Inside this issue

- What’s new in Education and Training?
- Working Group on Schools
- Working Group on Higher Education
- Working Group on Vocational Education and Training
- Working Group on Adult Learning
- Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care
- Working Group on Digital Education
- Working Group on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education

Member States committed to peer learning and the exchange of good practice, including the dissemination of outcomes when they adopted the new Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) in 2009. This newsletter, which appears three times a year, aims to give a succinct overview of these outcomes.

For more information, see
What’s new in Education and Training?

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

17
ALLIANCES

114
HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS

24
MEMBER STATES

€5 MILLION
max per alliance

3 YEARS
funding period

The Second European Education Summit

Tibor Navracsics, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, hosted the second European Education Summit in Brussels on 26 September. Focused on the theme of ‘Teachers first: excellence and prestige for the European Education Area’, the Summit brought together over 750 participants to discuss the main challenges as relates to ‘teachers and teaching’. This included stakeholders involved in education at regional, national and European level, 18 Education Ministers and State Secretaries, and around 160 teachers. The Summit’s programme included around 20 different sessions, covering a wide range of topics such as teaching in rural areas, the need for culture in the classroom, and the importance of regional and minority languages in Europe. The Summit reinforced the notion that although teachers are, and will remain, the main drivers of education, solutions need to be found to existing challenges, such as the changing nature of the teaching profession, difficulties in recruiting teaching staff and the need for continued professional development. This second European Education Summit followed on from the first edition, which took place in January 2018 and was dedicated to ‘Laying the foundations for a European Education Area’. The European Education Summits aim to give visibility to the central role of education, and to give stakeholders the opportunity to discuss how to reform and modernise education systems.

The Education and Training Monitor

Launched on 26 September at the European Education Summit, this year’s edition of the Education and Training Monitor focuses on teachers, and outlines the common challenges which EU countries face in both attracting and retaining the best candidates in the teaching profession. The Monitor indicates that teachers need high-quality lifelong learning, including initial teacher education and continued professional development. Teachers also reported the requirement for training in the use of ICT in classrooms, teaching students with special needs, and teaching in multicultural classrooms.

In light of the common targets (‘EU benchmarks’) agreed in 2009, European countries have made massive progress in expanding participation in education. The share of children enrolled in early childhood education rose from 90.8% in 2009 to 95.4% in 2017, and the share of young people holding a tertiary education diploma rose from 32.3% in 2009 to 40.7% in 2018. Early school leaving also decreased from 14.2% in 2009 to 10.6% in 2018. The Monitor shows that higher educational attainment corresponds with higher employment rates in the first few years after graduation, and higher participation in adult learning. For more details, please consult the Education and Training Monitor website.
Mariya Gabriel nominated as new Commissioner for Innovation and Youth

Bulgarian Commissioner-designate Mariya Gabriel was assigned the Innovation and Youth portfolio by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen during the unveiling of the new College of Commissioners in Brussels on 10 September. The portfolio combines the Research, Science and Innovation, and Education portfolios (including culture and sport), and has a budget of around €124 billion, making it the third largest (in terms of resources) following Agriculture and Regional Policy. Commissioner-designate Ms. Gabriel will be responsible for implementing the future Horizon Europe programme, building a true European Research Area and making the European Education Area a reality by 2025. The portfolio also includes the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture, and the promotion of sport as a tool for inclusion and wellbeing. As a next step, the European Parliament has to give its consent to the entire College of Commissioners. This will be preceded by hearings of the Commissioner-designates in the relevant Parliamentary committees, in line with the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

G7 Education Ministers put education and inclusion on agenda in Paris

On 4 July 2019, French Minister of Education Jean-Michel Blanquer chaired a G7 education ministerial meeting dedicated to the role of education in fostering inclusive societies. The Minister stressed the importance of keeping education high on the global political agenda, and the crucial role of Erasmus+ as a flagship programme for cooperation and exchange in the European context. Representing the EU as one of the full members of the G7, Director-General Themis Christophidou outlined the activities that the European Commission has developed to promote inclusive education, including the School Education Gateway, E-Twinning and the Erasmus+ programme. The meeting paved the way for the adoption of an education ministerial declaration and a Communiqué on combatting bullying at schools.

