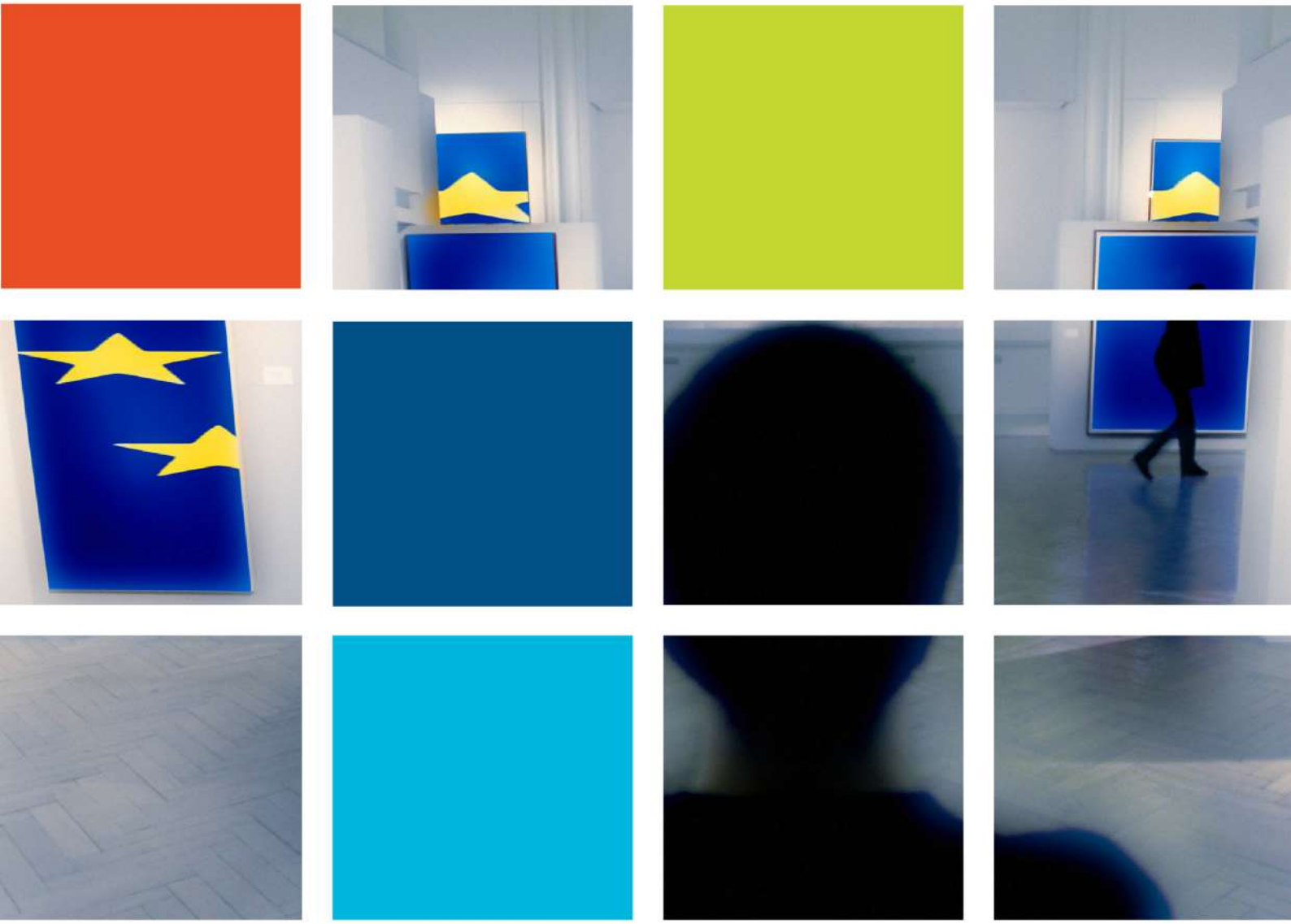
LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION



GUIDEBOOK

TO EU DECISION-MAKING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2026 EDITION

Co-funded by
the European Union

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This publication was updated in February 2026 to reflect the new strategies and initiatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission after over one year in office. This will consider the forward-looking discussions for preparing the 2028-2034 financial cycle as well as future initiatives of the 2024-2029 Commission. The first edition was published in 2015.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY A TOOL FOR ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

Elisa Gambardella
LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM
PRESIDENT

The European Guide on Decision and Policy-Making in Education and Training has become a staple of the policy and advocacy toolbox that the Lifelong Learning Platform puts forward. Our 2026 update of the guidebook is designed not only for our members, but for **anyone living in Europe that seeks deeper insights into EU procedures, structures and a better understanding of the complexity of Europe as a whole.** We live in a dynamic and diverse Europe, accounting for 27 Member States, 450 million inhabitants and 24 languages. All while the European Commission alone published 10.000 documents in 2024. Keeping track of and understanding everything taking place within the EU represents a real challenge for many who wish to engage and might feel dismayed by **policy-making from an ivory tower.** This guidebook aims to address this gap and provides all the explanations and mechanisms to help our members and every single person living in Europe gain and comprehend the basics to identify where to go and what to do to raise their concerns and ensure their voices are heard in the education and training sector, the Lifelong Learning Platform's mission.

Our Guidebook supports engagement with education and training policy-making at EU level, offering a learning opportunity in itself for all users. It includes all processes and actors relevant for achieving our vision, which promotes a holistic definition of and a lifelong learning approach to education and training in which formal, informal and non-formal learning environments and stakeholders collaborate, placing learners at the centre. **Education and training play a key role in shaping the future, and determining how democratic, inclusive and just Europe will be. They are a long-term investment in Europe's resilience and preparedness, and for this reason we will never stop advocating for participatory policy processes.**

As European Civil Society Organisations (CSO), we bridge over 60.000 education and training institutions in formal, non-formal and informal learning - covering several million learners, volunteers, educators and academics - with the apparatus of the EU and its Member States. With this guidebook, we are proud to give capacity to EU CSO networks to distill the EU to people, bringing them in education and training policymaking and contributing to the democratisation of EU processes!

WHO'S WHO?

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

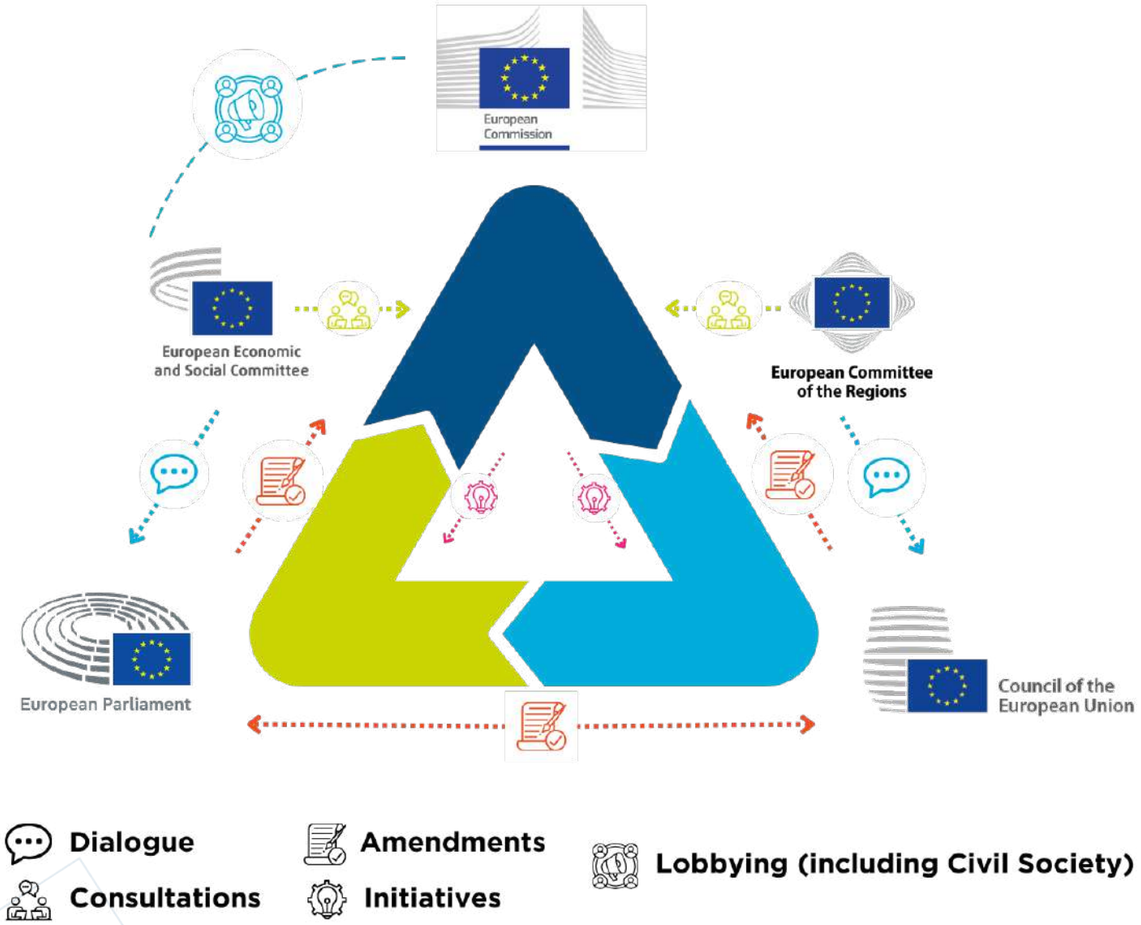
Anyone interested in European affairs should start by having basic knowledge on how the main EU institutions work. This section focuses on key institutions; many more exist but will not be mentioned for the sake of simplification. A first, important aspect to remember is that the EU is only competent for what is provided for in its Treaties.

The EU has three types of Competences: exclusive competences; shared competences and supporting competences. For instance, in the field of education and training the EU has a supporting competence which means it supports Member State action in a certain number of areas (for further information, see part II).

THE INSTITUTIONAL TRIANGLE

Over the years, the EU institutional structure has become both more expansive and more stratified, with multiple sub-structures and overlapping areas of competence. To make it simple, we can say that the institutional structure of the EU has evolved into a triangular relationship between the European Commission (EC), the Council of the EU, and the European Parliament (EP).

Other institutions also intervene such as advisory bodies like the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of Regions (CoR) which address opinions to the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament on specific issues. However, their opinions are not binding upon the institutions.



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

What is it?

The term “Commission” refers both to the College of Commissioners and the institution itself. The President of the European Commission is chosen based on the results of European Parliament elections. In 2024, the European People’s Party (EPP) won the most seats in the European Parliament. Following this, the European Parliament elected Ursula von der Leyen for a second term as European Commission President. Ursula von der Leyen was chosen as the EPP’s Spitzenkandidat (main candidate for the post of President of the European Commission) in spite of not being the leader of EPP, but due to the fact that she was already President of the European Commission and continuity was regarded as beneficial.

The College of Commissioners and their portfolios are presented by the President of the European Commission. The Commissioners-designate are subject to checks regarding conflicts of interest and to public hearings organised by relevant Committees of the European Parliament to assess their competence. Based on the hearings, the Parliament approves the College, as a whole. The Commissioners-. designate are nominated by Member States. The President of the European Commission can make requests to meet gender balance criteria, or to balance the competences existent in the College. However, Member States hold the final decision with regard to who they nominate Education and skills remains a main responsibility of the Commission Executive Vice-President Roxana Mînzatu, as she is tasked with the portfolio “Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness”. This is a new role, mainly aggregating responsibilities of the previous Commissioner responsible for education and the one responsible for employment and social rights. Nevertheless, the word ‘education’ is not mentioned in her title. Education and training aspects appear in other portfolios such as the one of Commissioner Glenn Micallef.

Roxana Mînzatu,
European Commission Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness

Glenn Micallef,
European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

What does it do?

The European Commission acts as the executive body of the European Union. It is responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the Union's treaties and the day-to-day running of the Union.

Ursula von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission

The European Commission has four main tasks.

Proposes Laws

The Commission is the sole EU institution tabling laws for adoption by the Parliament and the Council that:

- protect the interests of the EU and its citizens on issues that cannot be dealt with effectively at national level;
- get technical details right by consulting experts and the public.

WORK PROGRAMME

Every year, the European Commission adopts a Work Programme which sets out its key initiatives for the year ahead. It informs citizens how the EU will deliver on its political priorities and turn them into concrete action.

A collection of the European Commission Work Programmes starting from the year 2007 is made available, while every new annual Work Programme would be published on the same webpage. The Work Programme takes stock of all planned initiatives, all upcoming proposals, all ongoing processes, as well as the upcoming evaluations and potential withdrawals of proposals. It accounts for an annual timeline which is linked with the overarching timeline of the European Commission mandate. It is essential to monitor its contents in relation to education and training, considering how initiatives like the Union of Skills are referenced across the Work Programme.

Manages EU policies & allocates EU funding

- Sets EU spending priorities, together with the Council and Parliament.
- Draws up annual budgets for approval by the Parliament and Council.
- Supervises how the money is spent, under scrutiny by the Court of Auditors.

Enforces EU law

Together with the Court of Justice, the European Commission ensures that EU law is properly applied in all the member countries.

Represents the EU internationally

The Commission speaks on behalf of all EU countries in international bodies, in particular in areas of trade, policy, and humanitarian aid.

Structure and organisation

Political leadership is provided by a team of 27 Commissioners (one from each EU country) – led by the President of the European Commission, who decides who is responsible for which policy area.

