This guide is a modest contribution to bridge the gap. As I said, it is for our members. But if we consider the vision that I exposed before, the guide is a tool of understanding for all citizens. Because *"To know is to understand and to act"...*

It is also a tool to call for a better dialogue between citizens and institutions in the field of education and training.

# INTRODUCTION

## Advocating for education and training in the European Union: a complex and necessary process

### Audrey Frith
*LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM DIRECTOR*

Over the past years the **EU has gained more and more influence** in the field of education and training. This evolution was not natural; it took 30 years of cooperation, from the formal adoption of the first Community Programme in 1976, for such recognition to be expressed at the highest level of the Union.

We had to wait for the Maastricht Treaty (1992) to give the EU a role in the development of quality education and the promotion and improvement of vocational training (articles 165 and 166 of the Lisbon Treaty). To date, the EU has only a **supporting role** over education and training, meaning that its mission is limited to support, coordinate and supplement member states' actions, without superseding their competence. Indeed education has always been regarded as a national rather than an EU competence. However the success of programmes such

as Erasmus highlights the important and **symbolic role** education plays in European societies and in the European construction but also the impact of the latter on our educational systems.

Ever since the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, the Heads of State or Government of the Union have been constantly stressing the fundamental role of education and training in the economic and social development of the Union. The Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) aimed at "making the European Union the most competitive economy in the world by 2010" and referred significantly to education and training, predominantly as a way for the EU to become the most **competitive and knowledge-based economy**. In June 2010 the European Council adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy in which education, training and lifelong learning play an even greater role (2010-2020).

In the field of education and training, the EU is using what is called the **Open Method of Coordination**. It is a working method that promotes convergence between systems and the attainment of joint objectives. European indicators and benchmarks are key instruments to measure progress in achieving the common objectives set for 2010 and now for 2020. This cooperation is framed in a work programme that follows the same timeline than the overall strategy - the **Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework** (ET2020) that contains four key objectives and seven benchmarks.

A new step in EU cooperation in the field is the **tighter link** that is made between the **ET2020 and the Europe 2020 strategy**. Two

headline targets from the ET2020 have been top-ranked on the Europe 2020 agenda, namely on reducing early school leaving and increasing levels of tertiary attainment across the EU. This means that education is now part of a **new monitoring mechanism**, the **European Semester** which works as an annual cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination. Since 2011, the EU publishes Country-Specific Recommendations that are more and more related to education and training. This represents a **turning point** in EU cooperation in education and training with the **formulation of policy recommendations to individual countries** at a very high level of EU decision-making.

In line with legal frameworks, the European Commission regularly publishes Communications giving political directions for the years to come such as the 2012 "Rethinking Education" and the 2013 "Opening up Education" Communications – what is referred to as **soft law**. These communications have a relative impact especially in terms of agenda setting in the different Member States. Some **intergovernmental policy initiatives** are also developed whitin for example the Bologna process.

Finally, the EU funds many European projects in education and training through the new **Erasmus+ programme** 2014-2020 and the **European Social Fund**. With the new programming period (2014-2020) the EU is making a **stronger link between the policy frameworks and the programmes**. This means that supported projects are more and more asked to demonstrate an impact on EU objectives in the field.

As we can see there is clearly a stronger role played by the EU in education and training. The fact that it is only a supporting role means that **cooperation remains mainly at the level of the European Council and European Commission**, despite an increasing role of the European Parliament with the extension of the co-decision procedure to education by the Lisbon Treaty.



Advocating for education, training and lifelong learning requires understanding how policy decisions are shaped. The specificities of our sector explain the need for a specialised guide book on advocating European institutions because the schemes of decision in this area are different from others and because this is an opportunity for civil society to contribute actively to improve European standards. First it is **necessary to understand the functioning of EU institutions** to grasp their mode of action. A second section will introduce more in detail the **various policy processes** and possible ways of influencing them. A last section will present the main **EU funds** that can support your actions.

European integration appears sometimes technocratic, in the hands of distant institutions, which are asked to manage macroeconomic policies which benefits are not always immediately clear to the general public. This guide is a **concrete tool to empower educators and learners** over Europe to have their say in their future. The Lifelong Learning Platform strongly believes in **civil dialogue and in the importance of civil society** in contributing to shape the future of learning in Europe.

# WHO'S WHO?

## European institutions

Anyone interested in European affairs should start by having basic knowledge on how the main European Union institutions work. This section will focus on **key institutions** – many more exist but will not be mentioned for the sake of simplification. Another very important thing to remember is that the EU is only competent for what is provided for in the Treaties. The EU has **three types of competence**: exclusive competences; shared competences and complementary competences. In the field of education for instance, the EU has a complementary competence which means it supports Member State action in a certain number of areas (for further information, see part II).

## The institutional triangle

The institutional configuration of the EU can feel like entering a labyrinth to someone unfamiliar with it. This confusion is enhanced by the fact that over the years, the EU institutional structure has become both more expansive and more stratified, with multiple sub-structures and overlapping areas of competence. But to make it simple, we can say that the institutional structure of the EU has evolved into a **triangular relationship between the European Commission (EC), the Council of the EU, and the European Parliament (EP)**.



*EU institutions: the «Institutional Triangle»*
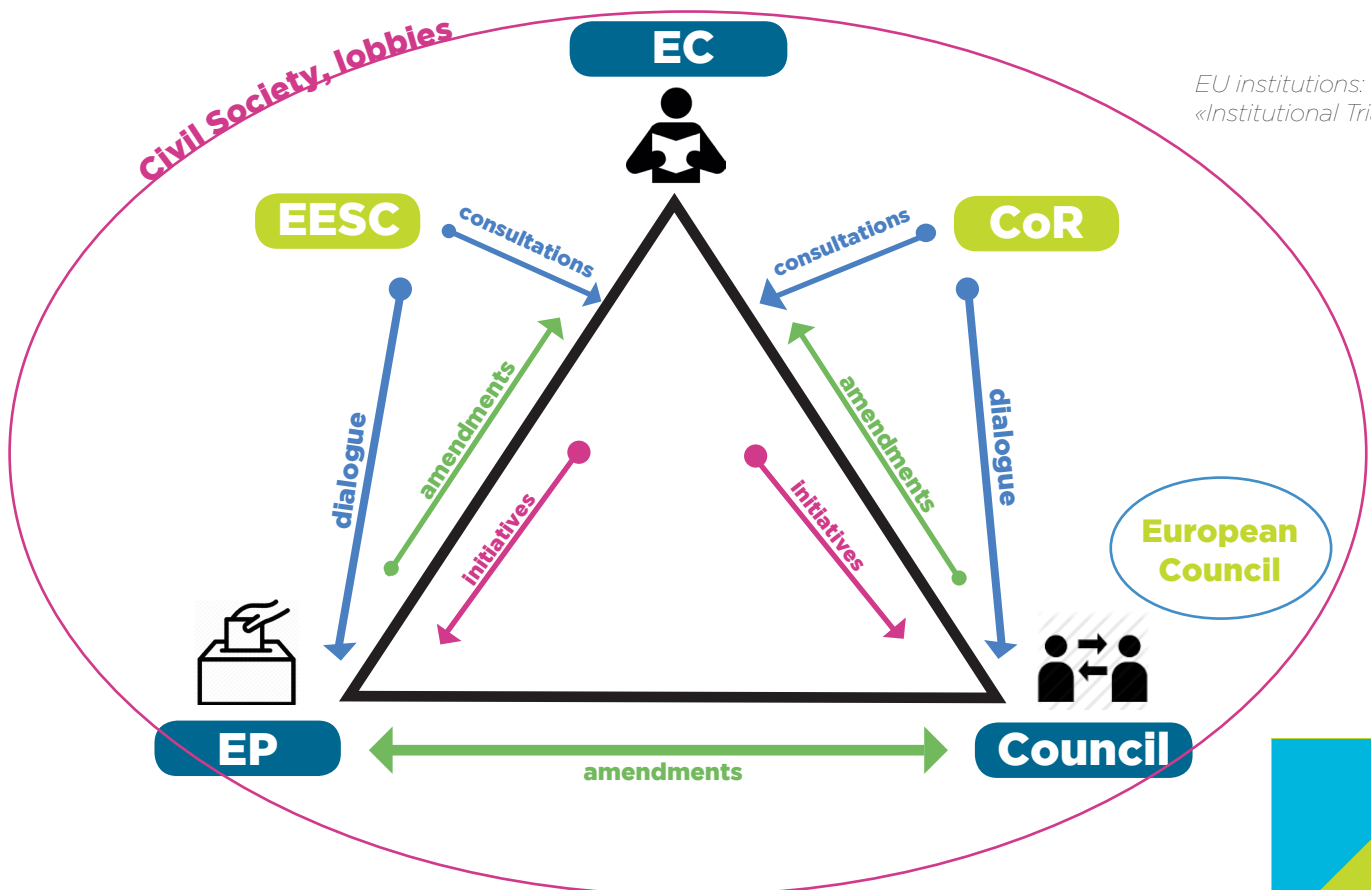
Of course, other institutions also intervene, such as advisory bodies like the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR), but they do not have as much impact on the final outcome and their intervention is often limited to very specific domains of EU action.

*Jean-Claude Juncker,*
*President of the*
*European Commission*

## The European Commission

### What is it?

The term "Commission" refers both to the College of Commissioners and to the institution itself.

The **President** of the Commission is now chosen based on the results of European Parliament elections. In 2014, the European People's Party (EPP) won majority in the Parliament leading EPP candidate **Jean-Claude Juncker** to be nominated.

The College of Commissioners is elected by the European Council after the Parliamentary elections and serves for five years. Commission designates have to be approved by the European Parliament as a whole; after the organisation of hearings.

When Mr. Juncker announced in September 2014 the distribution of portfolios among the Commissioners, he proposed seven **Vice-presidents**, each leading a **project team**. The aim of this new design is to improve policy coherence and operating efficiency. The vice-presidents steer and coordinate the work of a number of Commissioners in compositions that may change according to the needs and as new projects develop over time. The project teams mirror his **Political Guidelines**.

Education is mainly under the project team **"Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness"** led by Vice-President **Jyrki Katainen**.

## WORK PROGRAMME 2015

The European Commission Work Programme for 2015 sets out the actions it intends to take over the next 12 months to make a real difference for jobs, growth and investment and bring concrete benefits for citizens. It reflects the Commission's political commitment to an approach more focused on priorities and results. Indeed, it contains a significantly lower number of new initiatives compared to previous years: where they usually consisted of more than 100 new initiatives, it only contains 23 projects, reflecting Juncker's commitment to be "small in smaller things and big in bigger things".

For more information, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp_2015_en.pdf

Education remains a main responsibility of **Commissioner Tibor Navracsics for "Education, Culture, Youth and Sport"** and appears in other portfolios  such as the "Digital Economy and Society", of Commissioner Oettinger. The Skills agenda, adult education and VET are covered by **Commissioner Thyssen under "Employment, Social affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility"**.

Jean-Claude Juncker stated that "My number one priority and the connecting thread running through each and every proposal will be getting Europe growing again and getting people back to decent jobs".

