



Ministry of Education and Research

## Education and Training 2020 National Report

### **A. Implementation of the ET 2020 strategic objectives**

1. Assessment and key suggestions for improvement of the ET 2020 strategic objectives

The role of the education and training system is wide-ranging. Education and training are means of providing individuals with knowledge that enables them to grow and influence their situation. Good education and training broadens perspectives, equips people favourably for their future lives and lays the foundations of active citizenship and democratic values. At the same time, the education and training system also needs to respond to both the short and long-term skills requirements of the labour market. A high level of education is necessary for functional societies and for countries' competitiveness and growth. It is important that both of these perspectives are present in the continuing European cooperation in the field of education and training.

The four strategic objectives forming the basis of Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020)<sup>1</sup> are still relevant and should remain the focus of European cooperation in this area. The benchmarks adopted under the strategy also remain relevant. At an early stage, however, Sweden identified a problem with the benchmark established in both the Europe 2020 strategy and ET 2020 with regard to people with post-secondary education. When this benchmark was adopted, a large proportion of those people who will be 30–34 years old in the year 2020 were already engaged in post-secondary education. This has made it difficult to impact on this benchmark.

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<sup>1</sup> Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; 2. improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; 3. promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; 4. enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

*Proposed priorities at the European level 2015–2017*

The continuing work on ET 2020 should focus on reinforcing the quality of education and training and on ensuring that individuals progress through the education and training system with pass grades. Results in Swedish schools have declined in recent decades, which has been shown by both domestic and international studies.

Consequently, one important challenge for the school system is to improve results, particularly when it comes to basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. Over a number of years, the Swedish Government has instigated several extensive reforms to raise the standard of attainment and to increase both the equivalence and achievement of targets in compulsory schools and the other types of education within the school system. As is the case in several other Member States, pupils' results in reading and mathematics have deteriorated in Sweden. Teachers need to be acquainted with a larger number of evidence-based methods and proven working practices in order to provide more individualised tuition. Consequently, the Swedish Government has introduced extensive continuing professional development initiatives for the improvement of mathematics and literacy. A priority issue for continued work at the European level within the scope of ET 2020 should be efforts to raise the level of pupils' basic skills. This process can be driven forward by continued discussions and collaboration in which Member States learn from one another. (Strategic Objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training)

Continued cooperation towards making the education and training systems in the EU more transparent and understandable is crucial to increasing educational and labour mobility between countries. There are now a number of tools that have been in use for varying lengths of time and Sweden believes that these tools need to be given time to be implemented in the Member States. At the same time, a shift is occurring in the field of education and training whereby greater emphasis is placed on the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils and students than on the set-up of the education programme, number of hours in the classroom, etc. Sweden welcomes the work that has been initiated in order to review whether existing tools are optimal and how they interact, but does not believe it is possible, or perhaps even desirable, to draw up a single common instrument that would work at all levels of education and training. Such a common instrument risks becoming too general and difficult to interpret. Joint European efforts should instead aim to establish a common view of existing instruments, their compatibility and use. Sweden believes there is a need for continued cooperation in this field to make it easier for individuals to transition between education and work and also between different Member States. (Strategic Objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality)

## 2. Lifelong learning and mobility

Quality, equivalence and a high level of accessibility are linchpins of the Swedish education and training system. In Sweden, everyone has the right to education and training, regardless of their background or other circumstances. This means, for example, that children are entitled to a pre-school place, that pupils' needs for special support are met and that employees who want to gain additional qualification have the right to take a leave of absence to do so. All education and training within the public education and training system is free of charge to citizens of the EU, EEA and Switzerland, and student aid in Sweden is generously designed so as to give many people the financial means to take part in education or training.

The structure of the Swedish education and training system is designed to facilitate the transition between its various levels and parts, as well as between education and work. Dead-ends in the system is avoided as far as possible. Good opportunities are available to those who need to supplement their previous education in various ways in order to change direction or advance their career. There is a high level of access to adult education, not least thanks to initiatives taken to increase flexibility and individualisation. Universities and university colleges are found all over the country, and distance education also provides good opportunities for the working population and the elderly to study. Sweden has a strong tradition of education and training, which also applies to voluntary initiatives and liberal adult education (*folkbildning*). Study and vocational guidance is provided at different levels of the education and training system to cater to the needs and desires of individuals, society and the labour market. Various forms of study and careers guidance are also provided by Arbetsförmedlingen (the Swedish Public Employment Service), e.g. in connection with the initial activities of the job guarantee for young people.

### *Reference frameworks for qualifications*

Sweden intends to implement the recommendation concerning a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008/C 111/01), EQF, and work to develop a national qualifications framework is in progress. The purpose of EQF is to facilitate national and international comparisons at different levels of education and training in order to promote mobility. The intention is to create a framework that covers qualifications based on both theoretical and practical learning. The Government believes that a national qualifications framework is an important tool that can clarify the relationships between the levels of different qualifications and better promote lifelong learning in Sweden. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has served as the EQF National Coordination Point since 1 July 2009 and has set up a portal on its website with the

aim of disseminating information about the work on EQF and a national framework in Sweden.

#### *Validation*

There are a number of tools and mechanisms in place within field of validation, and various national initiatives are currently ongoing. Several different agencies are involved in this work. A report to the Expert Group on Public Economics (Fi 2007:03), *Sysselsättning för invandrare – en ESO-rapport om arbetsmarknadsintegration* [Employment for immigrants – an ESO report on labour market integration] (Report 2011:5), shows that information on validation opportunities is fragmented and difficult to understand, which probably reduces the chances of harnessing an individual's existing skills and qualifications. For this reason and others, the Ministry of Education and Research has appointed a committee of inquiry that will submit proposals aimed at making efficient use of the resources already allocated so that more people, both those born in Sweden and those born abroad, can have their existing skills and qualifications validated (U 2014:G). This involves aspects such as clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the education and training sector and the labour market sector and how these sectors can work together to create a validation pathway for individuals, both those born in Sweden and those born abroad, and improve the transparency of validation initiatives. The inquiry chair will take into account the autonomy of state universities and university colleges and the potential need for specific solutions because of their decentralisation. The inquiry chair will also take into account the existing roles of the authorities concerned. Part of the background to this inquiry is the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning that Member States are to report back to the Council on by 2018. The inquiry will report back in December 2014.