The College of Commissioners is composed of the President of the European Commission, six Executive Vice-Presidents, including the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and 20 Commissioners, each responsible for a different portfolio and tasks assigned by Von der Leyen with their respective Mission Letters (for those Mission Letters relevant for the education and training sectors, see in particular the **Mission Letter of Roxana Mînzatu** and the **Mission Letter of Glenn Micallef**.

European Union priorities 2024-2029

Europe is facing significant challenges, from rising costs of living and housing shortages to underachievement in skills and skills shortages. In response, the EU set a number of priorities that derive from a dialogue between EU leaders, national ministers, EU institutions and the political groups elected in the European Parliament. In June 2024, the European Council outlined its priorities in the **EU Strategic Agenda for 2024-2029** which helps guide the EU institutions and sets out how to deliver on these priorities. The strategic agenda guides the Commission's own priorities for its term of office, which the candidate for President of the European Commission, in this case Ursula von der Leyen, set out in the **political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029.**

In their 2024-2029 strategic agenda, EU leaders set out 3 priority areas:

- A free and democratic Europe: Upholding European values both within the EU and on the global stage.
- A strong and secure Europe: Enhancing EU security, defence, and migration management while preparing for a larger and more resilient Union.
- A prosperous and competitive Europe: Driving competitiveness, succeeding in the green and digital transitions, and fostering innovation and business-friendly environment.

The President of the European Commission determined 7 priorities for the 2024-2029 mandate of the European Commission. The priorities are:

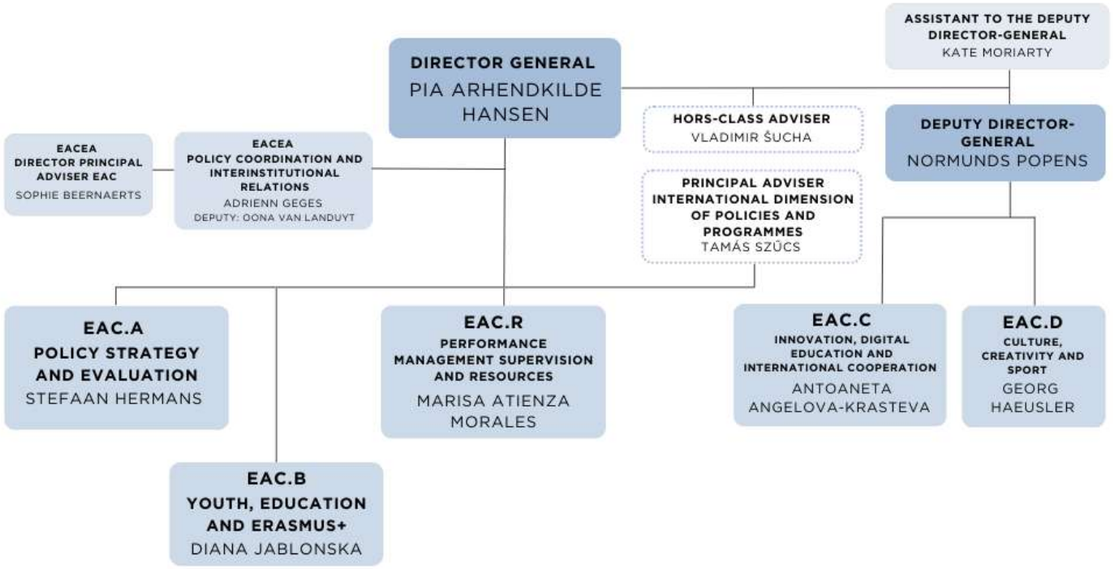
- A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness
- A new era for European Defence and Security
- Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model
- Sustaining our quality of life: Food security, water and nature

- Protecting our democracy, upholding our values
- A global Europe: Leveraging our power and partnerships
- Delivering together and preparing our Union for the future

The day-to-day running of the Commission is performed by its staff (lawyers, economists, etc.), organised into 56 different departments known as Directorates-General (DGs) and Executive Agencies (EAs). Each DG covers a specific policy area or service, and is headed by a Director-General who reports to one or more Commissioners and EVPs. Each DG is subdivided into directorates and each directorate, in turn, is divided into units. All the DGs and services are coordinated by the Secretariat-General, headed by a Secretary-General that reports directly to the President of the European Commission. The two main DGs in charge of education are **Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)** and **Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)**.

The other DGs dealing with education, although to a lesser extent, are **DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME)**, **DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)**, **DG Digital Services (DG DIGIT)** and **DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT)**. The list is not exhaustive, as each DG will touch upon education and training in one way or another during a mandate.

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)



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DG EAC is the executive branch of the EU responsible for policy on education, youth, sport, and culture, namely working on the modernisation of European education and training systems; mobility policies and programmes; and international relations in the field of education, youth, sports and culture. It advances the work on these issues through various projects and programmes, notably **Creative Europe** and **Erasmus+**, while being jointly led by two Commissioners (Glenn Micallef and Ekaterina Zaharieva) and one Executive Vice-President (Roxana Mînzatu), who report to the European Parliament, and by a Director General, who is not a politician but rather a technical profile.

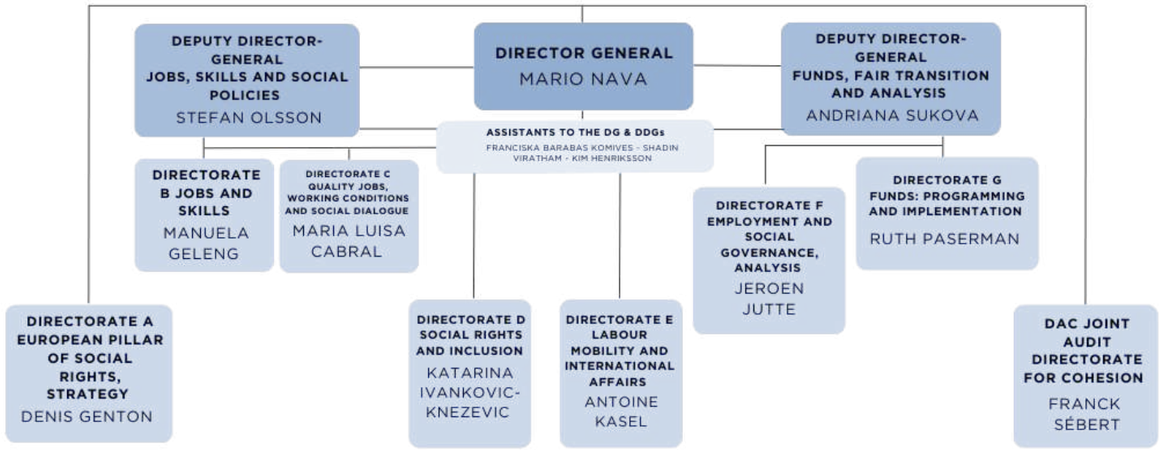
DG EAC is divided into five directorates:
• Policy Strategy and Evaluation
• Youth, Education, and Erasmus+
• Performance Management, Supervision, and Resources
• Innovation, Digital Education and International Cooperation
• Culture, Creativity and Sport

If you are interested in meeting the European Commission, the best is to look for the Unit who deals with your sector of activity knowing that Directorate A is focused on policies, Directorate B more on programmes while C and D is organised by sector. You can search for specific staff of the Commission on the **DG EAC's website**.

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is an agency of the EU, established in 2006, that has been a catalyst for projects in education, training, youth, sport, audiovisual, culture, citizenship and humanitarian aid. EACEA operates under the supervision of its six parent Directorates-General of the European Commission (DG EAC, DG INTPA, DG JUST, DG CONNECT, DG NEAR and DG EMPL).

Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion



Click on the image to see the full organigramme

DG EMPL pursues the EU policy on employment, social affairs, skills, labour mobility, inclusion, and the related EU funding programmes. Through the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, it aims to create more and better jobs, promote skills and entrepreneurship, improve the functioning of the labour markets, confront poverty and social exclusion, modernise social protection systems, support social dialogue, facilitate workers' free movement, promote workers' rights, and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. DG EMPL has been responsible for EU policies on skills and qualifications, vocational education and training and adult learning since 2014. Much of DG EMPL's work is performed through the **European Employment Strategy** and the **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**.If you are looking for specific Commission staff from DG EMPL and their contact details, you can find them on the **DG EMPL's website**.

LOBBYING?

When a legislative process is initiated at EU level, several actors external to EU institutions intervene in order to voice their particular concerns and needs. Actors can also ask for new regulations to be adopted or revised. This is what is usually called lobbying. It is reported that far more than 30,000 professional lobbyists are present in Brussels, more than the number of European Commission public servants (32,000). Of course, this concept covers various groups (for-profit actors versus NGOs who advocate for general interests). It thus covers various practices aimed at influencing policy makers on behalf of a special interest. The EU establishes rules to ensure transparency such as the **Transparency Register** and a **Code of Good Administrative Behaviour**. Directors-General for example are required to publish information on meetings held with organisations or self-employed individuals. If you intend to play in this field you should register on the Transparency Register.

Decision Making in Education within the European Commission

Countries are responsible for their own education and training systems, but the EU helps them set joint goals and share good practices. On the basis of articles 165 and 166 TFEU (**Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union**), the European Parliament and the Council may adopt incentive measures (that must not infringe Member State power), while the Council may adopt recommendations.

Once a legislative process is launched, a unit is usually in charge of the drafting. If you are interested in a particular policy initiative, the best is thus to contact the Unit in charge. DG EAC also publishes an **annual Management Plan** that will help you to know what initiatives are planned. The EU also has funding programmes on education, training and youth, with the aim of promoting mobility and encouraging cooperation, which are frequently tied to priorities of recently launched EU initiatives. For further information, see part III.

As regards decision making, the European Commission set up various **working**, **advisory and expert** groups with external stakeholders to inform its work, in addition to its broad consultation procedures. These groups meet several times each year and contribute with their expertise to help the Commission prepare its communications and initiatives.

Consultations

When the European Commission starts working on a new policy initiative or revises existing legislation, it usually opens a public consultation for relevant stakeholders to provide inputs and feedback. The main goal is to improve the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large scale projects, laws or policies. For example, the public consultation on the "**Learning opportunities (learning mobility) abroad in Europe for everyone**", launched in February 2023. The aim of the consultation is to collect information, expertise and views from all interested parties for evidence-based contributions ahead of the Commission's proposal. In November 2023, the Commission presented a proposal for a Council Recommendation titled "Europe on the Move – Learning Mobility Opportunities for All."

EU CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

The **ECI** was introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon (articles 225 and 241 TFEU), aimed at increasing direct democracy in the European Union. It allows one million EU citizens from more than 7 different Member States to participate directly in the development of EU policies, by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

What is it?

The Council of the European Union (often referred to as "the Council") is the principal decision maker of the EU and jointly with the European Parliament has the power to adopt, amend or reject laws (legislative power), which are initiated by the European Commission. It brings together Member State government representatives at ministerial level on a specific policy area. It reflects the national interests and views of each Member State within the EU.

What does it do?

As the main decision making body of the EU, the Council is responsible for the:

1. Adoption of laws (ordinary in co-decision with the European Parliament)
2. Definition and implementation of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, and conclusion of international agreements
3. Coordination of economic policies across Europe
4. Adoption of the EU annual budget, in conjunction with the European Parliament agreements

The Council also has a mediation role, which has grown in importance throughout the years and is undertaken mostly by the Council Presidency. This role accounts for taking a neutral stance in the negotiation process among EU Member States on the legislative work. The Council of the EU, just as the EU in general, is not a monolith with a clearly defined, unique position for policy-making. It comprises the interests and agenda of each EU Member State. Therefore, to act as a single voice in a specific legislative process, there needs to be a process of compromises across Member States, and this mediation is facilitated through the Council of the EU, and by the Council Presidency.

Structure and organisation

The Council functions according to a six-month rotational presidency. However, since 2007, the Council works on the basis of a common 18-month programme established by a "trio" of succeeding Presidencies and prepared in collaboration with the European Commission.

At the time of publication of this Guidebook, Cyprus holds the presidency (January-June 2026) as part of the trio that was composed of Poland and Denmark (throughout 2025). The next trio will be composed of Ireland (July-December 2026), Lithuania (January-June 2027) and Greece (July-December 2027). These presidencies set up priorities for their term and define areas of heightened EU policy focus, events and activities. As chair of most of the Council configurations, the country holding the rotating presidency plays an important role in organising the work of these Council configurations, both in terms of their political agenda and in terms of advancing legislative procedures.

DO NOT GET CONFUSED

The Council should not be mixed up with the **Council of Europe**. The Council of Europe is a non-EU organisation of 46 States, including for instance Georgia and Ukraine, based in Strasbourg (France). Established in 1949, it is the oldest international European level organisation and it represents over 700 million citizens.

The Council of the EU should not be confused with the 'European Council' either, which is the EU institution that defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. It consists of the heads of state or government of the Member States, together with its President, António Costa, and the President of the European Commission.

CO-DECISION

Under the Treaty of Lisbon, what was once known as co-decision officially became the 'Ordinary Legislative Procedure' and the general rule for passing legislation at EU level, covering the vast majority of areas of Union action. The main characteristic of the ordinary legislative procedure is the adoption of legislation jointly and on an equal footing by the Parliament and the Council - hence the term "co-decision". It starts with a legislative proposal from the Commission (normally for a regulation, directive or decision) and consists of up to three readings, with the possibility for the co-legislators to agree on a joint text - and thereby conclude the procedure - at any reading.

The Council is a single legal entity. However, in practice, it is divided into several different council configurations. Each council configuration is responsible

for a different functional area and is composed of the relevant ministers from each state government. There are currently 10 council configurations. The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS) Council brings together ministers responsible for these sectors in the Member States around three or four times a year. It usually adopts its decisions by a qualified majority (apart from cultural affairs, where it acts unanimously) and in co-decision with the European Parliament.