*More about the new structure:*
*http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019_en.*

## What does it do?

The European Commission acts as the executive body of the EU. It is responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the Union's Treaties and the day-to-day running of the Union. The European Commission has four main roles:

**EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF INITIATIVE**

proposing legislation to the European Parliament and the Council

**EXECUTIVE BODY**

managing and implementing EU common policies and the EU's budget and programmes

**GUARDIAN OF THE TREATIES**

making sure that each Member State transposes and applies EU law properly

**REPRESEN-TATION OF THE EU**

*at international level*

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy and Security

## INVESTMENT PLAN

The European Commission has proposed an Investment Plan for Europe in 2014. It is a key priority of President Juncker political guidelines. The Plan is based on 3 mutually reinforcing strands:
- a smart mobilisation of public and private resources of at least EUR 315 billion over the next three years;
- targeted initiatives to make sure that this extra investment meets the needs of the real economy (investments and projects);
- measures to improve investment conditions to make Europe more attractive.

In January 2015, the European Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which will be established in close partnership with the European Investment Bank (EIB). The EFSI will support strategic investments of European significance in infrastructure including education, research and innovation.

For more information, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/

## Structure and organisation

The nearly **34,000 civil servants**, who deal with the Commission's day-to-day running, are spread across **44 departments known as Directorates-General (DGs)**, and various other services (e.g. translation, publications, legal services). Each DG covers a specific policy area or service, and is headed by a Director-General who reports to the Commissioner. Each DG is subdivided into directorates and each directorate is in turn subdivided into units. All the DGs and services are coordinated by the Secretariat-General, headed by a Secretary-General that reports directly to the President of the Commission.

The two main DGs in charge of education are **Directorate-General for Education and Culture** (DG EAC) and **Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion** (DG EMPL).

The other DGs dealing with education, although to a lesser extent, are DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), DG Regional and urban Policy (DG REGIO), DG Informatics (DG DIGIT) and DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT).

### *Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC)*

DG EAC is the executive branch of the European Union responsible for policy on **education, culture, youth, languages and sport**. DG EAC also supports these issues through a variety of projects and programmes, notably Creative Europe and Erasmus+. It is led by a Commissioner and Director General, who report to the European Parliament.

It is currently divided into **five directorates**:

- Lifelong Learning, Education and Training Policies
- Lifelong Learning, Education and Training Programmes and actions
- Culture and Communication
- Youth, sport
- Resources and Planning

The main policy areas under the DG EAC responsibility are the **modernisation of European education and training systems; mobility policies and programmes;** the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT); and international relations in the field of education, culture and youth.

The European Commission staff is changing frequently, a new **organigramme** is thus posted on DG EAC website in July and January each year. If you are interested to meet the European Commission the best is to look for the **Unit** who deals with your sector of activity knowing that Directorate A is focused on policies, Directorate B on programmes while C is organised by sector.

*Tibor Navracsics (HU), current Commissioner to Education, Culture, Youth and Sport*



## EACEA

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is an agency of the European Union, established in 2006, to manage parts of the Unions' programmes in education, culture and audiovisual fields. Fully operational since 1st of January 2006, EACEA operates under the supervision of its four parent Directorates-General of the European Commission (DG EAC, DG CONNECT, DG HOME and DG ECHO).
For more information, visit:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index_en.php

*Structure of DG EAC*

**Deputy Director-General**

**Director-General**

**EACEA**

**EAC.A**
Modernisation of Education I: Europe 2020, country analysis, Erasmus+ coordination

**EAC.B**
Modernisation of Education II: Education policy and programme, Innovation, EIT and MSCA

Europe 2020, Investment Plan, Education and Training 2020

Higher Education

Erasmus+: - Higher Education - Knowledge Alliances, Bologna Support, Jean Monnet

Country Analysis

Schools and educators; multilingualism

Erasmus+: Higher Education - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Erasmus+ Programme coordination and National Agencies management

Innovation in education, EIT and MSCA

Erasmus+: - Higher Education - International Capacity Building

Studies, impact assessments, analysis and statistics

International cooperation in education and youth; Jean Monnet actions

Erasmus+: Schools, Vocational Training, Adult Education, Platforms

Erasmus+: Prospective Initiatives, Policy Networks, Programme and Linguistic Support

Erasmus+: Education and Youth Policy Analysis

### *Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion*

When President Juncker unveiled his team within the European Commission, one of the changes relates to **adult education and vocational training**, which moved from DG EAC to DG EMPL. In this new configuration, different sectors of education are divided between two different Commission portfolios and directorates, adding steps in the decision-making process.

EU employment and social policies bring practical benefits to citizens, e.g. in finding a job, moving to another Member State for work or other reasons and upgrading skills. In partnership with national authorities, social partners, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, DG EMPL addresses challenges linked to **globalisation, the ageing of Europe's population and changing social realities**. The European Commissions' priorities are set out on the Annual Management Plan of DG EMPL.

## LOBBYING?

When a legislative process is initiated at EU level, an important number of actors intervene in order to voice their particular concerns and needs. Actors can also ask for new regulations to be adopted or revised. This is what is usually called lobbying. It is reported that more than 30 000 professional lobbyists are present in Brussels, more than the number of European Commission public servants. Of course, this concept covers various groups (for-profit actors versus NGOs who advocate for general interests). It thus covers various practices aimed at influencing policy makers on behalf of a special interest. The EU is trying to establish rules to ensure transparency such as the Transparency Register and a Code of Administrative Good Conduct. Directors-General for example are required to publish information on meetings held with organisations or self-employed individuals. If you intend to play in this field you shall register on the Transparency Register.

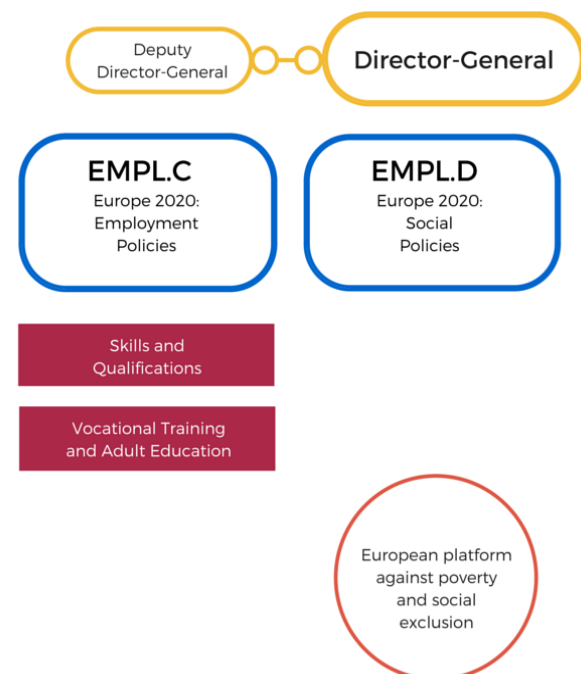For more information, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/

Examples of the areas in which DG EMPL is active include support for:

- More and better jobs through the European Employment Strategy and the European Social Fund (ESF);
- Free movement of workers and coordination of social security schemes;
- Better working conditions through common minimum standards in the workplace, by supporting social dialogue at European level;
- Social inclusion by supporting efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, reform social protection systems, and assess new demographic and social developments.

*Marianne Thyssen (BE), Commissioner for employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility*

*Structure of DG EMPL*

Deputy Director-General — Director-General

**EMPL.C**
Europe 2020: Employment Policies

**EMPL.D**
Europe 2020: Social Policies

Skills and Qualifications

Vocational Training and Adult Education

European platform against poverty and social exclusion

## Decision making in education within the European Commission

Countries are responsible for their own education and training systems, but the EU helps them set joint goals and share good practices. On the basis of articles 165 and 166 TFEU, the European Parliament and the Council may adopt **incentive measures** (that must not infringe Member State power in the matter), while the Council may adopt **recommendations**.

Once a legislative process is launched, a unit is usually in charge of the drafting. If you are interested by a particular policy initiative, the best is thus to contact the **Unit** in charge. The DG EAC also publishes an annual **Management Plan** that will help you to know what initiatives are planned.

The EU has also **programmes** on education, training and youth, with the aim of promoting mobility and encouraging cooperation. For further information, see part III.

As regards to decision-making, the European Commission has set up various **advisory groups** with external stakeholders to inform its work, in addition to its broad consultation procedures. These groups meet several times each year and contribute with their expertise to helping the Commission prepare its Communications and other initiatives. The list of consultative entities is available online: http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/

## Consultations

When the European Commission starts working on a new policy initiative or revises existing legislation, it usually opens a **public consultation**. The main goal is

to improve the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large-scale projects, laws or policies. For example, a public consultation on a "European Area of Skills and Qualifications" was launched by the EU in 2014. The objective of the consultation was to collect the views of stakeholders on the problems faced by learners and workers with regard to the transparency and recognition of their skills and qualifications when moving within and between EU Member States, on the adequacy of the related European policies and instruments and on the potential benefits of developing a "European Area of Skills and Qualifications".

## EUROPEAN CITIZEN'S INITIATIVE

The ECI was introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon (articles 225 and 241 TFEU), aimed at increasing direct democracy in the European Union. It allows one million EU citizens from more than 7 different Member States to participate directly in the development of EU policies, by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal. For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/ public/welcome

## *The Council of the European Union*

### What is it?

The Council of the European Union (often called Council) is the principal decision-maker of the EU and jointly with the European Parliament, has the power to adopt, amend or reject laws (legislative power), which are initiated by the European Commission. It brings together Member State government representatives at ministerial level on a specific policy area. It reflects the national interests and views of each Member State within the EU.

## CO-DECISION

Since 2009 and the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU ordinary legislative procedure is known as co-decision. According to this procedure, after the Commission has initiated a draft legislation, this one goes through to the EP and the Council of the EU, who may amend the text. When the draft is finalised, the EP and the Council vote. The text shall be carried out by a majority in each assembly.

### What does it do?

As the main decision-making body of the EU, the Council is responsible for the:

• adoption of laws (ordinarily in co-decision with the Parliament)

• coordination of economic policies across Europe

• definition and implementation of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the conclusion of international agreements

• adoption of the EU annual budget, in conjunction with the Parliament.

The Council also has a mediation role, which has grown in importance throughout the years and is undertaken mostly by the Council Presidency.

### Structure and organisation of the Council

The Council functions according to a **six-month rotational presidency.** However, since 2007, the Council works on the basis of a common 18-month programme established by **trios of succeeding Presidencies** (and prepared in collaboration with the European Commission).

The current trio is composed of Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg (from July 2014 to 31 December 2015). It will then be the turn of the Netherlands (January–June 2016), Slovakia (July–December 2016), and Malta (January–June 2017). These presidencies set up priorities for their term and define areas of heightened EU policy focus, events, and activities. As chair of most of the Council configurations, the country holding the rotating Presidency plays an important role in organising the work of these Council configurations, both in terms of their political agenda and in terms of advancing legislative procedures.

The Council is a single legal entity. However, in practice it is divided into **several different councils**. Each council is responsible for a different functional area and composed of the relevant ministers from each state government. There are currently 10 council formations. The **Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS) Council** brings together education, culture, youth and communication Ministers around three or four times a year. It usually adopts its decisions by a qualified majority (apart from cultural affairs, where it acts unanimously) and in co-decision with the European Parliament.

All the work of the Council is prepared or

## DO NOT GET CONFUSED

The Council should not be mixed up with the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe is a non-EU organisation of 47 States, including for instance Russia, based in Strasbourg (France). Established in 1949, it is the oldest international European level organisation and it represents 820 million citizens.

coordinated by the Committee of National Representatives (**COREPER** - after its French acronym). COREPER is comprised of high-level national civil servants on permanent assignment to Brussels and plays a significant role in the **day-to-day running** of the Council. Its members prepare the agenda and brief their ministers who attend meetings in Brussels. Furthermore, COREPER is where the first examination of Commission proposals takes place. If a Commission proposal produces a consensus at this level, it is accepted without any discussion at ministerial level.

