

Information Guide



Education Policy

A guide to the European Union's Education Policy, with hyperlinks to sources of information within European Sources Online and on external websites

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Overview.....	2
Early developments	3
Legal basis	3
Policy development.....	5
Education and Training 2010: the Lisbon Strategy	5
Europe 2020	9
Action Programmes.....	11
Higher education	13
Qualifications	15
European Institute of Technology	15
European Centres and Networks.....	15
International co-operation	16
Information sources in the ESO database	17
Further information sources on the internet	18

Introduction

Investment in education and training for skills development is essential to boost growth and competitiveness: skills determine Europe's capacity to increase productivity. In the long-term, skills can trigger innovation and growth, move production up the value chain, stimulate the concentration of higher level skills in the EU and shape the future labour market. The massive increase in the global supply of highly skilled people over the last decade puts Europe to the test. The time when competition came mainly from countries that could offer only low-skilled work has come to an end. The quality of education and supply of skills has increased worldwide and Europe must respond.

From: Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes, [COM\(2012\)669](#), 20.11.2012.

Overview

Although the original Treaties expressed some interest in education and - more particularly - vocational training, it was not until the 1993 Treaty on European Union that education was recognised as an area in which the EU should formally play a role, by encouraging co-operation between Member States. Since then pupils, students and teachers from all EU countries have benefited from support for mobility and for transnational projects and cooperation networks.

A 10-year programme of educational and training reform - Education and training 2010 - was adopted in 2002 as a contribution to the Lisbon Strategy of 2000, aiming to make the European Union economy the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. That was superseded in 2009, when a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) was adopted.

The [Bologna Process](#) is an inter-governmental process, aiming to create a European Higher Education Area in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education (see also [Summaries of EU Legislation](#)).

In its [Communiqué](#) 'The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade' of 29 April 2009, the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, stated:

In the decade up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realising a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative. Faced with the challenge of an ageing population Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximises the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in lifelong learning as well as in widening participation in higher education.

The February 2010 report [Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010: The Impact of the Bologna Process](#), produced by the Eurydice network, gave an overview of progress on higher education reform in the 46 countries of the Bologna Process (see also Press Release [MEMO/10/68](#)).

[Education at a Glance 2011](#), published by the OECD, looked at investment in education, student-teacher ratios, teaching hours, graduate numbers and results from over 40 countries. It highlighted differences between the 21 EU Member States included in the report, although all of them were near the OECD average (see also Press Release [IP/11/1027](#)).

In [The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report](#) all countries involved in the Process were shown to have made significant changes, enabling the European Higher Education Area to emerge.

On 14 September 2012, the Commission announced the publication of the report [Mind the Gap - education inequality across EU regions](#) which highlighted significant disparities in education opportunities and results both between and within EU Member States. The report showed a north-south divide in educational attainment, with the highest rates of low-qualified people, with lower secondary education or less, mainly found in southern regions of Europe (see also Press Release [IP/12/960](#)).

Published on 21 March 2013, the Eurydice study [Funding of Education in Europe 2000-2012: The Impact of the Economic Crisis](#) showed that investment fell in eight of 25 Member States (see also Press Release [IP/13/261](#)).

Early developments

In the early years of the European Community developments in the area of education were largely limited to ensuring mutual recognition of qualifications, training and retraining workers to help them find (better) jobs, and encouraging exchanges of students between Member States. There was also much interest in sharing information about, and experiences of, the different educational systems in the Member States.

During the 1970s and 1980s a number of non-binding resolutions and conclusions were adopted by the Community. A [Resolution](#) of June 1974 on co-operation in the field of education established an Education Committee to consider how co-operation might best be pursued. The Committee's recommendations formed the basis of the significant [Resolution](#) of 9 February 1976 'comprising an action programme in the field of education', which provided a framework within which the Member States could begin to co-operate.

The following decade saw a significant increase in activity related to education and vocational training, with a growing number of funded programmes being managed by a Commission Task Force on Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth (later promoted to the status of Directorate-General XXII - now the [DG Education and Culture](#)). These programmes included:

- COMETT - co-operation between universities and business for joint university-enterprise training initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of European industry
- Erasmus - student mobility and co-operation in higher education
- EUROTECNET - vocational training in new technologies
- FORCE - development of continuing vocational training
- Lingua - promotion of foreign language competence
- PETRA - one year's vocational training for school-leavers
- Tempus - to assist the development of universities in Central and Eastern Europe and encourage co-operation with partner institutions in the member states
- Youth for Europe - exchanges for young people outside formal education.

The funded programmes were - and are - are managed on a decentralised basis, with national agencies in all participating countries.

Legal basis

The 1992 Treaty on European Union (TEU) introduced 'education and training' as one of six new areas of competence for the Union, with its provisions incorporated into the Treaty establishing the European Community. In the current Treaties, the provisions are included in the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU).