All the work of the Council is prepared or coordinated by the Committee of National Representatives (COREPER - French acronym). COREPER comprises high-level national civil servants on permanent assignments to Brussels and plays a significant role in the day-to-day running of the Council. Its members prepare the agenda and brief their ministers who attend meetings in Brussels. Furthermore, COREPER is where the first examination of Commission proposals takes place. If a proposal produces a consensus at this level, it is accepted without any discussion at ministerial level. The work of the COREPER is itself prepared by more than 150 committees and working groups consisting of delegates from Member States. For example, the Education Committee prepares the work of the EYCS Council on education issues.

Voting in the Council

There are three types of voting procedures, depending on the issue under discussion: Simple majority (14 Member States out of 27) vote in favour; Qualified majority (55% of Member States with at least 65% of the total EU population vote in favour), or Unanimous vote (all votes are in favour).

Simple Majority is used for procedural issues, such as rules governing Council Committees. It requires the majority of Member States (14 out of 27) to vote for the proposal.

Qualified majority is used in 80% of EU legislation adopted through the Ordinary Legislative Procedure. A qualified majority is reached if two conditions are met: 55% of Member States vote in favour (15 out of 27) and the proposal is supported by Member States representing at least 65% of the total EU population. This is the double majority rule. A reinforced qualified majority rule is applied when the Council is voting on acts that do not come from the European Commission or the EU High Representative. The requirements for a reinforced qualified majority rule are: 72% of Member States vote in favour (20 out of 27) and they represent at least 65% of the total EU population.

Proposals can be blocked by a group of 4 Member States, representing more than 35% of the EU population. This is called a blocking minority.

Unanimity requires everyone to agree, or abstain. If a Council member abstains, the other ministers can still reach unanimity. Unanimity voting is used for some specific areas mentioned in the EU treaties, such as citizenship, EU membership and taxation.

EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS) consists of the EU Ministers of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport and assembles three to four times a year. It works to ensure a high standard of education and training and to contribute to the flourishing of national cultures. This is done whilst fully respecting that the responsibility for teaching content, structure of education systems and cultural diversity lies with the Member States. When doing advocacy campaigns, the education attachés, who work in the Permanent Representations of each EU Member State to the EU (effectively national embassies to the EU), can play a role of intermediary to pass civil society concerns to the EU and its Member States.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

What is it?

The European Parliament (EP) is the only directly elected institution in the EU, since 1979. Currently, it is made up of 720 Members elected in the 27 Member States. Since 1979, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have been elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. The Lisbon Treaty gives the EP a more prominent role by extending the co-decision procedure to new policy areas, including education and training policies.

What does it do?

The EP has three main roles:

1 Legislative role

The Parliament, together with the Council, can accept, amend or reject the content of European law, even though the right of initiative in terms of legislation lies within the Commission.

2 Democratic supervision

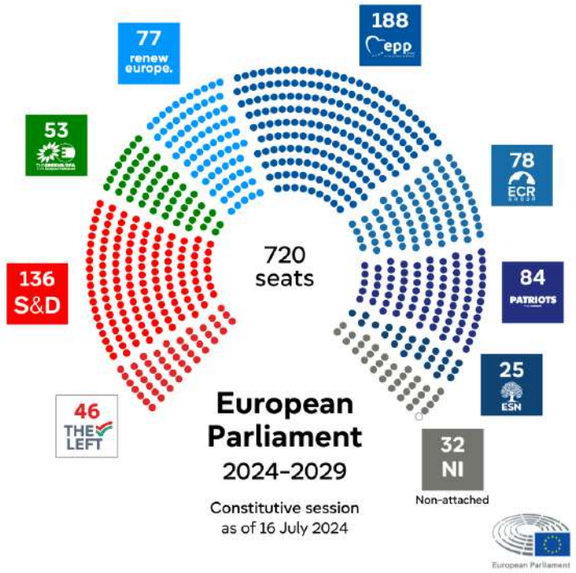
Of other EU institutions, and in particular the Commission. The Parliament approves or rejects the college of Commissioners (including the President of the European Commission) upon nomination, and it has the right to censor it, in both cases as a whole. MEPs regularly ask the Commission and the Council written and oral questions, and the Council President takes part in plenary debates.

3 Budgetary role

Both the Council and the Parliament can amend and must approve the annual EU budget.

Structure and organisation

MEPs are elected by universal suffrage throughout the Member States.
The number of MEPs is determined proportionally to the country's population. Currently, the European Parliament is made up of 720 members elected in 27 Member States.



Countries	seats		
Germany	96	Austria	20
France	81	Bulgaria	17
Italy	76	Denmark, Finland, Slovakia	15
Spain	61	Ireland	14
Poland	53	Croatia	12
Romania	33	Lithuania	11
Netherlands	31	Slovenia, Latvia	9
Belgium	22	Estonia	7
Greece, Czechia, Sweden, Portugal, Hungary	21	Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta	6
		Total	**720**

Even though MEPs are designated on a national basis, the parliamentary groupings are formed according to political, rather than national lines: once elected, they represent the European people. Currently, there are twelve political groups, of which the biggest are the European People's Party (EPP), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Patriots for Europe (PfE), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), Renew Europe (Renew), The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), The Left (GUE/NGL) and Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN).

Plenary sessions are attended by all MEPs and are normally held for one week each month in Strasbourg. Parliamentary Committees bring together smaller groups of MEPs that specialise in particular areas of EU policy. They do much of the preparatory work for the debates and votes carried out later in plenary. Currently there are 22 Standing Committees, which have been formed thematically. The Culture and Education Committee (CULT) and the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) have education and training as part of their portfolio elements.

Main Committees in charge of education

The committees of the European Parliament are designed to help the European Commission in initiating legislation. The Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) is responsible for improving the knowledge and dissemination of culture, safeguarding cultural heritage and the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. It deals with the EU's education policy and programmes, audiovisual policy, the cultural and educational aspects of the information society, youth policy and the

INTERGROUPS

MEPs can meet in unofficial, voluntary, transversal, cross-party groups known as **Intergroups**. Intergroups are a forum for informal exchanges of views on specific issues across different political groups, and for contact between Members and stakeholders - including civil society. Each is composed of Members from at least three different political groups. Intergroups are not official Parliament bodies, but are recognised by Parliament. They are established by agreement between the chairs of the political groups at the beginning of each legislative term. They bring together MEPs as well as civil society representatives to discuss issues of common interest that transcend political divisions or the work underdone in standing Parliamentary Committees, such as the Children Rights Intergroup, the Disability Intergroup or the first-ever Intergroup focused on education and training, titled the Future of Education and Skills for a Competitive Europe, created for the 2024-2029 legislature. In addition, informal interest groups exist, such as the Lifelong Learning Interest Group. The Lifelong Learning Platform used to coordinate the **Lifelong Learning Interest Group** together with the European Association for the Education of Adult (EAEA), but will now be responsible, in partnership with the European Federation of Education Employers, to support the work of the **Intergroup on the Future of Education and Skills**.

development of a sports and leisure policy. It plays a strong budgetary role in the adoption of the EU funded programmes in its fields.

In that regard, the CULT Committee is responsible for the 'Erasmus+' programme for education, training, youth and sport, 'Creative Europe' which supports European cultural and creative sectors, but also some smaller programmes such as the European Solidarity Corps. The chair of the CULT Committee is Nela Riehl (Germany, Greens/EFA) from July 2024. The CULT Committee consists of 60 members representing the various political groups in the European Parliament. All the meetings of the CULT Committee are public and livestreamed on the EP website.

Nela Riehl
Chair of the CULT Committee

Li Andersson
Chair of the EMPL Committee

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) is mainly responsible for employment policies, social affairs and working conditions, vocational training and the free movement of workers and pensioners. The Chair of the EMPL Committee is Li Andersson (Finland, GUE/NGL) since July 2024.

THE CONSULTATIVE BODIES

Other institutions intervene in the law-making process. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) are almost systematically consulted by the Commission and the Member States during the law drafting period. Their intervention is a way of ensuring decisions are taken only after a variety of stakeholders from European and national levels have been able to express their opinion, in light of the principle of subsidiarity.

THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

What is it?

Set up in 1957, the EESC functions primarily as a consultative body on issues of social policy, education, social and economic cohesion, and health. The EESC gives Europe's interest groups - trade unionists, employers, civil society, farmers, etc. - a formal say on EU legislative proposals. It must be consulted before decisions are taken on economic and social policies. On its own initiative, it may give opinions on matters it considers important. On average, the EESC delivers 170 advisory documents and opinions a year (about 15% of which it issues on its own initiative). All opinions are forwarded to the EU decision-making bodies (EC, Council, and EP) and then published in the EU's Official Journal.

Composition

The EESC is based in Brussels and is composed of 329 members, drawn from economic and social interest groups across Europe, nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable five-year term. Its members are organised into three groups.

- **Group I: Employers**

This group has 108 members, accounting for entrepreneurs and representatives of entrepreneur associations working in industry, trade, services and agriculture in the 27 Member States of the European Union.

- **Group II: Workers**

It comprises representatives from national trade unions, confederations and sectoral federations. Its members represent over 80 trade union organisations.

- **Group III: Diversity Europe**

From farmers' organisations to consumer and environmental organisations and NGOs.

The EESC is structured around 6 sections, dealing with particular policy areas, including the section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC), responsible for education and training, among other policy items.

In February 2004, a "Liaison Group" with organised civil society was set up. It is composed of EESC members and representatives of European civil society organisations and networks. It holds regular meetings, as well as hearings, conferences and seminars. Currently it is made up of 16 EESC members and representatives of 36 main

sectors of European Civil Society. The Lifelong Learning Platform is among the organisations participating in the liaison group's activities, representing Education and Training; its Director, Brikena Xhomaqi, was co-chair of the Liaison Group from January 2020 until October 2025. This position is now occupied by Piotr Sadowski, Secretary General of Volonteurope and Vice-President of LLLPlatform, since October 2025.

This group prepares contributions to the work of the EESC and organises debates and events, such as the Civil Society Week in Brussels since 2009 to highlight the contribution and added value that civil society organisations are making to the building of the European project. Its main aim is to promote civil dialogue and participatory democracy (as per Article 11 **TEU**).

Séamus Boland
President of the EESC

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR)

What is it?

The CoR was set up in 1994 as an advisory body composed of nominated representatives of Europe's regional and local authorities. It is consulted by the EU Institutions (Commission, Parliament and Council) when issues and proposals have local or regional repercussions, for example, on employment and education policy. It does so by issuing opinions on European Commission proposals. Based in Brussels, the CoR has 329 members from the 27 EU Member States and its work is organised in 6 different commissions, including one for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC).

Members are appointed for a five-year term by the Council of the European Union, acting on proposals from the EU countries. Each country chooses its members in its own way, but delegations should reflect the political, geographical and regional/local balance in their country. Throughout the EU, local and regional levels have key responsibilities for policies and activities related to education, culture, youth and sports. They are key players in developing regional research and innovation strategies to benefit society.

Kata Tüttő
President of the CoR

THE OMBUDSMAN

What is it?

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions and bodies of the European Union. It seeks fair outcomes to complaints against EU institutions, encourages transparency, and promotes an administrative culture of service. It aims to build trust through dialogue between citizens and the European Union and to foster the highest standards of behaviour in the EU's institutions. The European Ombudsman was established by the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the first Ombudsman, Jacob Soderman (Finland), was elected in 1995. The Ombudsman is elected for a five-year mandate after each European Parliament election. Teresa Anjinho has been the European Ombudsman since December 2024. This institution is playing a more and more important role in monitoring transparency.

Teresa Anjinho
Ombudsman

THE COURT OF JUSTICE

Established in 1952, the mission of the Court of Justice is to ensure that "the law is observed" in the interpretation and application of primary and secondary law. The Court of Justice of the European Union reviews the legality of the acts of the EU institutions, ensures that the member States comply with their obligations under the Treaties, and interprets EU law at the request of the national courts and tribunals. The Court thus constitutes the judicial authority of the European Union and, in cooperation with the courts and tribunals of the member states, ensures the uniform application and interpretation of the European Law, as well as EU law-changing through legal precedent.

SPECIALISED AGENCIES

EUROPEAN AGENCIES

CEDEFOP

Founded in 1975, the **Cedefop** is located in Thessaloniki, Greece. It is an EU decentralised agency that works closely with the European Commission, governments and representatives of trade unions, researchers and practitioners in VET, with the goal of strengthening European cooperation in the area of VET and lifelong learning by providing expertise, for example on validation, learning outcomes or qualification frameworks.

EURYDICE

The **Eurydice network** supports and facilitates European cooperation in the field of lifelong learning by providing information on education systems and policies in 40 countries and by producing studies on issues common to European education systems. It consists of 42 national units based in 40 countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme (27 EU Member States, United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Republic of North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey) and a coordinating unit based in the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels.

ETF - European Training Foundation

The **European Training Foundation** is an EU Agency that helps transitioning 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. It is based in Turin, Italy, and has been operational since 1994. A major part of the ETF's work is focused on upskilling and reskilling, on VET and on collaboration in education and training with neighbouring countries.

EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The **European Institute of Innovation and Technology** is a body of the European Union which was established in 2008 in order to address Europe's innovation gap. It creates collaboration between innovation and excellence centres and is the first EU initiative to fully integrate all three sides of the knowledge triangle. The EIT contributes strongly to the objectives set out in Horizon Europe, in particular by addressing societal challenges in a complementary way to other initiatives in these areas.

