



EUROPEAN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH FORUM 2014

REPORT

*Future priorities of the ET 2020 Strategic Framework
for European Cooperation in Education and Training
and Synergies with Youth Policy*

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1 Key messages from the Forum

- The **value of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020)** as an **integrated framework**: Forum participants underlined the great value of having a holistic strategic framework covering education and training in all contexts, sectors and dimensions. Participants advocated strong links between the education and training sectors, and between youth work and employment. They also argued for an increased cooperation between the various stakeholders.

A holistic approach is crucial for building a bridge between education, training, youth work and the labour market, and for increasing dialogue among stakeholders. This approach implies collaboration involving formal, non-formal and informal education and training, the education and youth sectors, different levels of education, different Commission services and different Ministries at national level. Several stakeholders acknowledged the value of existing EU tools, cross-policy synergies and multi-professional cooperation, but also emphasized the need to improve the cooperation framework, by promoting networking, cross-sector collaboration and cooperative learning opportunities.

- **Remaining challenges**: In the context of ET2020, the following main challenges are still outstanding:
 - Employability and transition between education and the labour market,
 - The social dimension of education and training, for example the provision of equal access to education and training opportunities for all, and the provision of civic competences against the background of growing mistrust of the EU - especially among young people - and of rising extremism,
 - Supporting low-achievers in gaining basic and transversal skills and combating early school leaving more effectively,
 - Diversifying and professionalising the teaching profession and finding solutions to cope with the increasing diversity in the classroom/learning environment.
- **Issues neglected during the past ET2020 work cycle**: The areas perceived as having been neglected during the past ET2020 work cycle include:
 - The social and equity dimension of education and training, the civic objectives of learning, and the consideration of countries' socio-economic situations when designing education and training policies,
 - Cross-sector cooperation and partnerships between all types of stakeholders,
 - Recognition of non-formal and informal skills, competences and learning outcomes,
 - The use of technology in education, in particular ICT,
 - The investment in and support to entrepreneurship education,
 - The attractiveness of and support to the teaching profession.

- **Priorities for the next ET2020 work cycle:** The next ET 2020 work cycle should focus on the following priorities and expected outcomes:
 - Developing a holistic approach linking education, training, youth work and employment, and increasing cross-sector cooperation between stakeholders,
 - Strengthening the social dimension of education and training and delivering on the strategic objective 'Promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship' of ET2020. This also means promoting learning interventions for those not in employment and enhancing the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, especially for low-qualified youth/adults and marginalised groups,
 - Providing additional support, especially from national authorities, to ensure the professionalization of teachers (e.g. pedagogical and digital skills),
 - Encouraging the transnational mobility of learners and educators,
 - Supporting entrepreneurship education at all levels (starting at primary school level),
 - Improving learning outcomes relative to resources used (efficiency).

- **ET2020 working methods/governance:** The Forum participants confirmed the importance of ET2020 for mutual learning through peer learning activities and sharing of best practices. They also recognised the key role played by the European Commission in promoting these activities. On the other hand, participants emphasised the need to improve the ET2020 governance and working methods by:
 - Focussing on a limited number of priorities and on implementation, in the sectors where the EU can add value,
 - Developing a more systematic approach to enhance peer learning; setting up platforms to learn, exchange ideas and share good practice examples,
 - Communicating results and disseminating successful policies and best practices more effectively – at both national and EU level - using clearer language to allow key messages to reach a wider audience.

- **Stakeholder involvement:** The key messages related to stakeholder involvement can be divided in two groups. On the one hand, the Forum participants advocated a better involvement of the stakeholders in the ET 2020 governance process and working methods, including suggestions for:
 - Involving different actors in the next ET2020 work cycle – notably parents and families, youth organisations, companies and the self-employed, and social partners,
 - Widening the range of stakeholder groups involved in ET2020 debates, for example by enhancing collaboration with representatives from informal and non-formal education, training and youth work,
 - Consulting educators on what they want to achieve and how.

On the other hand, the participants suggested a number of substantive ET2020 policy priorities concerning stakeholders, including:

- Promoting cooperation mechanisms and increasing synergies across policies and between stakeholders from the variety of formal, informal and non-formal sectors,
- Developing a community-based approach to education and the delivery of integrated services, and support to adult participation. This may involve reinforcing the links between schools and families to assist disadvantaged parents in helping their children to succeed,
- Promoting active citizenship to support learners' commitment in society.