First ‘European Universities’ Selected

Following a call for proposals launched by the Commission in October 2018, seventeen ‘European University’ alliances, bringing together 114 higher education institutions, were selected on 26 June 2019. European Universities aim to strengthen the mobility of students and staff, and foster the quality, inclusiveness and competitiveness of European higher education. As a major step in building a European Education Area, European Universities will become inter-university campuses whereby students, doctoral candidates, staff and researchers can move seamlessly. They will pool their expertise, platforms and resources to deliver joint curricula and modules covering various disciplines. A budget of up to €85 million is available for the 17 pioneer European Universities. Each alliance will receive up to €5 million in the coming three years to start implementing their plans and pave the way for other higher education institutions across the EU to follow.
In May 2019, the Working Group on Schools organised two key events: a second Peer Learning Activity (PLA) and a second seminar under the current mandate. The seminar format is now an established and valued way of working, which is seen as complementary to the other approaches employed by the Group.

**Working Group holds PLA on teacher development**

The Working Group’s second PLA took place on 13-16 May 2019 in Antwerp, Belgium. Hosted by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and Eurocities, the theme of the PLA was ‘How can leadership support teacher development and careers?’.

Attention was paid to three key questions:

1. What strategies are there for teacher development that can contribute to attractive and sustainable careers?
2. What are the conditions, roles and needs of educational leadership to support these strategies, both at local and national level?
3. How can these be coordinated and supported by coherent action at policy level?

Participants from a number of countries identified teacher shortages as a key challenge, with too many teachers leaving the profession prematurely. There was also concern that too many teachers are reverting, disillusioned, to routine work in their classrooms. The importance of giving teachers a choice about their career paths was emphasised.

**Thematic seminar looks at school self-evaluation**

On 23-24 May, the Working Group sponsored a thematic seminar in Brussels on school self-evaluation and development. The seminar addressed:

- policies to raise awareness of the role of school self-evaluation;
- policies to strengthen the capacity of school staff, school boards and local authorities to gather, analyse, interpret and use evidence (qualitative and quantitative);
- approaches and tools to support school self-evaluation, while ensuring sufficient flexibility for local contexts;
- school engagement in the design of these policies and their evaluation.

Five members from the Working Group and the European Commission (the seminar steering group), and nine external representatives from relevant stakeholder organisations and the research community, participated in the seminar.
The European Education Area by 2025 is a key focus of the Working Group for Higher Education. A major step towards this was taken with the launch of the first European Universities and other initiatives. Preparations were also made for a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on academic integrity, a key ingredient for trust in higher education.

**Major steps taken towards European Education Area**

On 26 June, the first 17 ‘European Universities’ alliances were launched involving 114 higher education institutions from 24 EU Member States and Norway. With a budget of up to €85 million, these alliances will become a game changer in European higher education, boosting excellence and inclusion. The publication of the second pilot call during autumn 2019 and the long-term vision of this initiative will be discussed in the Working Group going forward. The Working Group is also encouraging higher education institutions to engage with the other European Education Area initiatives, such as the European Student Card Initiative, and encouraging Member States to implement the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad. Different tools – databases, training sessions and capacity building activities – can be used for this purpose.

**Focus on academic integrity to pave the way for European Education Area**

Preparations are underway for a PLA on academic integrity, which will take place in Cyprus on 24-25 October 2019. Academic integrity helps to build trust in quality higher education and the path towards the European Education Area. The PLA will explore how higher education authorities and institutions can enhance academic integrity, and discuss, share and assess the effectiveness of related policies and practices. It will examine the relevant national and institutional strategies, policies and tools, as well as their implementation in practice. It will touch upon different aspects of academic integrity, but will have a particular focus on academic misconduct related to students and their learning process. The results will feed into the discussions at the Directors General for Higher Education meeting under the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU in March 2020.
The Working Group on Vocational Education and Training (VET) had its sixth meeting, by webinar, on 19 June. The main objectives were to provide updates on the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) mapping exercise and the stocktaking exercise on VET innovation and digitalisation, and an overview of the Working Group Roadmap.