#### *Changes to the study support system*

The Swedish study support system has undergone adjustments to reflect the fact that an increasing number of Swedes are studying abroad. The aim of these changes is to create a simpler and more effective study support system for studies abroad. For example, the same loan amount should, in general, be payable for studies abroad as for studies in Sweden, with payments being made monthly rather than each semester, and the amounts available to borrow for tuition fees will increase.

#### *Examples of national challenges*

As explained above, one of Sweden's challenges is to review the validation opportunities of both those born in Sweden and those born abroad in terms of formal, non-formal and informal learning. This work is in progress. The committee of inquiry appointed will submit its proposals in December 2014.

### 3. Quality and efficiency in education and training

Sweden continues to invest in education and training at a high level, relative to other countries. In 2012, Sweden was in twelfth place among the OECD countries, with education and training constituting 6.5 per cent of GDP (OECD average: 6.3 per cent of GDP). The total cost of the education and training system rose by 7 per cent over the period 2008–2012. In 2013–2014, Sweden has continued to invest in education and training, both in the long-term and through specific investments.

#### *Supervision of principal organisers' responsibility for school education*

The principal organisers, i.e. the municipalities and independent schools, are responsible for ensuring that all pupils achieve the national goals for compulsory and upper secondary school education. However, central government monitors the principal organisers' management of their responsibilities in various ways; for example, supervision by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate and monitoring and evaluations undertaken by several other authorities.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate was established as an independent governmental authority in 2008. The Inspectorate is responsible for the supervision of schools, adult education, leisure-time centres, pre-school and other educational activities. Inspections take place by means of regular supervision, targeted supervision, flying inspections, quality audits and by handling complaints. The first full cycle of regular supervision under the Swedish Schools Inspectorate have been responsible for is to be completed this year, and the Inspectorate is now working to introduce a new model for regular supervision from 2015. Among other things, this will involve the Inspectorate giving even greater priority to those schools most in need of support. One prerequisite for the new model is a more advanced system for analysing risk and materiality that can identify the schools to be prioritised. Furthermore, the Government has tasked the Inspectorate with better scrutinising the quality of teaching.

Schools must have effective procedures for continuously monitoring and checking pupils' knowledge with the aim of identifying at an early stage those pupils who have difficulty in achieving the knowledge requirements. The national tests provide meaningful support to teachers' efforts to monitor, assess the knowledge of and grade their pupils. The national tests also create the conditions for national equivalence and impartial grading. Given this, the Government has introduced additional national tests in more school years in the compulsory school system.

#### *The Independent School Committee*

The conditions for municipal and independent schools should be as equal as possible so that pupils will receive an equivalent education. The Independent Schools Committee submitted its final report,

*Friskolorna i samhället* [Independent schools in society] (SOU 2013:56), in 2013. The Government has subsequently drafted a bill (Govt. Bill 2013/14:112) containing proposals on matters such as the requirements for establishing an independent school and the assessment of conduct of independent providers etc. Furthermore, the Swedish National Agency for Education has been instructed to develop a new information system that makes it possible to compare schools. According to the assessment by the Government in its bill, the system should contain information about schools' organisational structure, results, the courses and programmes offered, perceived quality, financial information and any injunctions issued by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate.

#### *Use of resources in higher education*

One of the most important tasks of the new authority, the Swedish Higher Education Authority, is to examine how higher education utilises its resources. The Authority's role includes developing methods to measure efficiency in an appropriate way. The Swedish Higher Education Authority has published a number of analyses concerning such matters as performance indicators and the courses and programmes offered.

#### *Examples of national challenges*

The high quality of the entire education and training system is of paramount importance to the individual and society as a whole. One challenge for Sweden is improving quality and results while maintaining recruitment and student completion.

#### *Cooperation at the European level*

European exchange within education and training is important for promoting quality and development. Sweden agrees that cooperation in the field of education and training can be improved, but when it comes to funding, Sweden does not consider the discussion of common solutions to be as relevant.

#### *PISA*

The results of the PISA survey in 2012 show that Swedish 15-year-olds' proficiency in mathematics, reading and science continues to deteriorate. The results deteriorated in all three of these areas between 2009 and 2012. For the first time, Swedish pupils are performing below the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science. Against this background, the OECD will, at the request of the Swedish Government, conduct an in-depth thematic study of the Swedish compulsory and upper secondary school system, with a particular focus on compulsory school. The study will, among other things, lead to recommendations on how to improve the results of Swedish schools. The report will be presented in spring 2015. The Swedish Government has also established an educational research council comprised of experts from a variety of disciplines such as education,

economics and medicine. In addition, the Government has enacted a series of extensive reforms in order to improve pupils' results. However, most of these reforms were introduced in 2011 or later and have therefore not yet had their full impact. The Government is nonetheless aware that further efforts to raise pupils' results are necessary. Accordingly, the 2014 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill (Govt. Bill 2013/14:100) announced several new reforms and initiatives in the area of schools, with a particular focus on early measures in compulsory school.

### *PIAAC*

The results of PIAAC show that Sweden stands up well in an international comparison. Sweden is one of four countries that are above the OECD average in all three areas of knowledge<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, there are large differences within the population. Sweden is among the countries with the greatest differences between low and high performers and between those born in Sweden and those born abroad. At the same time, the survey shows that Sweden offers adult education to those who are at the lowest levels and that social background does not affect the results to as great an extent as in many other countries. Sweden has succeeded in combining an above-average result with a high level of equivalence. Statistics Sweden (SCB) was Sweden's project manager for PIAAC and will continue its work to disseminate the results from PIAAC in various ways.

## 4. Equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

### *Financial aid in Sweden*

Financial aid in the form of grants and loans is a part of education policy. One purpose of financial aid is to encourage recruitment and thus contribute to a high level of participation in education and training. It is also intended to even out differences between individuals and groups in the population, and so contribute to greater social justice. Financial aid mainly funds students' living expenses while studying. There are various forms of financial aid in order to meet differing needs. Financial aid is issued directly to the student and is essentially independent of their parents' or their family's finances. In order to enhance opportunities for re-training throughout working life and to make it financially easier for those in work to return to studies, the Government has implemented a number of changes to financial aid in recent years.