The Preamble to the TFEU states that the signatories to the Treaty are, amongst other things:

Determined to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating

Article 6 of the TFEU identifies 'education, vocational training, youth and sport' as one of a number of areas in which the EU can carry out:

actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States.

Article 9 requires the Union, when defining and implementing its policies and activities, to take into account requirements linked to a high level of education and training.

It is, however, in Articles 165-166 (Title XII) that the main provisions on education and training are found.

The relevant parts of Article 165 read:

1. The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

2. Union action shall be aimed at:

- developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States,
- encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study,
- promoting cooperation between educational establishments,
- developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States,
- encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe,
- encouraging the development of distance education

3. The Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the field of education ... in particular the Council of Europe.

Article 166 concerns vocational training, stating - amongst other things - that:

1. The Union shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training.

2. Union action shall aim to:

- facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining,
- improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market,

- facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people,
- stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms,
- develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.

In neither education nor vocational training is the EU empowered to harmonise Member States' legislation; educational provision is therefore essentially the responsibility of national governments.

Policy development

Following the adoption of the 1993 Treaty on European Union, a number of important documents relevant to the development of educational policy were published:

Member States were invited to consider the future direction of educational policy at European level and how it might interact with national policies for education in a White Paper 'Education and Training: Teaching and Learning - towards the learning society' ([COM\(95\)590](#), text courtesy of Archive of European Integration), published in November 1995.

The following year the Commission's Green Paper 'Education - training - research; the obstacles to transnational mobility' ([COM\(96\)462](#), text courtesy of Archive of European Integration) recognised the difficulties of translating ideals into practice.

The Amsterdam Treaty brought vocational training within the scope of the co-decision procedure and stressed the importance of European citizenship - see the Commission Communication of March 2004 on 'Making citizenship Work' ([COM\(2004\)154](#)).

Education and Training 2010: the Lisbon Strategy

At the March 2000 Lisbon European Council a strategy was agreed that the European Union should become by 2010 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world', stressing that this would require a 'challenging programme for modernising social welfare and education systems'. It was recognised that education and training policy reform was essential to the success of this Lisbon agenda.

As part of this reform process, in 2001 Ministers of Education adopted a report on [The concrete future objectives of education systems](#) approving three strategic objectives:

- improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the Union
- facilitating the access of all to these systems
- opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

A year later in 2002 the Education Council and the Commission endorsed a 10-year work programme (see Press Release [14380/04](#)) to improve the quality and efficiency of education systems, facilitating access to education for everyone and opening up EU educational establishments to the outside world. By 2010, the following should be achieved:

- EU countries should have the highest quality in education and training
- education and training systems in Europe should be compatible enough to allow citizens to move between them to take advantage of their diversity
- it should be possible to validate qualifications acquired anywhere in the EU in other Member States for the purpose of career developments and further learning

- Europeans of all ages should have access to lifelong learning.

Starting in 2004 a summary of progress on the 10-year plan has been presented biennially, by the Council and the Commission to the Spring European Council. In the first [Joint interim report](#), the Council and Commission concluded that the 'pace of reforms of education and training systems should be accelerated' if the education goals of the Lisbon agenda were to be achieved (see also Summaries of EU legislation [Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation](#) and [Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe](#)).

This dissatisfaction with current educational attainments in the EU was taken into account in the re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, when the Spring European Council, considering that human capital is Europe's most important asset, asked the Member States to redouble their efforts to raise the basic level of education and skills and reduce the number of young people who leave school early, in particular by pursuing the 10-year Education and training 2010 work programme.

The 2006 biennial Council/Commission progress report 'Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe' ([COM\(2005\)549](#); see also Press Release [MEMO/05/415](#)) saw some improvement but emphasised that particular attention should be paid to the needs of school leavers and adult learners. In order to make further progress, European leaders were asked to:

- set 2% of GDP as a common target for spending on higher education by 2010
- free universities to access top-up private funding and end barriers to public-private partnerships by the end of 2007
- ensure that all technical universities should have a technology transfer office to, for example, commercialise in partnership with industry the inventions, patents, licenses etc. that result from their research
- set the 2009-10 academic year as a target start date for a European Institute of Technology
- to deliver on their commitment to put in place comprehensive Lifelong Learning ensure that proficiency in maths and science are stepped up to enhance people's ability to innovate
- to provide for compulsory teaching of two foreign languages in their national education systems.

On 25 May 2007, the Education, Youth and Culture Council adopted [Conclusions](#) 'on a coherent framework of indicators for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training'. Based on four strategic objectives, EU-level benchmarks were set:

2010 benchmarks:

- the share of low achieving 15 year olds in reading should decrease by at least 20%
- the average rate of early school leavers should be no more than 10%
- 85% of 22 year olds should complete upper secondary education
- the total number of graduates in maths, science and technology should increase by at least 15%, and the gender imbalance in these subjects should be reduced
- the average participation of working adults population in lifelong learning should rise by at least 12.5%.

