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What's new in Education and Training?



The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council works towards European Education Area

On 22-23 May, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS) brought together education ministers to further Europe's work on establishing a European Education Area. The EYCS adopted the Commission's proposal for a [Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages](#), which sets out ways to boost language learning and stresses how the language of schooling is the basis for literacy. The Recommendation also advocates for a high level of competence in an additional European language and the ability to use a third language confidently.

Ministers further agreed on the Commission's proposal for a [Council Recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems](#). This Recommendation sets out ways to increase access to quality early childhood education and care services for all families and children, including those from a disadvantaged background. The Recommendation also highlights the need to professionalise staff, the importance of promoting transparent and coherent monitoring and evaluation of services, and the importance of ensuring that adequate funding and a legal framework are in place.

The EYCS also adopted Conclusions on the implementation of the [Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults](#), which renews and intensifies the commitment of Member States to supporting adults who are low-skilled and lack basic reading, writing and digital competences. These Conclusions are a follow-up to the Commission's [stocktaking of Member States' implementation plans](#), which aim to address the 61 million adults across Europe who are low-skilled.

In addition, ministers took part in a debate on the contribution of education to strengthening social cohesion. This debate highlighted the notion that well-performing education systems play a crucial role in helping people acquire basic, digital, entrepreneurial and transversal skills throughout their lives. These, in turn, are precursors for inclusion in the labour market and central to sustaining cohesive, fair and innovative European societies.

Altiero Spinelli Prize for Outreach awarded for 2018

On 29 April, the European Commission and the European Parliament announced the recipients of the 2018 Altiero Spinelli Prize for Outreach during a ceremony at the House of European History in Brussels, as part of European Youth Week. The Prize is granted to outstanding works that help enhance citizens' understanding of the EU, while promoting ownership of the European project. Five prizes of €25,000 were awarded to works that bring to light the relevance of learning about the EU and the importance of participating in its democratic processes. The winners and their projects can be viewed [here](#).

Conference explores the future of reading and the impact of technology use on children

A conference organised by DG EAC on 4 April focused on the future of reading and the impact of technology use on children.

Professor Adriaan van der Weel, University of Leiden, and fellow researchers (Ladislao Salmerón and Miha Kovač) presented the main findings from the European research initiative [E-READ](#). E-READ is a research initiative funded by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) organisation, which brings together almost 200 scholars and scientists from the fields of reading, publishing and literacy. Specifically, the conference presented the main outcomes of a meta-study done by E-READ on the effects of digitalisation on reading. The study concluded that reading informative texts on screen instead of on paper led to a significant disadvantage in terms of reading comprehension, equal to losing two-thirds of a school years' worth of progression.

Francesca Gottschalk (OECD) presented the OECD's report 'The impact of technology use on children'. The report is part of the [21st Century Children project](#), which looks at the nature of modern childhood and the ways in which schools and communities can work together to protect and guide children while still allowing them the flexibility to make their own mistakes. After scrutinising the evidence behind statements made in the heated public debate on children's technology use, the project cautions against making policy decisions without careful consideration. More and better research is needed to untangle the complex chains of cause and effect where technology is involved.

European Parliament votes on new Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027

On 28 March, the European Parliament adopted its position on a post-2020 Erasmus+ programme in its first reading. MEPs voted to triple the 2021-2027 funding for Erasmus+, allowing more people to take part and adapting the grants to the needs of participants. MEPs also proposed that the European Commission and Erasmus+ national agencies draft a European inclusion framework within the Erasmus+ programme, and develop national inclusion strategies. It noted that increased synergies with other European funding programmes would enable support to be extended to quality projects that currently cannot be financed under Erasmus+ due to insufficient funding, and would increase the inclusiveness of the programme (particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged people).