The work of this Committee is itself prepared by more than **150 committees and working groups** consisting of delegates from the Member States. For example, the **Education Committee** prepares the work of the EYCS Council on education issues.

*Responsibilities of the Council of the European Union*
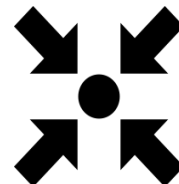
### ADOPTION OF LAWS

ordinarily in co-decision with the Parliament

### INTERNA-TIONAL POLICIES

definition and implementation of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and conclusion of international agreements

### COORDINA-TION

of economic policies across Europe

### EU ANNUAL BUDGET

adoption of the EU annual budget, in conjunction with the Parliament

*17 March 2015, Informal Council Meeting in Paris - Education Ministers adopt a declaration to tackle intolerance, discrimination and radicalisation*

## Voting in the Council

There are three types of voting procedures, depending on the issue under discussion:

- Simple majority (15 Member States out of 28) vote in favour;
- Qualified majority (55% of Member States vote in favour), or
- Unanimous vote (all votes are in favour).

**Simple majority** is used for procedural issues, such as the rules governing Council Committees. It requires the majority of Member States (15 out of 28) to vote the proposal.



### EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS) consists of the EU Ministers of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport and assemble three to four times a year. It works to ensure a high standard of education and vocational training and to contribute to the flourishing of national cultures. This is done whilst fully respecting that the responsibility for teaching content, structure of education systems and cultural diversity lies with the Member States. When doing advocacy campaigns, the education attachés can play a role of intermediary to pass civil society concerns to the EU and its Member States. For more information, visit:
www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/configurations/eycs/

**Qualified majority** is used in 80% of EU legislation adopted through the ordinary legislative procedure, also known as co-decision. A qualified majority is reached if 2 conditions are met: 55% of Member States vote in favour (16 out of 28) and the proposal is supported by Member States representing at least 65% of the total EU population. This is the double majority rule. Proposals can be blocked by a group of 4 Member States, representing more than 35% of the EU population. This is called a blocking minority. This qualified majority rule is in use from November 2014 but until 2017, Member States can still request to use the previous rule. Under this previous rule, each Member State has a certain number of votes, based on their population size. Reaching a qualified majority needs 260 votes, out of a total of 352, from at least 15 Member States.



**Unanimity** requires everyone to agree, or abstain. If a Council member abstains, the other ministers can still reach unanimity. Unanimity voting is used for some specific areas mentioned in the EU treaties, such as citizenship, EU membership and taxation.

# *The European Parliament*

## What is it?

The European Parliament (EP) is the only directly elected institution in the EU, since 1979. Currently, it is made up of **751 Members** elected in the 28 Member States. Since 1979 MEPs are elected by **direct universal suffrage** for a **five-year mandate**.

The Lisbon Treaty gives the EP a more prominent role by extending the co-decision procedure to new policy areas, including education and training policies.

## What does it do?

The European Parliament has 3 main roles:

- **Legislative role:** the Parliament, together with the Council, can accept, amend or reject the content of European law, even though the right of initiative in terms of legislation lies within the Commission.

- **Democratic supervision:** of other EU institutions, and in particular the Commission. The Parliament approves or rejects the college of Commissioners (including the President) upon nomination, and it has the right to censure it, in both cases as a whole. MEPs regularly ask the Commission and the Council written and oral questions, and the Council President takes part in plenary debates.

- **Budgetary role:** both the Council and the Parliament can amend and must approve the annual EU budget.

## Structure and organisation

MEPs are elected by universal suffrage throughout the Member States. The number of MEPs is determined proportionally to the country's population. Currently, the European Parliament is made up of 751 members elected in the 28 member States.

Even though MEPs are designated on a national basis, the parliamentary groupings are formed according to political, rather than national lines: once elected, they represent the European people. Currently, there are **seven political groups**, of which the biggest is the centre-right European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED).

**Plenary sessions** are attended by all MEPs and are normally held for one week each month in Strasbourg.

**Parliamentary Committees** bring together smaller groups of MEPs that specialise in particular areas of EU policy. They do much of the preparatory work for the debates and votes carried out later in plenary. Currently there are 20 committees, which have been formed thematically. The **Culture and Education Committee (CULT)** and the **Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL)** have education and training as one of their portfolio elements;

MEPs can meet in unofficial, voluntary, cross-party groups known as **Intergroups**. They bring together MEPs as well as civil society representatives to discuss issues of common interest that transcend political divisions, such as the Youth Intergroup. In addition, informal interest groups exist, such as the **Lifelong learning Interest Group**. The European Parliament also has delegations of MEPs handling relations with parliaments in non-EU countries.

## Main committees in charge of education

The Committees of the European Parliament are designed to help the European Commission in initiating legislation.

The **Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)** is responsible for improving the knowledge and dissemination of culture, safeguarding cultural heritage and the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. It deals with the EU's education policy and programmes, audiovisual policy, the cultural and educational aspects of the information society, youth policy and the development of a sports and leisure policy. It plays a strong **budgetary role** in the adoption of the EU-funded programmes in its fields.

In that regard, the **Committee on Culture and Education** is responsible for the 'Erasmus+' programme for education, training, youth and sport, 'Creative Europe' which supports European cultural and creative sectors and the 'Europe for citizens' programme. The chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education is **Silvia Costa** (Italy, S&D) since July 2014.

The CULT Committee consists of **61 members** representing the various political groups in the European Parliament. All the meetings of the CULT are public and mainstreamed on the EP website.

Votes in the CULT can have a wider impact in defending education and culture. One of the latest opinions adopted recommendations to the European Commission on the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), adopted on 16 April 2015. The rapporteur was Helga Trüpel (Greens, Germany). The CULT Committee voted in favour of theamendment stating the agreement shall "ensure with a general clause the right to adopt or maintain any measure with regard to the provision of all educational services
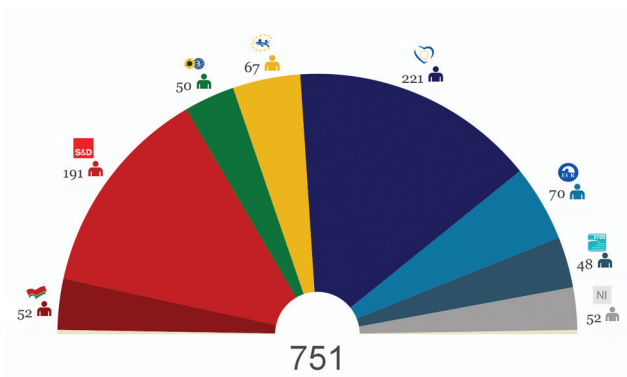


*Number of seats per political group (2014-2019)*
*(Source: European Parliament)*

### Number of seats/members per country (2014-2019)

| Country (ies) | |
|---|---|
| Germany | 96 |
| France | 74 |
| Italy, United Kingdom | 73 |
| Spain | 54 |
| Poland | 51 |
| Romania | 32 |
| Netherlands | 26 |
| Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal | 21 |
| Austria | 18 |
| Sweden | 20 |
| Bulgaria | 17 |
| Denmark, Slovakia, Finland | 13 |
| Ireland, Lithuania, Croatia | 11 |
| Latvia, Slovenia | 8 |
| Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta | 6 |
| TOTAL | 751 |

## LLL INTEREST GROUP

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the Lifelong Learning Programme have initiated an interest group on lifelong learning together with six Members of the European Parliament. The group brings together civil society representatives and MEPs to discuss various key issues connected to lifelong learning. For more information, visit: www.eucis-lll.eu

which work on a non-profit-basis and/or receive public funding to any degree or state support in any form and ensure that privately funded foreign providers meet the same quality and accreditation requirements as domestic providers".

The **Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)** is mainly responsible for employment policies and all aspects of policy, working conditions, vocational training and the free movement of workers and pensioners. The President of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is Thomas Händel (Germany, GUE/NGL) since July 2014.

The EMPL Committee consists of 55 members representing the various political groups in the European Parliament.

*Silvia Costa, MEP, Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education*

## WRITTEN DECLARATION?

A written declaration is a text of a maximum of 200 words relating exclusively on a matter falling within the competence of the European Union. They do not, however, bind Parliament, that is, they cannot be considered as an act of the Parliament representing its position, but only those of its authors and signatories.
For more information, visit: www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/written-declarations.html

*Thomas Händel, MEP, Chairman of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

# The consultative bodies

Other institutions intervene in the law-making process. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) are almost systematically consulted by the Commission during the law drafting period. Their systematic intervention is a way of ensuring decisions are taken only after a variety of stakeholders from European and national levels have been able to express their opinion, in light with the principle of subsidiarity.

## The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

### What is it?

Set up in 1957, the EESC functions primarily as a **consultative body** on issues of social policy, education, social and economic cohesion, and health. The EESC gives Europe's interest groups – trade unionists, employers, farmers, etc. – a formal say on EU legislative proposals.

The EESC must be consulted before decisions are taken on **economic and social policies**.

On its **own initiative**, it may also give opinions on matters it considers important. On average the EESC delivers 170 advisory documents and opinions a year (about 15% of which it issues on its own initiative).

All opinions are forwarded to the EU decision-making bodies (Commission, Council, and EP) and then published in the EU's Official Journal.

### Composition

The EESC is based in Brussels and has **353 members**, drawn from economic and social interest groups across Europe, nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 5-year term.

It has three groups of members:

**Group I: Employers**
This group has 117 members, entrepreneurs and representatives of entrepreneur associations working in industry, trade, services and agriculture in the 28 Member States of the European Union.

**Group II: Employees**
It comprises representatives from national trade unions, confederations and sectoral federations. Its members represent over 80 trade union organisations.

**Group III: Various interest**
From farmers' organisations to consumer and environmental organisations and NGOs.

The EESC is structured around **6 sections**, dealing with particular policy areas, including the **Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC)**, responsible for education and training, among other policy items.

*Maureen O'Neill, President of the SOC Section*

In February 2004, a **"Liaison Group"** with organised civil society was set up. It is composed of EESC members and representatives of European civil society organisations and networks. It holds regular meetings, as well as hearings, conferences and seminars. Currently it is made of 15 EESC members and of representatives of more than 20 main sectors of European Civil society. The Lifelong Learning Platform is among the organisations participating in the liaison group's activities, representing Education and Training.

This group prepares contributions to the work of the EESC and organises debates and events such as the **Civil Society Day** since 2009 in Brussels to highlight the contribution and added value that civil society organisations are making to the building of the European project.

For more information, visit: www.eesc.europa.eu



*Civil Society Day at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels, 6 March 2013*

## Committee of the Regions (CoR)



### What is it?

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) was set up in 1994 as an **advisory body** composed of nominated representatives of Europe's regional and local authorities. It is consulted by EU Institutions (Commission, Parliament and Council) when issues and proposals have **local or regional repercussions** (for example, on employment and education policy). It does so by issuing 'opinions' on European Commission proposals.

### Composition

Based in Brussels, the CoR has **350 members** from the EU 28 countries and its work is organised in **6 different commissions**, including one on **Education, Youth and Research (EDUC)**.

Members are appointed for a five-year term by the Council, acting on proposals from the EU countries. Each country chooses its members in its own way, but delegations should reflect the political, geographical and regional/local balance in their country.

Throughout the EU, local and regional levels have key responsibilities for policies and activities related to education, culture, youth and sports. They are also key players in developing regional research and innovation strategies, and in harnessing the full potential of information and communication technologies to benefit society.