2020 benchmarks:

- at least 95% of children between four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education

- the share of low-achieving 15-years olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%
- the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%
- the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%
- an average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.

The fifth report to examine performance and progress under the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme was published on 10 July 2008 as [Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - Indicators and benchmarks 2008](#) (see also Press Release [IP/08/1127](#)).

Its main finding was that:

overall Europe is making progress in all five areas - with the exception of low achievers in reading. However, although education and training has been improving slowly but steadily in EU Member States since 2000, progress needs to be faster in almost all areas in order to reach the 2010 targets.

(Copies of [other EU and national reports](#) are also available).

On 16 December 2008, the Commission issued the Communication 'An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training' ([COM\(2008\)865](#)). Described as a 'strategic vision for co-operation between EU Member States on the reform of their education and training systems', it identified common challenges (e.g. skills deficits, ageing societies, foreign competition) and priorities for 2009-2010 and beyond (see also Press Release [IP/08/1986](#)).

Subsequently, on 12 May 2009, the Council adopted 'ET 2020' - a new strategic framework for co-operation between EU Member States to reform their education and training systems (see [Council Conclusions](#) and Press Release [IP/09/748](#)).

According to the [Strategic framework for education and training](#) page:

The approach recognises that high-quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and vocational education and training are fundamental to Europe's success. However, in a rapidly changing world, lifelong learning needs to be a priority – it is the key to employment, economic success and allowing people to participate fully in society.

With each EU Member State responsible for its own education and training systems, Union- level policies are designed to support national actions and help address common challenges such as: ageing societies, skills deficits among the workforce, and global competition. These areas demand joint responses and countries can benefit from sharing experiences.

Ministers agreed that the framework should address four strategic objectives:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

In April 2009, the [Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning](#) (KSLLL) website was launched, to give greater visibility and better access to the Commission's work with Member States on policy initiatives to reform education and training systems.

The report [Key Data on Education in Europe 2009](#) was published on 16 July 2009. It showed increasing numbers of four-year old children in pre-school education, a significant rise in the numbers of students in higher education and a general trend towards longer periods of compulsory schooling. It also raised concerns about demographic changes which will see school age children and 'very large scale' teacher retirement in many Member States (see also Press Releases [IP/09/1145](#) and [MEMO/09/338](#); and [Key data series](#) page).

On 25 November 2009, the Commission adopted 'Key competences for a changing world' - the draft fourth joint report on the implementation of the Education & Training 2010 work programme ([COM\(2009\)640](#)). Based on a detailed assessment of national reports and performance against a set of indicators and benchmarks, it focused on progress towards agreed objectives during 2007-2009. The final text of the joint report was published in the Official Journal on 6 May 2010 as [2010/C 117/01](#).

Also on 25 November 2009, the Commission presented the report 'Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - indicators and benchmarks 2009' (see 2009 report page and Press Releases [IP/09/1816](#) and [MEMO/09/520](#)).

The report 'Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training (2010/2011): Indicators and benchmarks' was presented on 19 April 2011 (see [report](#) page and Press Releases [IP/11/488](#), [MEMO/11/253](#)). It stated:

The focus on education and training within Europe 2020 has huge potential to influence the future of Europe's systems and this report accordingly pays particular attention to the issues addressed in both the headline targets and the flagship actions.

1 February 2011 saw the inaugural meeting of a High-level expert group on literacy, established by the European Commission with the aim of identifying ways of raising literacy levels (see Press Release [IP/11/115](#)). The EU aims to reduce the percentage of pupils with difficulties in reading, maths and science to less than 15% by 2020.

On 11 July 2011, the study [Teaching Reading in Europe: Contexts, Policies and Practices](#) was published by the Eurydice network. Covering 31 countries, it shows that most have made progress in developing literacy policies, but that they often lack focus on the groups most at risk, such as boys, children from disadvantaged households and migrant children (see also Press Release [IP/11/846](#)).

In April 2011, the Commission published its seventh annual progress report on the Union's education and training policies. 'Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training: Indicators and benchmarks 2010/2011' (see [Report text](#) and [Monitoring progress](#) page) showed:

that examples of good performance and progress can be found throughout Europe that have the potential to inspire others for improvement. At the same time, educational systems in many Member States continue to show signs of struggling in the face of major challenges. The Report helps therefore to point to possible areas for the exchange of information, experience and mutual learning, the core purpose of ET 2020, and where concerted action across Member States, as envisaged under Europe 2020, could transform Europe's educational performance. It also points to the scope for further improving the framework of indicators and benchmarks and the evidence base for policy making.

Among the findings of [Key Data on Education in Europe 2012](#) were:

- A general trend towards longer compulsory schooling to guarantee the acquisition of core competences has been observed in almost all education systems since 1980.
- Children start formal education at an increasingly early age.
- With the Bologna reforms in higher education, the minimum qualification and length of training for teachers has changed. Most countries now require a Bachelor's degree as the minimum entry qualification for becoming a pre-primary teacher or its equivalent.
- Tertiary education graduates integrate into the job market two times more quickly than people with at most lower secondary education.