Results of first year of Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange presented

On 6 February, the first year of the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange was presented to the European Parliament as part of a workshop on 'Virtual Exchange for digital skills and global citizenship'. To date, more than 10,000 participants from over 40 countries have participated in these online dialogues, which allow young people living in European and Southern Mediterranean countries to engage in intercultural dialogue and improve their skills through online learning tools. More than 150 partnerships have been established between higher education institutions and youth organisations.

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange also trains facilitators to moderate debates and professors to create their own virtual exchange components in partnership with colleagues from other universities. Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange is expected to reach 25,000 young people by the end of 2020 and become an integral part of the future Erasmus+ programme.

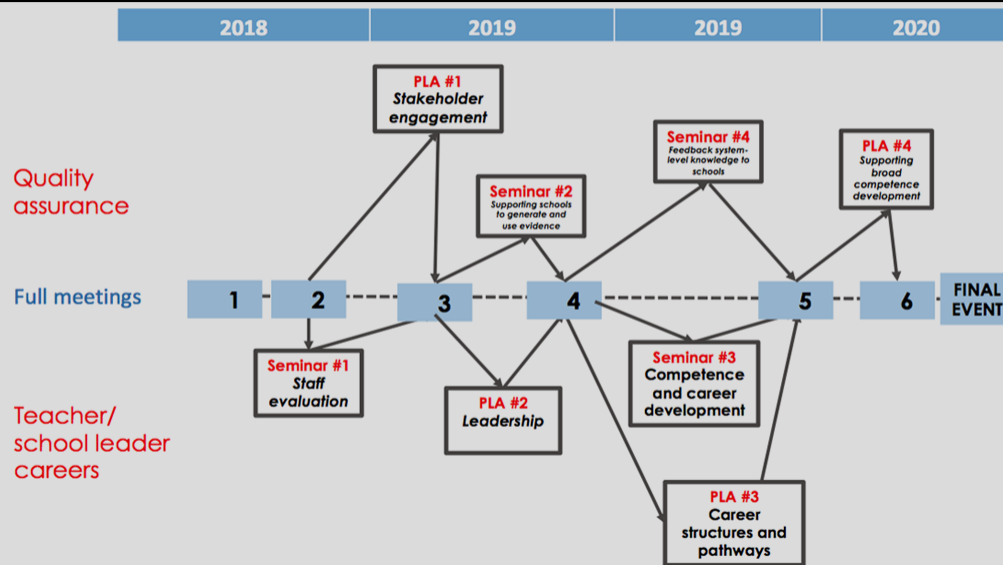
Highlights from the ET 2020 Working Groups

Interested in learning about the activities and good practices shared in 2016-2017 by the ET 2020 Working Groups? The highlights from the previous mandate are now available online in all EU languages and can be found [here](#).

Schools Working Group explores new approaches to evidence gathering



WORK PROGRAMME *Main themes, overarching principles & key questions*



The Working Group on Schools is currently concentrating on two priorities: **career paths in teaching and school leadership**, and **quality assurance processes and mechanisms**. Early 2019 witnessed key events in both areas, and a considerable amount of forward planning for the rest of the year.

PLA explores stakeholder engagement in quality assurance

The first Peer Learning Activity (PLA) of 2019 was held on 5-8 February, in Zagreb, Croatia. The guiding question for this PLA was: What are the conditions that need to be created at the system level to enable stakeholder engagement in quality assurance processes? Within this, participants looked at how to:

- enable conditions at different levels of education systems;
- achieve broad and active stakeholder engagement;
- create clear expectations for engagement focused on improvement.

11 countries participated in this PLA, including Croatia (host), Albania, Belgium (Flemish Community), Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and the UK (Northern Ireland). Each country was represented by two delegates who provided both the government and stakeholder perspectives.

The horizontal messages drafted during the PLA were discussed at the 21-22 February Working Group meeting. They serve as the foundation for further work on system-level conditions to support school- and teacher-led quality cultures.