NETWORK OF RESEARCHERS

European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE)

EENEE is a knowledge provider funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, coordinated by PPMI (a consultancy). EENEE has a mission to become a leading knowledge broker, advisor and knowledge disseminator in the economics of education and training. In addition, the Network aims to contribute to lasting positive policy changes that ensure high-quality education and training for all. EENEE is now on its fourth cycle (2021-2024). The Network was previously coordinated by the Centre for European Studies (CEPS) and the ifo Institute.

Network of Experts on the Social Dimension of Education and Training

NESET is an international advisory network of experts working on the social dimension of education and training. Being the successor to NESSE (2007-2010), NESET (2011-2014) and NESET II (2015-2018), NESET consists of approximately 60 experts covering complementary areas of expertise in education and training, while representing the 27 EU Member States. It provides reliable, independent and rigorous scientific support, country-specific expertise, and advice to the European Commission in relation to the equity and social aspects of all types and levels of education and training. The Network also bridges the gap between EU policy coordination and the academic world. Through its activities it aims to provide feedback from research to policy.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

COUNCIL OF EUROPE (COE)

The **Council of Europe** is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 46 member states, 27 of which are members of the European Union. All CoE member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights democracy and the rule of law. The CDEDU is the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice within the CoE. A few civil society organisations representing the stakeholders have observer status. In addition, the CoE organises regular consultation meetings with INGOs during the INGOs Conference.

ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

The **OECD** promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. It provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek

common problems. The OECD Directorate for Education and Skills helps individuals and nations to identify and develop the knowledge and skills that drive better jobs and better lives, generate prosperity, and promote social inclusion. It encourages countries to compare their experiences and learn from each other, and it accompanies them in the difficult process of policy implementation.

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE ORGANISATION (UNESCO)

Since its creation in 1945, **UNESCO**'s mission has been to contribute to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue, with education as one of its principal activities to achieve this aim. The Organisation is committed to a holistic and humanistic vision of quality education worldwide, the realisation of everyone's right to education and the belief that education plays a fundamental role in human, social and economic development. UNESCO has 7 specialised institutes for education including the International Institute for Education Planning and Lifelong Learning Institute. The consultation with NGOs is well organised and regulated in various ways. The most important being the Conference of INGOs. The Lifelong Learning Platform is in an official partnership with UNESCO.

UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

The **UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning** (UIL) is one of the 7 specialised institutes for education of the UNESCO. The mission of the Institute is to promote the recognition of and create the conditions for the exercise of the right to education and learning. The Institute undertakes research, capacity- building, networking and publication on lifelong learning with a focus on adult and continuing education, literacy and non-formal basic education. UIL responds to the concerns of all UNESCO Member States, giving priority to least developed countries.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)

The **International Labour Organization** was founded in 1919 to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. The ILO became the first specialised agency of the UN in 1946. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, including training, upskilling and reskilling, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection, and strengthen dialogue on work-based issues.

EU POLICY-MAKING

Education has always been regarded as a national rather than an EU competence. To date, the EU has only a supporting competence over education and training, meaning that its role is limited to support, coordinate and supplement Member States' actions, without superseding their competence. However, the **Maastricht Treaty** already recognised a European dimension to education and allowed the EU to contribute to the development of quality education and the promotion and improvement of vocational training, now included under articles 165 and 166 of the **Lisbon Treaty**.

A turning point in the EU's involvement in education was the formulation of the Lisbon Agenda and the application of the Open Method of Coordination to the area of education. Formulated at the Lisbon Summit of 2000, the Lisbon Agenda aimed at "making the European Union the most competitive economy in the world by 2010". In June 2010 the European Council adopted the so-called Europe 2020 strategy (2010-2020), which succeeds the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010) and where education, training and lifelong learning play an even greater role. These strategies have been the precursors of the new education and training strategies and their relevant sectoral initiatives. The following sections will, initially, cover a series of forward-looking initiatives which have been defined by the new European Commission, but which are not yet developed. Afterwards, the focus will fall on the ongoing strategies, namely the European Education Area and the European Skills Agenda, as well as the Strategic Framework that facilitates the cooperation needed for the European Education Area.

EUROPEAN LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

The term European legal instruments refers to the instruments available to the European institutions to carry out their tasks. As EU has only a supporting competence over education and training, it mostly issues non-legally-binding policy measures, but nonetheless carry political weight:

- Communications usually set out a Commission action plan. They may also include concrete proposals for legislation.
- Green Papers are usually used to launch a consultation process. They present Commission policy orientations to interested parties that may wish to comment. The Commission will generally prepare a subsequent proposal.
- White Papers, which are often the follow-up of a Green Paper, set out concrete proposals for action by the Commission in a specific area.
- Council Conclusions are policy guidelines adopted at Council meetings. Although not legally binding, the conclusions have political power as a frame of reference.
- Council Resolutions are documents that are produced at the end of thematic debates at the European Council. While they are not legally binding, they have often been transposed into EU law through the work of the European Commission, Council of Ministers, or the European Parliament.
- Recommendations and Opinions are non-binding instruments issued by the Commission to define its view and suggest a line of action for a specific issue. Though they have technically no legal force, they do carry political and moral weight.

FORWARD-LOOKING

Competitiveness Compass

Policymaking in the EU is underpinned by medium and long-term strategies and initiatives which define the way ahead for the various institutions and their departments as presented above. The previous editions of this EU Decisionmaking Guidebook looked at **Europe2020** as the defining overarching strategy for the period 2010-2020. Since its conclusion, general wisdom pointed towards the **European Green Deal** and **Europe's Digital Decade** strategies for overarching direction. Though the latter two continue to be in implementation, this Guidebook's edition will start from the January 2025 announcement of the EU's **Competitiveness Compass**. This represents the manifestation of the current focus at EU level on competitiveness, preparedness and security. Though the Compass is bound by the term of the current College of Commissioners, it will serve as the main approach, containing most EU initiatives, for the next few years. It goes without saying that the EU will not work solely on competitiveness, but, as it is structured, the Competitiveness Compass is bound to touch on a wider range of policy sectors than any of the existing EU strategies and will aim to pool all other initiatives and strategies towards its general objectives.

The Compass is split between three pillars:

- Closing the innovation gap (it includes boosting innovation and research, improving infrastructure, creating a deeper and efficient venture capital market, facilitating the environment of start-ups)
- A joint roadmap for decarbonisation and competitiveness (it includes mainstreaming decarbonisation policies, facilitating access to affordable energy, supporting clean tech manufacturers)
- Reducing excessive dependencies and increasing security (it includes trade, security and preparedness initiatives)

Five horizontal enablers will ensure that the three pillars can be achieved:

- Simplification
- Removing barriers in the Single Market
- Financing
- Skills and quality jobs
- Better coordination

The horizontal enabler 'skills and quality jobs' will represent the most significant for this edition of the Guidebook. It foresees the launch of a new overarching strategy for policymaking in education and training at EU level, namely the Union of Skills. Most reforms and initiatives in education and training foreseen by the EU are listed under the Union of Skills which will be discussed below.

Union of Skills

In September 2024, Ursula von der Leyen released the European Commission's latest **Political Guidelines for the period 2024-2029**. A primary objective was the creation of a **Union of Skills (UoS)**, designed to address labour shortages and skills gaps throughout the EU. This plan represents the new overarching strategy on education and training of the EU, promoting investment in lifelong learning, skills retention, and the recognition of various forms of training, enabling citizens to work effortlessly across borders. Building on the actions of the European Education Area, the European Skills Agenda, and the European Research Area, the Union of Skills, officially introduced through a Communication in March 2025, underlines three main objectives:

- Empower European citizens to build solid skills, and engage in lifelong learning upskilling and reskilling
- Increase EU's companies competitiveness by combatting skills mismatches
- Make skills and qualifications acquired in Europe more transparent, trusted and recognised

To achieve those objectives, the Commission presents four key strands:

- **Build skills for quality jobs and lives:** The UoS already launched a **STEM Education Strategic Plan** and an **Action Plan on Basic Skills** to address this. But future initiatives are expected, including an EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda, a 2030 Roadmap on the future of digital education and skills, as well as a European Strategy for VET, among others.
- **Upskill and reskill for the digital and green transition:** key deliverables include continuing the efforts on the **Individual Learning Accounts (ILA)** and **Microcredentials**, while also exploring innovative ways for community learning.
- **Circulate skills to enhance competitiveness:** Although there are measures to facilitate free movement, some barriers remain. The UoS introduces mechanisms to reduce barriers, including the development of a common European framework for the automatic recognition of study qualifications, and learning periods abroad, as well as a legislative proposal for a Skills Portability Initiative.
- **Attract, develop, and retain talent:** An initiative is the EU Talent Pool, a platform aimed to connect EU employers to third country jobseekers, but further actions look at bringing more researchers to Europe, addressing the EU Visa Strategy, and train-to-hire programmes to bring people with the required skills in Europe.

This Guidebook update will contain references to those Union of Skills initiatives that have been published so far.

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA (EEA)

Before the Union of Skills, the main existing strategy in education and training has been defined in 2017, in Gothenburg. Its vision and steps for the EEA has been defined as: «A Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent, where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn, or to work – has become the standard and where, in addition to one's mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm. A continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity.» This vision was set out building on the New Skills Agenda for Europe and investing in Europe's youth initiatives. Education is

considered part of the solution to get more people into decent jobs, respond better to the economy's skills needs and strengthen Europe's resilience in a context of the rapid and profound changes induced by the technological revolution and globalisation».

This was then fully detailed in the **Communication on Achieving a European Education Area (EEA)** by 2025, published in 2020. The various aspects and facets of the EEA will be detailed in the following sections, as the focus, for now, will fall on its general structure. The EEA contains six dimensions:

- Quality
- Inclusion and gender equality
- Green and digital transitions
- Teachers and trainers
- Higher education
- Geopolitical dimension

The **Communication sets targets and initiatives for each of the dimensions** and will all be discussed in the following sections given that, prior to the announcement of the Union of Skills, the EEA encompassed all education and training initiatives at EU level. The Communication was accompanied by **Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)**. This defined the governance of the EEA and the various structures used to make the initiatives a reality. The Strategic Framework and the Communication formed a package that replaced the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training 2010 – 2020 (ET 2020) which used to govern decisionmaking and policymaking in education and training at EU level.

The Geopolitical Dimension is not fully represented across the different sectors, but one initiative which remains central to the implementation of this dimension is **Study in Europe**. This project aims to showcase European Higher Education worldwide and provide information about organising and funding study and research periods in Europe. On the other hand, it seeks to help European Higher Education organisations connect with potential students and partners. The project, which covers 33 European countries (these countries also participate in the Erasmus+ programme), is implemented by a consortium of partner organisations and is supported by an Advisory Group composed of national higher education promotion agencies.

The EEA has already been subjected to a **2023 midterm review** as well as to a **2024 interim evaluation**, taking stock of what has been achieved and what still needs to be achieved. The results of the interim evaluation were not published at the date of the launch of our Guidebook. They will, nevertheless, feed decisions taken for the second cycle of the EEA (or: European Education Area 2.0) and are bound to bring some changes in the context of the Union of Skills. This Guidebook will be updated accordingly at a later stage.

SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE

In 2016, the European Commission launched the **European Skills Agenda** which accounted for ten actions and was meant to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness. In 2020 it provided an **updated European Skills Agenda**, setting 2025 as a target to meet its 12 actions. The goals of the new Skills Agenda were to:

- strengthen sustainable competitiveness - through the implementation of the European Green Deal
- ensuring social fairness - through the first principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights
- build resilience to react to crises.

The 12 actions can be found below:

- **Action 1:** A Pact for Skills
- **Action 2:** Strengthening skills intelligence
- **Action 3**: EU support for strategic national upskilling action
- **Action 4:** Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET)
- **Action 5:** Rolling out the European Universities Initiative and upskilling scientists
- Action 6: Skills to support the twin transitions
- Action 7: Increasing STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and transversal skills
- **Action 8**: Skills for life
- **Action 9:** Initiative on individual learning accounts
- **Action 10:** A European approach to micro-credentials
- **Action 11:** New Europass platform
- Action 12: Improving the enabling framework to unlock Member States' and private investments in skills

Some of the initiatives have been directly linked with an immediate action and have been achieved already, hence being hyperlinked directly. Several other actions are connected to other have been achieved already, hence being hyperlinked directly. Several other actions are connected to other broader actions that the European Commission is undertaking and cannot be linked to a specific output.

The new Skills Agenda also set ambitious objectives to be achieved by 2025:

- 50% participation of adults aged 25-64 in learning every year
- 30% participation of low-qualified adults 25-64 in learning every year
- 20% of unemployed adults aged 25-64 should have a recent learning experience
- 70% of adults aged 16-74 should have at least basic digital skills

Progress towards the objectives are systematically tracked within the European Semester. The implementation of the Skills Agenda is being reported annually in the Joint Employment Report, providing the analytical foundation for more targeted Country-Specific Recommendations on skills, education, and training. You can find detailed information on the European Semester in the following sections of this Guidebook.

THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) is about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens. It sets out 20 key principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems, structured around three categories:

- **Equal opportunities and access to the labour market -** this includes the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning; equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men and equal pay for work of equal value; the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public; the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects.
- **Fair working conditions -** this includes the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training and flexibility of working hours or time; the right to be informed, in writing at the start of employment, about their rights and obligations resulting from the employment relationship and the right to be informed of the reasons and be granted a reasonable period of notice prior to any dismissal; the right to participate in work unions and express their views and concerns; right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services; and the rights to healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection
- **Social protection and inclusion** - this includes Childcare and support to children, workers' right to Social protection, unemployment benefits for the unemployed, minimum income, old age income and pension, health care, Inclusion of people with disabilities, long term care, housing and assistance for homeless people and access to essential services.