Europe 2020

The [Europe 2020](#) initiative has set objectives for the EU in five areas - employment, innovation, education, social inclusion, and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020.

The [Smart growth](#) element of Europe 2020 focuses on improving the EU's performance in education, research/innovation, and the digital society. Education-related targets for smart growth include reducing school drop-out rates to below 10% and ensuring that at least 40% of 30-34 year olds complete tertiary-level education. Within smart growth are three separate Flagship initiatives: Digital agenda for Europe, Innovation Union, and Youth on the move - which addresses education and training issues.

The Communication 'Youth on the Move: An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union' was adopted by the Commission on 15 September 2010 as [COM\(2010\)477](#) (see also Press Releases [IP/10/1124](#) and [MEMO/10/408](#)). The introduction to the Communication states:

The Europe 2020 Strategy sets ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. Young people are essential to achieve this. Quality education and training, successful labour market integration and more mobility of young people are key to unleashing all young people's potential and achieving the Europe 2020 objectives.

Youth on the Move focuses on four main lines of action: lifelong learning, higher education, mobility, and employment.

Investment in skills and training falls within the [Inclusive growth](#) element of Europe 2020. Inclusive growth has two Flagship initiatives, one of which is the [Agenda for new skills and jobs](#). The Communication 'An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment' was adopted on 23 November 2010 as [COM\(2010\)682](#).

On 11 May 2010, the Education, Youth and Culture Council adopted [Conclusions](#) 'on the social dimension of education and training'. The Council invited Member States to take a series of specific actions in four areas: early and school education; vocational education and training; higher education; and adult education.

The 9 June 2010 Communication 'A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy' ([COM\(2010\)296](#); see also Press Releases [IP/10/707](#) and [MEMO/10/245](#)), set out the Commission's vision for the future of VET, building on the Europe 2020 strategy and the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training up to 2020.

On 31 January 2011, the Commission adopted the Communication 'Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda' ([COM\(2011\)18](#); see also Press Releases [IP/11/109](#) and [MEMO/11/52](#)). The Communication was accompanied by a

proposal for a Council Recommendation setting out guidelines to help Member States tackle the problem. The proposal was subsequently adopted as Council Recommendation [2011/C 191/01](#) of 28 June 2011 'on policies to reduce early school leaving'.

On 14 February 2011, Ministers at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council adopted [Conclusions](#) 'on the role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy'. Ministers stressed that education and training are key to achieving the Europe 2020 goals and that increased efforts are needed to achieve the headline targets in education.

In its 17 February 2011 Communication 'Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow' ([COM\(2011\)66](#)) the Commission stated:

The flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move' as part of the EU's overarching Europe 2020 Strategy highlights the role of creativity and innovation for our competitiveness and for the preservation of our standards of living in the longer term. Against this background, it underlines that we must offer all our young people the chance to develop their talents to the fullest possible extent. ECEC has the potential to give all young people a good start in the world of tomorrow and to break the cycle which transmits disadvantage from one generation to another.

The Commission also argued that ECEC has an important role to play in reducing early school leaving.

Subsequently, on 24 May 2011, Ministers adopted [Conclusions](#) on ECEC, inviting the Member States and Commission to cooperate with the relevant sectors (education, social affairs, employment etc) and stakeholders, with a view to supporting policy development in ECEC at local, regional and national levels (see also Press Release [MEMO/11/316](#)).

Adopted on 20 December 2011, the report 'Education and Training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe' ([COM\(2011\)902](#); see also Press Release [MEMO/12/76](#)) claimed the EU risks missing its 2020 targets of reducing the number of pupils leaving school early and of increasing the share of students completing tertiary education.

Early school leaving was one of the issues highlighted in a Communication on a 'Youth Opportunities Initiative', adopted by the Commission as [COM\(2011\)933](#). Part of Youth on the Move, the proposed initiative would in particular target young people not in employment, education or training (see also Press Releases [IP/11/1568](#), [MEMO/11/928](#), [MEMO/11/934](#), Commission's [YOI](#) page, and [Pre-Lex dossier](#)).

In its 20 November 2012 Communication 'Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes' ([COM\(2012\)669](#); see also Press Release [IP/12/1233](#)) the Commission stated:

Europe will only resume growth through higher productivity and the supply of highly skilled workers, and it is the reform of education and training systems which is essential to achieving this.

In that context, the Communication aimed:

to give the impetus to governments, education and training institutions, teachers, businesses and other partners alike to pull together, in accordance with national circumstances, in a concerted push for reform.

On 26 November 2012, the Council adopted [Conclusions](#) 'on education and training in Europe 2020 - the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth

and jobs', in which Ministers identified a number of actions to help meet the Europe 2020 objectives in education and training.

Data published by Eurostat on 11 April 2013 showed that a majority of EU Member States had made progress on the Europe 2020 targets for reducing early school leaving and increasing the share of young people with higher education (see Press Release [IP/13/324](#)).