2 Summary of the sessions, panels and workshops

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*. The event hosted forward looking discussions to identify key priority areas for policy cooperation as part of the review of the Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020). It gathered more than 350 participants representing different types of stakeholders and organisations active in education, training and youth.

2.1 Opening session

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, opened the Forum, highlighting its importance as a platform for discussions and debates for all education, training and youth stakeholders.

Commissioner Vassiliou welcomed the new Commission's focus on employment, education, training and youth. She restated the need to address the most urgent challenge identified by Commission President-elect Juncker as the 29th state emerging in Europe: a state where people – in particular young people – are without jobs. She highlighted the need for solid and sustainable funding for education, training and youth policies, as well as the need to improve the quality of provision. She pinpointed excellence, innovation and 'outside the box' thinking as successful modernisation factors.

Commissioner Vassiliou pointed out the prominence of the European Semester process and the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs, notably the headline targets focusing on education, employment, and fighting poverty and social exclusion. She stressed the importance of taking stock of ET2020 to assess whether the framework delivers the intended results, what can be improved and what should be the future priorities.

She emphasized the positive correlation between participation in youth work and non-formal learning and achievement in formal education, one of the key results highlighted in the recent study on Youth Work in the EU. She stressed the flexible and personalised approach of youth work, which equips young people with relevant transversal skills and competences.

Finally, Commissioner Vassiliou highlighted the importance of networks and partnerships between the various stakeholders involved in education, training and youth, as reflected in the results of the stakeholder survey on the remaining challenges and future priorities of ET2020. Bringing people together, cooperating and sharing ideas were mentioned as crucial to best address the challenges faced by young Europeans.

Silvia Costa, Chair of the Culture and Education Committee in the European Parliament, highlighted the importance of investing in education as part of sustainable development of the economy and the society. She stressed that budget cuts in education and training are not the right solution as these sectors should be seen as generating economic growth and key drivers of a knowledge-based society. The Member States and the EU should therefore invest more in education and training.

Ms Costa emphasised the central place of education and training within the revised Europe 2020 Strategy. She emphasised the need to link skills with new jobs in the digital era. She referred to the consolidation of the 'knowledge triangle', to creativity and entrepreneurship education. She also highlighted the need to reinforce the social dimension of education, which will have positive impacts on the reduction of early school leaving and the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

She stressed the need to develop new models of governance to foster dialogue and partnerships between the various stakeholder groups. She also argued for new pedagogical practices, new teaching models and new ways to enhance knowledge, notably through adequate training for educators and the use of digital technologies in learning environments.

Ms Costa finally pleaded for a successful cooperation between the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council. She stressed the Parliament's wish for the Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture to continue to take the lead in implementing Erasmus+ and hoped that the changes in the Commissioner's responsibilities would not hamper this. She concluded by stressing the importance of a holistic approach to education, training and youth issues.

2.2 Challenges and priorities

2.2.1 Towards a new EU Agenda for Education, Training and Youth

Xavier Prats Monné, Director General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission, outlined the issues linked to the new agenda for education, training and youth, emphasising that formal, non-formal and informal education, and youth work pursue the common objective of improving human capital. He highlighted the good working relationships between the European Commission and the European Parliament, one of the achievements of Commissioner Vassiliou. The main challenge is to revive Europeans' confidence in their education systems and their own future. Education and training should be a top priority for the next Commission.

Mr Prats Monné emphasised five main issues to be dealt with in the near future:

- Early School Leaving, which affects five million Europeans (50% of early school leavers are unemployed);
- Tertiary education, especially given the high level of unemployment among graduates;
- Innovation in education, which is directly linked to the effective management of change in a global world, with a strong focus on new technologies;
- Efficiency of spending in education;
- The agenda for youth, which should be closely related to education and training.

Mr Prats Monné also highlighted the key contribution of ET2020 to the core business of the EU, in particular its Growth and Jobs agenda.

2.2.2 Priorities for Education and Training 2020 - Results from the stakeholder survey

As part of the ET2020 stock-taking exercise, an online survey prior to the ETY Forum collected stakeholders' views on the achievements of ET2020 and on the outstanding challenges.

The survey highlighted many (158) concrete positive impacts of EU activities in the area of education and training, relating both to policy initiatives and funding programmes. Examples most frequently cited concerned the areas of: Lifelong learning (49); Quality and efficiency in Education and Training (38) and Mobility (32).