In 2011, the Swedish Board for Study Support (CSN) conducted a student survey that shows, among other things, that the recruiting

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<sup>2</sup> Literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments.

power of financial aid is slightly greater for students whose parents have little or no education at all. Students whose parents have a tertiary education were the group who stated they were most likely to have studied even if financial aid had not been available. All in all, CSN's survey shows that financial aid helps make it possible to study, regardless of the student's social and economic background.

#### *Equivalent school system*

According to the Education Act (2010:800), all, irrespective of their geographic residence and social and financial circumstances, shall have equal access to education in the national school system. However, studies from the National Agency for Education (see e.g. Report 330 from 2009 and Report 391 from 2013) show that there is a compensatory element in the allocation of resources and that this has increased over time. Nevertheless, the proportion of resources allocated according to ability and needs is still relatively small. The Government has recently made a clarification to the Education Act (2010:800) to the effect that municipalities and head teachers must take into account pupils' different abilities and needs when allocating resources between and within schools. The OECD's "Resources, policies and practices in Sweden's schooling system – an in-depth analysis of PISA 2012 results" shows that Sweden is at the OECD average as regards resources allocated based on the needs of schools. However, head teachers in areas where exclusion is widespread increasingly report that teaching is being adversely affected by the way in which resources are allocated.

#### *Pre-school*

The Swedish pre-school system has a high level of quality and accessibility. Pre-schools have a dual function, to enable parents to combine work or studies with parenthood and to support and stimulate children's development. Pre-schools are regulated by the Education Act (2010:800) and by the Ordinance (SKOLFS 1998:16) on the curriculum for the pre-school. Pre-school is to be offered to children aged 1–5 whose parents work or study, are on parental leave or are unemployed. All 3–5-year-olds are to be offered pre-school free of charge for at least 525 hours/year or 15 hours/week. This means that almost all children attend pre-school – nearly 95 per cent of all children aged 3–5. A further 2.6 per cent of 1–5-year-olds attend educational care in family day-care homes. All pre-schools are publicly funded, together with a low fee for the parents amounting to 7 per cent of the total cost. The results of the National Agency for Education's parental survey<sup>3</sup> in 2012 point to the image of pre-school being mainly positive.

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<sup>3</sup> *Föräldrars val och inställning till förskola och fritidshem. Resultat från föräldraundersökningen 2012* [Parents' choice and attitude to pre-school and family day-

### *Upper secondary school*

The role of upper secondary school is to prepare pupils for tertiary education and for entry into working life. Autumn 2011 saw the introduction of the new upper secondary school system, which recognises that the future plans of young people are not all the same. Changes were made to make those pupils on the higher education preparatory programmes better prepared for further studies by raising the requirements and streamlining the programmes. For pupils in vocational programmes, it is no longer compulsory to study towards higher education entry requirements, giving them more time for to specialise in their vocational subjects. They are also entitled to study towards these requirements if they so desire.

### *Pupils with a foreign background*

As a group, pupils with a foreign background<sup>4</sup> generally have poorer results than pupils with a Swedish background. It is principally pupils who immigrated after the age at which school starts who have poorer grades.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden, however, pupils with a foreign background constitute a heterogeneous group in terms of country of origin, language, level of education and parental level of education. Pupils with a foreign background who were born in Sweden have slightly lower grades than pupils with a Swedish background, but the differences have decreased over the period 1998–2011. However, the results for foreign-born pupils have deteriorated. One explanation for this trend is an increase in the average age of these pupils when they immigrated. As a group, pupils who immigrated before the age at which school starts have results in line with pupils with a foreign background who were born in Sweden. The lowest proportion of those eligible for national programmes at upper secondary school is among those pupils who immigrated after the age at which school ordinarily starts, of which the proportion was lowest for pupils having parents with a low level of education. In international comparison, there is a large difference in results between pupils who arrived in Sweden before the age of seven and pupils with a Swedish background. Moreover, Sweden belongs to the group of countries where performance differences between pupils arriving at younger and older ages is the greatest.

In light of the above, the Government is implementing a number of initiatives aimed at improving the results of foreign-born pupils and pupils with a mother tongue other than Swedish, e.g. increased

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care homes: Results of the parental survey 2012]. Report 392, National Agency for Education 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Foreign-born pupils or pupils born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents.

<sup>5</sup> An Assessment of the Situation in the Swedish School System 2013 by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Report 387, National Agency for Education 2013.

teaching hours in Swedish for newly arrived pupils and surveying their knowledge.

#### *Examples of national challenges*

Additional efforts are needed to raise the results of foreign-born pupils. It is important that newly arrived pupils are provided with the help they need at an early stage and that they quickly get into an ordinary teaching group. The key to being able to participate fully in ordinary teaching and to the successful schooling of these pupils is good knowledge of the Swedish language. For this reason, the 2014 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill (Govt. Bill 2013/14:100) has announced extensive government initiatives that aim, amongst other things, to improve newly arrived pupils' knowledge of Swedish, as well as that of pupils with needs similar to those of newly arrived pupils.

One challenge is to improve the opportunities of those born abroad who have qualifications equivalent to a Swedish academic education to take bridging programmes in Sweden. The 2000s saw an increase in bridging opportunities for persons with a completed foreign degree or other tertiary education equivalent to an education governed by the Higher Education Act. In recent years, these programmes have gone from being general in nature to being specific to different professional groups. In 2014, eight higher education institutions were commissioned to provide third-country nationals who had completed their training as lawyers, teachers, doctors, nurses and dentists with bridging programmes corresponding to a total of 595 full-time equivalents. The Government has allocated specific funding for these places, but the higher education institutions may themselves initiate bridging programmes within their funding cap. Adult education provides many people who have immigrated to Sweden with an opportunity for further education or re-training or for supplementing existing education from their home country. Adult education thus increases the opportunities for these individuals to establish themselves in the labour market.

#### *Proposed priorities at the European level 2015–2017*

At the European level, it would be worthwhile to discuss and exchange experiences with respect to improving the learning outcomes of foreign-born pupils and improving the chances of newly arrived university graduates establishing themselves in the labour market. A European exchange of experience on various initiatives and methods to improve the results of foreign-born pupils could provide valuable information for future reforms in this area.