Working Group discusses using evidence for improvement and supporting leadership careers

The February Working Group meeting took place in Brussels and included discussions on 'the generation and use of evidence for improvement' and 'leadership in the context of career paths'. There were presentations from all countries about their current priorities concerning the generation and use of evidence. Time was allocated to review a background paper on quality assurance presented by Janet Looney, which set the foundation for the group's future work in this area.

Building on the seminar held in December 2018 on staff evaluation, there were also group discussions that covered the recruitment, preparation and support of those in leadership positions in the teaching profession, as well as the roles and responsibilities those leaders might have in the development and careers of other teachers. The direction of the Group's work was outlined in plans for future events in 2019, which include two PLAs and three seminars.

Higher Education Working Group focuses on the twin challenge of inclusion and excellence



Increasing inclusion and excellence within higher education is one of the goals of the [European Education Area](#). While higher education attainment has grown over the decades, more effort is needed to widen access and develop strategies for inclusion. The Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in spring 2019 focused on these issues.

PLA calls for stronger commitment to inclusion in higher education and specific strategies

A PLA on 'Inclusion in higher education – Promotion of life changing opportunities for people from under-represented groups' was organised in Brussels on 11-12 April. The aim was to explore how to enhance inclusion (particularly for students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups), to strengthen the understanding that inclusion and excellence go hand-in-hand, and to encourage further action.

The PLA attracted over 40 participants from 15 EU Member States, including representatives from ministries, higher education institutions, social partners and stakeholders. Speakers included representatives from the European Students' Union, the European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the World Bank.

The discussions showed the need for action in terms of legislation, funding, data development, quality assurance, the training of higher education staff, and communication about the results. There is also a need for closer dialogue between stakeholders, including representatives of disadvantaged groups.

Towards the European Education Area

The Working Group met on 6-7 May in Brussels to discuss inclusion, [the European Education Area](#) (which is due to be established by 2025), the future of the Erasmus+ programme, resourcing higher education, and innovative approaches to learning and teaching.

- The meeting highlighted the progress that has been made on key initiatives relating to the European Education Area:
- The [European Universities](#) pilot will soon be launched and a new call announced.
- The development of the [European Student Card](#) and the new [Erasmus Charter](#) is ongoing.
- Member States are beginning to implement the [Council Recommendation](#) on promoting mutual automatic recognition of qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods.

Innovative approaches to teaching and learning covered examples of accessible virtual mobility, and combining creative and technological learning. The session showed the benefits of sponsoring a national forum for the enhancement of teaching and learning to allow for sustainable and scalable results.



The Working Group on Vocational Education and Training (VET) had its third meeting on 24-25 January followed by two peer learning activities (PLAs) in Romania (February) and Spain (April). The first focused on innovative regional approaches to VET while the second looked at new approaches to VET teacher training.

Combining new pedagogical approaches and digital tools to achieve VET excellence

Held in Timișoara, Romania, the Working Group's first PLA provided opportunities to see how VET excellence can be driven through innovative combinations of new regional approaches to VET and digital tools. Romanian partners have launched the Title of VET Excellence, which is awarded to schools that meet criteria in areas like attractiveness, relevance and innovation. They have also collaborated to develop the [Trialog app](#), which enables companies, students and teachers to keep track of students' progress on a daily basis.

Participants learnt about these measures first-hand by visiting the VET school, Energetic College 'King Ferdinand I'. The school has pursued an innovative road since 2012 by launching a new dual education system, which has led to the introduction of innovative ways of managing pedagogy, curricula, and school organisation. The college demonstrated how excellence can spring from cooperation between partners at local level, who have a common motivation to work together to give young people a better future.

Educating teachers and trainers for the 21st century

At the second PLA, organised back-to-back with the [Selfie Forum](#), Spain's National Institute for New Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) showed how to take a systematic approach to helping teachers acquire new digitalization- and innovation-related competences. INTEF is implementing a Digital Competence Framework for Teachers and provides a wide range of innovative measures ranging from Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), each with its own Facebook group and Twitter hashtag, to 'EduPills' which provide 3-8 minutes of 'micro-learning' via a dedicated app.