The most frequently mentioned **impacts** were:

- Development of new projects, initiatives and tools at national level,
- Greater visibility of the topics covered by ET2020 with enhanced awareness and interest,
- Increased collaboration between various groups of stakeholders,
- Stronger emphasis on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning,
- Improvements in the quality of education and training.

The most frequently mentioned **challenges** were:

- Limited focus on the social dimension of education and training,
- Level of and access to financial resources,
- Lack of communication and dissemination of results and good practices,
- Need to widen the range of stakeholders' groups involved in debates on ET2020 topics.

Suggestions to improve the ET2020 **Strategic Objectives** included:

- Making Strategic Objective 3 - 'Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship' - more prominent. This objective was considered by several respondents as the most relevant and important. This includes the need to better adapt the strategic objectives to national socio-economic situations and to increase the focus on issues linked to unemployment and employability,
- Better integrating technologies and ICT in future priorities.

Respondents were **overall satisfied with the usefulness of ET2020**. Suggestions for improving its **effectiveness** included:

- Bringing the ET2020 outputs closer to national/regional realities and priorities, in particular by improving communication, awareness-raising and dissemination,
- Further improving the cooperation between stakeholders and involving a broader range of stakeholders in the Open Method of Coordination (OMC),
- Simplifying the language used to communicate on the ET2020 objectives.

2.2.3 Key findings of the Study on Youth Work in the European Union

Good quality youth work produces valuable outcomes of different types:

- **Education and training:** non-cognitive skills; better academic outcomes; alternative pathways for dropouts; educational/career guidance; opportunities for further individual development.
- **Employment/entrepreneurship:** transversal skills as demanded on the labour market; opportunities to practice skills in real settings; improved orientation of young people; matching young job-seekers and jobs.

- **Social inclusion:** socialisation and safer environments; prevention of exclusion; targeting of specific groups, including combatting negative perceptions of specific groups amongst the general public.

2.3 Challenges and priorities for a new agenda – a view from a panel of stakeholders

The first stakeholder panel was composed of **Marcello Limina**, Chair of the Education Committee, EU Council of Ministers/Italian Permanent Representation; **David Lopez**, President of the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL); **Martin Rømer**, European Director of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE); **Maxime Cerutti**, Director of Social Affairs of Business Europe; **Allan Päll**, Secretary General of the European Youth Forum; and **Caroline Jenner**, CEO of Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise Europe (JA-YE Europe).

The **main messages** emerging from the discussions in Panel 1 are summarized below:

Inclusion is not sufficiently addressed at EU level, neither at policy nor at programme level. The objective of ensuring inclusive growth in Europe should be more prominent. In this respect, investment is a key priority.

A holistic approach is essential to better link youth work with employment and different forms of education. In parallel, dialogue and participation within ET2020 could be improved. More cooperation between stakeholders involved in the education, training and youth sectors is needed (e.g. civil society organisations, private companies and youth organisations). One panellist stressed the need to align qualifications developed in different national systems to make them understandable by employers.

The European Commission is not sufficiently in touch with the real world (e.g. employers) and should make efforts to be closer to its citizens. The results of European and national initiatives in education and training are not well communicated and not sufficiently disseminated. Many stakeholders who responded to the online survey did not know whether and how their country implemented the Country-specific Recommendations issued during the European Semester.

Prioritizing and focusing on a limited number of priorities is key to making cost-effective investments in education and to communicating results more clearly. Quality and the efficient use of resources are also crucial.

Focus should be put on entrepreneurship education, from primary to tertiary level. Schools and universities need to embrace entrepreneurial education and to become more entrepreneurial themselves. There is also a need to invest in new technologies and ICT for learning to adapt to the changing world. Coding is considered as a very useful digital skill and should be taught to young children to some extent. Investment in basic skills is also important, and one panellist pinpointed the shortage of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skills.

2.4 Challenges and priorities for a new agenda – a view from Forum participants

The **Forum participants** highlighted in particular the following **challenges**:

- Unequal access to education and training and difficulties in reducing early school leaving,
- Lack of synergy between the labour market and education and training, and growing mistrust towards the EU and its capacity to reduce (youth) unemployment through education and training,
- Lack of consideration of the socio-economic conditions of particular countries when developing EU policies and strategies on education, training and youth,
- Negative attitudes of many young people towards education and training,
- Inadequate training of educators,
- Poor communication and use of jargon.