The EPSR Action Plan turns the Principles into concrete actions to benefit citizens. It also puts forward three ambitious EU-level targets to be achieved by 2030 in the areas of employment, skills, and social protection and that will help to steer national policies and reforms:

- at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment by 2030
- at least 60% of all adults should be participating in training every year by 2030
- a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion

While the majority of the instruments for achieving them are competence of the Member States, the EU targets reflect a common ambition by 2030 to which this Action Plan offers an important contribution. The Commission will review the Action Plan in 2025. The review will provide a basis for further actions at EU level with a view to achieving the 2030 EU targets.

EUROPEAN SEMESTER

The European Semester, established in 2010, is an annual exercise carried out as part of the EU's economic governance framework. It aims to coordinate economic, budgetary, employment and social policies within the EU. During the Semester, Member States align their budgetary and economic policies with the objectives and rules agreed upon at EU level. The main goal of the Semester is to ensure that the EU Member States do not violate the Stability and Growth Pact fiscal rules, namely the 3% public deficit and the 60% public debt benchmark thresholds. The Semester timetable follows a recurring cycle:

It begins in November when the European Commission presents the **European Semester Autumn Package**, that sets out general social and economic priorities and provides Member States with policy guidance for the period ahead. **The Autumn Package** includes:

- the **Annual Sustainable Growth Survey**
- the **draft Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area**
- the **Opinions on the Draft budgetary plans**
- the **Alert Mechanism report**
- **Joint Employment report**

In April, Member States submit their policy plans for evaluation.

In May[1] The European Commission published its European Semester **Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)** and **Country Reports (CRs)**, known as the **'Spring Package'**, which provides economic and fiscal guidance to Member States following the assessment of the medium-term fiscal structural plan or the related progress report.

The draft recommendations are then further discussed by the Council which reaches consensus on a final version over the summer.

In August-October, Member States are invited to incorporate the final CSRs into their national policies and budgetary plans for the upcoming year. The Commission closely monitors Member States' progress in implementing the CSRs through a **specialised database**, and evaluates the impact of the measures.

By mid-October, Euro area Member States must then submit their draft budgets for the following year to the Commission and the Eurogroup. The Commission assesses their compliance with the CSRs, the agreed net expenditure path and the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact. Following this, the European Semester concludes, and a new cycle begins.

The most recent addition to the Semester is the **Council Recommendation on Human Capital in the EU**. Presented on 25 November 2025, it urges all the Member States to invest in strategic sectors, including green, digital, and defence, to tackle labour mismatch and skills shortages. In addition, it aims to enhance education and training systems to reduce the amount of young people lacking basic skills. All those actions converge toward

1 Exceptionally, in the 2024 exercise of the European Semester, the European Commission published the Country Specific Recommendations and the Country Reports in June.

strengthening the EU competitiveness. Because of its key role in competitiveness development, the Commission has decided to include it in the Semester for the upcoming years. This is a new process which was first mentioned in the Union of Skills Communication. It remains to be seen if this will be an annual iteration in the European Semester, and how this Recommendation for a Council Recommendation will enter into the negotiation process with the European Parliament and Council of the EU.

Education, training and skills-related issues have become more prominent in the European Semester Country Reports and CSRs in recent years. In February 2020 the EYCS Council adopted a resolution on education and training in the European Semester which highlights the importance of investment in education and training and calls for comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and policies. It also calls for closer involvement of education policymakers in the Semester process.

REVIEW OF FISCAL FRAMEWORK AND THE SOCIAL CONVERGENCE FRAMEWORK

On 30 April 2024, the **new economic governance framework**, established based on the **Commission's proposals** from April 2023, entered into force. It maintained the fiscal rules accepted when the Semester was created (3% public deficit and the 60% public debt benchmark thresholds) but it focused on strengthening Member States' debt sustainability, while promoting growth-enhancing reforms and priority investments.

The reform was meant to simplify the Semester by creating medium-term fiscal structural plans, which replaced former national reform programmes (NRPS) and stability and convergence programmes (SCPS). These documents outline a multi-year net expenditure path, aiming to reduce national debt or maintain it at prudent levels. The structural plans also detail the reforms and public investments that countries intend to adopt to enhance sustainability and growth, addressing key challenges identified within the context of the European Semester. The medium-term fiscal structural plans were also complemented by a **Social Convergence Framework** which enhances the reporting on the monitoring and progress of various social indicators linked to the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The introduction of a "Social Convergence Framework" provides a more structured and deeper analysis of employment and social developments at the national and Union levels within the annual Semester cycle.

ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY GROWTH SURVEY

The annual iteration of the European Semester starts when the Commission adopts its **Annual Sustainable Growth Survey (ASGS)**, usually towards the end of the year, which includes a review of the progress achieved and sets out EU priorities for the coming year to boost growth and job creation. This ASGS had been last reviewed in 2019, to adapt to four dimensions:

- Environmental sustainability,
- Productivity gains,
- Fairness and
- Macroeconomic stability.

EUROPEAN EDUCATION FORUM / SUMMIT

The Education, Training and Youth Forum aimed to bring together various stakeholders to discuss key policy developments linked to the Europe 2020 strategy, the ET2020 strategy and the European Youth strategy. It last took place in 2016, even as LLLP always praised this partnership dialogue between decision-makers, social partners and civil society representatives and called to step it up in a richer, open, more regular and sustainable way to discuss the future of education and training in Europe.

Building on these ideas, in 2018 the Commission hosted the First European Education Summit, focused on laying the foundations of the European Education Area: for an innovative, inclusive and values-based education. The Summit gathers ministers, experts, and teachers from across Europe to exchange experience, insights, and ideas on the future of education in the EU. The summit emphasises the critical role education plays in promoting resilience, fairness and social cohesion. After not being held in 2024, the European Education Summit returned in November 2025 under a new name: **European Education and Skills Summit.** The Summit has expanded its focus, according to the portfolio of the Executive Vice-President Roxana Minzatu, encompassing both the education field and the skills field, which the Commission defines as the adult learning and learning related to the labour market portfolios.

MAIN POLICY INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

KEY COMPETENCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING EUROPEAN REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

The European Reference Framework for **key competencies for lifelong learning** was adopted in 2006 by the Council Conclusion and **revised in 2018**. It is a tool for policy-makers across the EU which identifies the essential skills that people need to lead successful lives in today's world. This framework defines eight key competences and describes the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to each of these. These key competences are all interdependent, and the emphasis in each case is on critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and constructive management of feelings. As of January 2018 the eight key competences are:

- Literacy competence
- Multilingual competence
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
- Digital competence
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence

This is a revision of the 2006 framework where the competences were communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and Cultural awareness and expression.

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has developed reference frameworks for specific key competences in order to provide a more comprehensive description of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they encompass. So far these include **EntreComp**: the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework and **DigiComp**: The European Digital Competence Framework. The development of a framework for the personal, social and learning to learn' competence or **LifeComp** was concluded in 2020, while **GreenComp**: the European sustainability competence framework was launched in 2022. This is not an exhaustive list of the competence frameworks put forward by the Joint Research Centre but it represents some of the main ones.

ACTION PLAN ON BASIC SKILLS

This new initiative, launched under the Union of Skills, was fueled by the most recent PISA and PIAAC results, based on which one in three 15 year olds struggle with mathematics, one in four in reading, and almost half of eight graders underachieve in digital skills. Similar trends arise for adults with only 56% possessing digital skills. Considering the crucial role that a skilled population plays for the other EU objectives linked to competitiveness and social cohesion, the Plan serves as a way to correct the course on this matter. As part of the Union of Skills, the **EU Action Plan on Basic Skills** aims to enhance digital, literacy, numeracy, sciences, and citizenship skills across European countries to bridge basic skills gaps focusing on four key actions:

- Piloting a Basic Skills Support Scheme: Identify and address basic skills deficiencies among young children. The pilot begins in 2026
- Boost basic skills teaching and learning: Innovative teaching approach and reinforcement of individual learning accounts
- Supporting educators: Invest in mentors for teachers, and training in socio-emotional learning and oral communication for educators
- Enabling supportive environments: Increased involvement of immediate and wider community.

The Commission provides detailed targets and monitoring mechanisms. in the document. This initiative builds on the earlier efforts, notably, the **2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults**, the **Council Recommendation on establishing a European Child Guarantee**, and the **Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success**, which all emphasis equitable access to learning opportunities, regardless of your age.

EU STEM EDUCATION STRATEGIC AGENDA

The Union of skills also introduced the **EU STEM Education Strategic Agenda** which is the first comprehensive strategic framework dedicated to STEM. Its creation results from evidence that highlights that there are less students performing in STEM-related fields, which leads to a shortage of qualified STEM graduates; Furthermore, there is an increasing demand for STEM professionals in technology related fields to face the digital and green transitions. The Commission proposes three actions to enhance EU's competitiveness:

- Prioritise STEM education and training by reducing the amount of 15-years-old underperforming in basic skills, and providing more cooperation with social partners, and industries to understand what skills are needed
- Build a strong and more inclusive EU STEM talent pipeline by modernising curricula and implementing innovative teaching methods, in addition to providing tailored learning pathways for adults and students
- Advance women in STEM, and inspire future innovators by addressing gender stereotypes, making the sector more attractive and accessible, and implementing more institutional support through mentorship programs with role models such as the 'Girls go STEM' initiative.

SKILLS PORTABILITY INITIATIVE

Announced as part of the Union of Skills, the Skills Portability Initiative aims to facilitate the movement of workers in Europe by making skills more transparent. Some points covered are the digitalisation of learning credentials, and simplification for recognition of skills of non-EU nationals.

EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

The **European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)** aims to better link different national qualifications systems, acting as a translation device for individuals and employers to better understand qualifications from different EU countries, thus making it easier to work, study or hire staff abroad. Its eight common European reference levels are described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences. This allows any national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and qualifications in Europe to relate to the EQF levels. Learners, graduates, workers, providers and employers can use these levels to understand and compare qualifications awarded in different countries and by different education and training systems. The rapid development of NQFs at national level has set the scene for the development of other initiatives such as the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

EUROPASS

Europass is an EU initiative designed to increase the transparency of qualification and mobility of citizens in Europe. It is generated through the implementation of five documents to make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe. Two of these documents (the curriculum vitae and language passport) are freely accessible, while three of these documents (the **Europass Mobility**, **Europass Certificate Supplement**, and **Europass Diploma Supplement**) are issued by education and training authorities. Europass aims to help citizens communicate their skills and qualifications effectively when looking for a job or training, help employers understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce, and help education and training authorities define and communicate the content of curricula.

In every country of the EU and the European Economic Area, a **National Europass Centre** coordinates all activities related to the Europass documents. It is the first point of contact for any person or organisation interested in using or learning more about Europass.

In 2016, the Commission adopted a **proposal to revise the Europass Decision** with the aim of simplifying and modernising these tools for the digital age and to add a new feature using big data to map and anticipate labour market trends and skills needs. The objective is to ensure the realisation of the tools' full potential and to update them so that they meet ever-shifting requirements (for instance, the increasing role of non-formal skills and digitalisation). The proposal was adopted by EU Member States in April 2018. An Advisory Group, of which the LLLP is a part of, was established with the Member States and stakeholders representatives until 2025. After a series of user-tests, the new Europass platform was launched in July 2020. Because of the expiring mandate of the AG, in June 2025, the Commission launched a call for new members targeting representatives in the education, digital and employment sectors. LLLP participates in the renewed AG, whose first meeting took place in November 2025.

In recent years, the **European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC)** initiative was introduced as part of Europass to provide a secure, standardised and open-source solution to issuing and verifying learning achievements. They can be used for diplomas, micro-credentials, training certificates and other learning records, and can be issued by institutions directly into an individual's Europass account. This allows learners to manage and share their credentials with employers or education providers, ensuring a seamless and trustworthy recognition process across borders.

The **European Learning Model (ELM)** represents a data model which was designed to increase the interoperability and recognition of accreditations and qualifications across the EU The aim is to establish a common language/ vocabulary for learning experiences and outcomes in order to facilitate recognition of qualifications and validation of competences. The model has undergone three versions to finetune the technical format in which courses can be defined to ensure wide-spread European recognition. ELM is developed in line with the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** and the **Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials**.

THE EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ECVET)

The 2009 **Council Recommendation on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)** has set out to create such a system in order to facilitate the documentation of learning units in VET and better learning mobility. In its ten years existence, this Council Recommendation and the principles of ECVET have not been fully implemented. Therefore, the 2020 **Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Justice and Resilience** formally repealed the **ECVET Recommendation** though it chose to maintain the learning tools of ECVET (learning agreement and memorandum of understanding) and its principles of flexibility (units of learning, etc.). For vocational qualifications at post-secondary and tertiary levels, the existing European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) may apply.

THE EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (EQAVET)

EQAVET was adopted by the **European Parliament and the European Council Recommendation in 2009**. The EQAVET Reference framework was designed to help EU Member States develop, improve, guide and assess the quality of their vocational education and training systems. The methodology proposed by EQAVET is based on a cycle consisting of four phases (planning, implementation, assessment and review), quality criteria and indicative descriptors for each phase of the cycle and common indicators for assessing targets, methods, procedures and training results: some indicators are based on statistical data, others are of a qualitative nature.