## Ombudsman

The European Ombudsman investigates **complaints about maladministration** in the institutions and bodies of the European Union. It seeks fair outcomes to complaints against EU institutions, encourages transparency, and promotes an administrative culture of service. It aims to build trust through dialogue between citizens and the European Union and to foster the highest standards of behaviour in the EU's institutions.

The European Ombudsman was established by the Maastricht Treaty and the first, Jacob Söderman of Finland, was elected by Parliament in 1995. The Ombudsman is elected for a five year mandate after each European parliament election. Emily O'Reilly, is European Ombudsman since 2013. This institution is playing a more and more important role in monitoring transparency (see «TTIP»).

*Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman since 2013*

### TTIP

The European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, has welcomed the latest steps taken by the European Commission to increase the transparency of the on-going Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. In response to her own-initiative inquiry, the Commission is building on its more pro-active approach to publishing TTIP documents. It stated that its soon-to-be-published list of TTIP documents will be comprehensive, and signalled that it continues to seek to persuade the United States of the need for greater transparency in these trade talks.
For more information, visit: www.ombudsman.europa.eu

## Court of Justice

Established in 1952, the mission of the Court of Justice is to ensure that "the law is observed" in the interpretation and application of primary and secondary law.

The Court of Justice of the European Union reviews the legality of the acts of the EU institutions, it ensures that the Member States comply with their obligations under the Treaties, and interprets EU law at the request of the national courts and tribunals. The Court thus constitutes the judicial authority of the European union and, in cooperation with the courts and tribunals of the Member States, it ensures the uniform application and interpretation of the European law.

The Court is also responsible for many evolutions in EU law that influence the future of the Union as a whole.

# Specialised European Agencies

## European Agencies

### CEDEFOP

Founded in 1975, the Cedefop is located in Thessaloniki, Greece. It is a EU decentralised agency that works closely with the European Commission, governments, and representatives of trade unions, researchers and practitioners in VET, with the goal of strengthening European cooperation in the area of VET and lifelong learning by providing expertise, for example on validation, learning outcomes or qualification frameworks. For more information, visit: www.cedefop.europa.eu

### EURYDICE

The Eurydice network supports and facilitates European cooperation in the field of lifelong learning by providing information on education systems and policies in 37 countries and by producing studies on issues common to European education systems. It consists of 41 national units based in 37 countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme (28 Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey) and a coordinating unit based in the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels. For more information, visit: eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice

### ETF - European Training Foundation

The European Training Foundation is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy. It is based in Turin, Italy, and is operational since 1994. For more information, visit: www.etf.europa.eu

### European Agency for Special needs and Inclusive Education

It is an independent and self-governing organisation established by its member countries to act as a platform for collaboration regarding the development of provision for learners with special educational needs. For more information, visit: www.european-agency.org

### JRC - Joint Research Center

The Joint Research Centre is the European Commission's in-house science service which employs scientists to carry out research in order to provide independent scientific advice and support to EU policy. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/jrc/

## EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The institute is a body of the European Union which was established in 2008 in order to address Europe's innovation gap. It creates collaboration between innovation and excellence centres and it is the first EU initiative to fully integrate all three sides of the Knowledge Triangle. The EIT contributes strongly to the objectives set out in Horizon 2020, in particular by addressing societal challenges in a complementary way to other initiatives in these areas. For more information, visit: eit.europa.eu

## EUROSTAT – Statistical Office of the EU

Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. Its task is to provide the EU with statistics at European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. International statistics are a way of getting to know your neighbours in Member States and countries outside the EU. They are an important, objective and down-to-earth way of measuring how we all live. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/

## Network of Researchers

## CRELL – Centre for Research on LLL

The Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning (CRELL) was established in 2005 in order to provide expertise in the field of indicator-based evaluation and monitoring of education and training systems and their contribution to the achievement of Community objectives specified in the EU2020 agenda. CRELL combines expertise in the fields of economics, econometrics, education, social sciences and statistics in an interdisciplinary approach to research. For more information, visit: crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu

## EENE - Network of European experts on economics of education

EENEE is an EU Think Tank sponsored by the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture. The network is coordinated by the Ifo Institute. EENEE aims to contribute to the improvement of decision-making and policy development in education and training in Europe by advising and supporting the European Commission in the analysis of economic aspects of educational policies and reforms. For more information, visit: www.education-economics.org

## NESET - Network of European Experts on social aspects of education and training

NESET is a network of Academics across Europe and beyond working on social aspects of education and training. Set up in 2011, its mission is to advise and support the Commission in the analysis of educational policies and reforms, and to consider their implications at national, regional and EU level. NESET also contributes to the dissemination of knowledge on social aspects of education and training. For more information, visit:

www.nesetweb.eu

## NESSE - Network of experts in social sciences of education and training

NESSE is a network of scholars working on social aspects of education and training. It was set up in 2007 after a Call for Tenders by European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture. The Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique (INRP, France) is responsible for the coordination of the network. NESSE's

mission is to advise and support the European Commission in the analysis of educational policies and reforms, and to consider their implications at national, regional and European level. NESSE also contributes to the dissemination of knowledge on social aspects of education and training. For more information, visit: http://www.nesse.fr/nesse

# International Organisations

## OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. It provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. The OECD Directorate for Education and Skills helps individuals and nations to identify and develop the knowledge and skills that drive better jobs and better lives, generate prosperity and promote social inclusion. It encourages countries to compare their experiences and learn from each other, and it accompanies them in the difficult process of policy implementation. For more information, visit: www.oecd.org/education/

## ILO - International Labour Organisation

The ILO was founded in 1919, in the wake of a destructive war, to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. The ILO became the first specialised agency of the UN in 1946. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

## Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. For more information, visit: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education

## UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO's mission has been to contribute to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue, with education as one of its principal activities to achieve this aim. The Organisation is committed to a holistic and humanistic vision of quality education worldwide, the realisation of everyone's right to education, and the belief that education plays a fundamental role in human, social and economic development. The UNESCO has 7 specialised institutes for education  including the International Institute for Education Planning and the Lifelong Learning Institute. For more information, visit: unesco.org

# EU POLICY-MAKING

Education has always been regarded as a national rather than EU competence. To date, the EU has only a supporting competence over education and training, meaning that its role is limited to **support, coordinate and supplement member state actions, without superseding their competence**. However, the Maastricht Treaty already recognised a European dimension to education and allowed the EU to contribute to the development of quality education and the promotion and improvement of vocational training, now included under articles 165 and 166 of the Lisbon Treaty.

A turning point in the EU's involvement in education was the formulation of the **Lisbon Agenda** and the application of the **Open Method of Coordination** to the area of education. Formulated at the Lisbon Summit of 2000, the Lisbon Agenda aimed at "making the European Union the most competitive economy in the world by 2010". In June 2010 the European Council adopted the so-called **Europe 2020 strategy** (2010-2020), which succeeds the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010) and where education, training and lifelong learning play even a greater role. In this section you will learn more about the Europe 2020 and ET2020 strategies.

## Europe 2020 Strategy

**Priorities**

Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the current decade (2010-2020). It identifies three key drivers for growth, to be implemented through concrete actions at EU and national levels:

- **Smart growth**, fostering knowledge, innovation, education and digital society.

- **Sustainable growth**, ensuring that the European economy makes a transition towards a low-carbon economic model.

- **Inclusive growth**, raising participation in the labour market and reducing poverty.

Education, training and Lifelong Learning play a key role to achieve these strategic priorities, in particular when it comes to smart and inclusive growth. To render this more tangible, **five key targets** in the areas

### FIVE TARGETS

**1. EMPLOYMENT:** aiming to raise to 75% the employment rate for people aged 20-64;

**2. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT:** improving the conditions for research and development, particularly with the aim of raising combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 3% of GDP;

**3. CLIMATE CHANGE:** reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, increasing the share of renewable to 20% and improving energy efficiency by 2018;

**4. EDUCATION:** improving education level, in particular by aiming to reduce school drop-out rates to less than 10% and increasing the share of young people with a third-level degree or diploma to at least 40%;

**5. POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION:** Ensuring at least 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy have been set for the EU to achieve by the end of the decade.

The strategy also includes **seven 'flagship initiatives'** providing a framework through which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts. Two of these flagship initiatives are particularly linked to education: Youth on the Move and An Agenda for New Skills and New Jobs.

## SEVEN FLAGSHIPS

Under Smart Growth:
- Digital Agenda for Europe
- Innovation Union
- **Youth on the Move**

Under Sustainable Growth:
- Resource efficient Europe
- An industrial policy

Under Inclusive Growth:
- **An Agenda for new skills and new jobs**
- European platform against poverty

### *Youth on the move*



Youth on the move is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives aiming at improving young people's education and employability, in order to reduce high youth unemployment and to increase the youth-employment rate – in line with the wider EU target of achieving a 75% employment rate for the working-age population (20-64 years) by making education and training more relevant to young people's needs, encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country and encouraging EU countries to take measures simplifying the transition from education to work.

### *An agenda for new skills and jobs*



This agenda has the objective of creating the right conditions to modernise labour markets and to allow people to acquire new skills in order to raise employment levels and to ensure the sustainability of our social models.

The concrete actions to be taken include the acquisition and recognition of learning throughout general, vocational, higher and adult learning, and the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework.

Of course, the EU can take new initiatives to face important challenges such as youth unemployment. This is the case of the Youth Guarantee for example for the Investment Plan. The Youth Guarantee is a new approach to tackling youth unemployment which ensures that all young people under 25 – whether registered with employment services or not – get a good-quality, concrete offer within 4 months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. For more information, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/social/

## European Semester

The Europe 2020 strategy calls on each Member State to translate the common European targets into **national targets and trajectories** by taking account its relative starting position and national circumstances. To ensure that the Europe 2020 strategy delivers, a new system of **economic governance** has been set up since 2010 to coordinate policy actions between the EU and national levels, the so-called European Semester.

The **European Semester** is an annual cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination. Through this process, the European Commission evaluates whether and to what extent the commitments undertaken by Member States allow the EU to meet its headline targets for 2020 in essential areas such as employment rates and/or education, and provides them with recommendations for the next 12-18 months.

In May/June, the European Commission publishes **Country Specific Recommendations** (CSRs). Once these recommendations are endorsed at the June European Council and formally adopted by the Council of Ministers in July, they are **meant to help Member States to prepare and adopt their national economic policies and budgets for the following year**.

Throughout the year Member States are encouraged to implement **peer review** activities in specific policy issues at EU and national level to see its compliance with the recommendations and monitor progress towards the EU 2020 headline targets.

### SPRING EUROPEAN COUNCIL

In March, EU Heads of State and government issue EU guidance for national policies on the basis of the Annual Growth Survey. The Spring meeting of the European Council, based on the Annual Growth Survey, takes stock of the overall macroeconomic situation, the progress towards the five EU-level targets and the progress under the flagship initiatives. It provides policy orientations covering fiscal, macroeconomic structural reform and growth enhancing areas, and advises on linkages between them.

### STABILITY AND CONVERGENCE PROGRAMMES (SCPS) & NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES (NRPS)

The Spring European Council gives strategic guidance on the priorities to be pursued during the Semester Cycle. It invites Member States to take into account these priorities in their SCPs and NRPs, including their national Job Plans. In April, Member States submit to the European Commission both their medium-term budgetary and economic strategies (SCPS) and set out actions and measures to be undertaken in areas such as employment, education, research, innovation, or social inclusion in line with EU2020 objectives (NRPs).