Participants also visited VET school 'CIFP Professor Raúl Vázquez', which included a demonstration of the moodle platform 'Educamadrid', provided by the Community of Madrid. The platform is used for core academic tasks and communication amongst students and teachers. For example, tasks are set by teachers, submitted by students and then marked by teachers on the platform. Course materials are also uploaded onto the platform.

Adult Learning Working Group nears end of stocktaking exercise



romania2019.eu

Conference

Adult upskilling and reskilling

Balancing the labour market

Bucharest, 6-7 June 2019



In early 2019, the Working Group on Adult Learning continued to take stock of the main accomplishments in the field of adult learning, and develop proposals to strengthen adult learning and its uptake. The topics were discussed during the March Working Group meeting in Brussels and on the dedicated web-platform.

Working Group close to finalising stocktaking exercise on developments in adult learning

One of the key deliverables of the Working Group for 2018-2020 is a report on the policy trends, developments and changes in Member States in relation to the priorities of the [European Agenda for Adult Learning \(EAAL\)](#).

Work on a stocktaking exercise on the main accomplishments in the field of adult learning commenced in September 2018 and has nearly concluded. The work has consisted of identifying policy developments in relation to the EAAL's four priorities through existing documentation and Working Group consultations. The members have also been asked to provide input on policy developments in their countries related to the priorities.

The final report will consist of:

- developments and trends at European level;
- developments at Member State level since 2011 with regard to the EAAL's four priorities;
- key messages that arose from the stocktaking exercise;
- potential topics to be addressed in the post-2020 programming period.

Working Group to meet in Romania

Member of the Working Group will take part in a conference entitled 'Adult Upskilling and Reskilling: Balancing the Labour Market', which is being organised as part of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The conference will provide a forum for discussing the key findings of the stocktaking report in relation to [Upskilling Pathways](#) and the implementation plans of Member States. It aims to generate a new momentum for sustaining implementation efforts in the future, identifying innovative solutions, and financing mechanisms for the delivery of upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all.

Early Childhood Education and Care Working Group holds second meeting



The second meeting of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) took place in Brussels on 12-13 March. During this meeting, the group reviewed research on staff professionalisation and inclusion, agreed on the final outputs, and identified the themes of the three upcoming Peer Learning Activities (PLAs).

Working Group defines outputs

The Working Group's discussions focused on two areas of the ECEC Quality Framework (staff professionalisation and inclusion), which forms the basis for the [2018 Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on high quality ECEC systems](#). Within these areas, the Working Group agreed to produce a report that outlined the outcomes of the discussions in the five Working Group meetings and the three PLAs. This will include a set of core competences for ECEC staff (assistants, 'teachers' and leaders of ECEC centres) with recommendations on how the competences could be acquired, recommendations on raising the attractiveness of the ECEC profession, and a toolbox for policy-makers that supports increased ECEC inclusion.

Existing research informs future focus

After reviewing existing European research, the Working Group further agreed that, in the context of staff professionalisation, ongoing professional development is key to improving the quality of ECEC and that coaching, mentoring and reflection are vital in preparing people to work in the ECEC sector. Lastly, measures to support the attractiveness of careers in the ECEC sector should be promoted to overcome negative biases. Moreover, on the topic of inclusion, the Working Group agreed that: parental involvement is key; staff attitudes and values are important competences for supporting inclusion; targeted measures can enhance inclusion; public awareness campaigns are key to reaching everyone; and, that there is a need for specialists in ECEC.