## 5. Creativity and innovation

### *Entrepreneurship*

In May 2009, the Government adopted a strategy for entrepreneurship in the field of education and training, which involves entrepreneurship

being a consistent feature throughout the education and training system. The National Agency for Education has been tasked with stimulating efforts involving entrepreneurship within the school system. This involves activities such as encouraging schools to cooperate with the world of work, offering continuing professional development in the field of entrepreneurship, facilitating experience exchange and allocating development funding to principal organisers and operational support to organisations. In recent years, the Riksdag has allocated funding for this, including funding for the organisation Young Enterprise (*Ung Företagsamhet*, UF). UF's training gives young people in upper secondary schools the opportunity to run their own businesses and bring real goods and services to market.

#### *Digital learning*

The curriculum for compulsory school includes schools' work to develop their pupils' digital skills. There is no overall picture of the digital skills of Swedish pupils, but there are studies that show that pupils' use of and access to computers is good. Among initiatives to increase digital learning, mention may be made of an agreement in June 2013 between the Government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) to promote digitalisation and digital collaboration. Part of this related to the production of a framework for evaluating schools' digitalisation. Another of the initiatives is SALAR's establishment of a collaborative forum for IT and schools. This forum will be a venue for dialogue and collaboration between actors with an interest in schools' ability to make optimal use of the opportunities offered by digitalisation for achieving curriculum objectives and increasing administrative efficiency. SALAR is also working on a project under the Creative Assessment Alliance. This project is an extension of the Assessment and Teaching of 21st-Century Skills (ATC21S) programme, which covers a number of countries. The goal is to create digital tests and methods to assess what is often termed "future skills".

The Higher Education Ordinance's qualification descriptor for the Degree of Master of Arts in Primary Education (school years 4–6) states that students shall demonstrate the ability to confidently and critically use digital tools in educational activities and consider the role of different media and digital environments in this.

The Government has appointed a committee of inquiry concerned with the courses and programmes offered in higher education. Its remit includes analysing opportunities and potential obstacles to the introduction of an open online programme in Swedish higher education in relation to international developments, including funding and any credit transfers. The committee of inquiry will also submit proposals on whether, and if so, in what way and to what extent, an open online programme could be accommodated within the framework of Swedish higher education and the consequences this would have (Dir. 2014:54).

### *Languages*

Sweden has endorsed the work programme to achieve the common educational goals agreed by the EU's education ministers involving, for example, the promotion of proficiency in two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue. Language and communication skills are much in demand in the labour market. Those who speak several languages can make greater use of the free movement in the EU and can more easily integrate into another country to study or work.

Language teaching in a modern language in compulsory school usually starts in school years 6 or 7. The Government has undertaken several initiatives to promote language learning. Upper secondary schools have introduced special credit increments in modern languages that pupils may be given credit for in higher education applications. This has resulted in more pupils choosing a modern language in upper secondary school. The equivalent has been introduced in the compulsory school system where pupils choosing a modern language may be given credit for their grade in that modern language. The wording on language choice in the Compulsory School Ordinance and the Upper Secondary School Ordinance has been clarified with respect to languages other than German, French and Spanish.

### *The Creative Schools Initiative*

The Creative Schools Initiative aims to increase collaboration between schools and professional cultural life, to help to increase children and young people's access to culture and their own creativity and to improve goal fulfilment in schools. This initiative was established in 2008 and has since undergone a gradual expansion. As of 2012, it covers the pre-school class and the entire compulsory school system, including compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities.

### *Examples of national challenges*

Today, around 65 per cent of the pupils who have chosen a modern language end their language studies in school year 9. This means it is still a challenge to get more compulsory school pupils to choose a second foreign language and also to get pupils to complete their language studies.

One challenge in Swedish higher education is an increasingly renewed and modernised arena with new forms of education, such as open online education.

### *Proposed priority at the European level 2015–2017*

Sweden is of the opinion that indicators of language competence for 15-year-olds should be adopted at the European level. The work initiated in this area should continue in order to follow up and improve pupils' knowledge of at least two additional languages.

## **B. Sectorial contribution to the ET 2020 Strategic objectives**

### 6. School Policy

#### *Early school leaving*

The Government has implemented numerous reforms and initiatives to raise results in compulsory and upper secondary schools so that more pupils leaving compulsory school will be eligible for a national programme at upper secondary school and to reduce drop-out rates in upper secondary school. Identifying pupils in need of extra support or stimulation as early as possible requires early, clear and regular monitoring of pupils' knowledge. The Government has implemented several important reforms to overcome deficiencies in schools' knowledge monitoring. These include grades from school year 6 and more national tests in school years 6 and 9 in compulsory school. Further initiatives that the Government has implemented in this area are the introduction of central government funding for summer school and homework help in compulsory school. In addition, in the 2014 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill (Govt. Bill 2013/14:100) the Government announced that principal organisers will be obliged to offer pupils both summer school and homework help. Furthermore, the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill includes an announcement of the introduction of obligatory assessment support in literacy development and mathematics for school year 1 in compulsory school and that compulsory school will become ten-year, i.e. that compulsory school attendance will commence from the age of six.

The upper secondary school reform, introduced in 2011, is the biggest reform in the upper secondary school system and aims to improve results and increase the throughput in upper secondary school. Stricter admission requirements were introduced to make pupils better prepared for upper secondary studies, with the goal of increasing the number of pupils who complete their education. The first cohort starting the reformed upper secondary school left upper secondary school in spring 2014. It is therefore not yet possible to say whether the upper secondary school reform has led to greater student completion and improved results. The National Agency for Education has the task of continuously monitoring and analysing the reformed upper secondary school. The reformed upper secondary school has five introductory programmes for young people who are not eligible for national programmes at upper secondary school. The education in introductory programmes is to offer individualised study pathways, provide pupils with as sound a basis for further education as possible and help to increase their opportunities to establish themselves in the labour market. Improving the quality of the education offered to pupils who are not eligible for national programmes at upper secondary school is expected to increase student completion in upper secondary schools.

Good study and vocational guidance can serve to prevent drop-outs and increase pupils' motivation. The Government has tasked the National Agency for Education with more explicitly linking study and vocational guidance with the labour market. As part of this task, funds have been allocated to the National Agency for Education so that it can offer in-service training to study and careers guidance counsellors.