### ANNUAL GROWTH SURVEY (AGS)

The European semester starts when the Commission adopts its Annual Growth Survey, usually towards the end of the year, which includes a review of the progress achieved and sets out EU priorities for the coming year to boost growth and job creation, in line with EU 2020 objectives. In the Annual Growth Survey for 2015 , the European Commission, which took office on 1 November 2014, outlines the main features of its new jobs and growth agenda.

# Education and Training 2020 (ET2020)

## Aim and objectives

The main aim of the framework is to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, covering all levels and contexts (including non-formal and informal learning). It provides common strategic objectives for Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas for each periodic work cycle. ET2020 builds on its predecessor, the **Education and Training 2010** work programme, which was launched as a response to the Lisbon Agenda in 2000.

For each of these strategic objectives, the programme identified key issues and indicators for measuring progress and proposed ways with the follow-up work for achieving the concrete objectives. It draws on tools, such as benchmarks and indicators, and facilitates mutual learning by comparing best practices, period monitoring, evaluation, and peer review.

A new element that has been introduced by the ET2020 is that the period up to 2020 is divided into a series of **cycles**, with the current one covering the three years from 2015 to 2017. For each work cycle, a number of **priority areas** are adopted on the basis of the above-mentioned four strategic objectives. This more "flexible" approach should allow more regular evaluation of progress and, when necessary, adjustment

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improve the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

of priority areas for the following cycle.

A **joint Council-Commission progress report** should be drawn up at the end of each cycle, which assesses Member States progress towards the common ET2020 objectives and also contributes to the establishment of the priority areas for the next cycle. The next report will be adopted in the second half of 2015 and will assess progress made toward the overall strategic objectives and the priorities for the current work cycle (2012-2015) and establish a new set of priority areas for the next cycle.

Since 2015 marks the half-way stage for ET 2020, the report will also evaluate all aspects of the strategic framework. It will propose any modifications which Member States consider necessary to improve the governance and working methods. The Commission is expected to publish its draft proposal after the summer. This proposal will be examined and adopted by the Council before the end of the year.

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is a voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing common objectives and common indicators, which show how progress towards these goals can be measured. The Commission plays a very active role in setting goals, indicators and benchmarks and monitoring their evolution.

**RESEARCH, DATA**

e.g. NESSE, studies...

**PEER LEARNING**

e.g. Pear learning activity on VNFIL...

**GROUPS AND NETWORKS**

e.g. EQF Advisory Group, Thematic working groups..

## Open method of Coordination (OMC)

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is an instrument from the Lisbon Strategy. It consists in a **voluntary process for political cooperation** based on agreeing common objectives and common indicators, which show how progress towards these goals can be measured. It is applied in policy areas where the European Union has limited competences according to the EU Treaties, such as education and training, but where Member States feel there is an added value in working together at the European level. This is therefore an **intergovernmental method** where Member States assess each other according to a method based on "naming and shaming" and under the supervision of the European Commission. The European Commission plays indeed a very active role in setting goals, indicators and benchmarks and monitoring their evolution, which allows it to gain quite an influence in the process.

The OMC is the working method applied to implement the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020).

From a practical level point of view, this work within the OMC can be undertaken through different working methods and tools, like establishing groups/networks with the aim of implementing legal instruments (i.e. EQF advisory Group), setting up thematic working groups and expert groups to address specific policy

### ET2020 WORKING GROUPS

- Schools, including early school leaving and the Teaching Profession.
- Modernisation of Higher Education.
- Vocational education and training, with an initial focus on apprenticeships and work-based learning, as key elements of overall VET systems.
- Adult Learning, with focus on strategies to reduce the number of low-skilled adults.
- Transversal skills, including ICT and Entrepreneurial Skills (and Languages once the new benchmark is agreed).
- Digital and online learning.

areas, organising peer-learning activities and conducting research, data collection and analysis. In the field of education, **ET2020 Thematic Working Groups (TWGs)** have just undergone a revision after the Council's request in February 2013. Their new mandate focuses on implementing the ET2020 agenda and building tighter links with the European Semester, and their number has been reduced to match key policy challenges. Their results should be regularly presented to the Education Committee of the Council and national representatives should turn over within the TWGs representation in order to gain more ownership on what happens there.

The role of the EU in education and training is to support, coordinate and supplement member state actions, without superseding their competence. The European Commission regularly publishes Communications giving political directions for the years to come such as the 2012 "Rethinking Education" and the 2013 "Opening up Education" Communications – what is referred to as soft law.

**WHY?** Contribute to the development of quality education and the promotion and improvement of vocational training.
art. 165 & 166 TEU

**HOW?**

BENCHMARKING

SETTING COMMON OBJECTIVES

EU PROGRAMMES

PEER LEARNING

## Measuring progress:

## Indicators and  benchmarks

In addition to the above-mentioned policy frameworks, the implementation of the four strategic objectives agreed under the umbrella of the ET2020 is principally based on establishing measuring instruments (benchmarks and indicators), monitoring progress towards them, exchanging good practices and developing peer-learning activities.

Moreover, various **networks, expert groups, and research centres** are supporting the European Commission in the field of education and training by providing extensive research in order to support "**evidence based policy making**" and by promoting relevant comparative analysis.

To measure progress towards the ET2020 strategic objectives in education and training, Member States agreed to set up measurement tools, the so-called **benchmarks and progress indicators**. Their role is to help structure educational performance data on different education systems among Member States and, thus, become frames of reference and comparison for setting future policy development and discussion.

In May 2009 the Council adopted the set of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020. Two of these five benchmarks – to reduce the number of early school leavers; and to increase the share of young adults holding tertiary education qualifications (they are underlined in the above list) – have been given further importance having been selected headline targets for the overall Europe 2020 Strategy.

The new framework for cooperation ET2020 explicitly mentions that the benchmarks are **not to be considered as binding targets** for Member States. EU countries are rather encouraged to contribute to the collective achievement of the benchmarks at EU

## LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

The term European legal instruments refers to the instruments available to the European institutions to carry out their tasks. As EU has only a supporting competence over education and training, it mostly issues soft-law policy measures, which are nonbinding, but nonetheless carry political weight:

- **Communications** usually set out a Commission action plan. They may also include concrete proposals for legislation.
- **Green Papers** are usually used to launch a consultation process. They present Commission policy orientations to interested parties that may wish to comment. The Commission will generally prepare a subsequent proposal.
- **White Papers**, which are often the follow-up of a Green Paper, set out concrete proposals for action by the Commission in a specific area.
- **Council Conclusions** are policy guidelines adopted at Council meetings. Although not legally binding, the conclusions have political power as a frame of reference.
- **Council Resolutions** are documents that are produced at the end of thematic debates at the European Council. While they are not legally binding, they have often been transposed into EU law through the work of the European Commission, Council of Ministers, or the European Parliament.
- **Recommendations and Opinions** are non-binding instruments issued by the Commission to define its view and suggest a line of action for a specific issue. Though they have technically no legal force, they do carry political and moral weight.

level according to their specific needs and national priorities.

In addition, since 2009 two new benchmarks on learning mobility and the employability of young graduates have been adopted and the European Commission launched in 2012 another benchmark on language teaching.

Moreover, in 2007 the Council adopted a wider framework of **16 indicators** as a means to supplement the analysis of education systems, such as the role of teachers and trends in investment in education:

- Participation in preschool education;
- Special needs education;
- Early-school leavers;
- Literacy in reading;
- Mathematics and science;
- Language skills;
- ICT skills;
- Civic skills;
- Learning to learn skills;
- Upper secondary completion rates of young people;
- Professional development of teachers and trainers;
- Higher education graduates;
- Cross national mobility of students in higher education;
- Participation of adults in lifelong learning;
- Educational attainment of the population;
- Investment in education and training.

## Monitoring progress:

## Joint and Annual Reports

Monitoring of both performance and progress is an essential part of the European Union's education and training policies, assessing strengths and weaknesses and guiding future strategy. The European Commission publishes regular **annual reports** and Commission staff working documents that present a detailed analysis of national statistics on performance and progress under ET2020 using all of these benchmarks and indicators.

The first joint report was adopted in February 2012 and, apart from adjusting some of these priority areas, it also reviews some of the working arrangements under ET 2020 to be better aligned with Europe

## EU BENCHMARKS FOR 2020

- **Pre-school participation:** at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education;
- **Low achievers:** the share of 15 years olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%;
- **Early school leavers:** The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%;
- **Tertiary attainment:** the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%;
- **Adult lifelong learning participation:** an average of at least 15% of adults (age group 25-64) should participate in lifelong learning.
- **Learning mobility** (adopted in 2011): at least 20% of higher education graduates in the EU should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) lasting a minimum of three months or representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits; more than 18-34 year olds with an initial vocational education and training qualification should have had an initial study or training period abroad of at least two weeks by 2020;
- **Employability of young graduates** (adopted in 2012): by 2020, the share of employed graduates (20-34 year olds) having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year should be at least 82%.
- **Language teaching** (launched in 2012): by 2020, at least 50% of 15 year-olds should attain the level of independent user of a first foreign language; by 2020, at least 75% of pupils in lower secondary education should study at least two foreign languages.
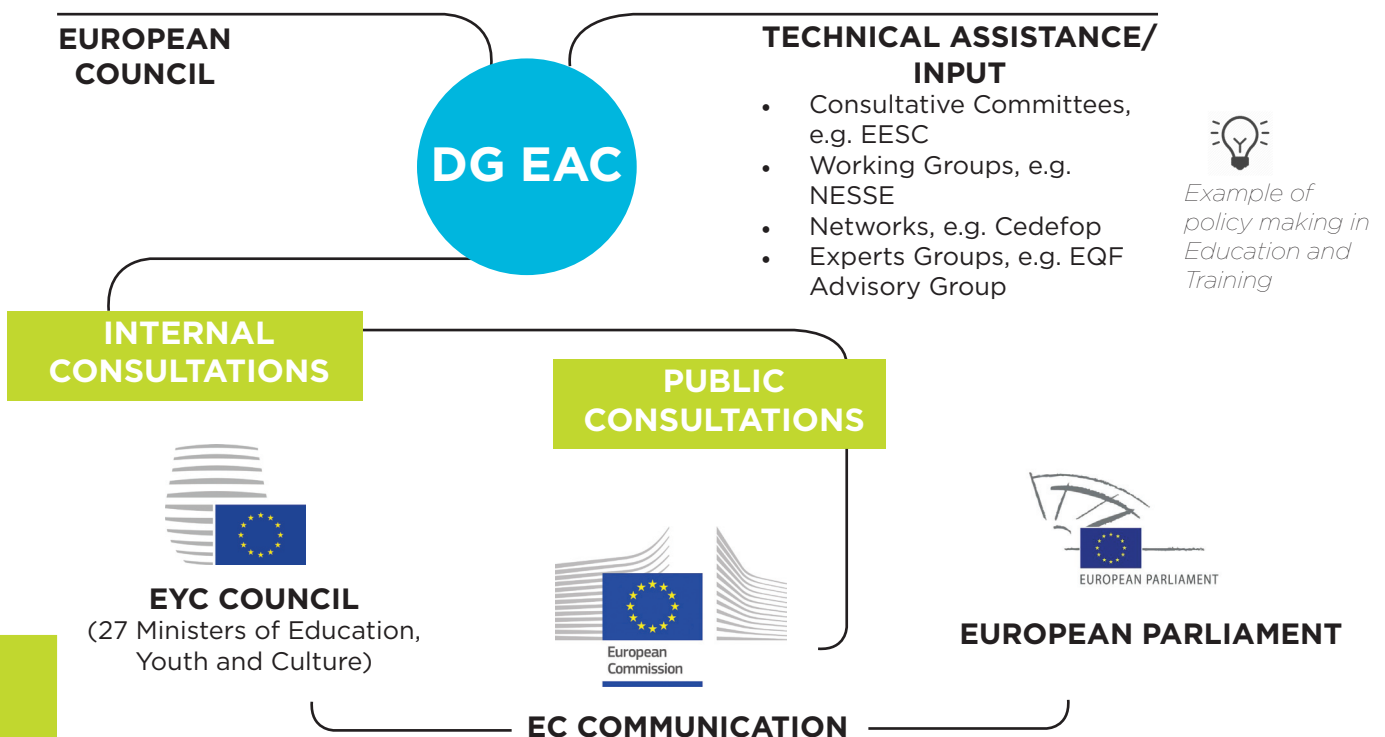
2020 and the European Semester. In particular, it strengthened the Council's involvement and role on the education and training dimension of Europe 2020 in both the European and national semester process (i.e. peer-reviews on the outcomes of the semester) and it suggested the creation of two new tools: the Education and Training Forum, to consult stakeholders on modernising education and training systems drawing on the discussion of education issues in the European Semester, and the Education & Training Monitor,an annual analytical report to monitor progress on the ET2020 benchmarks and core indicators.