Action Programmes

In the mid-1990s a rationalisation of educational programmes and initiatives led to the creation of three main programmes: Socrates (a framework programme for education, encompassing the programmes Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Lingua, Minerva), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training), and Youth (mobility and non-formal education for young people).

A Communication 'The new generation of Community education and training programmes after 2006' was published in March 2004 ([COM\(2004\)156](#); see also Press Release [IP/04/315](#)). The Education, Youth and Culture Council of May 2004 endorsed 'the adoption of an integrated approach covering education and training' (see Press Release [9283/04](#)).

Formal proposals for a Decision 'establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning' were submitted by the Commission in July 2004 as [COM\(2004\)474](#) (see Press Releases [IP/04/918](#) and [MEMO/04/183](#)). It was adopted as [Decision 1720/2006/EC](#) of 15 November 2006 (see also Press Release [IP/06/1478](#)).

The action programme is divided into six sub-programmes:

- [Comenius](#) (pre-school and school education up to the end of upper secondary education, and the institutions and organisations providing such education)
- [Erasmus](#) (formal higher education and vocational education and training at tertiary level)
- [Leonardo da Vinci](#) (vocational education and training other than that at tertiary level)
- [Grundtvig](#) (adult education)
- [Jean Monnet Programme](#) (European integration in the academic world and the support needed for institutions and associations active in education and training at European level)
- Transversal Programme (activities beyond the limits of the sectoral programmes; includes four key activities in the field of lifelong learning: [policy cooperation and innovation](#); [promotion of language learning](#); [development of innovative ICT-based content](#), services, pedagogies and practices; [dissemination and exploitation of results of actions](#) supported under the programme or previous programmes, and exchange of good practice).

Some €7 billion was provided over the period 2007-2013 to support the four main programmes Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus and Grundtvig.

(See also [A new generation of EU programmes](#), [The Lifelong Learning Programme: education and training opportunities for all](#) and [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

On 3 July 2008, in its Communication 'Improving competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools' ([COM\(2008\)425](#); see also Press Release [IP/08/1094](#)), the Commission called on Member States to cooperate more in order to make school systems more relevant to pupils' and employers' needs. Warning that

radical changes will be needed if Europe's schools are to equip young people fully for life in this century, the Commission called for a focus on three main areas:

- giving all pupils the competences they need for life
- providing high quality learning for every student
- improving the quality of teachers and school staff.

8 July 2009 saw the publication of the Green Paper 'Promoting the learning mobility of young people' ([COM\(2009\)329](#)), intended to encourage debate on 'how best to boost the opportunities for young people in Europe to develop their knowledge and skills by going abroad' (see also Press Release [IP/09/1096](#) and the [Public consultations](#) page). On 30 July 2009, it was announced that the Erasmus programme had reached two million student exchanges (see Press Release [IP/09/1204](#)).

On 23 September 2009, the Commission announced that Comenius will give secondary school pupils the opportunity to spend between three and 10 months in a host school and a host family abroad. The new initiative started in the school year 2010/11 (see [news item](#) and [Comenius individual pupil mobility](#) page).

On 24 November 2009, the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)) presented the report 'Teachers' Professional Development: Europe in international comparison' (see [report](#) page and Press Release [IP/09/1808](#)).

On 26 November, Ministers at the Education, Youth and Culture Council adopted [Conclusions](#) 'on the professional development of teachers and school leaders', calling on the Commission to:

Enhance and support European policy cooperation in the areas of initial teacher education, continuous professional development and school leadership, notably by establishing platforms and peer-learning activities for the exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise among policymakers and teaching professionals.

On 26 January 2010, the European Court of Auditors published a [Special Report](#) 'concerning vocational training actions for women co-financed by the European Social Fund' (see also Press Release [ECA/10/06](#)). It concluded that, overall, projects were not a direct response to labour market requirements, and that actions failed to focus sufficiently on specific target groups.

On 22 September 2010, to mark the 10th anniversary of Grundtvig, the Commission issued Press Release [IP/10/1156](#), giving details of the initiative and how it fits into the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

In September 2010, the Commission launched public consultations on three proposed education, training and youth programmes to replace existing initiatives from the beginning of 2014. The consultations asked how the new programmes might contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and in particular to the Flagship initiatives Youth on the move and An Agenda for new skills and jobs. The proposed programmes are: 'Education and training', to replace the current Lifelong Learning programme; 'Youth', to replace Youth in Action; and an 'International higher education programme' to replace Erasmus Mundus. The deadline for contributions was 30 November 2010.

On 27 September 2010, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published the [Special Report](#) 'Is the design and management of the mobility scheme of the Leonardo da Vinci programme likely to lead to effective results?' (see also Press Release [ECA/10/22](#)). It concluded that the Commission had not established a comprehensive system for measuring the impact of the programme and found that the general nature of the

Leonardo objectives makes it difficult to measure how mobility projects can contribute to them.