### *Teachers*

Good teachers are the single most important factor involved in improving pupils' results in school. For a number of years, the Government has been making very large investments in order to improve the expertise of teachers. New teacher training programmes have been introduced and the special needs teacher training programme has been reintroduced. Furthermore, teacher registration and stricter qualification rules for teachers and pre-school teachers have been introduced, and changes have been made to reduce the administrative burden of teachers and thus allow them to spend more time with their pupils. Extensive in-service training initiatives to increase teachers' expertise in the theory and didactics of their subjects have been implemented and are ongoing. Those currently ongoing include the Government's Teacher Boost II initiative that focuses on courses to qualify registered teachers for all types of school, subjects and school years in which they teach. The Government has also initiated a number of large-scale continuing professional development initiatives for teachers. For example, the Mathematics Boost and the Reading Boost are two in-service training initiatives in the didactics of their respective subjects with trained supervisors, online support and a focus on peer learning.

On 1 July 2013, the Government introduced a career stage reform for teachers with significant salary increases for particularly skilled teachers (first teachers and senior teachers). To ensure high teacher quality, the teaching profession must be made more attractive so that pupils receive better teaching and thus improved chances of achieving the national targets and good results. The expertise and potential of teachers must be harnessed and encouraged in a better way than at present, and teachers must be given opportunities to develop their professionalism and advance their careers in the teaching profession. It has also been deemed essential that career stages for particularly skilled teachers encompass salary increases. The Government estimates that the reform in autumn 2016 will encompass approximately 17 000 teachers. This means that about one sixth of the registered teachers in Swedish schools may then be covered by the career stage reform.

### *Examples of national challenges*

It is necessary for various actors, such as the Government, principal organisers and employers, to continue offering appropriate basic

teacher training programmes, continuous in-service training for teachers and educators to make the teaching profession an attractive career option, as well as offering different ways for teachers to pursue careers within the profession. Sweden's various investments in teachers – with respect to basic teacher education, in-service training, career stages and making the profession more attractive – contribute towards this.

As mentioned earlier, Swedish 15-year-olds' proficiency in mathematics, science and reading continues to deteriorate. Sweden's results show the worst trend of all the OECD countries. The latest PISA survey shows a downward trend for the results of both girls and boys in all three areas, but boys' results have deteriorated more than those of girls. Although there are no significant differences in results between the sexes in mathematics, the differences in reading have increased further in favour of girls, and girls are now performing better than boys in science.

*Proposed priorities at the European level 2015–2017*

It is also crucial for Europe that it has high-quality education systems that are both effective and offer the same opportunities for all and that employability is increased. The greatest challenge is to ensure that everyone acquires key competences<sup>6</sup> while developing the high level of expertise and attractiveness at all educational levels that enable Europe to maintain a strong international position.

Teachers play a very important role in providing young people in Europe with a high-quality education. A continued focus on improving the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession is therefore important in a European context, while it is also important for this context to take into account a well-judged balance between what should be done at the EU level and what constitutes the responsibility of the Member States and education providers.

At the European level, it would be worthwhile to discuss and exchange experiences with respect to differences in boys' and girls' learning outcomes. However, a comparison of pupils' PISA survey responses between countries must be problematised and interpreted cautiously.

## 7. Vocational Education and Training

High quality vocational education and training is of great significance if young people are to select a vocational pathway and also complete it. The new Education Act (2010:800) came into force on 1 July 2011, and apprenticeship education is now one of its most important

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<sup>6</sup> Key competences for lifelong learning, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council [2006/962/EC](#) of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning [Official Journal of the European Union L 394/10 of 30/12/2006].

elements of the reformed upper secondary school system, providing an alternative study pathway to the traditional, mainly school-based initial vocational training. The reformed upper secondary school system offers pupils in vocational programmes more time for their vocational subjects than was previously the case. Furthermore, the Riksdag has decided to introduce a new type of labour legislation for apprentices that came into force on 1 July 2014, with the intention of facilitating employment while they are still in training. The first cohort to graduate from the reformed upper secondary school system did so in spring 2014 (about 6 per cent of all pupils in initial vocational training were apprentices). This means that it is too early to make any reliable assessments of the effectiveness and impact of the upper secondary school reform of 2011. However, monitoring and quality audits performed in recent years have indicated a number of challenges. These are in line with the issues identified in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA). This particularly involves measures to increase the supply, quality and attractiveness of initial vocational training and to reform it in cooperation with employers and other interested parties.

#### *The involvement of employers*

When the upper secondary school reform of 2011 was being drafted, relevant stakeholders were closely involved in drawing up the structure and content of the new programmes. A key element was the introduction of the national programme councils, involving representatives from employers for each of the twelve upper secondary school vocational programmes to ensure that the needs of the labour market are taken into account. This form of systematic involvement by the employers is vitally important, and the introduction of programme councils has generally been successful. However, discussions continue regarding the mandate and influence of the programme councils, with limited support for apprenticeship education from some industries. A committee of inquiry has been appointed to investigate matters such as the interest in and conditions for trialling an upper secondary school apprenticeship programme in which industries and employers have greater influence and responsibility, known as industry apprenticeships (Dir. 2014:50).

#### *Supply*

Sweden has introduced a specifically targeted grant for providers of apprenticeship education in order to increase the supply of apprenticeships. The grant is shared between the school and the workplace, with the majority going to the workplace. An evaluation commissioned by the National Agency for Education shows that a majority of workplaces and companies stated that the grant was necessary in order to accept an apprentice in the workplace. The significance of the grant to a company's willingness to accept an apprentice varies from sector to sector. The most significant factors to the acceptance of an apprentice are a desire to help young people

establish themselves in the labour market and the recruitment of potential future employees.

Making the apprenticeship system an interesting proposition to both private and municipal providers of vocational training is a challenge. Private providers have accounted for a large proportion of the supply of apprenticeships, and the Government wants municipal providers to offer more apprenticeships in upper secondary school. A government grant has been established for this purpose and the National Agency for Education also has a special mandate to stimulate the supply, quality and attractiveness of apprenticeship programmes.