In addition to the joint reports, a new **Education and Training Monitor** has been put in place to provide an annual analytical report to monitor progress on the ET2020 benchmarks and core indicators, and that is accompanied with 28 countries reports. The European Commission published the third annual edition of the Education and Training Monitor in November 2014 and is accompanied by 28 country reports, as well as a visualisation tool to evaluate the performance and progress of the Member States in relation to the ET2020 targets. The next Education and Training Monitor is due to be published in late 2015.

## EDUCATION FORUM

The Education, Training and Youth Forum aims to bring together various stakeholders once per year in order to discuss key policy developments linked to the Europe 2020 strategy, the ET2020 strategy and the European Youth strategy. The Lifelong Learning Platform wants this partnership dialogue between decision makers, social partners and civil society representatives to be rich, open, more regular and sustainable in order to discuss the future of education and training in Europe and foster the successful implementation of reforms at national and regional level, in particular through the opportunities offered by the new EU education, training and youth programme 2014-2020 "Erasmus+". The third edition of the European Education, Training and Youth (ETY) Forum took place in Brussels on 9th and 10th of October 2014. The theme of the Forum was "Future Priorities of the ET2020 Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training and Synergies with Youth Policy". It gathered more than 350 participants representing different types of stakeholders and organisations active in education, training and youth.
For more information, please visit: www. eucis-lll.eu

**EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

**DG EAC**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/ INPUT**

- Consultative Committees, e.g. EESC
- Working Groups, e.g. NESSE
- Networks, e.g. Cedefop
- Experts Groups, e.g. EQF Advisory Group

*Example of policy making in Education and Training*

**INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS**

**EYC COUNCIL**
(27 Ministers of Education, Youth and Culture)

Europen Commission

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**EC COMMUNICATION**

# Main policy initiatives of EU cooperation in Education and Training

## Mobility and Lifelong Learning instruments

There are several initiatives aimed at making qualifications, experiences and skills better appreciated and easier to recognise throughout the EU. The aim is to give greater access to learning or employment opportunities in different countries and encourage greater mobility – for individuals, businesses and other organisations.

### The European Framework of Key Competences

The eight key competences framework for lifelong learning is a tool for policy-makers across the EU which identifies the essential skills that people need to lead successful lives in today's world. This framework defines eight key competences and describes the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to each of these. These key competences are all interdependent, and the emphasis in each case is on critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and constructive management of feelings.

The **eight key competences** are:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

### The European Qualification Framework

The European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) aims to better link different national qualifications systems, acting as a translation device for employers and individuals to better understand qualifications from different EU countries, thus making it easier to work, study or hire staff abroad. Its eight common European reference levels are described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences. This allows any national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and qualifications in Europe to relate to the EQF levels. Learners, graduates, providers and employers can use these levels to understand and compare qualifications awarded in different countries and by different education and training systems. The rapid development of NQFs at national level has set the scene for the development of other initiatives such as the validation of non-formal and informal learning. For further information, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus

### The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)

EQAVET was adopted by the European Parliament and the European Council in 2009. It is designed to promote better vocational education and training by providing authorities with common tools for the management of quality. The Reference Framework forms part of a series of European initiatives which aim to recognise qualifications and competences received by learners across different countries or

learning environments, thereby promoting modernisation, mutual trust and mobility in vocational education and training (VET). For more information, visit: www.eqavet.eu

### The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

This tool helps to design, describe and deliver study programmes and award higher education qualifications. The ECTS is a learner-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve certain course outcomes. The use of ECTS, in conjunction with outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, makes study programmes and qualifications more transparent and facilitates the recognition of qualifications. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm

### The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

This tool was initiated in 2004 along the lines of the ECTS. It has been developed to help the transfer and recognition of learning experiences in Europe, including those outside formal training systems.

The aim of the ECVET is to:
• Make it easier for people to get validation and recognition of work-related skills and knowledge acquired in different systems and countries
• Make it more attractive to move between different countries and learning environments
• Increase the compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems in place across Europe, and the qualifications they offer
• Increase the employability of VET graduates and the confidence of employers that each VET qualification requires specific skills and knowledge.

For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en.htm

### Europass

Europass is a EU initiative to increase transparency of qualification and mobility of citizens in Europe. It aims to be a Lifelong Learning portfolio of documents containing the descriptions of all learning achievements, official qualifications, work experience, skills and competences, acquired over time. Europass helps people make their qualifications and skills better understood and recognised throughout Europe, increasing their employment prospects. Its webportal includes interactive tools that, for example, allow users to create a CV in a common European format.

It comprises 5 documents to make skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood:
• The Curriculum Vitae
• The Language Passport
• The Europass mobility
• The certificate Supplement
• The Diploma Supplement

In every country of the European Union and the European Economic Area, a National Europass Centre coordinates all activities related to the Europass documents. It is the first point of contact for any person or organisation interested in using or learning more about Europass. For more information, visit: europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about/national-europass-centres

### National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)

NARIC provides information and advice on the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study abroad. It consists of national centres in the countries covered by the Erasmus+ programme and works closely with the wider European Network of Information Centres covering the whole of the European Higher Education Area. It is part of the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme and is aimed at improving the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/education/tools/naric_en.htm

## European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)

ESCO is an online job portal which identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations using standard terminology in all EU languages. It enables users to exchange CVs and job vacancies stored in different IT systems. The beneficiaries of ESCO are jobseekers, education and training institutions and employers. For more information, visit the ESCO Portal: ec.europa.eu/esco/home

## Youthpass

Youthpass is part of the European Commission's strategy to foster the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in youth work. This tool is for projects funded by Erasmus+ Youth in Action and Youth in Actions programmes. The Youthpass certificates are available for Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service, and youth workers' mobility within key Action 1. For more information on Youthpass, visit: https://www.youthpass.eu/

## PLOTEUS

The Portal on Learning Opportunities Throughout European Space is a EU webportal coordinated by DG EAC. The portal offers an easy access and source of information from primary school to postgraduate education. Run by the Euroguidance network and financed by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the portal is interconnected with EURES, the European Commissions' portal on job mobility information. For further information on PLOTEUS, please visit: ec.europa.eu/ploteus/

## School education

Also each country is responsible for the organisation and content of education and training systems, there are often advantages by working together on similar issues of concern. The European Commission supports national efforts in two main ways: it works closely with national policy-makers to help them develop their school education policies and systems. It gathers and shares information and analysis and encourages the **exchange of good policy practices**.

Building on the results of two previous Thematic Working Groups on Teacher professional Development and Early School Leaving, a new group looks at ways to improve the quality of teacher education and the collaborative approaches that can support schools in their ambitions to **provide educational success for all and reduce early school leaving** (ESL). By the end of 2015, the group expects to deliver a Guidance Framework and a toolkit for schools to reduce ESL.

## SOME NGOS IN THE FIELD

- European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE)
- European Federation for Education and Culture (EFEC)
- European Forum for Freedom in Education (effe)
- European Parents' Association (EPA)
- European Shool Heads Association (ESHA)
- International Federation of Training Centres for the promotion of new education (FICEMEA)
- International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC)
- Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
- European Council of National Association of Independent Schools (ECNAIS)
- European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO)

For further information on school policy, please visit: ec.europa.eu/education/ policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups_ en.htm#schools

The **Erasmus+** Programme invests millions of Euros each year in projects that promote school exchanges, school development, the education of school staff, school assistantships, etc.

As regards the priority areas, education ministers from EU countries have recently come together to create these key priority areas:

- All pupils should gain basic literary and numeracy skills through modernising curricula, learning materials and pupil assessment;
- Every pupil should benefit from high-quality learning including migrant children;
- Pre-school education should be more widely available;
- Early school leaving should be reduced;
- Improvements are to be made for the support given to students with special needs in mainstream education;
- More support should be given to teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators through effective recruitment and selection and professional education.

## Vocational Education and Training

Based on the **Copenhagen Process**, the European Commission acts in partnership with national governments, employers' and workers' groups and countries outside the EU to:

- Improve the quality of training (initial education, continuing development);
- Improve the quality of teachers, trainers and other professionals in the sector;
- Make courses more relevant to the labour market.

The Commission's work on vocational education and training is supported by two agencies: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (**Cedefop**), which provides information and analysis of education and training systems, policies, research and practice in the EU and the European Training Foundation (**ETF**), which works to develop education and training systems in the Western Balkans, neighbouring countries and Central Asia.

On 7 December 2010, European Ministers for vocational education and training (VET), the European Social Partners and the European Commission adopted the **Bruges**

### SOME NGOS IN THE FIELD

- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
- European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET)
- European Vocational Training Association (EVTA)
- European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)
- European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)
- The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
- Foundation of European Regions for Research in Education and Training (FREREF)

**Communiqué** on enhanced European cooperation in VET for 2011-2020. The Communiqué defines common objectives for 2020 and an action plan for the coming years, combining national measures with European support.

The Bruges Communiqué has inspired systemic reforms focusing on **learning-outcomes-oriented standards and curricula**. Some countries, such as Germany, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands, already have strong dual VET systems. These countries report better employment rates for young people and fewer skills mismatches. The EU is thus pushing for the development of dual VET systems.

Reviews of Europe 2020 and ET2020 strategies, and priorities for VET, as outlined in the 2010 Bruges communiqué, were agreed upon on 22 June 2015 in the **Riga Conclusions** to boost competitive and innovative vocational education and training. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy

The **Erasmus+** programme aims to improve the quality of VET across Europe, providing opportunities for vocational students and staff to undertake traineeship abroad. It helps to improve employability and skills and contribute to the competitiveness of the European economy. It involves companies, NGOs, vocational school with periods of work-based learning in a company, training, job shadowing or observations and teaching assignments. This is being done through the implementation of the European Credit system for Vocational Educational and Training (ECVET) and European Quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

Last but not least, an **ET2020 Working Group on VET** started its activities in January 2014 and will last until October 2015.

## Higher Education

Higher education, research and innovation play a crucial role in personal and societal development and in delivering the European Union's strategy to achieve and maintain growth. The Europe 2020 strategy has set a target that by 2020 40% of young Europeans have a higher education qualification.