2.5 Tackling the challenges, setting the priorities - Workshops

2.5.1 The workshop process

Ten workshops covered five topics. There were two workshops per topic (A and B). Each workshop was supported by a facilitator and rapporteur who respectively guided the discussions and noted the key emerging messages. The workshops were interactive, focusing on the contributions of participants. Two presentations, respectively from an independent introductory speaker and a European Commission expert, informed the process.

Thirty policy proposals emerged from the workshops along with ideas for processes and synergies. These proposals and ideas were presented during the second day of the Forum by the workshop rapporteurs. The policy proposals (three per workshop) and ideas for processes and synergies (three to four per workshop) for the five topics are summarised below.

2.5.2 Workshop 1: Promoting excellence and innovation

Key messages

Workshop 1A

Policy proposals

- Recognition for excellence and innovation in teaching
- Systemic mobility across non-formal and formal education and training
- Collaboration between education and world of work and society

Processes and synergies

- Incentives for excellence for all stakeholders
- Responsibility of educators and education and training institutions
- Open cooperation and sharing of knowledge

Workshop 1B

Policy proposals

- Innovation should be part of teachers' training and continuing education
- National best practice funded and shared at EU level – identification and sharing of best practices
- Diverse pathways to tertiary education and affordable tuition fees

Processes and synergies

- Innovation must be continuous and part of school's development plan
- Provide room for innovation
- Is all innovation good?

Key messages from panels and participants underpinning the proposals:

- Adapt European education systems to the needs of today, developing innovation for all and stimulating educators to innovate (e.g. through innovative pedagogical techniques),
- Enhance collaboration between relevant stakeholders – notably students, academics and companies. This could include collaboration at local level by, for example, engaging young people not connected to education through non-formal education activities and, at higher level, between different Ministries. European tools such as ET2020 and Erasmus + have the potential to create space for such cooperation,
- Let new policies evolve even if there is resistance to changing the status quo,
- Better disseminate and mainstream success stories.

2.5.3 Workshop 2: Tackling the low-skills gap

Key messages

Workshop 2A

Policy proposals	Processes and synergies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote community-based learning • Prioritise initiatives for Lifelong Learning • Reinforce cross-sector cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training teachers for specific target groups and social inclusion • Provide basic skills starting from the early years • Validation of non-formal learning and informal learning to recognise competences of low-skilled • Need to modernise education

Workshop 2B

Policy proposals	Processes and synergies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on family (early tracking) • Holistic cross-sectoral approach • Quality mentoring in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach basic skills at an early age • Empower the individuals/mediators • Disseminate best practices • Incentives to create a culture of learning

Key messages from panels and participants underpinning the proposals:

- Ensure the recognition by educators of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, for employability purposes but also for further learning. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes would in particular enhance the employability of low-qualified people who have non-certified (soft) skills and competences required by employers,
- Talk about 'skills gap' rather than 'low skills', to avoid negative perceptions about low-qualified people,
- Improve cooperation between the stakeholders involved in education and training,
- Better involve families in education and tackle the low-skills gap at the level of Early Childhood Education and Care,

- Improve the role of employers in up-skilling workers, for example by developing systems where employees act as advisors, mentors and trainers,
- Provide adequate funding for policies tackling the low-skills gap,
- Better share examples of best practices and successful initiatives.

2.5.4 Workshop 3: Supporting a new generation of educators

Key messages

Workshop 3A

Policy proposals

- Support experiences outside the educational organisation environment (European / global)
- Help educators and educational stakeholders network and collaborate
- Recruit excellent educators reflecting learners' diversity

Processes and synergies

- Integrate Continuing Professional Development in educators' professional path
- Develop pedagogical expertise in using ICT in education
- Ensure complementarity and teamwork among educators within their institution
- "New generation of educators (non-formal sector)" as policy priority in Erasmus + (KA3)

Workshop 3B

Policy proposals

- Create future schools today
- Inspire educators to become professional
- Create conditions to enable educators to let learners shine

Processes and synergies

- Opening up the schools
- Implement holistic view on education
- Use diversity
- Stimulate collaborative attitudes amongst educators

Key messages from panels and participants underpinning the proposals:

- Change the mentalities so that the professionalization of the teaching profession is inspired by a political will to change the system,
- Involve educators in the discussions on the evolution of their roles (decide with them, not for them) ; actively engage educators in their own professional development, for example by offering them company placements and securing their temporary replacement in their job,
- Promote networking and collaborative learning opportunities for educators (e.g. peer learning in similar educational organisations) and other educational stakeholders, for example through online platforms or international cooperation programmes,
- Reinforce the attractiveness of the teaching profession to attract educators who have the right skills and specialisations, are motivated and reflect the diversity of the learning population,
- Provide educators continuous support to reduce early drop-out rates, e.g. through mentoring, advice and training in class management, especially in the initial years of the profession,
- Enable educators to reflect on the socio-economic situations of learners, for example by stimulating their creativity and innovation and helping them to develop critical thinking,

- Nurture a European and cosmopolitan space for training and practice outside the learning environment for educators (e.g. international benchmarks, sabbatical year, voluntary or social work in related field of teaching).

2.5.5 Workshop 4: Recognising and valuing skills and competences

Key messages 4

Workshop 4A

Policy proposals

- Take stock of existing validation and recognition tools
- Develop a common understanding of competences and implement validation frameworks to ensure quality
- Improve coordination of stakeholders introducing a high-quality label for employers to encourage recognition

Processes and synergies

- Include both social and professional development in recognition frameworks
- Expand recognition with quality stamp into apprenticeships and traineeships
- Holistic approach in the dialogue with all stakeholders
- Ensure that policy developments at national level are not lagging behind what is already well acknowledged at EU level

Workshop 4B

Policy proposals

- Include validation of non-formal / informal learning in all relevant EU policies
- Develop validation of soft / transversal skills within existing validation frameworks
- Offer information and guidance to support validation

Processes and synergies

- Share good practices – also among countries
- Promote the concrete consolidation of validation arrangements and tools
- Make the learning outcomes approach a pre-requisite
- Develop training of practitioners on validation

Key messages from panels and participants underpinning the proposals:

- Ensure that qualifications better reflect the skills needed by the labour market,
- Promote the learning outcomes approach and the certification and recognition of competences at EU level, since these are key concepts that require a shift of mind; implement existing qualification and recognition tools effectively rather than create new tools, and bring them closer to the people who need them the most,
- Better recognise informal learning and raise the awareness of educators, learners and employers on validation opportunities; apply quality labels at school level,
- Promote a holistic approach to sustain dialogue among stakeholders and build a bridge between education, training and the labour market,
- Support learners reflecting on their skills and professional development and start career guidance as early and widely as possible, in a lifelong learning perspective,

- Encourage peer-learning approaches, which are essential to share good practices.

2.5.6 Workshop 5: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

Key messages

Workshop 5A

Policy proposals

- Flagship EU initiative to address inequality in education in Europe
- Treat children and young people as competent stakeholders
- Best prepare educational workforce for equity, diversity and inclusion

Processes and synergies

- Encourage greater political commitment from governments
- Develop cross-policy synergies and multi-professional cooperation on the ground
- Support a community approach to education and delivery of integrated services

Workshop 5B

Policy proposals

- Family support; partnership with parents, especially in the early years
- Funding to promote participatory and inclusive schools / learning
- Systematic strategy for managing diversity through opening schools to community and empowerment

Processes and synergies

- Tackle low numeracy and literary competences by connecting/engaging parents
- Platform for learning and sharing good practice examples
- Address issues linked to power imbalance between teachers and students
- Peer exchanges on formal and non-formal education and civil society

Key messages from panels and participants underpinning the proposals:

- Prioritize the 'Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship' ET 2020 objective and ensure political commitment and funding to fight inequalities in education,
- Further promote and support the recognition of non-formal learning, which is especially important for disadvantaged learners,
- Improve the use of new technologies (in particular ICT tools) in education, developing didactic approaches to help educators become competent users of innovations,
- Promote inclusive school governance and classroom models based on a participatory and active learning culture, also to address problems such as bullying; promote individualised pedagogical approaches and support for pupils with special educational needs,
- Enhance youth empowerment and civic education to prepare children for participation in democratic societies and fight stereotypes and discrimination at school; develop a community-based approach to education ('open schools' or 'community schools') to deliver integrated services to disadvantaged learners and enhance links with informal and non-formal learning,
- Carry forward the work done in the ET2020 Early Childhood Education and Care working group on a quality framework; promote synergies, the

dissemination of good practices and peer learning. A quality mark could be developed,

- Reconsider the performance-driven culture of education systems, which alienates the most disadvantaged learners; promote access to tertiary education for disadvantaged learners.