### *Quality*

Potential options for improving the quality of workplace-based learning were investigated in 2013. Numerous initiatives aimed at increase the quality of vocational training have been undertaken in recent years. For example, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate and the National Agency for Education have been given resources to strengthen the monitoring and quality development of workplace-based learning and apprenticeship education. The National Agency for Education has, among other things, had the task of organising training for supervisors, and in-service training for counsellors has been introduced to increase their knowledge of current labour market needs. Furthermore, there are in-service training initiatives for vocational education teachers to maintain and develop professional expertise within their respective industries/sectors. Schools and various industries can also obtain temporary financial support to develop the quality of workplace-based learning.

### *Enhanced attractiveness*

There appears to be a general trend towards fewer pupils choosing upper secondary school vocational training in favour of higher education preparatory programmes. This is a major challenge, especially for certain sectors, such as health, care of the elderly and some technical areas in which Sweden is faced with a shortage of qualified staff in the years ahead. The National Agency for Education has been tasked with conducting an information campaign concerning initial vocational training, certain career opportunities and various occupations. Another challenge is that young people do not choose the apprenticeship education programmes on offer. This is partly due to a problematic perception that apprenticeship education programmes are a study option for low achievers. Study and careers guidance should play an important role in counteracting this perception. A positive increase, however, may be noted in the number of apprentices, but the total number of pupils in upper secondary school vocational training has fallen sharply in recent years, which is a major challenge. Increased attractiveness is a responsibility shared by education providers and employers. For example, a cost

reimbursement for apprentices of SEK 1 000 per month of studies has been introduced with the aim of increasing attractiveness.

#### *Initiatives for youths*

Since 2006, Sweden has pursued a policy of promoting youth employment, in line with the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. The most important reform was the establishment of a job guarantee for young people in December 2007. Young people are often unemployed for a relatively short period, but those who have not completed upper secondary education are at risk of becoming locked into long-term unemployment. Since 2012, these and other young people at significant risk of long-term unemployment can be placed in "active measures", such as on-the-job training, study motivation or training, from the first day of unemployment. This was not the case in 2007, when the job guarantee for young people was first introduced, but the new strategy has been continuously monitored, and the package of labour market measures for young people has undergone alteration and improvement as time has gone by. The Government has enacted other general initiatives to open up new and broader pathways to working life for young people by providing support for vocational introduction jobs, training investments, apprenticeship education, vocationally oriented programmes and reduced social security contributions for young people. Last but not least, the European Social Fund (ESF) contributes by providing opportunities to supplement and strengthen national and local employment policies with a range of measures targeted at young people.

#### *Examples of national challenges*

As described above, there are a lot of national challenges relating to vocational education and training. Some examples of these are:

- increasing the scope of apprenticeship education and making the apprenticeship system a more interesting proposition for both private and municipal providers of vocational education and training;
- developing the quality of workplace-based learning and apprenticeship education;
- enhancing attractiveness and increasing interest in the programmes; and
- further collaborations with industries and stakeholders to strengthen the content of programmes and their relevance to the needs of the labour market.

#### *Proposed priority at the European level 2015–2017*

One specific question to continue working with at the European level is cooperation and contacts between education and working life. As mentioned above, Sweden has enacted several measures to improve this relationship and further steps are being planned. The basis for this

priority is that all matters relating to supply, quality and attractiveness are closely linked to effective contacts between education and working life. European cooperation may result in policy documents, manuals, best practices, etc. Ways to achieve this could be through the use of *peer learning* and various parts of Erasmus+.

#### 8. Higher Education

The Government has set up a special inquiry to provide an overall perspective on the development and composition of programmes and courses offered in higher education over the past 20 years (Dir. 2014:54). The inquiry includes an assessment of whether the range of course and programmes offered in higher education is well-balanced in relation to the requirements for high quality, the demands of students and the needs of the labour market and society as a whole. The inquiry will also submit proposals concerning what overarching changes, if any, in the range of course and programmes offered are required in order to better meet future needs. One basic premise of the inquiry is that the proposals submitted will assume the current level of resources within the present resource allocation system for higher education. The inquiry is to report back on 15 October 2015.

##### *Increase participation in studies*

To increase the proportion of 30–34-year-olds with at least two years' post-secondary education, the Government has, among other things, temporarily increased the number of places in higher vocational education in the period 2013–2016.

Within the framework of the EU's common educational goals, Sweden's national goal is for the proportion of 30–34-year-olds with at least two years' post-secondary education to be 40–45 per cent by 2020. This goal builds upon an assessment based on study patterns for the age group in question. Since 2002, the proportion of 30–34-year-olds with at least two years' post-secondary education has increased in Sweden, and was 47.9 per cent in 2012, according to the EU definition. This proportion is expected to drop slightly by 2020. This is principally due to the persons aged 30–34 in 2020 having had a lower rate of study participation when they were aged 19–25, i.e. the age at which individuals most commonly pursue higher education. The EU target for 2020 also coincides with a period in which the number of 30–34-year-olds in Sweden will be unusually high.

##### *Quality*

To achieve the overall objectives of higher education policy there is an urgent need to continue efforts to increase the quality of education and research. In order to achieve high-quality education, universities and university colleges have considerable freedom to independently structure their activities. But this freedom comes with a great responsibility. As a result of the higher education institutions' increased autonomy, central government's role has primarily become

overarching governance, monitoring, supervision and quality audit. This includes reviewing the institutions' degree-awarding powers and evaluating programme results in relation to targets. A new quality assurance system for higher education was introduced in 2011. This system places a more explicit emphasis on programme results than was previously the case. In addition, universities and university colleges can, from 2013, be allocated certain resources based on quality evaluations of programme results. In 2014, the Government appointed a committee of inquiry (Dir. 2014:54) to submit proposals on the future organisation of quality assurance activities. The inquiry chair is to consult with universities and university colleges, students and representatives from the world of work.

As part of efforts to enhance quality in higher education, the Government has raised the higher education institutions' funding for, above all, programmes in social sciences, the humanities, law and theology.

Further quality improvement measures are being implemented by raising the general entry requirements and selection requirements for higher education. The pupils leaving upper secondary school this year are among the first to have studied under the new rules introduced in 2011. These rules tightened the requirements regarding the amount of Swedish and English pupils need to have studied to meet the general entry requirements for higher education.

