



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
IMPACT ASSESSMENT BOARD

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Opinion

Title

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

(Resubmitted draft version of 12 October 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 has been improved along the lines of the Board's first opinion. It now contains an overview of the progress by Member States in reducing ESL and discusses the potential costs of acquiring data for a more evidence-based approach to policy making. A new Annex gives an overview of the proposed Policy Framework. The report should nevertheless improve the presentation of the policy options to demonstrate better the value added of the initiative on top of the existing measures, and clarify how the coordination mechanism of this initiative will interact with the Europe 2020 reporting and monitoring process.

(C) Main recommendations for improvements

(1) Fine-tune the operational objectives. The report now provides a clearer baseline scenario which argues that the support provided by the current range of EU measures (i.e. Strategic Framework for Cooperation in Education and Training, the OMC framework, different funding opportunities, headline target under Europe 2020 Strategy) is sub-optimal for reducing ESL. The main reasons for this situation are an insufficient level of commitment of some Member States, the absence of an agreed policy framework and inconsistencies between the individual measures. These issues are reflected in the revised

set of operational objectives. These should nevertheless be revised further to focus on 'the ends' (objectives) rather than 'the means' (specific measures).

(2) Provide a clearer description of the options. The report still analyses only one alternative to the baseline scenario – Option B *Policy Framework*, a general description of which is provided in new Annex 1. Two sub-options are considered for the instrument to implement the Policy Framework - B.1 *Commission Communication/Recommendation* and B.2 *Council Recommendation*. To demonstrate better the value added of the initiative, the report should provide a more systematic description of the options and sub-options. Regarding the Policy Framework and the baseline, the report should explain the functions of the main policy elements, such as the OMC, the expert group, agreed agenda and management of the funding opportunities. This explanation should include the concrete measures currently mentioned in Section 3 *Objectives* (e.g. thematic working groups, peer-learning activities, extending membership of expert groups). Regarding the sub-options, the report should be clearer that the only difference between them is the instrument considered for implementation of the Policy Framework and the consequent ability to engage the Member States. In addition, the report should explain in more concrete terms how the funding of the existing programmes (European Social Fund, Framework Programmes for Research, Lifelong Learning) can be used more effectively.

(3) Explain further the coordination mechanism. The report mentions that implementing the policy framework being discussed would complement the Europe 2020 reporting and monitoring process (p.16). It should clarify how the two will interact and how the 'national policy frameworks against ESL' (p.20, 23) would articulate with the 'national reform programmes' foreseen under Europe 2020.

(4) Clarify issues with administrative costs. The revised report addresses more systematically the issues related to availability of data and information. Given the lack of data and differences in the situations of the Member States, the report does not provide concrete cost estimates. Nevertheless a new section has been added which discusses in qualitative terms what Member States may need to invest in order to obtain the necessary data for a more evidence-based approach to policy making. The report should clarify the claim that there is no impact on administrative costs due to new information requirements (p.24). Although there might be no changes in reporting obligations of Member States vis-à-vis the EU, the implementation of the policy framework will create new administrative costs within Member States.

(D) Procedure and presentation

It seems that all procedural aspects have been followed, although the Table of Contents should now be updated. To improve the clarity of the presentation, the report should (a) present all options in the same way in Section 4 (currently one option is not presented in a separate sub-section like the others, and one option is discarded in Section 4, while another in 5.1), (b) add a reference to Annex 1 in Section 4.2 (c) add one missing operational objective (reinforced commitment) to Chart 9, (d) clarify an inconsistency between Charts 7 and 9 regarding the assessment of options A and B.1 in terms of better targeting of funding (while in Chart 7 the impacts are equal, in Chart 9 Option B.1 gets higher scores than Option A).

(E) IAB scrutiny process	
Reference number	2010/EAC/028
External expertise used	No
Date of Board Meeting	Written procedure The present opinion concerns a resubmitted draft IA reports The first opinion was issued on 24/9/2010