The contribution of higher education to jobs and growth, and its international attractiveness, can be enhanced through effective links between education, research, and innovation, which are key drivers of a knowledge-based society. Education, research and innovation are the three sides of the so-called "**Knowledge Triangle**".

Launched in 1999, the **Bologna Process** aims to provide tools to connect national educational systems. The intention is to allow the diversity of national systems and universities to be maintained while the **European Higher Education Area** improves transparency between higher education systems, as well as implements

### SOME NGOS IN THE FIELD

- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
- European Students' Forum (AEGEE Europe)
- European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN)
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
- European Students Union (ESU)
- European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)
- European University College Association (EucA)
- European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)
- European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)
- European University Foundation – Campus Europae (EUF-CE)

tools to facilitate recognition of degrees and academic qualifications, mobility, and exchanges between institutions. The

reforms are based on ten simple objectives which governments and institutions are currently implementing. Most importantly, all participating countries have agreed on a comparable three cycle degree system for undergraduates (Bachelor degrees) and graduates (Master and PhD degrees).

The Bologna Process is a collective effort of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, international organisations, and institutions, including the European Commission.

The main focus is:

• The introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctor) strengthened;

• Quality assurance;

• Easier recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

The Bologna declaration (in full, Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on 19 June 1999) is the main guiding document of the Bologna process. It was adopted by ministers of education of 29 European countries at their meeting in Bologna in 1999.

On May 14-15 of 2015 the latest Bologna process Ministerial Conference and Bologna Policy forum was held in Yerevan, Armenia. The participants of the process agreed upon the most recent Communiqué that sets the agenda for the coming years, and approves new members. For more information, visit: http://www.ehea.info/

## Adult Learning

The European Commission is working with 32 countries to implement the **European Agenda for Adult Learning**. This agenda highlights the need to increase participation in adult learning of all kind (formal, non-formal and informal learning). The crisis has highlighted the major role which adult learning can play in achieving the Europe 2020 goals, by enabling adults, in particular the low-skilled and older workers, to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society.

The European Commission coordinates a network of national coordinators who all promote adult learning in their countries by providing policy advice and support, and gather and distribute the best practices. The European Commission also works with a range of European associations, networks and labour organisations to promote adult learning.

EU countries have set a target for adult learning: by 2020, 15% of adults aged 25-

### SOME NGOS IN THE FIELD

• European association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
• European Federation for Catholic Adult Education (FEECA)
• SOLIDAR
• International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)
• The International Language Association (ICC)
• Telecentre Europe
• VOLONTEUROPE Network

64 should be taking part. In 2012, average participation was 9% and only 5 EU countries had reached the target rate.

Besides, the European Commission facilitates exchange of good practices and publishes indicators and data on the current situation in member countries, reports on progress in implementing policies and proposes new policy and facilitates exchange of good practices.

The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (**EPALE**), funded under the Erasmus+ programme, aims to become the main point of reference for adult learning professionals in Europe.

EPALE began in early 2014 with the support of EACEA and became operational in 2015. The website offers a pan European Calendar of events, a Newsroom, a Resource centre and five Thematic pages which focus upon topics important in Adult learning Sector. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/epale/

## THE SURVEY OF ADULT SKILLS (PIAAC)

The Survey of Adult Skills is an international survey conducted in 33 countries as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). It measures the key cognitive and workplace skills needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper. The first results from the Survey were released on 8 October 2013. It is organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

## Youth policies (NFE)

The EU Youth Strategy, agreed by EU Ministers, sets out a framework for cooperation covering the years 2010-2018. It has two main objectives: to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market and to encourage young people to actively participate in society.

The objectives are achieved through a dual approach which includes:

• Specific youth initiatives, targeted at young people to encourage non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information.

• 'Mainstreaming' cross-sector initiatives that ensure youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other fields with a significant impact on young people, such as education, employment or health and well-being.

The EU Youth Strategy proposes initiatives in eight areas:

• Education & training
• Employment & entrepreneurship
• Health & well-being
• Participation
• Voluntary activities
• Social inclusion
• Youth & the world
• Creativity & culture.

The **Joint EU Youth Report** 2015 has been published together with national reports. In May 2015, the European Commission has published the **European Youth Monitor** based on 41 statistical indicators on the state of young people in the EU. For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/youth

## SOME NGOS IN THE FIELD

• European Students' Forum (AEGEE Europe)
• European Educational Exchanges – Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU)
• European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)
• Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
• European Students Union (ESU)
• International Federation of Training Centres for the promotion of new education (FICEMEA)
• Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
• Youth for Exchange and Understanding

## Horizontal policies

### *Rethinking Education*

Rethinking Education was set up in 2012 to reform education systems across the EU so as to meet growing demand for higher skill levels and reduce unemployment.

The initiative focuses on three areas in need of reform: quality, accessibility and funding.

Reforms should be designed to:

- raise basic skills levels,
- promote apprenticeships,
- promote entrepreneurial skills,
- improve foreign language skills.

The Communication was followed by extensive EU-wide country analysis aimed to establish sound benchmarks for developing policy on the basis of concrete evidence.

The Council followed up «Rethinking Education» and the country analyses with its Conclusions on investing in education and training.

For more information, visit: ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/rethinking-education

### *Opening up Education initiative*

The main goal of this initiative is to stimulate ways of learning and teaching through ICT and digital content, mainly through the development and availability of OER. Amongst its actions, the most important one is to change the role of digital technologies at school. All the actions within the initiative are put in place with the hope that they help attain the ultimate objective, namely to boost competitiveness and growth at the European level.

Opening up Education calls for EU-level cooperation to push reforms towards the adoption of open learning environments as drivers to enhance digital skills both for pupils and teachers, and in education in general. Another major concern of the European Commission, stated in this initiative and in alignment with the Open Education Europa portal, is to be able to support the deployment and availability of digital technology and content.

For more information, visit: www.openeducationeuropa.eu/fr/initiativeeducation

# EU FUNDING

EU funding programmes are also key policy implementation instruments. EU funds, managed mostly by the European Commission, can be granted to public or non-governmental organisations. The funds are intended to aid the implementation of EU policies or to further pursue EU interests in specific policy areas. The funds are especially important in areas where the EU lacks formal competence, such as education and training.

## Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014-2020 . It aims to boost skills and employability and to modernise Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme will have a budget of 14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to former programmes spending levels. Entered in force at the beginning of 2014 and acting up to 2020, the new Erasmus+ programme brings together seven former programmes including the Lifelong Learning programme, the Youth in Action programme 2007-2013, five international cooperation programmes and the new sport action.

The programme has been conceived with a simplified architecture based on three key actions:

- **Key Action 1 - Learning mobility** of individuals supporting mobility of learners and staff, joint master degrees and the master student loan guarantee. The actions supported under this Key Action are expected to bring positive and long-lasting effects on the participants and participating organisations involved, as well as on the policy systems in which such activities are framed;



**Erasmus+**

What's in it for education, training, youth and sport?

2014-2020

Erasmus+

- **Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices** supporting strategic partnerships, sector skills alliances and knowledge alliances, as well as capacity-building projects and IT sectoral platforms. This key Action is expected to result in the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European levels;

- **Key Action 3 - Support for policy reforms** encouraging stakeholders' participation, evidence based-policy-making, the Open method of Coordination and prospective initiatives from public authorities. The activities in support for policy reform

are targeted at the achievement of the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and of the European Youth Strategy. Key Action 3 covers other actions in support for policy reforms in the education, training and youth fields. These actions are:

• Knowledge in the field of education, training and youth, involving evidence gathering, analysis and peer learning;

• Initiatives for policy innovation in order to develop new policies or prepare their implementation;

• Cooperation with international organisations, such as the OECD and the Council of Europe. This action also fosters policy dialogue with partner

countries as well as the promotion of the international attractiveness of European higher education in the world.

The programme general objectives are meant to be more tightly linked to EU2020 and ET2020 priorities    as well as the renewed framework for EU cooperation in the youth field. Important features should be emphasised in the current programming period such as the recognition and validation of skills and qualifications, the international dimension, multilingualism and equity and inclusion. Indeed, Erasmus+ aims at facilitating the access to learning mobility to disadvantaged learners (disability, poor socio-economic background, migrants, remote areas inhabitants, etc.).

# Europe for Citizens

The programme aims at contributing to citizens' understanding of the EU, its history and diversity, and to foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level.

The annual priorities for 2015 are:

• **European remembrance:** in the context of the 70th anniversary of the end of the World war II, the focus will be on the consequences of World War II and the associated rise of intolerance that enabled crimes against humanity, as well as the consequences of World War II for the post-war architecture of Europe: its division and the Cold war on the one hand, and the beginning of the European integration process following the Schuman Declaration in 1950 on the other hand;



• **Democratic engagement and civic participation:** following the European elections of May 2014 and in the current debate on the European Union in times of the economic crisis, there is a need to stimulate new forms of civic participation whilst reinforcing those existing.

Public bodies or non-for-profit organisations with a legal personality can apply and the programme is open to the 28 EU Member States.

# Social Inclusion

## *The European Social Fund (ESF)*

The European Social Fund belongs to the EU Structural Funds that are financial tools set up to implement the European regional policy. It was created to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across the EU, especially through the promotion of employment and with a focus on VET. With the elaboration of the new ESF 2014-2020 a new category of regions has been created in order to ease the transition of these regions, which have become more competitive in recent years, but still need targeted support.

The funding is allocated for projects operated by public and/or private sector beneficiaries within Member States and their regions according to co-financing and shared management principles. The 2014 European Code of Conduct Programmes have been elaborated jointly with Member States and the Commission for the programming period describing thematic objectives and investment priorities chosen by countries.

The ESF investment priorities in education are the following:

- Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education, including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for re-integrating into education and training;

- Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increase participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;

- Enhancing equal access to Lifelong Learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways, including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences;

- Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training (VET) systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.

ESF projects are applied for and run by a wide variety of organisations known as beneficiaries, including public administrations, workers' and employers' organisations, NGOs, charities and companies. The individuals who take part in an ESF project are called participants; these include, for example, older workers training for new skills, young job-seekers getting work placements, or people seeking advice on how to set up their own business.

**European Social Fund. Investing In Your Future**

ec.europa.eu/esf

## *The EU programme for Social Change and Innovation (EaSI)*

EaSI is a financing instrument at EU level to promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions. It brings together three EU programmes managed separately between 2007 and 2013: PROGRESS, EURES and Progress Microfinance. As of January 2014, these programmes form the three axes of EaSI and they support:

- **The modernisation of employment and social policies with the PROGRESS axis** (61% of the total budget). The PROGRESS axis of EaSI  is open to all public and/or private bodies, actors and institutions. It can support cooperation with international organisations, in particular with the Council of Europe, the OECD, and the ILO, with other United Nations bodies and with the World Bank. To apply for the funding, eligible organisations must respond to a call for tender and/or to a call of proposals;

- **Job mobility with EURES axis** (18% of the total budget). This axis covers three sections: transparency of job vacancies, job applicants and any related information for applicants and employers; development of services for the recruitment and placing of workers in employment; cross-border partnerships. This axis is open to national, regional and local authorities; employment services and social partner organisations and other interested parties. To apply for the funding, eligible organisations must respond to a call for tender and/or to a call of proposals;

- **Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis** (21% of the budget). The objectives of the axis are to increase access to, and the availability of, microfinance for vulnerable groups who want to set up or develop their business and micro-enterprises, build up the institutional capacity of microcredit providers and support the development of social enterprises, in particular by facilitating access to finance. EU countries, EEA countries (in accordance with the EEA Agreement), EFTA countries and EU candidate countries (or potential candidate countries) in line with the framework agreements concluded by them can participate.