The higher education institutions themselves have a major responsibility for internationalisation. However, there is a national internationalisation strategy with specific targets that are to form the basis of internationalisation work at higher education institutions. The Government Offices of Sweden (Ministry of Education and Research) has taken the initiative to create a forum for internationalisation in order to improve coordination between government authorities and organisations that support the internationalisation efforts of higher education institutions. This forum includes, among others, representatives from the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, higher education institutions, student organisations and a number of government authorities.

Many Swedish higher education institutions engage in successful international collaborations in both research and education. Since the introduction of tuition fees for third-country students in 2011, the Government has funded scholarships for students liable to pay these fees.

#### *Higher Vocational Education*

Higher vocational education (HVE) was established in 2009 and has since then been reinforced with additional student places thanks to the economic trend. This type of education, which is post-secondary,

is based on a close collaboration with the world of work. HVE shows good results. Nine out of ten graduates have a job one year after completing their programme and just over six in ten have a job that entirely or mostly matches their programme. A large proportion (63 per cent) have a job before commencing their programme, but most of them move on to a different employer when they complete their education, with surveys indicating that these people receive more qualified tasks that make better use of their new skills. In 2013, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education introduced a new supervision strategy which means that more inspections are carried out. It is important that quality and supervisory work contributes to the maintenance of consistently good quality, and the Government intends to monitor this.

#### *Examples of national challenges*

From the perspective of society, it is important to have a system that ensures that the higher education courses and programmes that are offered are consistently of a high quality. Of central importance to Sweden are continued efforts to design a quality assurance system for higher education that is quality-driven while also taking into account the autonomy of higher education institutions.

There is a shortage of science teachers in Swedish schools. One future challenge will be to attract more individuals to teacher training in these subjects.

Another challenge is to increase mobility, mainly for teachers but also for students. This will help to increase the international perspective at universities and university colleges.

#### *Proposed priority at the European level 2015–2017*

Collaboration between higher education institutions – both nationally and internationally – is positive and important. The issue of joint degrees is an important part of developing international cooperation in higher education. Various EU programmes in the field of education and training have stimulated collaboration between European higher education institutions. Collaboration between higher education institutions with regard to designing courses and programmes is an important part of future developments. It is important that the EU continues to support this development. However, at the same time, this needs to take national legislation into account. Even though programmes are joint, parts of the programmes remain national matters. For Sweden, this concerns the exercise of national authority, such as admission decisions and the awarding of degrees.

Today, the internationalisation of higher education encompasses a range of activities such as student, teacher and researcher mobility, course development projects and educational development. The promotion of student and teacher mobility between EU countries

should be a priority. This includes working to ensure that all countries implement and apply the recognition tools available, such as ECTS, DS and NQF-HE, in order to facilitate mobility between countries.

#### 9. Adult learning

In parallel with the reform of the compulsory and upper secondary school systems, comes the reform of adult education. Among other things, a new Education Act (2010:800), a new Ordinance (2011:1108) on adult education and a new curriculum for adult education (Lvux12) have begun to be applied. The reform of adult education is necessary because its role has become broader and more important. Not least in light of the fact that adult education has assumed an increasingly important place in the integration of newly arrived immigrants in recent years. Adult education provides many people who have immigrated to Sweden with an opportunity for further education or re-training or for supplementing existing education from their country of origin. Adult education thus increases the opportunities for these individuals to establish themselves in the labour market. The goals that individuals have for their education vary considerably, which places great demand on providers. The recently introduced Lvux12 curriculum states that adult education must be able to meet the needs of all pupils, dependent on their individual needs and abilities. For this reason, a central theme in the reform of adult education is that education must be better adapted to the abilities, goals and circumstances of each individual pupil.

In Sweden, adult education is mainly funded by municipalities. However, in conjunction with the financial crisis and subsequent recession, the Government contributed specifically targeted central government grants for apprenticeship education for adults (*lärlingsvux*) and, temporarily, for vocationally oriented adult education at upper secondary school level (*yrkesvux*) in 2009–2014. These additional central government resources have not, however, resulted in the expected increase in places in municipal adult education (*komvux*) and education for adults with intellectual disabilities (*särvux*), since the municipalities cut back on adult education resources more than expected. The Government has announced its intention to clarify the regulations so that central government investments result in a net increase in the number of student places. The rules for central government grants to *yrkesvux* and *lärlingsvux* are currently under review. The starting point for the investments is that they should have the greatest possible impact in terms of the number of student places and quality of *komvux* and *särvux*.

#### *Liberal adult education (Folkbildning)*

The educational focus and distinctive character of *folkbildning* makes it an important part of the Swedish education system and an

important means of raising the level of knowledge in society. A number of investments are being made within *folkbildning*. Among these are the study motivation courses introduced in 2010. The annual number of places in general courses at folk high schools has also been expanded.

The Government has also decided that from 2014 Arbetsförmedlingen (the Swedish Public Employment Service) in cooperation with the Swedish National Council of Adult Education are to offer folk high school courses for certain newly arrived immigrants. Organised for persons covered by establishment measures, these are to be specially adapted and integrated folk high school courses. They are to encompass multiple measures in combination, including Swedish and social orientation and employment preparation initiatives.

#### *Swedish tuition for immigrants (Sfi)*

In 2013, the Sfi Inquiry submitted its report, “Swedish for immigrants – choice, flexibility and individualisation” (SOU 2013:76). Among other measures, the Inquiry proposes that Sfi and Swedish as a second language be combined to form a single course that would then be part of municipal adult education (*komvux*). This contrasts with Sfi's current status as a separate type of education, and Sfi's study pathways will be adapted to the target group to a greater extent. In December 2012, the Government decided that a central government grant, covering an estimated SEK 50 million per year in 2013–2015, may be issued to providers of Sfi (or its equivalent) for initiatives contributing towards increased quality and greater individualisation. Applications for central government grants are submitted to the National Agency for Education, which decides on and disburses the grant.

#### *Examples of national challenges*

The challenge remains of continuing to develop flexibility to meet individuals on their terms and level. One challenge for the years ahead is to improve education for newly arrived immigrants in order to enhance this group's opportunities to gain employment and integrate.

#### *Proposed priority at the European level 2015–2017*

Adult education is of great importance to speeding up the process by which foreign-born adults establish themselves. Effective adult education based on individual needs and abilities, in terms of both language learning and other training, e.g. vocational training, can result in major gains in terms of better social integration and finances – for the individual and for society. Adults with a limited previous education constitute a priority target group for the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning. A large proportion of this target group is made up of foreign-born adults. Sweden considers it important that improved education for foreign-born adults continues to be a priority in the ET 2020 cooperation.