In June 2011, the Commission revealed that, in the 2009/2010 academic year, Erasmus had supported more than 213,000 students (see Press Releases [IP/11/675](#) and [MEMO/11/375](#)).

A mid-term review of the LLP was adopted on 7 July 2011 as [COM\(2011\)413](#). It concludes that the LLP meets key EU-level education and training objectives and addresses the needs of its various target communities.

Issued in October 2011, the Eurydice report [Teachers and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe, 2009/10](#) showed that the best paid teachers in the EU are in Luxembourg, Denmark and Austria, with teachers in Bulgaria and Romania being the least well paid. Gross basic salaries for teachers entering the profession were lower than national GDP per capita in almost all European countries (see also Press Release [IP/11/1153](#)).

Erasmus celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2012, with the slogan 'Erasmus: changing lives, opening minds for 25 years'. The scheme has grown from 11 to 33 participating countries (the 27 Member States, plus Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey; see Press Releases [IP/12/83](#) and [MEMO/12/54](#)).

2014-2020: Erasmus for All

For the period 2014-2020, the Commission proposed a new programme for education, training, youth and sport. Called [Erasmus for All](#) it will replace seven existing programmes (Lifelong Learning Programme - Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig; Youth in Action; Erasmus Mundus; Tempus; Alfa; Edulink and the bilateral cooperation programme with industrialised countries).

Adopted on 23 November 2011, the proposal ([COM\(2011\)788](#); check progress via [PreLex dossier](#)) would see Erasmus for All focus on three types of action:

- earning opportunities for individuals, both within the EU and beyond
- institutional cooperation between educational institutions, youth organisations, businesses, local and regional authorities and NGOs
- support for reforms in Member States to modernise education and training systems and to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and employability

The proposed budget of €19 billion would represent a 70% increase over funding for 2007-2013 (see also [COM\(2011\)787](#); Press Releases [IP/11/1398](#) and [MEMO/11/818](#)).

[2014: The new programme for 2014-2020 has now been launched under the revised name ERASMUS+:

[ERASMUS+ Website](#)

[ERASMUS+ Programme Guide](#), February 2014]

Higher education

In April 2005 the Commission identified three priority areas for reform of European universities (see Press Release [IP/05/445](#)):

- enhancing the quality and attractiveness of Europe's universities
- improving their governance and systems
- increasing and diversifying their funding (with or without a substantial contribution from students).

The Communication 'A new partnership for the modernisation of universities: the EU Forum for University Business Dialogue' ([COM\(2009\)158](#); see also Press Release [IP/09/529](#)) was published on 2 April 2009, as part of the Commission's moves 'to support the Member States in their efforts to modernise their higher education systems.' The European Commission's first 'Report on progress in quality assurance in higher education' ([COM\(2009\)487](#)), published on 21 September 2009, highlighted 'significant developments towards more transparency and credibility over the past few years' (see Press Release [IP/09/1353](#)). The Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel', said:

Quality assurance is vital for making European higher education attractive and trustworthy, in line with the objectives of the EU modernisation agenda for higher education and the Bologna Process. Globalisation, economic integration and increased academic and professional mobility are making mutual recognition and cross-border quality assurance increasingly important. As a consequence, higher education is becoming more transparent and credible for citizens, employers and students within and outside Europe.

The Eurydice report [Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe](#) was published on 16 September 2011. Subtitled 'Funding and the Social Dimension 2011', it looked at national policies on access to higher education, funding and student support (see also Press Release [IP/11/1037](#)).

On 20 September 2011, the Commission adopted the Communication 'Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems' ([COM\(2011\)567](#); see also the accompanying Staff Working Document [SEC\(2011\)1063](#)), Press Releases [IP/11/1043](#) and [MEMO/11/615](#), and [The Higher Education Modernisation Agenda](#) page). In the context of the Europe 2020 goals for higher education, the Communication identifies a number of areas for improvement:

- increasing the number of higher education graduates
- improving the quality and relevance of teaching and researcher training, to equip graduates with the knowledge and core transferable competences they need to succeed in high-skill occupations
- providing more opportunities for students to gain additional skills through study or training abroad, and to encourage cross-border co-operation to boost higher education performance
- strengthening the 'knowledge triangle', linking education, research and business and
- creating effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence.

On 13 March 2012, MEPs called for more funding and support to promote student mobility and to make higher education in the EU more attractive and competitive (see Press Release [20120309STO40297](#)). Parliament wants to reinforce the Bologna Process and to:

harmonise academic standards, promote mobility and employability, remove administrative obstacle, improve the mutual recognition of qualifications (through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), and promote social cohesion.

[National student fee and support systems 2011/2012](#) was published by Eurydice on 10 September 2012 (see also Press Release [IP/12/947](#)). It showed that the cost of higher education for students varies dramatically in Europe. Tuition fees were highest in England, but nine countries generally do not charge fees (Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Malta, Norway, Scotland, and Sweden).