EQAVET supports the implementation of the **2020 recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience**. The VET Recommendation describes how EQAVET set out a reference framework aimed to improve quality assurance in vocational education but had limited impact on transparency and was mainly applied to school-based training. The new Recommendation integrates EQAVET and addresses gaps in learning outcomes, certification and assessment, stakeholders' consultation, the role of teachers and trainers and work-based learning. It also proposes EU-level peer reviews to enhance mutual learning, consistency, and trust among Member States in quality assurance.

NATIONAL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION INFORMATION CENTRES (NARIC)

NARIC provides information and advice on the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study abroad. It consists of national centres in the countries covered by the Erasmus+ programme and works closely with the wider European Network of Information Centres covering the whole of the European Higher Education Area. It is part of the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme and is aimed at improving the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions.

EUROPEAN SKILLS, COMPETENCES, QUALIFICATIONS AND OCCUPATIONS (ESCO)

ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) is the European multilingual classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. It works as a dictionary, describing, identifying and classifying professional occupations, skills, and qualifications relevant for the EU labour market and education and training and it enables users to exchange CVs and job vacancies stored in different IT systems. The aim of ESCO is to support job mobility across Europe and, therefore, a more integrated and efficient labour market, by offering a "common language" on occupations and skills that can be used by different stakeholders on employment, education and training topics.

In 2022, the ESCO Member States Working Group was launched by DG EMPL to support the Commission, from 2022 to 2025. Its tasks include supporting the implementation of ESCO related projects at national level, and acting as a consultant and bridge between the Commission Member States and the social partners to enhance the use of ESCO. Its mandates ended in 2025, but thanks to the strategic role of the Working Group, the Commission decided to extend its mandate to 2030. Its members include Member States Representatives, and EU stakeholders. LLLP was invited to join the WG in October 2025 for the new mandate.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS

In 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted a **Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs)**, designed to empower people of working age to continuously develop their skills throughout their professional lives, regardless of employment status. ILAs aim to overcome three main barriers to training: motivation, time and funding, by providing personal accounts with training entitlements and access to a registry of opportunities. Member States are encouraged to ensure guidance, clear information, and flexibility in implementation. The initiative is in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights' objective of having 60% of adults participating in training each year by 2030. In 2023, six Member States (BG, FR, HR, IT, PL, RO) participated in a year-long capacity building project to help with implementing ILAs. This continued in 2024 with eight more Member States (CY, EL, LV, LT, SK, MT as well as DE and NL as observers).

MICROCREDENTIALS

In 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted a **Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability** based on a proposal of the European Commission in 2021. It aims to support their development, implementation, and recognition across various sectors. Micro-credentials certify the outcomes of short-term learning experiences, such as courses or training, providing a flexible means of acquiring skills for personal and professional advancement. The Recommendation focuses on ensuring the quality, transparency, and portability of these credentials, facilitating individuals' success in an evolving labour market while promoting an inclusive and equitable transition to green and digital economies.

EUROPE ON THE MOVE

The **Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' – learning mobility opportunities for everyone** was adopted in May 2024. The aim is to broaden access to learning opportunities abroad for learners and staff, including those with fewer opportunities, such as individuals with disabilities. This initiative is a key element of the European Education Area (EEA), with the objective of integrating learning mobility into all education and training pathways, while enhancing the EU's attractiveness as a destination for global talent. The Recommendation outlines the following EU-level targets for 2030:

- 23% of higher education graduates should have participated in a learning mobility experience
- 12% of vocational learners in VET should engage in learning mobility abroad

It also puts up an aspirational target of 20% of all learners benefiting from learning mobility abroad, across all education, training, youth, and sport systems, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. This target can become a fully-fledged EU target based on a new mechanism for collecting data on learners coming from disadvantaged backgrounds which the European Commission needs to develop by 2026.

DIGITAL EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

The **Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027** adopted in 2020 builds on the first **Digital Education Action Plan (2018-2020)**. Its goal is to create a shared vision of high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education across Europe, supporting Member States in adapting to the digital age. The plan's priorities and actions are:

Priority 1: Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem.

- Action 1: Structured Dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills
    - Action 1: Council recommendation on key enablers for digital education and training
- Action 2: Council Recommendation on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education
- Action 3: European Digital Education Content Framework
- Action 4: Connectivity and digital equipment for education and training
- Action 5: Digital transformation plans for education and training institutions
- Action 6: Ethical guidelines on the use of AI and data in teaching and learning for educators

Priority 2: Enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation.

- Action 7: Common guidelines for teachers and educators to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation through education and training
- Action 8: Updating the European Digital Competence Framework to include AI and data-related skills
- Action 9: European Digital Skills Certificate (EDSC)
- Action 10: Council recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training
- Action 11: Cross-national collection of data and an EU-level target on student digital skills
- Action 12: Digital Opportunity Traineeships
- Action 13: Women's participation in STEM

The plan also establishes the **European Digital Education Hub** to enhance cooperation and facilitate the exchange of best practices in digital education across the EU. The DEAP has been undergoing a review process over 2024, taking stock of which activities have been achieved and which are still to be achieved.

SECTORIAL POLICIES

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)

ECEC refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, which may vary across the EU. One of the main initiatives for facilitating this used to be the ET2020 Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care; introduced in 2018, the Working Group has had a broad mandate to work on the achievement of the EU benchmark of 95% of children above 4 years old attending ECEC. It has been reached, globally speaking, but there are still wide differences across countries, regions and areas.

The Working Group focused, among others, on:

- Professionalisation of staff as a key element of creating an attractive, sustainable and competent profession. This covered both initial and continuous professional development, career pathways and opportunities, diversity of staff (e.g. tackling the gender gap, ensuring diversity of ethnic background), as well as working conditions.
- Social inclusion which focuses on promoting broad participation in ECEC, to narrow skill gaps between children of different backgrounds (including children with special needs), improving social cohesion and supporting early language learning of children from newly arrived migrant or minority groups.

In June 2021, the **Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee** (ECG) was published to support children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, targeting children from minorities, experiencing homelessness, and with disabilities, by granting free access to essential services such as:

- Early childhood education and care
- Education, including school-based activities, and at least one healthy meal each school day
- Healthcare
- Healthy nutrition
- Adequate housing

The implementation of the ECG unfolds across three preparatory actions:

- Phase I: Assess the feasibility for groups of children
- Phase II: Explore the costs and benefits
- Phase III: Test how it works in practise, in collaboration with UNICEF

In September 2021, as a continuation of the ET2020 Working Group, a new group was established by DG EAC within the context of the European Education Area strategic framework. The Working Group supports Member States to implement the EU Quality framework for ECEC, a key component of the **2019 Council Recommendation on High-Quality ECEC systems**. The general objective of the Working Group is to promote peer learning based on measuring, monitoring and evaluating quality in ECEC. The mandate of the working group concluded at the end of 2025. A continuation of it will depend on a general decision regarding the EEA Working Groups which will be taken over the course of 2026.

Throughout 2022-2023, the ECEC WG focused on three key topics:

- Purposes and values of monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC;
- Coordinating monitoring and evaluation efforts across levels;
- Involvement of stakeholders, including children and families in monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECEC.

The group published four key outputs focused on monitoring and evaluation, after holding 13 working group meetings and 2 peer learning activities (PLAs), that you can find in the **activity report (2022-2023)**. Additionally, in 2023 the WG also published a policy brief on **Staff shortages in the ECEC sector** and the first WG report of the work cycle 2024-2025 was published in November 2024 on **Leadership in ECEC: an overview of models and practices in Europe.**

MEMBERS OF LLLP IN THE FIELD:

- The European Parents' Association (EPA)
- Learning For Well-being Foundation
- Eurochild

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD:

- European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)
- Aflatoun international
- Association Internationale de Formation et de Recherche en Éducation Familiale (AIFREF)
- Alliance for Childhood
- European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA)
- International Step by Step Association (ISSA)
- QUEST
- COFACE Families Europe
- Save the Children

SCHOOL EDUCATION

School education accounts for the primary and secondary levels in education, though across the EU there are divergences with the inclusion of upper levels of pre-primary education in school education or with slight differences in the age of learners for different levels. Normally, this is the period mandated by law as compulsory education across all EU Member States. In September 2020, the European Commission presented its renewed vision for the European Education Area, highlighting the importance of schools in realising this vision.

The European Union has set clear education targets for 2030, focusing on school education, based on the **Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).** These goals include:

- less than 15% of 15-year-olds to be low-achievers in reading, mathematics and science (basic skills)
- less than 15% of eight-graders to be low-achievers in computer and information literacy
  less than 9% of pupils to leave education and training early

As each country is responsible for education and training systems, EU cooperation provides a valuable opportunity for sharing knowledge and best practices. The European Commission supports national efforts through:

- Gathering, analysing and sharing information and data
- Erasmus+ programme funding
- Online communities for teachers and trainers
- Mutual learning and exchange of best practices
- Establishing a Working Group on Schools for the period 2021-2025

These actions aim to foster collaboration, ensuring a cohesive and inclusive approach to education in the European context. They are supported by a series of initiatives which are described below.

The 2017 **Communication from the Commission on School Development and Excellent Teaching for a Great Start in Life** identifies key challenges facing schools and teaching in the EU, including low competence levels, digital skills gaps, high dropout rates and school education not fully promoting equity and social fairness. The EU aims to support member states in reforming their school systems to face these challenges.

Erasmus+ Teachers Academies, part of the Erasmus+ programme Key Action 2 and managed by the EACEA, foster European partnerships and promote cooperation between teacher education institutions and training providers to offer support to teachers' careers and enhance their competences and well-being at all stages of their careers. They encourage multilingualism, language awareness, mobility and innovative methods, cultural diversity and strong transnational sustainable cooperation among teacher training institutions, contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the EEA. Funding is made available for teacher education institutions and a list of other organisations. In order to be eligible for an Erasmus+ grant, project proposals for Erasmus+ Teacher Academies must comply with the criteria published in the **Erasmus+ Programme Guide**.

The **European Innovative Teacher Award**, launched in 2021 as part of the EEA, is an annual award aiming to highlight outstanding teaching practices within the Erasmus+ programme. It seeks to emphasise the value of European cooperation in education. Four awards are granted in each country participating in the Erasmus+ programme, one for each the following categories: ECEC, Primary education, Secondary education, and VET. The **Erasmus+ National Agencies** are responsible for the selection of winning projects through a direct selection of awardees or publishing an open call. In total, 96 projects from 32 European countries have been recognised.

Blended learning, which combines multiple approaches to education by integrating school-based settings with other physical environments beyond the school, along with both digital (including online learning) and non-digital learning tools, became particularly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis introduced home schooling and distance learning into the lives of numerous pupils, teachers and parents, making these methods a new reality. In 2021, drawing from the lessons learned from the crisis, the **Council adopted a Recommendation on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education**. The Recommendation outlines both immediate measures to address the crisis and long-term strategies to promote blended learning approaches.

The main recent initiative in the school sector remains, nevertheless, the 2022 **Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success**. The Recommendation defined success in school both in terms of academic achievement but also in terms of wellbeing and ensuring the prevention of early leaving from school. It foresaw prevention, intervention and compensation measures that targeted learners directly, but also school leaders, teachers, trainers and other staff, including in ECEC, schools themselves and the system level. The recommendation provided guidelines on

how to collect data on school success, on how to pool various EU resources together to achieve its suggestions, on sharing good practices for school success, and on supporting professional development for educators, among others. The Council Recommendation led to the creation of two guidelines for supporting wellbeing at school: one for **policymakers** and one for **schools**.

The Working Group

As part of the European Education Area strategic framework, a Working Group on Schools has been established for the period 2021-2025. Composed of representatives of national educational authorities and stakeholder organisations active in the field of education, the Working Group offers opportunities for peer learning, sharing of best practices and information, networking and collaboration. It aims to promote better achievements in basic skills and the successful conclusion of education and training pathways by all learners; education for the green transition; enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession.

Its current mandate ended in December 2025, and its continuation will depend on decisions from the European Commission and EU Member States. Based on this, any further developments will be presented in the next editions of the Guidebook.

The Working Group consists of 2 sub-groups:

- The **Pathways to School Success** subgroup supports the implementation and follow-up of the **2022 Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success**. It covers issues concerning improving educational outcomes and achievement in basic skills, as well as promoting mutual learning and exchange of practices on the promotion of a whole-school and whole-system approach. The subgroup aims to tackle underachievement and early leaving from education and training, considering topics such as cross-sectoral cooperation and the roles of of stakeholders, the learning climate, mental health, well-being, and fighting bullying through supporting a positive environment for teaching and learning, especially for groups at risk, and promoting students and teacher well-being at school. Most recently, the subgroup developed a **Roadmap** for the implementation of the 2022 Council Recommendation.

MEMBERS OF LLLP IN THE FIELD:

- European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE)
- European Forum for Freedom in Education (effe)
- European Parents' Association (EPA)
- European School Heads Association (ESHA)
- International Federation of Training Centres for the promotion of new education (FICEMEA)
- Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
- European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools (ECNAIS)
- European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO)
- Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE)
- Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU)
- European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)
- SIRIUS
- SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD:

- European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE)
- European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)
- European Children's Universities Network (EUCUnet)
- European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC)
- European Physical Education Association (EUPEA)
- EcoMedia Europe Network
- European Schoolnet
- GREEEN Network
- Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC)
- COFACE Families Europe
- Education International
- Save the Children
- Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE)
- Indus Center for Academic Excellence (ICAE)
- Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)
- European Disability Forum (EDF)

- The **Learning for Sustainability** subgroup supports the implementation of the **2022 Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development.** Its purpose is to foster mutual learning and the exchange of ideas on sustainability education in schools, with a focus on developing sustainability competences. Members collaborate to explore the vital role of primary and secondary schools in educating and empowering pupils and students for the green transition.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

VET provides learners with essential skills enhancing their employability, supporting their personal development and encouraging active citizenship. VET boosts enterprise performance, competitiveness, research and innovation. It has been a crucial focus of the European Education Area 2021-2030 initiative, and it is set to be central in the upcoming Union of Skills. A European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training is scheduled to be developed by the new European Commission, but this edition of the Guidebook will only take into consideration existing initiatives.