2.6 Main remaining challenges – Interactive reporting from workshops by rapporteurs (round 1) and comments from a stakeholders' panel

The stakeholders discussed the policy proposals and challenges identified by the Workshops, as part of an interactive reporting process. The panel was composed of:

- **Leonor Moral Soriano**, Education Attaché, Spanish Permanent Representation to the EU;
- **Elisabeth Gehrke**, Chairperson, European Students Union;
- **Tommaso Grimaldi**, General Manager, European Vocational Training Association (EVTA);
- **Peter Drummond**, Head of International Division, UK Department for Education;
- **Graciela Sbertoli**, Assistant Director, Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning;
- **John Bamber**, Project Specialist, Centre for Effective Services.

The **main messages** emerging from the panel discussions are summarised below:

On Workshop 1 (Promoting excellence and innovation), panellists recognized the importance of collaboration between stakeholders at all levels, notably at local (e.g. neighbourhood and municipality) and higher level (between Ministries). They highlighted the potential of ET2020 and Erasmus+ to bring students, academics, companies and other actors together. It is crucial for both individuals and society to promote cooperation instead of thinking and working in silos.

On Workshop 2 (Tackling the low-skills gap), one panellist suggested to speak of 'skills gap' rather than 'low skills', which implies negative perceptions and images of certain jobs. Some panellists recognised that skills gaps exist and need to be fixed, but developing quality mentoring and identifying which skills and competences are missing in the workplace involve significant challenges.

The status of non-formal education should be raised to gain more importance and receive additional funding. Emphasis should be put on validation, since many of the soft skills and qualifications that employers are looking for can be gained through non-formal and informal learning but are not certified. According to some panellists, promoting non-formal learning needs to be balanced with the need to keep its beneficial non-formal aspects. The importance of promoting and sharing best practices for action was also stressed.

On Workshop 3 (Supporting a new generation of educators), all panellists highlighted the need to professionalise the teaching profession. This could be achieved in various ways, such as facilitating the use of innovative tools (e.g. mobile devices and social media) for education, developing incentives for educators to be creative and critical (e.g. training and professional development opportunities) and creating the conditions for educators to work 'with passion'.

The working conditions of educators need to be improved, and the pressure to change should be put on the political level, not on the educators themselves. Also, educators should be consulted more on what they want to achieve and how. Benchmarking the teaching profession between countries (e.g. through international exchanges) is very important and should be promoted. Educators should be able to work in different settings (formal and non-formal) and reflect on the social reality of learners to better mentor them, stimulate their creativity and help them develop critical thinking.

On Workshop 4 (Recognizing and valuing skills and competences), several panellists recognized the role played by the Commission to develop certifications and recognize competences. There could be resistance from the national systems on these issues, but a new and common language is emerging. The discussion also highlighted the importance of better recognizing informal learning, promoting career guidance in a lifelong learning perspective, helping learners to reflect on their skills and development outlook, and ensuring that qualification tools are accessible to the people who need them most.

Many panellists insisted on the importance of the objectives discussed in Workshop 5 (Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship). Active citizenship is key since it teaches how to actively participate in society and be more tolerant. In addition to providing employability skills, education should also enable people to understand the socio-economic context in which they live. One panellist suggested that the EU should not be too normative in the case of a new EU initiative, since different situations may require different solutions.

Adult participation is important since it improves the attitudes of parents towards education in general, and has positive effects on the success of children in primary education. The links between schools and families should be strengthened, to support disadvantaged parents to help their children succeed. ICT tools are crucial for social inclusion and accessibility, and didactic approaches should be developed to show teachers how to use these tools. Several panellists stressed the high costs of accessing education for the most deprived families, and the wider costs of non-education for society.