Looking ahead

The Working Group has established a number of virtual groups to reflect on key areas of the discussion. These groups will help to prepare a draft set of core competences for ECEC staff, develop priority areas for inclusion and review case studies of effective practice. Once the virtual group has finished its work, a draft set of competences will be distributed to the full working group in May 2019 for comments and discussion. The Working Group's first PLA will be on the topic of inclusion and will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, on 6-7 June. The next meeting will be in Brussels on 24-25 September.

Digital Education Working Group celebrates successful first PLA



The Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment held its first Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in January and its second face-to-face plenary meeting in February. In addition, the group hosted a webinar in March on digital transformation in education, and an online plenary meeting in May.

Digital Game-Based Learning PLA proves a huge success

The Working Group's first PLA took place on 7-9 January in Luxembourg City. The PLA considered a range of Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) approaches, from gamification to commercial off-the-shelf games, and how these can be utilised in a number of learning scenarios.

The PLA attendees witnessed the use of DGBL in a range of educational and training settings, and, in particular, how students can create their own games. Moreover, the attendees shared examples from their own countries and regions to showcase how DGBL can enhance learning engagement.

A key message emerging from the PLA was the role of the teacher in selecting and designing learning activities that met the needs of their learners. The examples were wide-ranging and illustrated how a variety of games can be used to support learning, to deepen content knowledge and to help learners of all ages develop transversal skills.

Exploring key digital education issues through plenary meetings

The Working Group met online three times during the first half of 2019 to explore a range of topics aligned to the work programme.

In February, the Group met in Brussels to consider the role of digital technologies in supporting assessment across a range of settings. This aligned with the first key theme of the Group: Monitoring and measuring impact/Assessment and recognition. The keynote address, 'Assessment and Recognition', was delivered by Associate Professor Therese N. Hopfenbeck, Director of the Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment. She focused on the importance of formative assessment and how it can act as a bridge between teaching and learning.

In March, the Group took part in a webinar on the cooperation framework post-ET 2020. This was followed by an online plenary meeting in May, which focused on emerging practices in digital education and included presentations on hackathons, AI and learning analytics.



The USES (AND ABUSES) of (MEDIA) LITERACY



The Working Group on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education focused on two themes in early 2019: the uses and abuses of media, and building bridges through inclusive historical teaching. The topics were discussed at a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in April and will be further developed at the Working Group meeting in June.

First PLA of current mandate takes place in Croatia...

