



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
IMPACT ASSESSMENT BOARD

24 SEP. 2010

Brussels,
D(2010)

Opinion

Title

DG EAC - Impact Assessment on: Council Recommendation on Policies against early leaving from education and training

(draft version of 6 August 2010)

(A) Context

The Education Council set itself a benchmark in 2003 to reduce the EU average rate of early school leavers (ESL) to not more than 10% by 2010. Progress has been monitored under the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) framework of the 'Education and Training 2010' programme (ET 2010). While on average the situation has improved (in 2009 the ratio was 14.4% compared with 17.6% in 2000), the target ESL rate has not been achieved. In five Member States the situation has deteriorated. In 2009, the Council renewed the target by adopting the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) programme. The Europe 2020 Strategy includes the 10% ESL benchmark as one of the six headline targets.

(B) Overall assessment

The report needs significant further work on several important aspects. It should present and analyse in much more detail the content and the value added of the initiative. The problem definition should examine the reasons for variations in early school leaving rates in the Member States and identify the key elements which, taking into account the different starting points, could foster progress. The description of the options should indicate more clearly what the main policy elements of the initiative are, and the impact analysis should demonstrate how these measures would improve on the current situation. The report should also address more systematically the issues with data availability for Member States authorities, and make an attempt to assess the costs of acquiring necessary information for a more evidence based policy making in this area.

Given the nature of these recommendations, the Board asks DG Education and Culture to resubmit a new version of the report, on which it will issue a new opinion.

(C) Main recommendations for improvements

(1) Be more explicit about the different ESL situation in Member States. The report should present the progress of the Member States in terms of reducing ESL since 2000, and analyse in generic terms the reasons for the variations in the outcome (e.g. migration rates, factors of labour market, particularities of social and educational systems). It should discuss more concretely which approaches (e.g. pre-emptive, preventive and compensatory measures) have led to progress in some Member States and examine what have been the key success factors (e.g. monitoring and early warning arrangements, supplementary action at regional and local level).

(2) Discuss in more detail the content of the initiative and demonstrate better its value added. First, the report should explain explicitly what the problems are with the current baseline arrangements, which include the OMC and since 2010 also the monitoring of the national targets and National Reform Programmes under the Europe 2020 Strategy. The identified issues should then be reflected in the operational objectives of the report. Secondly, the report currently only analyses policy options on *instruments* (Commission recommendation/Communication or Council Recommendations). It should also discuss policy options on the *content* of the initiative and demonstrate how these options improve on the existing arrangements (e.g. agree upon the agenda, develop the cross sectoral approach). The report should also demonstrate how the proposed approach would take into account the diversity of the situations in the Member States, both in terms of their current rate of ESL and policies they have implemented to address this issue. Thirdly, based on the available evaluation results, the report should explore the possibilities of using more effectively the funds of the existing programmes (e.g. European Social Fund and Lifelong Learning) to target issues of ESL, and discuss how the weaknesses could be addressed in possible future programmes. Finally, the report should clarify the coordination mechanisms supporting the implementation of the recommendation, including whether the proposal to establish a specific working group of Member States on reducing ESL will be part of this mechanism.

(3) Address more systematically the issues with availability of data and information. The report should identify the main domains where information is missing or is of a poor quality. It should discuss which approaches (e.g. detailed statistics, evaluations, academic studies, surveys) would be most effective in closing the gaps. Based on past experience and anecdotal evidence, the report should make an attempt to assess how much it would cost the EU and Member states to acquire the necessary information for a more evidence based policy making.

Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG and are expected to be incorporated in the final version of the impact assessment report.

(D) Procedure and presentation

The report follows the structure provided by the IA Guidelines and it seems that all procedural aspects have been followed.

(E) IAB scrutiny process

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| Reference number | 2010/EAC/028 |
| External expertise used | No |
| Date of Board Meeting | 22 September 2010 |