2.7 New priorities, new ways ahead – Interactive reporting from workshops by rapporteurs (round 2) and comments from the DG EAC panel

In the second part of the interactive reporting process, a panel of DG EAC staff commented on the suggestions made during the workshops about processes and synergies. The panel was composed of:

- **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Head of Unit for Education and training in Europe 2020 governance;
- **Sonia Peressini**, Deputy Head of Unit for Skills and qualifications strategies; Multilingualism policy;
- **Diana Jablonska**, Deputy Head of Unit for School education; Erasmus+;
- **João Santos**, Deputy Head of Unit for Vocational training and adult education; Erasmus+;
- **Mette Mørk Andersen**, Policy Officer for Higher education: Modernisation Agenda; Erasmus+;
- **Florencia Van Houdt**, Deputy Head of Unit for Youth; Erasmus+.

The **main messages** emerging from the panel are summarized below:

ET2020 already acts as an integrated umbrella framework and tries to offer a holistic approach to education and training. The Commission is aware of the need to develop close synergies between sectors and types of learning, as well as between the education and youth sectors. This is reflected in the Erasmus+ programme, which has an integrated approach and facilitates cooperation. European tools could be better used and better implemented to promote transparency and comparability between systems. The Commission is also aware of the need for better exchange of good practices, as advocated by the ET2020 national reports and by the workshop conclusions, and is reflecting on a more systematic approach to mutual learning within ET2020.

Developing a common understanding of competences and enhancing the validation of transversal skills, and of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, are key priorities of the Commission.

The Commission aims at bringing the worlds of education and work closer together, in particular through vocational education and training (VET) policies. The social dimension of VET, lifelong learning and work-based learning are of key importance. The panel highlighted the critical role played by educators, alongside the need to use new digital technologies and tools in the learning environment.

The panel stressed the importance of cooperation between relevant stakeholders, but also the challenges to make partnerships happen. One key challenge is to reach those students and young people who are neither interested nor motivated to learn. Solutions to reach this target group could be based on examples from outside of formal education.

The Commission has been working on different initiatives to support stakeholders in the school education sector, for example by identifying and developing: key principles for high quality outcomes in Early Childhood Education and Care; means for better involving parents and enhancing collaboration; innovative didactics and pedagogies in schools; helping teachers and educators to feel more valued. Two major remaining challenges are the necessity to support the low-achievers in gaining basic and transversal skills, and the need to diversify the teaching profession.

The Commission has already translated into practice many of the proposals put forward by the Forum participants. For instance, Erasmus+ promotes flexible learning pathways and provides opportunities for work placements. Workplace experiences for students offered through Erasmus+ are popular among both students and employers.

2.8 Next steps

Pierre Mairesse, Director for Europe 2020: Policy Development and Country Analysis, DG EAC, European Commission, highlighted four key messages for the future of education and training in Europe emerging from the Forum:

■ Key message 1:

The holistic approach must be reinforced. It implies better cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal learning sectors, between the education and youth sectors, between the different Commission services and between Ministries at national level. This is very relevant in relation to new technologies in education and digital skills, entrepreneurship education, transversal skills and non-formal and informal learning.

■ **Key message 2:**

There is a huge need for more peer learning and learning from existing good practices in Member States. A knowledge gap exists on what works in education.

Much more can be done to improve the cooperation between the youth and education sectors, e.g. social workers in the youth field are also educators. There is a great potential for a stronger cooperation in the future. Links at the regional and local levels also need to be improved.

■ **Key message 3:**

There is a strong economic and social case to put education and training at the center of the European Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

■ **Key message 4:**

There are currently too many actions and priorities in ET2020. The EU needs rather to focus on a limited number of priorities and on implementation, in the sectors where it can bring added-value, for example:

- Educators: the EU can develop tools for interlinking educators and further developing *e-twinning*; European Structural and Investment Funds can also be mobilised to train educators,
- Reference frameworks: the EU has a responsibility for the freedom of movement of citizens and learners according to the Treaty. It should ensure that competences and skills are recognized throughout Europe.

■ **Next steps:**

- A new Commission (1 November 2014),
- Publication of the Education and Training Monitor (November 2014),
- High-level conference on education in the digital era (11 December 2014),
- Council of Ministers for Education (12 December 2014): discussion on the place of education in the forthcoming revised Europe 2020 strategy,
- Commission proposal for a review of the Europe 2020 strategy (early 2015),
- Commission proposal for new priorities for ET2020 (March 2015): a limited number of policy priorities and actions, and suggestions for a revised governance of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) process (the ET2020 Joint Report is planned to be adopted in May 2015 by the Council of Ministers for Education).

The ETY Forum Report was prepared by ICF Consulting Services, on behalf of the European Commission.