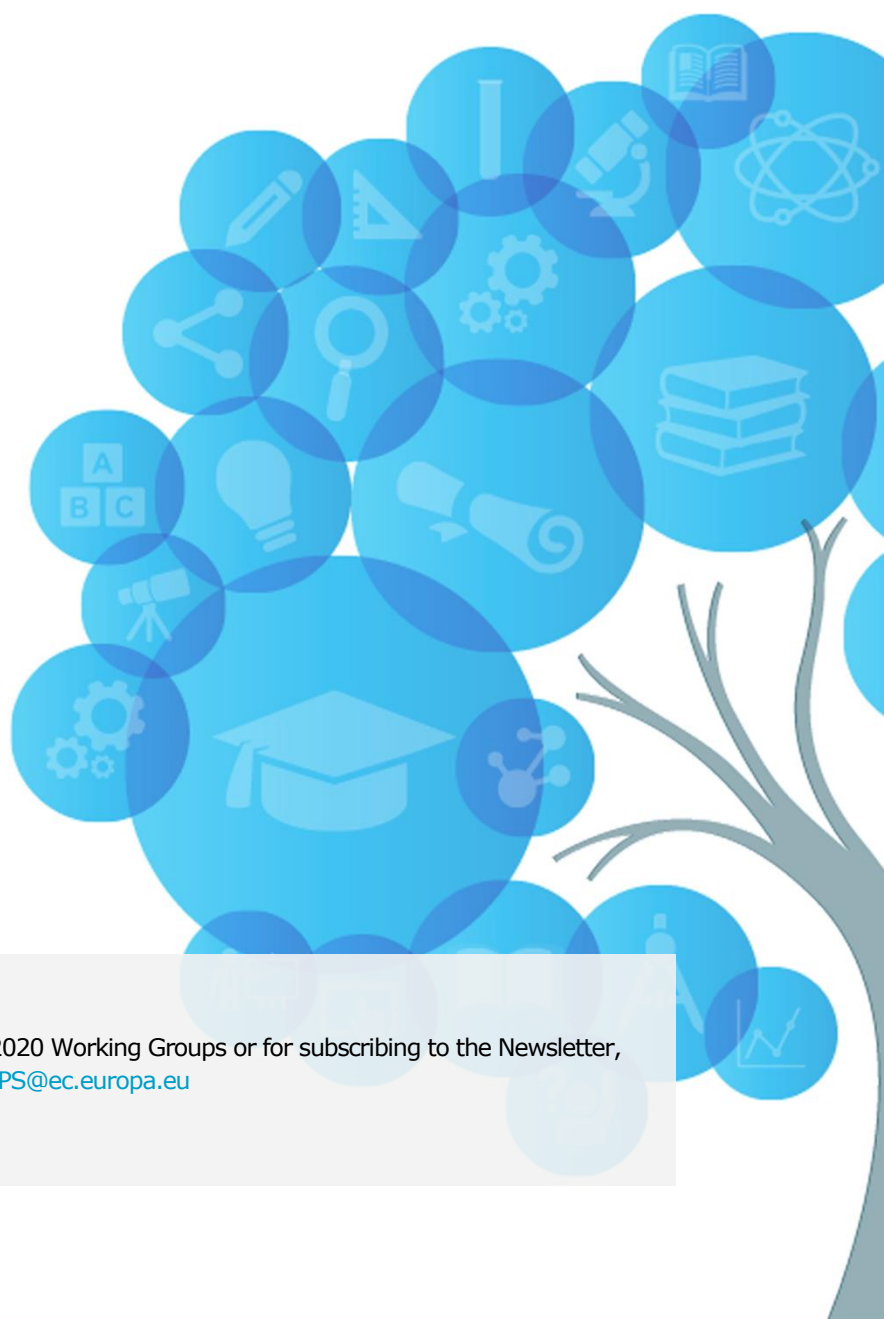
On 4-5 April 2019, Croatia welcomed a delegation of Working Group experts to a PLA in Zagreb, which focused on the uses and abuses of (modern) media and building bridges through inclusive historical education. The PLA featured keynote speeches on the challenges associated with a common European historical memory and identity (Markus Prutsch, European Parliament), the main achievements in Croatia within inclusive education (Neven Budak, University of Zagreb), and information disorder versus media literacy (Julian McDougall, Bournemouth University).

Rich panel discussions took place on the key topics, and on-site study visits were organised to an NGO tackling the prevention of bullying (Brave Phone) and the Centre for Peace Studies. A world café showcased interesting practices from Turkey, Flanders, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO). Assistant Minister for Education, Lidija Kralj, also presented the latest curricular developments in Croatia.

... and focuses on tackling 'fake news' and developing media literacy

Julian McDougall, from the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University (UK), gave a keynote speech entitled: 'Information Disorder vs Media Literacy: Critical Thinking, Resilience, Agency'. He highlighted that media disinformation (or 'fake news') is a growing problem in Europe, but that most Member States have not adopted a media education curriculum and that only the UK teaches Media Literacy Education as a discrete mandatory school subject.

He emphasised that it is necessary to tackle the threat of media disinformation, cyber-bullying and propaganda at school, legislative and policy levels. Effective media literacy education should be a core component of any approach, implying that both teachers and students need to have the access, competences and means to engage in the digital media world. Research shows that young people need to build resilience to media disinformation and that educational practices must be adapted to free learners from static systems.



For more information on any of the ET 2020 Working Groups or for subscribing to the Newsletter, contact EAC-ET-2020-WORKING-GROUPS@ec.europa.eu