**Mapping of CoVEs completed!**

CoVEs are networks and partnerships involving VET providers that focus on the provision of labour market relevant skills and qualifications in support of innovation and regional development strategies. The Working Group has completed an exercise to map CoVEs, which has resulted in an inventory of good practices across Europe that illustrates what success factors underpin vocational excellence.

During the sixth Working Group meeting, João Santos, Deputy Head of Unit E3 (VET, Apprenticeships, Adult Learning), presented three key success factors identified through the mapping:

1. anchoring VET into frameworks of regional development, innovation and smart specialisation;
2. integrating different activities to enable an holistic and person-centred approach to VET;
3. strong and enduring partnerships.

In July, the first five CoVE pilot projects selected for EU funding were announced. These will be presented alongside the results of the mapping exercise at a workshop during the European Vocational Skills Week 2019 in Helsinki.

**First draft produced of stocktaking report on innovation and digitalisation**

The Working Group has also been carrying out a stocktaking exercise of innovation and digitalisation in VET, and a first draft of the results has now been produced. The exercise has two goals:

1. to improve the knowledge base on the most recent innovations and digitalisation in VET, especially experimental and innovative practices, the types of digital technologies being deployed, the effects of these practices and technologies, and the underlying success factors;
2. to improve our understanding of how to innovate and how to implement digital technologies by showcasing examples of practices to inspire policy-makers, practitioners and other stakeholders.

The first draft highlights the lack of literature on VET, and therefore the important contribution that the Working Group will be able to make in the coming months, when the report will be developed further. The Working Group meeting in January 2020 will be dedicated to the development of conclusions and recommendations.
At the halfway point of its term, the Working Group on Adult Learning 2018-2020 finalised its stocktaking report on the main accomplishments in the field of adult learning. The Group also participated in a conference on the upskilling and reskilling of adults in June 2019.

Results of stocktaking exercise published

The Working Group finalised one of its key deliverables in mid-2019, with the release of its stocktaking report on policy trends, developments and changes in Member States in relation to the priorities of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL).

The key findings of the stocktaking exercise were as follows:

- Policy-makers have generally increased their focus on adult learning.
- Adult learning as a policy area is becoming broader and covering an increasing number of situations in which adults can learn.
- There is increasing need for functioning adult learning systems that respond to national and EU challenges in fast-changing contexts.
- From 2011 to 2018, initiatives were implemented at EU level to help Member States to work in line with the EAAL priorities.
- Developments have subsequently taken place in line with the EAAL priorities in the Member States.
- There are several areas that require further policy attention (e.g. broad topics such as financing, coordination, engagement with employers, professionalisation of adult learning staff and institutions).

Working Group members participate in upskilling and reskilling conference

On 6-7 June 2019, members of the Working Group took part in the 'Adult Upskilling and Reskilling: Balancing the Labour Market’ conference in Bucharest. The conference provided a forum for discussing the key findings of the Implementation report on Upskilling Pathways.

The following key messages emerged from the conference.

- Financial instruments will become increasingly important in the future. If well designed, they could be very successful when targeting companies.
- There is a growing need for upskilling and reskilling, and developing skills.
- There is a growing interest in individual learning accounts.
- Guidance and validation are essential for effective adult learning systems.
The Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) held its first Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in June and its third Working Group meeting in September. The Group’s work continues to focus on social inclusion and the professionalisation of staff in the ECEC sector, and a second PLA is planned for October.

**PLA in Lisbon focuses on inclusion policies**

In June 2019, Portuguese colleagues and ECEC Working Group members from 14 countries met in Lisbon to discuss the development, implementation and evaluation of a range of inclusion policies. The discussion sought to help countries compare and contrast their policies on inclusion, and gain critical feedback that could strengthen their systems. The group agreed that support and encouragement for greater inclusion is one aspect of high quality ECEC provision.

**Third Working Group meeting builds on PLA findings**

The Working Group met in Brussels on 24-25 September. The first day focused on inclusion by reviewing:

- the report and findings from the PLA in Lisbon;
- multilingualism and language learning in the early years;
- recent research findings;
- case studies to illustrate Member State initiatives to strengthen inclusion.

The second day focused on the further professionalisation of staff, including:

- a focus on ECEC assistants and leaders;
- a review of the Working Group’s draft core competences;
- preparation for the upcoming PLA on staff issues in Milan;
- discussions on how the core competences could be developed by all members of staff.