In 2020 the Council of the EU adopted a **Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Justice and Resilience**. The Recommendation emphasises the importance of keeping VET responsive to labour market demands by ensuring it can adapt swiftly and aims to provide high-quality learning opportunities for both young people and adults, focusing on increased flexibility, strengthened quality assurance and expanded options for work-based learning and apprenticeships.

It further advises Member States to take actions to implement this policy at national level, together with social partners and other relevant stakeholders, to develop and implement VET policies that equip young people and adults with skills, knowledge and competences to adapt to the evolving labour market and societal needs, support recovery, and enable green and digital transitions. These policies should also promote inclusiveness, equal opportunities, resilience and social fairness for all. By 2025, the following EU-level objectives have been set:

- The employment rate for VET graduates should reach at least 82%.
- 60% of VET recent graduates should gain work-based learning experience, including apprenticeships supported by the Youth Guarantee.
- 8% of VET learners should engage in learning mobility abroad.

In September 2025, Ministers responsible for VET from all EU Member States, EU Candidate Countries and EEA countries, the European Commission, and the European Social Partners, endorsed the **Herning Declaration on attractive and inclusive Vocational Education and Training**. Expanding the legacy of the **Osnabrück Declaration**, it presents policy priorities in VET aiming at enhancing competitiveness and job quality between 2026 and 2030.

The document complements and implements the vision and strategic objectives outlined in the Council Recommendation explained above. It carries on the effort to strengthen European cooperation in VET agreed in the **Copenhagen Declaration (2002)** and reaffirmed in the **Communiqués of Maastricht (2004)**, **Helsinki (2006)**, **Bordeaux (2008)**, **Bruges (2010)** and the **Riga conclusions (2015)**.

The Commission's work on vocational education and training is supported by: two agencies: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), which provides information and analysis of education and training systems, policies, research and practice in the EU and the European Training Foundation (ETF), which works to develop education and training systems in the Western Balkans, neighbouring countries and Central Asia.

The European Commission is also actively supporting the establishment of **Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)**. CoVEs support entrepreneurial initiatives and act as knowledge and innovation hubs for companies, in particular SMEs. The aim is to improve VET quality by ensuring high-quality skills that respond to the needs of an innovative, sustainable economy, particularly in the context of the green and digital transitions. CoVEs support regional development, innovation, and social inclusion, while collaborating internationally to foster business growth and entrepreneurship. They operate in skills ecosystems, encouraging collaboration and aims for long-term sustainability through strong partnerships and effective governance. They are effectively public-private partnerships that bring together VET providers, labour market stakeholders and the wider regional community around projects to improve the quality of VET provision.

As part of the European Education Area 2021-2030, a **Working Group on VET and the green transition** has been formed to promote mutual learning and the exchange of best practices among Member States. The Working Group's main objective is to facilitate technical exchanges that assist Member States in implementing the principles and objectives of the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) and the Osnabrück Declaration.

MEMBERS OF LLLP IN THE FIELD:

- European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET)
- European Vocational Training Association (EVTA)
- European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB)
- European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)
- The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
- European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL)
- Foundation of European Regions for Research in Education and Training (FREREF)
- Cités des Métiers International Network
- EURASHE
- european continuity university education network (eucen)

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD:

- European Providers of Vocational Education and Training (EUproVET)
- European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE)
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
- Don Bosco Technical Institute
- Education International
- International Society for Engineering Pedagogy (IGIP)

HIGHER EDUCATION

The EU is cooperating with higher education institutions and Member States to develop a genuinely European dimension in the higher education sector, built on shared values, with excellence and inclusion as distinctive features. This is seen as crucial in the context of Europe being home to close to 4500 higher education institutions, 18.8 million tertiary education students, 1.49 million people teaching in tertiary education[2] and 2.15 million researchers[3], an increase of more than 45% since 2013. Universities have a unique position at the crossroads of education, research, innovation, serving society and economy: they play a critical role in achieving the European Education Area (EEA) and the **European Research Area (ERA)**, in synergy with the **European Higher Education Area**.

Much of the current work at EU level in this sector, which will be detailed below, owes its success to the **Bologna Process**. This was launched with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, establishing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Its goal is to promote student and staff mobility, enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of higher education, boost the global appeal and competitiveness of European higher education, enhance the quality and recognition of European higher education systems and improve conditions for exchange and collaboration within Europe and internationally. It is one of the main voluntary processes at European level, as it is nowadays implemented in 49 States. In the past two decades, the Bologna Process has established goals for reform in the participating countries, such as the three-

2 Eurostat (2022) Tertiary education statistics
3 Eurostat (2023) R&D personnel

cycle higher education system consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies, ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad completed at other universities and implement a system of quality assurance, to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning and teaching.

In January 2022 the European Commission published the **Communication on a European strategy for universities**, alongside a proposal for a **Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation**. The European strategy for universities aims to help universities adapt to changing conditions, contribute to Europe's resilience and recovery and strengthen transnational cooperation. It emphasises excellence and inclusion as key features of European higher education. A crucial part to achieve higher education cooperation was foreseen through the Erasmus+ funded European University Alliances. These were piloted as of 2019, and, in 2024, their total number reached to 65 alliances with more than 570 higher education institutions **from all across Europe** being involved. The Alliances represent projects through which higher education institutions across Europe partner up, develop a joint strategy which they then implement by means of joint management and governance structures. This also leads to the capacity of learners to obtain a degree by combining studies in several European countries. This also accounts for inter-university campuses to allow learners to seamlessly access their student rights while being mobile across multiple universities. A **report on the impact of European University Alliances** has been launched in January 2025.

Similar to the other sectors, a target has also been set for higher education. The European target based on the **Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)** is that, by 2030, at least 45% of 25-34 year-olds obtain tertiary level attainment.

In 2024, the European Commission published and adopted a Higher Education package **Communication**. As part of the package, the Commission published two Proposals for Council Recommendations **on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System in Higher Education** and **on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education**. The package also contained a **Communication on a Blueprint for a European Degree**. All are regarded as tools to facilitate a truly cohesive EHEA, where learners have the opportunity to truly benefit from learning mobility and transnational cooperation. The **Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education** has been adopted in November 2024, while the rest of the higher education package is still pending on account of the EU Member States expressing doubts to the nature of the European Degree. The discussions on these latest initiatives will continue into the new European Commission mandate.

Additional tools in this sector are the **European Student Card Initiative**, the **Erasmus+ app** and the **Erasmus Without Papers** (EWP). The Card provides a smooth recognition of the students status, especially during learning mobility, simplifying such certification procedures from the side of higher education institutions. The App provides all needed information for planning a learning mobility and while ongoing the mobility. EWP provides a digital platform for European universities part of the Erasmus+ programme to exchange information among them around learning mobility.

Under the European Education Area strategic framework, a new **Working Group** on higher education has been established for the period 2021-2025. The Working Group reunites representatives of EU Member States with stakeholders in the higher education sector. They tackle European higher education initiatives at a technical level, and strengthen collaboration between education, research, and innovation missions of higher education institutions.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD:

- Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
- Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN)
- European University Association (EUA)
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
- European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning (EAPRIL)
- SGroup - Universities in Europe
- Coimbra Group
- European Teacher Education Network (ETEN)
- European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)
- European Children's Universities Network (EUCUnet)
- European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC)
- Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA)
- CESAER
- Consortium Linking Universities of Science and Technology for Education and Research (CLUSTER)
- Compostela Universities
- European Network of Cooperative and Work Integrated Higher Education (CWIHE)
- European Association for International Education (EAIE)
- European University Sports Association (EUSA)
- Education International
- European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI)
- European Educational Research Association (EERA)
- European Fusion Education Network (FuseNet)
- European Society for Engineering Education (SEFI)
- Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)
- International Society for Engineering Pedagogy (IGIP)
- European Disability Forum (EDF)
- European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH)

MEMBERS OF LLLP IN THE FIELD:

- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
- European University Foundation (EUF)
- European Students' Forum (AEGEE Europe)
- European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN)
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
- European Students Union (ESU)
- european continuity university education network (eucen)
- European University College Association (EucA)
- Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED)
- Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE)

ADULT LEARNING

Adult learning is approached under the European Education Area initiative as taking place in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments. The most recent overarching perspective of the sector has been the 2021 **Council Resolution on a New European Agenda for Adult Learning (NEAAL) 2021-2030**. The Resolution recognises the essential nature of ensuring that adults are continuously engaged in learning given the changing nature of our societies, as well as the fact that the current numbers of adults participating in education and training are low. To this end, the Agenda sets ambitious targets:

- 47% of adults aged 25-64 should participate in learning by 2025
- 60% of adults should participate in learning by 2030

The Agenda outlines a vision of how adult learning should develop in Europe by 2030 in five main priority areas:

1. Strengthening partnerships among key stakeholders to ensure effective governance.
2. Expanding lifelong learning opportunities tailored to individual needs.
3. Enhancing accessibility and flexibility to accommodate adult learners' responsibilities.
4. Promoting equity and inclusion by removing barriers for disadvantaged groups.
5. Supporting green and digital transitions through the development of new and necessary green and digital skills to work and live in a digital environment and to adapt to the ever-changing labour market.

Under the European Education Area strategic framework, a new working group of Member State experts on adult learning has been established for the period 2021-2025. The working group supports Member States in implementing the EU's vision for a European Education Area and the objectives, priorities and principles outlined in the European Skills Agenda, the EPSR and the NEAAL 2030. It also addresses the implementation of the 2**016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults** and other related initiatives which are not solely limited to the adult education sector, such as Individual Learning Accounts, Micro-Credentials and VET initiatives.

MEMBERS OF LLLP IN THE FIELD:

- European association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
- european continuity university education network (eucen)
- SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation
- International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)
- The International Language Association (ICC)
- All Digital
- Volonteurope Network
- Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE)
- Réseau International des Cités des Métiers
- The European Basic Skills Network (EBSN)

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD:

- European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI)
- European Lifelong Learning Magazine (ELM)
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
- Make Mothers Matter
- International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE)
- Culture Action Europe
- Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)
- European Disability Forum (EDF)
- Association Internationale de Formation et de Recherche en Éducation Familiale (AIFREF)

NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

The value of skilled and knowledgeable citizens in Europe goes beyond formal education, encompassing learning gained through non-formal and informal means. To support career growth and further education, countries must implement systems to identify, document, assess, and validate all forms of learning.

The 2012 **Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning**, calls on Member States to support individuals in recognising learning gained outside formal education and training, including through mobility experiences, and applying it to their careers and further education. Similarly, In the Bruges Communiqué of December 2010, the European Commission declared that countries should start to develop national procedures for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, supported by national qualifications frameworks.

Cedefop, in cooperation with the European Commission, developed the 2023 **European guidelines on validation**, seeking to clarify the conditions for developing and implementing validation. Additionally, Eurydice's 2023 report on **Validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education in Europe**, explores how higher education systems across Europe acknowledge and validate learning outcomes from non-formal and informal contexts.

MEMBERS OF LLLP IN THE FIELD:

- Fédération internationale des CEMÉA (FICEMÉA)
- SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation
- Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE)
- European Network for Education and Training (EUNET)
- Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)
- European Educational Exchanges - Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU)
- Volonteurope Network
- International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation (IYMF)

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD:

- European Movement International (EMI)
- European Organisation for Grassroots Sport (ENGSO)
- European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)
- European Democratic Education Community (EDEC)
- European Food Information Council (EUFIC)
- European Youth Forum (YFJ)
- Bantani Education
- European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC)
- Eurodesk
- European University Sports Association (EUSA)
- Junior Achievement Europe (JAE)
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGS)
- Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)
- Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)
- Public Libraries 2030
- garagErasmus (gE)
- Culture Action Europe
- International Association For Intercultural Education (IAIE)
- European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

EU FUNDING

EU funding programmes are key policy implementation instruments. EU funds, managed mostly by the European Commission, can be granted to public or nongovernmental organisations. The funds are intended to aid the implementation of EU policies or to further pursue EU interests in specific policy areas. The funds are especially important in areas where the EU lacks formal competence, such as education and training.

The funding for each programme is allocated within the framework of the long-term EU budget or the EU **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** which runs in a seven year cycle. **The current MFF** covers the period from 2021-2027. Under the MFF, EU funding is geared towards new and reinforced priorities across the EU's policy areas, including the green and digital transitions.

ERASMUS+

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It aims to boost skills and employability and to modernise Education, Training, and Youth work. The 2021-2027 programme, which places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life, has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion. This is nearly double the funding compared to its predecessor programme (2014-2020). During these years, the number of participating citizens is expected to rise to 12 million, which compared to the number of participating citizens of the previous years of 2014-2020 will be tripled. The current pace is on track to reach 12 million, which compared to the number of participating citizens of the previous years of 2014-2020 will be tripled. The current pace is on track to reach 12 million participants by 2027, with 3.3 million already reached by 2023.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Erasmus+ Programme foresees the implementation of the following Actions in the 2021-2027 period:

- **Key Action 1 -** Learning mobility of individuals supporting mobility of learners and staff, joint master degrees and the master student loan guarantee. The actions supported under this Key Action are expected to bring positive and long-lasting effects on the participants and participating organisations involved, as well as on the policy systems in which such activities are framed;
- **Key Action 2 -** Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices supporting strategic partnerships, sector skills alliances and knowledge alliances. as well as capacity building projects and IT sectoral platforms. This Key Action is expected to result in the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European levels;
- **Key Action 3 -** Support for policy reforms encouraging stakeholders' participation, evidence based policy-making, the Open method of Coordination and prospective initiatives from public authorities.