A High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education was launched by the Commission on 18 September 2012. The group will initially focus first on how best to achieve quality and excellence in teaching and learning, and will then look at how to adapt learning in the digital age (see Press Release [IP/12/976](#)).

On 17 December 2012, the Commission announced that 500 universities from across Europe and the world were expected to participate in U-Multirank, a new international university ranking. The 'multi-dimensional' ranking will rate universities in five separate areas: reputation for research, quality of teaching and learning, international orientation, success in knowledge transfer, and regional engagement. First results are due in early 2014 (see Press Release [IP/12/1373](#) and [SPEECH/13/306](#)).

Qualifications

Since 2005, in order to improve mobility of both learners and workers throughout Europe, the [Europass](#) system brings together five documents that have been developed at European level to improve the transparency of qualifications and skills. A Briefing Note [Europass 2005-2020: Achievements and prospects](#) was published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training in May 2012.

A consultation process was launched on a blueprint for the development of a [European Qualifications Framework](#) (EQF) to facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens. A [Recommendation](#) was subsequently adopted on 23 April 2008 (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)). On 17 September 2009, the Commission announced that Ireland was the first EU Member State to link its national qualifications to the EQF (see Press Release [IP/09/1331](#)).

A Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning was published on 5 September 2012 as [COM\(2012\)485](#) (see also Press Release [IP/12/936](#)). The proposal aimed to increase access to higher education and to increase job opportunities, especially for the young unemployed and those with few formal qualifications (e.g. older and low-skilled workers). The final act was adopted on 20 December 2012 as [Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01](#).

European Institute of Technology

In February 2006 the Commission unveiled plans for a European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), intended to boost the EU's economic competitiveness. Based on top-class networks it is designed to be an important step in filling the gap between higher education, research and innovation. Created by [Regulation 294/2008](#) of 11 March 2008 and started its activities in September 2008, with the mission 'to grow and capitalise on the innovation capacity and capability of actors from higher education, research, business and entrepreneurship from the EU and beyond through the creation of highly integrated Knowledge and Innovation Communities'.

(See Press Releases [IP/06/201](#) and [IP/08/1318](#), [Summaries of EU legislation](#) and [EIT website](#)).

European Centres and Networks

In 1975 the [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training](#) (Cedefop) was established, designed to promote the exchange of information in the area of vocational training, so that policy makers and practitioners could make informed choices (see [Summaries of EU Legislation](#)). In 1980 the [Eurydice](#) network was set up to promote the exchange of information on national educational systems and policies in the member

states as well as information on Community action in education (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

The [Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency](#) (EACEA) was set up to manage Community programmes in the fields of education, culture and audiovisual (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

International co-operation

The Treaty Articles encourage the EU to develop [co-operation with third countries](#) and relevant international organisations (the [Council of Europe](#) is explicitly mentioned). Programmes thus extend not only to other European countries, but also to other parts of the world, including Asia, Latin America, North America, and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP).

The [European Training Foundation](#) (ETF), established in 1994, 'helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy.' The ETF works with a wide range of [partner organisations](#).

The [Tempus](#) programme (Trans-European mobility scheme for university studies) was established in 1990 after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Now labelled Tempus IV, it spans 2007-2013 and 'supports the modernisation of higher education in the Partner Countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region, mainly through university cooperation projects' (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

[Erasmus Mundus](#), established in July 2002, aims 'to enhance the quality of higher education in Europe by promoting cooperation with third countries and to make higher education in Europe more attractive' (see Summaries of legislation [Erasmus Mundus \(2004-2008\)](#) and [2009-2013](#)).

The Copenhagen Process brings together national authorities and social partners from 33 European countries to develop vocational education and training systems. Education Ministers meet every two years to review the process. On 7 December 2010, they adopted the 'Bruges Communiqué' - a package intended to increase the quality of vocational training by making it more accessible and relevant to the needs of the labour market (see Press Release [IP/10/1673](#) and [Copenhagen Process](#) page).

On 21 October 2011, a Commission Report 'on the Interim Evaluation of External Cooperation Agreements in Higher Education, Training and Youth with the United States of America and Canada' ([COM\(2011\)653](#)) confirmed that the Agreements 'offer substantial and tangible benefits for students, faculty and institutions'. However, financial constraints mean that Canada and the USA will cease to participate in the initiatives.

On 2 July 2012, the Commission announced the launch of a new dialogue with Southern Mediterranean countries on higher education policies and programmes (see Press Release [IP/12/732](#)).

A 'Report on the Interim Evaluation of the Erasmus Mundus II Programme (2009-2013)' was adopted by the Commission on 19 September 2012 as [COM\(2012\)515](#).

On 25 March 2013, the Commission published a draft Directive intended to make it easier and more attractive for non-EU national students, researchers and other groups to enter and stay in the EU for periods exceeding three months. The proposal for a Directive 'on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary

service and au pairing' was adopted as [COM\(2013\)151](#) (see also Press Release [IP/13/275](#); check progress via [PreLex dossier](#)).