# Creative Europe

The Creative Europe programme (2014-2020) was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 11 December 2013.  It aims to support the European audiovisual, cultural and creative sector and to increase these areas competitiveness by 2020, and it is built on the former Culture, MEDIA and MEDIA Mundus Programmes (2007-2013). Creative Europe is divided into two parts: Culture and Media. A third cross-sector section dedicated to fund cultural

entrepreneurship will be operational by 2016.

The Culture sub-programme finances cooperation projects, literary translation as well as cultural and creative networks and platforms projects, such as performing and visual arts, fashion, design, architecture, cultural heritage, video games, publishing etc. This part of the programme targets mostly the rise of new creation and production models, the need to facilitate the circulation of art works in Europe, the proximity with the audience and finally

the development of digital tools to spread European creative personalities' influence abroad.

The MEDIA sub-programme supports the European film, audiovisual and videogames industries in the development, distribution and promotion of their work, while also encouraging skills development. It enables works to find markets beyond national and European borders, and helps professionals build productive international networks.

# Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research an Innovation programme ever with nearly 80 billion EUR of funding available over seven years (2014-2020) in addition to the private investment that this money will attract.

It is the financial instrument implementing the "Innovation Union", a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. The first calls for proposals were published on 11 December 2013. The programme supports SMEs with a new instrument that runs throughout various funded research and innovation fields, so it should be easy for SMEs to find opportunities in many calls.

What is more, Horizon 2020 also aims to enhance EU international research cooperation, so there are more opportunities for Third Country participation.

Horizon 2020 is open to everyone and has a simple structure. The programme consists of three main research areas that are called pillars, which are the following:

- **1st pillar – Excellence Science.** It focuses on basic science and has a budget of 24 billion;

- **2nd pillar – Leadership in enabling**



**and industrial technologies.** It focuses on information and communication technologies, nanotechnologies, advanced materials, advanced manufacturing and processing, biotechnology and space. It has a budget of €14 billion euro and it is managed by DG Enterprise and based on Europe 2020 and Innovation Union Strategies;

- **3rd pillar – Societal challenges.** It focuses on finding solutions to social and economic problems, such as health (7.5 b. EUR), food, water, forestry, bioeconomy (3.8 b. EUR), energy (5.9 b. EUR), transport (6.3 b. EUR), climate change (3.1 b. EUR), European society (1.3 b. EUR), security (1.7 b. EUR).

To respond to Horizon 2020 calls, you must submit a proposal through the Participant Portal:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal

## Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MCSA)

These actions are part of the Excellence Science pillar of Horizon 2020. The MCSA support researchers working across all disciplines, as well as industrial doctorates, combining academic research study with work in companies, and other innovative training that enhances employability and career development. It enables research-focused organisations to host talented foreign researchers and to create strategic partnerships with leading institutions worldwide. The Research Executive Agency (REA) implements the activities of MCSA.

## European Research Council grants

The European Research Council (ERC) grants support individual researchers of any nationality and age who wish to pursue their frontier research. The ERC encourages in particular proposals that cross disciplinary boundaries, pioneering ideas that address new and emerging fields and applications that introduce unconventional, innovative approaches. For more information, please visit: http://erc.europa.eu/funding-and-grants

# EUROPEAN NGOS

### European Students' Forum (AEGEE)

AEGEE is one of the biggest students' organisations that promotes cooperation, communication and integration amongst young people in Europe. It counts around 13.000 members, active in more than 200 university cities in 40 European countries.

### Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE)

DARE stands for Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe. The DARE Network consists of 48 member organisations from 26 countries in Europe.

### European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)

EADTU is the Europe's leading institutional association for online, flexible and distance higher education. It has a membership of 15 institutions and 14 national associations across 25 nations covering over 200 universities and around 3 million students across Europe.

### European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

EAEA is a European NGO with 123 member organisations from 42 countries working in the fields of adult learning. It promotes adult learning and the widening of access and participation in formal, non-formal and informal adult education for all, particularly for groups currently under-represented.

### European Association for practitioner Research on Improving Learning (EAPRIL)

EAPRIL is a non-profit organisation that bridges practice and research and aims to cross the boundaries between education and working life. It gathers about 500 delegates from across Europe with 7 L&D related networks at its annual conference.

### European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL)

The European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning currently includes the co-operation of 16 regional and local authorities aiming to influence EU policy and to co-operate in projects in the field of lifelong learning.

### European Council of National Association of Independent Schools (ECNAIS)

ECNAIS is an association founded in 1988 which aims at supporting and pursuing the values embedded in a democratic approach to pluralism in the national educational systems, and the respect of the parental choice.

### European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE)

ECSWE consists of 26 national Waldorf Associations representing some 700 schools in Europe. They count more than 2000 kindergartens and around 600 institutions for curative education.

### European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN)

EDEN exists to share knowledge and improve understanding amongst professionals in distance and e-learning and to promote policy and practice across the whole of Europe and beyond. It counts with more than 200 institutional members and over 1200 members in Europe.

### European Educational Exchanges - Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU)

Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU) is the umbrella for national YFU organisations in Europe and currently has 29 member organisations. EEE-YFU provides exchange programmes for 15 to 18 year old students in more than 50 countries worldwide.

### European Federation for Education and Culture (EFEC)

EFEC is a federation gathering non-religious educative associations from 8 European countries. It represents the European branch of the International Teaching, Education and Popular Culture League that gathers 20 organisations worldwide.

### European Forum for Freedom in education (*effe*)

EFFE is an NGO in the field of education, it gathers people from more than 20 countries, from public and private schools and with various teaching method views. It was designed as a forum in which all current issues concerning education at primary and secondary level can be discussed.

### European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)

EFIL is the umbrella organisation of 28 AFS organisations in Europe. AFS's activities include the long-term secondary school-based exchanges of students in order to promote intercultural learning and active citizenship.

### European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (E*f*VET)

Founded in 1991, EfVET is a unique European-wide professional association which has been created by and for providers of technical and vocational education and training. It consists of 1500 member associations and institutions.

### European Parents' Association (EPA)

EPA gathers the parents associations in Europe which together represent more than 150 million parents. EPA works in partnership both to represent and give parents a powerful voice in the development of education policies and decisions at EU level.

### European School Heads Association (ESHA)

ESHA is a professional organisation for European school heads within primary and secondary education. Represented by one or more organisations in each European country, it aims to provide an exchange platform where its members can identify, share and promote best practice in school leadership across Europe.

### Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

ESN is one of the biggest non-profit interdisciplinary student associations in Europe, founded in 1989 for supporting and developing student exchange. It brings together 13.500 members from 460 local sections in 37 countries.

### European Students Union (ESU)

ESU is an umbrella organisation of 47 National Union of Students from 39 countries. ESU acts in representing, defending and strengthening students' educational, democratic and political and social rights in Europe.

### European University College Association (EucA)

EucA works to promote the excellence of university halls of residence, to create an international network among university halls of residence, promote cultural exchanges and so to encourage active citizenship among young people. It represents around 30 000 students and 194 halls of residence in 10 countries.

### European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)

EUCEN is the largest European multidisciplinary Association in University Lifelong Learning. It is an international non-governmental non-profit making organisation which gathers 183 members from 35 countries.

### European University Foundation - Campus Europae (EUF-CE)

EUF-CE is a network of 20 European Universities aiming at strengthening and accelerating the development of the sphere of European education by establishing examples of concrete cooperation.

### European Network for Education and Training (EUNET)

EUNET wants to spread the European Idea to teenagers and adults. It has the goal to intensify the experience-exchange, to increase the quality of the offers, to develop and distribute methodical-didactic materials as well as simulations. It is a network and has 61 members (NGOs) in 20 countries.

### European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)

EURASHE is the European Association of Higher Education Institutions that offer professionally oriented programmes and are engaged in applied and profession-related research within the Bologna cycles. It gathers about 1.100 higher education institutions in 40 countries within and outside the European Higher Education Area.

### European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO)

EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators, promotes a responsible and innovative teaching of history based on multi-perspectivity, critical thinking, mutual respect, and the inclusion of controversial issues. It represents a network of 44 member associations and 15 associated members from 52 countries.

### European Vocational Training Association (EVTA)

EVTA is a vocational training network which comprises 27 members from 14 European countries, representing thousands of national training centres and, in certain cases, national employment services.

### European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)

Founded in 1998, FEDEC is a network of 41 professional circus schools and 14 circus arts organisations located in 24 different countries. FEDEC's main vocation is to support the development and evolution of pedagogy and creation in the field of circus arts education.

### European Federation for Catholic Adult Education (FEECA)

FEECA represents Catholic adult education on a European level. It aims to contribute in furthering both European integration and international cooperation, based on faith in freedom and a democratic order. It gathers 9 national umbrella-organsisations of catholic adult education.

### Foundation of European Regions for Research in Education and Training (FREREF)

FREREF promotes concrete interregional cooperation in the field of lifelong learning. It has 15 member Regions and 3 member Institutions, and cooperates regularly with some 20 other Regions, as well as with national and European institutions and agencies.

### International Federation of Training Centres for the promotion of new education (FICEMEA)

FICEMEA aims to federate the action of its member organisations in order to promote active training methods as widely as possible and to contribute to the evolution of educative and social practices all over the world.

### International Association of Educating cities (IAEC)

Founded in 1994, IAEC is a non-profit association, constituted as a permanent collaborative structure uniting local governments committed to the Charter of Educating Cities, which is the road map of the cities that comprise it. IAEC has 478 member cities in 36 countries on all continents.

### International Language Association (ICC)

ICC groups professionals from all areas of language education and intercultural communication promoting excellence in the teaching and learning of languages by defining professional standards and disseminating these standards and practice to the widest possible public. It represents 25 members located in 12 countries worldwide.

### International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)

ISCA is an organisation bringing together sport, culture and youth organisations. With more than 191 affiliated organisations and more than 40 million individual members worldwide from 65 countries that share the idea that everyone should be able to participate in international activities.

### MENON Network

MENON is a European research and innovation network, working since 15 years to foster and smoothen innovation processes in areas such as education and lifelong learning, international S&T cooperation, knowledge society, social inclusion.

### Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)

Founded in 1975, OBESSU is a platform for cooperation between national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education. It brings together 24 national associations in 19 European countries.

### SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European network of 60 NGOs based in 27 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the policy sectors social affairs, international cooperation and lifelong learning.

### Telecentre Europe (TE)

Telecentre Europe represents publicly funded telecentres/telecentre networks, ICT learning centres, adult education centres and libraries across Europe where children and adults can access the Internet, learn digital skills and keep up do date with technology and community developments.

### Universal Education Foundation (UEF)

The Universal Education Foundation promotes Learning for Well-being (L4WB), forming a community of individuals and organisations gathered around a vision of inclusive and supportive societies where children, young people and adults respect each other as competent partners and help each other realise their unique potential throughout their lives.

### Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)

YEU is an international youth led organisation working on mainstreaming youth issues in society by encouraging development of young people's competences by using non-formal education and youth work as tools. It is a network of 34 organisations in 25 countries in Europe and North Africa.

### VOLONTEUROPE Network

Volonteurope is an international network promoting the values and principles of volunteering, active citizenship and social justice at local, regional, national and European level, both in the Member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

# NOTES

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# LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

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