### C. ET 2020 Governance and Europe 2020

The country-specific recommendations in the field of education and training

Within the scope of the monitoring of country-specific recommendations, the field of education and training has had an explicit presence when it comes to the recommendation made to Sweden in the area of employment, which includes educational aspects. The Government's economic policy has a significant focus on increasing employment, strengthening the incentives to work, increasing employability and reducing the thresholds for entry to the labour market. In its Budget Bill for 2014, the Government presented reforms that aim to, for example, accelerate the transition from studies to work and reduce long-term unemployment among young people. An important part of this work has been the 'tripartite talks' (see below). The Government has also proposed a new form of employment – upper secondary apprentice employment – which means that apprentices in upper secondary school may be offered employment under adapted labour regulations even while they are still training. Investments are also being made, for example, to increase the attractiveness of vocational training, to establish those born abroad and to get young people to leave unemployment for work or studies at the first-cycle or upper secondary school level.

In March 2014, the Government submitted a youth policy bill that presents a youth policy action plan for 2014–2017. The action plan includes efforts to improve work with the group of young people who neither work nor study. Among other things, schools are to notify the municipality as soon as possible if a pupil has a significant level of absence from teaching without a valid reason.

For more details on the work with the country-specific recommendations, see Sweden's national reform programme 2014.

Working methods and tools

The working groups within the open method of coordination are important in the continuing work on the ET 2020 strategic priorities. The working groups constitute a valuable platform for the Member States to exchange experience and for their opportunities to learn from each other. Moreover, the groups constitute an important network of contacts for further work on national reforms. Sweden considers it important that mutual learning will be the focus of the groups' work and for the groups to have a broad perspective with reference to the strategic objectives adopted under ET 2020. The mandates of the working groups have a major focus on labour market needs, and it is important that the groups work on all the ET 2020 objectives. It is also important to include the perspective that education and training is formative and thus shapes the development

of individuals and societies. The new ET 2020 working groups have just formed, and it is Sweden's view that these groups should be given the opportunity to work for some time before it is possible to discuss whether they need to be altered further.

Discussions at the Directors-General meetings should be held at an overarching and strategic level. Discussions on a detailed level, as well as peer review exercises, should be held in the working groups.

The Directors-General meetings and meetings of the *High Level Group* should act as a forum for checking which issues should be passed on from the working groups to the Education Committee and the ministers.

Collaboration with other interested parties

#### *Dialogues with authorities and organisations*

The Government has both formal and informal dialogues with the authorities for which it is responsible. These dialogues discuss all the issues covered in this report. The Ministry of Education and Research has a special reference group for EU issues consisting of all the authorities in the field of education and training, as well as trade union representatives, students' and pupils' organisations and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). This reference group meets twice a year. In its activities regarding the new working groups within the open method of coordination in ET 2020, Sweden has chosen to include, together with ministry representatives, experts from the authorities working on the issues dealt with in the working groups. This means that the authorities are continuously involved in this work.

#### *The tripartite talks*

Joint talks between trade unions, employers and the Government commenced in autumn 2011: the tripartite talks. The tripartite talks are intended to lead to agreements and reforms that will improve the labour market for young people, among others. The education and training sector is part of these talks, and one of the areas covered by the talks is vocational introduction agreements. This is an umbrella term for industry-specific agreements on the employment of individuals who lack relevant professional experience, which involve a proportion of working hours being used for training and supervision. The agreements specify the design of these jobs in each individual industry with reference to, for example, terms of employment and the training or supervision that will be included. Since January 2014, as part of the Government's investments in expanding workplace learning, there is special support for these jobs when an employer takes on a young person who lacks relevant experience and/or is unemployed. The investments in these jobs have been designed in close cooperation with employers.

### *National programme councils*

Every vocational programme in the upper secondary school system has a national programme council. The overarching objective of the programme councils is national collaboration on upper secondary vocational training and the needs of the labour market. The National Agency for Education appoints members to the twelve national programme councils. The members are representatives from the world of work with knowledge of the programmes' vocational aspects. These might, for example, be people who are responsible for training or skills issues in a vocational organisation or government authority. The national programme councils discuss many different issues related to vocational training. These range from analysing training on the basis of the needs of the labour market to more concrete matters such as the content of vocational training or the design of support for supervisors.

### *Forum for Internationalisation*

The Forum for Internationalisation was created in late 2008 on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research. Its aim is to improve coordination between the Swedish authorities and organisations that are affected by and may have an influence on the internationalisation of higher education. The internationalisation of higher education provides opportunities, but problems can also arise. For example, when many organisations are involved, there is a risk that issues fall through the cracks. The Forum enables participants to exchange experience, catalogue the opportunities and work together to avoid such problems. The Forum's task is to facilitate coordination of the work done by the relevant authorities and organisations. The Forum meets two to three times a year and its work is coordinated by the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

### *European programmes and Education and Training 2020*

With regard to both the previous Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and the current Erasmus+ education programme, Sweden's work programme is based on the objectives and benchmarks for education and training specified in ET 2020.

In-service training and professional development are a means by which to equip teachers with tools to provide all pupils, regardless of ability, with an opportunity to remain in education and for the school system to achieve the goals of education policy. The focus on teachers' professional development has been central to the LLP. The monitoring and analysis of in-service training scholarships indicate that as many as 97 per cent of respondents state that they are satisfied with the in-service training and that they see Comenius in-service training as a good opportunity for teachers and other educational staff to develop both professionally and personally.

Other national reports concerning Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci point to the positive impact of international cooperation on the project's quality. The evaluation of Leonardo da Vinci specifically states that, regardless of the projects' direction, a primary focus for the projects has been to increase the quality and transparency of vocational training.

In the proposed programmes for the new Programming Period 2014–2020, the Social Fund has clear links to ET 2020 with wording that highlights Strategic Objectives 2, 3 and 4. Education and training is highlighted as a key factor for young men and women's access to the labour market.

The 2014 Work Programme for Erasmus+ also gives priority to activities and objectives that support ET 2020, such as work involving

- basic knowledge,
- the transition between school and work, and
- the quality of higher education.