The first pan-European 'MOOCs' (Massive Open Online Courses) initiative was launched on 23 April 2013, enabling people to access quality education from home. MOOCs brings together partners from 11 countries: France, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey and the UK (see Press Release [IP/13/349](#)).

The Union's aid budget for 2014-2020 is to provide up to €2.5 billion to help fund education initiatives, including the Erasmus for All programme (see Press Release [IP/13/453](#), 23 May 2013).

On 20 June 2013, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou announced that more students from Southern Mediterranean countries will benefit from the forthcoming [Erasmus for All](#) programme. To be launched in January 2014, the programme aims to build on the existing Tempus and Erasmus Mundus initiatives (see also Press Release [IP/13/582](#)).

The OECD report [Education at a Glance 2013](#) confirmed the importance of policies aimed at modernising education systems and increasing opportunities for young people to study or train abroad. Launched on 25 June 2013, the survey covered the education systems of the 34 OECD member countries, including 21 EU Member States (see also Press Release [IP/13/603](#)).

On 4 March 2013, the Commission announced that the 'eTwinning' network would be extended to schools in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The 'eTwinning Plus' pilot project aims to enable those countries to join a massive virtual classroom in which pupils and teachers can learn more about their counterparts and take part in interactive projects (see Press Release [IP/13/183](#)).

Further information on international cooperation in education and training can be found in [Summaries of EU legislation](#).

Information sources in the ESO database

Find updated and further information sources in the ESO database:

[17.1 Education and training \[all categories\]](#)

- [Key source](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Policy-making](#)
- [Report](#)
- [Statistics](#)
- [News source](#)
- [Periodical article](#)
- [Textbook, monograph or reference](#)
- [Background](#)

[17.2 European Union: Education: Multi-sectoral Programmes](#)

[17.3 Higher education](#)

[17.3.a Specialist European education and training institutions](#)

[17.4 Education - Other sectors](#)

[17.5 Transition from education to working life](#)

[17.6 Lifelong learning](#)

[17.6.a Vocational training](#)

[17.6.b Qualifications](#)

[17.7 Youth Programmes](#)

Further information sources on the internet

- European Commission: DG Education and Culture
 - [Education and Culture website](#)
 - [Education and training](#)
 - [Youth](#)
 - [A new generation of EU programmes for education and training ...](#)
 - [ERASMUS+](#)
 - [ERASMUS+ Dissemination Platform: Projects](#)
 - [Funding](#)
 - [Annual Work Programme](#)
 - [Document Library](#)
 - [Public consultations](#)
 - [European Tertiary Education Register](#)
 - [Evaluation](#)
- European Commission: DG Eurostat
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [Education and training](#)
 - Statistics explained: [Education and training](#)
- Europa
 - Policy areas: [Education, training, youth](#)
 - Summaries of EU legislation
 - [Education, training, youth, sport](#) (includes factsheets under the headings: [Education, training, youth: cooperation with non-EU countries](#), [Education and training: general framework](#), [Lifelong learning](#), [Sport](#), [Vocational training](#), [Youth](#))
- European Commission: DG Communication
 - [RAPID](#) press releases database - [Education, culture, multilingualism and youth](#) (pre-set search)
 - EU news: [Culture, education and youth](#)
- Legislative and policy making information
 - [Treaty on the functioning of the European Union](#): Article 6, 9, 165-166
 - EUR-Lex: Legislation: [Education](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Preparatory legislation: [Education](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Consolidated legislation: [Education](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Case Law: [Education](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Summaries of EU Legislation: [Education](#)
 - European Commission: DG [Education](#)
- Court of Justice of the European Union: InfoCuria
[Homepage](#): 'at 'Subject-matter' box, click icon at far right to open list of subjects. Select 'Education, vocational training and youth' and click 'Enter' to return to main search page. Select dates if required. Hit 'Search' at top or bottom of page.
- European Parliament: Legislative Observatory (OEIL)
[Homepage](#): Carry out a [Search](#): scroll down right-hand menu and expand 'Subject'; then expand 'Economic, social and territorial cohesion', then choose 'Education, vocational training and youth' and select appropriate sub-heading
- Council of the European Union
 - [Education, youth, culture and sport](#)

- European Parliament
 - [Culture and Education Committee](#) (CULT)
- European Parliament: Fact Sheets
 - Within the section on [Common policies](#) is a sub-section on Culture and Education, which includes a Fact Sheet on [Education and vocational training policy](#)
- European Economic and Social Committee
 - [Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship](#) (SOC)
- Committee of the Regions
 - [Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture](#) (SEDEC)
- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [Erasmus+](#)
 - [Creative Europe](#)
 - [Europe for Citizens](#)
 - [EU Aid Volunteers](#)
 - [Intra-Africa](#)
 - [Eurydice](#)
 - [Eurypedia](#) (European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems)
 - [Programmes 2007 - 2013](#)

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