The Working Group agreed to revise the core competences. It also agreed to produce case studies to illustrate successful policies on inclusion and staff professionalisation, and the importance of monitoring and recording the acquisition of staff competences.

**Upcoming PLA in Milan will explore ECEC competences**

The Working Group’s second PLA will take place in October 2019 and provide an opportunity to discuss ECEC competences, the ways in which they can be developed, the attractiveness of the ECEC profession and the ways in which new ECEC educators can be supported when they gain employment. The PLA will support the Working Group’s discussions and seek to answer specific questions on staff professionalisation:

- How can the ECEC workforce become more professional in order to ensure high quality ECEC systems?
- How can the attractiveness of the profession be increased?

**Looking ahead**

The Working Group is currently developing case studies to illustrate effective practices. Over the next few months, many more case studies will be finalised and these will be included in the final report from the Group.
In May, the Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment held an online plenary meeting on emerging issues in digital education. This was followed by a successful and thought-provoking Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on artificial intelligence (AI) in education in Slovenia in June. Looking ahead, an EU-wide digital education hackathon is set to take place in October.

**PLA in Slovenia considers the role of AI in education**

The Working Group’s second PLA, entitled ‘Artificial intelligence and its implications for education’, was hosted by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in June 2019. The PLA explored AI-related practices in the education sector, shared current or upcoming initiatives in different Member States, and explored how to contribute to the EU’s coordinated plan on AI.

One of the key issues that emerged was the need to define the role of AI in education, specifically ‘education for AI’ and ‘AI for education’. Education for AI includes everything from teaching coding in early years education to teaching computer science in upper secondary to higher education and VET. AI for education focuses on how AI can impact on the work of educational professionals, and enhance teaching, learning and assessment. These are emerging issues and it is important that education systems consider them and have a voice in national strategies or discussion papers.

**Digital education hackathon to take place in October**

An EU-wide digital education hackathon will be organised to identify innovative solutions to the challenges facing educational institutions today. DigiEduHack is an initiative by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) under the European Commission’s Digital Education Action Plan, which is led by EIT Climate-KIC and coordinated by Aalto University in Finland. The DELTA Group was consulted on the challenge categories, the format and also provided assistance with promoting the event.

The hackathon will take place on 3 October 2019 with a series of 24-hour local events, while the mainstage event will occur at the Aalto University campus. Over 50 organisations are expected to solve challenges that are relevant to the world of digital education and the three winning teams will each receive a prize of €5,000. The initiative is open to everyone and interested organisations should visit the DigiEduHack website for more information about how to get involved. The project website is comprehensive and provides detailed information about the hackathon along with support material.
The Working Group on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education held its first meeting of the year in Brussels in June 2019. It also launched a new phase of work on the online compendium of inspiring practices.

**House of European History hosts first Group meeting of 2019!**

The second Working Group meeting under the current mandate took place in Brussels on 5-6 June 2019 and involved experts from 20 countries, as well as from a range of key EU level and international organisations. The House of European History hosted the second day of the meeting, which included a guided visit and a discussion with the curators.

Building on the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) that took place in Croatia on 4-5 April, the meeting included sessions on the uses and abuses of modern media and building bridges through inclusive historical education. The meeting also included a lively panel discussion on educational approaches to address extremist voices, involving Karel Fracapane (UNESCO), Stijn Sieckelink (RAN) and Owen Jones (Hope not Hate). Hope not Hate underlined the worrying rise of the ‘manosphere’ – a range of approaches that seek to maintain male dominance and often extend to racist and xenophobic jargon.

**Working Group relaunches work on online compendium of inspiring practices**

The Working Group experts agreed to relaunch their work on the online compendium of inspiring practices. During the first Working Group mandate (2016-2018), 75 practices were selected and developed and the aim is to add some 40 new examples by 2020. Inspiring practices will be identified through PLAs and Working Group meetings, the development of thematic fiches, and suggestions from Group experts. The presentation of each practice includes its context, its main activities, and evidence of its effectiveness, transferability and sustainability. The goal is for the new version of the compendium to be online in 2020.
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

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