These actions are managed partly at the national level by **Erasmus+ National Agencies** and partly at the European level

by the EACEA. The European Commission is responsible for Erasmus+ policies and oversees the overall programme. Erasmus+ provides grants for activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. It offers opportunities for:

- individuals to spend a mobility or volunteering period abroad and to receive linguistic training,
- organisations to collaborate in project partnerships in the fields of academic and vocational training, schools, adult learning and European sport events

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PLUS

The **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** is the European Union's primary tool for investing in people. With a budget of €142.7 billion for the 2021-2027 period, the ESF+ will maintain its significant role in supporting the EU's employment, social, education, and skills policies, helping to reduce social and economic disparities between Member States and regions. The ESF+ offers a variety of key benefits:

- **Green and digital transitions:** €65 billion invested in jobs and skills by the EU.
- **Youth employment:** Member States will invest at least 12.5% of their ESF+ resources for youth in NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training).
- **Support for vulnerable groups:** At least 25% for social inclusion measures.
- **Food and material assistance:** At least 3% of resources used by Member States to assist the most deprived.
- **Social innovation:** Investment in social innovation in employment, education, skills, and inclusion.
- **Capacity building:** At least 0.25% of the Member States' ESF+ resources for enhancing social partners and civil society

CITIZENS, EQUALITY, RIGHTS AND VALUES PROGRAMME (CERV)

The **CERV programme**, launched in 2021, was created along with the 2021-2027 **Justice programme** under the Justice, Rights and Values Fund, and is the result of the merger of the "Europe for Citizens" and "Equality, Rights and Citizenship" programmes. With a budget of €1,166.7 million, CERV aims to protect and promote EU rights and values as outlined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, particularly by supporting civil society organisations at local, regional, national and transnational level. It seeks to foster open, democratic, and inclusive societies based on the rule of law, empowering civil society and encouraging democratic participation while embracing the diversity of European society rooted in shared values and history.

The CERV programme has four main pillars:

- Equality, Rights and Gender Equality - promoting equality and non-discrimination, including gender equality, and advancing gender and non-discrimination mainstreaming
- Citizens' engagement and participation - promoting and engaging citizens' participation in the democratic life of the Union
- Daphne - fight violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children
- Union values - protect and promote fundamental rights and values of the Union

CREATIVE EUROPE

The **Creative Europe programme 2021-2027** has a budget of €2.44 billion, compared to €1.47 billion of the previous programme (2014-2020). Creative Europe invests in actions that reinforce cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors.

The main objectives of the programme are to:

- safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage
- increase the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audio-visual sector

The programme aims to support the cultural and creative sectors to become more inclusive, more digital and environmentally more sustainable. The creative Europe programme is divided in 3 strands: Culture, Media and Cross-Sectoral.

HORIZON EUROPE

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. The indicative funding amount for Horizon Europe for the period 2021-2027 is €93.5 billion. The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges.

Horizon Europe consists of three pillars:

1. Excellent Science: Supports researcher-driven projects and fellowships through the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.
2. Global Challenges & Industrial Competitiveness: Focuses on research for societal challenges like health and climate, with support from the Joint Research Centre.
3. Innovative Europe: Aims to boost market-creating innovation, with funding from the European Innovation Council and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

New elements in Horizon Europe compared to its predecessor programme include:

- **The European Innovation Council:** Support for innovations with potential breakthrough and disruptive nature with scale-up potential that may be too risky for private investors. 70% of its budget is earmarked for SMEs.
- **Missions:** Sets of measures to achieve bold, inspirational and measurable goals within a set timeframe. There are 5 main mission areas as part of Horizon Europe: A Climate Resilient Europe, Conquering Cancer, Restore our Ocean and Waters, 100 Climate-Neutral Cities and healthy soils for food.
- **Open science policy**: Mandatory open access to publications and open science principles are applied throughout the programme
- **New approach to partnerships:** Objective-driven and more ambitious partnerships with industry in support of EU policy objectives

EUROPEAN NGOs MEMBERS OF LLLP

AEGEE - European Students' Forum

AEGEE is one of Europe's biggest interdisciplinary student organisations. As a non-governmental, politically independent, and non-profit organisation AEGEE is open to students and young people from all faculties and disciplines. Founded in 1985 in Paris, today AEGEE has grown to a network of 13000 AEGEEans, present in 161 cities in 40 countries all over Europe.

ALL DIGITAL Europe

All Digital (previously known as Telecentre Europe) is a leading pan-European association based in Brussels. It is dedicated to supporting Europeans with insufficient digital skills and represents member organisations across Europe that work with 25,000 digital competence centres.

ATEE - Association for Teachers' Education in Europe

The Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) is a non-profit European organisation, whose aim is enhancing the quality of Teacher Education in Europe and supporting the professional development of teachers and teacher educators at all levels.

DARE - Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe

The Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE) Network is a Europe-wide network of primarily NGOs, academic institutions and training providers devoted to promoting active democratic citizenship and human rights through formal education, non-formal and informal education, and life-long learning.

Diesis Network

Diesis Network is one of the widest networks specialised in supporting the development of the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social innovation covering 60+ member organisations in 30+ countries representing over 100 000 organisations and 1.3 million jobs through major national federations and support networks.

DLEARN - European Digital Learning Network

The European Digital Learning Network – DLEARN – is a no-profit association. It aims to embrace the challenges brought by the digital transformation in terms of digital skills mismatch and digital learning opportunities.

EAEA - European Association for the Education of Adults

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non- formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 120 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.

EBSN - The European Basic Skills Network (EBSN)

EBSN is a European non-profit association aiming at promoting the effective policy development in the field of adult basic skills through cooperation and effective multi-stakeholder cooperation. Its core mission is to ensure lifelong learning, social inclusion and employability by enhancing essential skills, including numeracy, digital, literacy and transversal skills.

ECNAIS - European Council of National Association of Independent Schools

ECNAIS is a non-political, non-confessional, international association for collaboration between national associations of independent schools in European countries. ECNAIS supports and pursues the value of civil society initiatives in education as a way to promote a democratic approach to pluralism and to respect parental choice and the freedom of education.

ECSWE - European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education

The European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education is an international non-profit organisation (AISBL). It consists of 27 national Steiner Waldorf school associations, representing 802 Steiner Waldorf schools across 28 European countries. ECSWE's mission is to support authentic Steiner Waldorf education and to advocate for freedom in education across Europe.

EEE-YFU - European Educational Exchanges - Youth for Understanding

EEE-YFU is an international non-profit organisation under Belgian law (AISBL) and the umbrella organisation of Youth For Understanding (YFU) in Europe. EEE-YFU supports its 28 European Member Organisations to have a strong impact in youth exchanges and intercultural education and be a visible and growing community.

EFFE - European Forum for Freedom in Education

The European Forum for Freedom in Education (effe) is a non-governmental organisation working in the field of general education. effe is based in Germany and connects people all over Europe who want to shape the future of education.

EFIL - European Federation for Intercultural Learning

EFIL is an international, non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary-led organisation representing a membership of national non-profit organisations and associations that contributes to peace and justice by stimulating an awareness of mankind's common humanity and by encouraging a wider understanding of the diverse social, cultural and physical environment which make up world society.

EfVET - European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

EfVET is a leading European-wide professional association, representing over 1500 VET Institutions in Europe. EfVET mission is to enhance VET provision across all members through an active networking of all the key actors. To create the capacity to influence policy at European and National level.

EMDR Europe

EMDR Europe is the official professional association of National EMDR Associations, establishing, maintaining and promoting the highest standards of excellence and integrity in EMDR therapy practice, research and education throughout Europe. Its mission is to improve through EMDR therapy the lives of people affected by trauma and mental illness related to stressful experiences and relationships.

EPA - European Parents' Association

EPA gathers the parents associations in Europe which together represent more than 150 million parents. In the field of education, EPA aims to promote the active participation of parents and the recognition of their central place as the primary responsible of the education of their children.

ESHA - European School Heads Association

ESHA, the European School Heads Association, is a professional organisation for European School Heads. Members of ESHA are national organisations for school heads and deputy school heads within (pre-)primary, secondary and vocational education. Nearly all European countries (both EU and non-EU) are represented within ESHA by one or more organisations.

ESN - Erasmus Student Network

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is a non-profit international student organisation, present in more than 1000 Higher Education Institutions from over 40 countries. ESN's mission is the enrichment of society through international students and works for the creation of a more mobile and flexible education environment by supporting and developing the student exchange from different levels and providing an intercultural experience also to those students who cannot access a period abroad.

ESU - European Students' Union

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 44 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries and represents over 20 million students. ESU's mission is to represent, defend and strengthen students' educational, democratic and political and social rights. ESU will work for sustainable, accessible and high quality higher education in Europe.

EucA - European university college Association

The European university college Association was founded in 2008 to bring together and represent University Colleges and networks of Colleges in Europe. The aim was to exchange experiences and best practices, facilitating the students with new international opportunities.

eucen - european continuity university education network

eucen is the largest multidisciplinary European association of university lifelong learning (ULLL) and university continuing education. It aims to inspire University Lifelong Learning through the development and dissemination of cutting edge practice and research among our members in order to create transformational and equitable impact that contributes to sustainable development.

EUF - European University Foundation

The European University Foundation is a network of universities committed to bring about a modern, strong and competitive European Higher Education Area. The EUF is also an influential advocate for a substantial increase of the quantity and quality of student mobility, regularly putting forward new ideas, policies and recommendations.

European network for Education and Training

The "European Network for Education and Training e.V.", shortly EUNET, is a network for European educational-facilities. The network consists of Non-Governmental-Organisations that inform, educate or in any other way spreads the European Idea to youth and adults.

EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

EURASHE, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, has as its mission the strengthening of the impact of innovative, high-quality professional higher education and related user-oriented research across Europe, by representing professional higher education institutions and facilitating their multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue.

Eurochild

Eurochild is the leading network of organisations and individuals working WITH and FOR children in Europe. Eurochild aims to bring about positive changes in the lives of children, in particular those affected by poverty and disadvantage. Their network gathers 224 members in 42 countries.

EuroClio - European Association of History Educators

EuroClio was established in 1992 with the support of the Council of Europe. Its mission is to inspire and support educators to engage learners in innovative and responsible history and citizenship education.

EVBB - European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training

The European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB) is the European umbrella association of free and non-profit educational providers. Its objective lies in the qualitative improvement of vocational education and training, not only in Europe but also beyond its borders. Currently there are 600 educational institutions from 72 countries.

EVTA - European Vocational Training Association

The European Vocational Training Association – EVTA, is a leading European network in the field of Vocational Education and Training, representing VET providers across Europe. EVTA works to facilitate the relationship between stakeholders in the field of VET, in order to enable them to share knowledge and practices on how to shape the training for the future.

FEDEC - European Federation of Professional Circus Schools

Founded in 1998, FEDEC is a European and international network for professional circus education with 83 members located in 34 countries in Europe and beyond. FEDEC's main vocation is to support the development and evolution of training, teaching and creation in the field of circus arts education.

FEDE - Federation for European Education

FEDE gathers more than 400 private higher education and vocational training establishments in 39 countries mainly in Europe. It is an International INGO specialised in education driving force in the creation of a common area of higher education on an international scale and it promotes a model of progress for education.

FICEMEA - International Federation of Centers for Training in Active Education Methods

FICEMEA gathers 42 organisations present in Europe, South America, Africa and the Indian Ocean. For the last sixty years, the Federation has been working to promote active education working towards change in social and educational practices.

FREREF - Foundation of European Regions for Research in Education and Training

FREREF was created in 1991 as an initiative of several European Regions. The network currently gathers about thirty Regions and Regional bodies and organisms acting in the area of lifelong learning.

ICC - The International Language Association

The International Language Association (ICC) gathers professionals from all areas of language education and intercultural communication promoting excellence in the teaching and learning of languages by defining professional standards and disseminating these standards and practice to the widest possible public.

ISCA - International Sport and Culture Association

ISCA, the International Sport and Culture Association, is a democratic, non-governmental and not-for-profit umbrella association inspiring people around the world to be more active for their health and wellbeing, aiming at keeping grassroots sport high on the political agenda and influencing policy-making, as well as stimulating an exchange of knowledge and best practices. Their 260 members span across five continents.

IYMF-International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation

IYMF is an international foundation, created in 1991, that aims to empower populations through arts. It achieves its objectives by supporting the implementation and the coordination of socio-cultural projects and programs.

L4WB-F - Learning for Well-Being Foundation

The Learning for Well-being Foundation is a non-profit organisation, established in 2004, envisioning a world where every child can fulfil their unique potential. Its work focuses on combining human and social development, implementing programmes that explore inner diversity and cultivate core capacities with the aim of creating social change.

OBESSU - Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions

OBESSU is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin and brings together Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe.

Réseau International des Cités des métiers

A Cité des Métiers is a place managed in partnership by different stakeholder organisations, open to anyone in search of information to build one's professional future, according to principles of open access, and free of charge and anonymous use. Its mission is to direct users to all the resources allowing them to formulate and achieve their career aims and to guide and support them in their choices. The International Network of Cités des Métiers federates today 26 spaces labelled Cités des Métiers in 7 different countries and 3 continents.

SIRIUS

SIRIUS is the international leading Policy Network on Migrant Education. Its vision is a world where the universal right to education is fully implemented and discrimination at all levels of the educational system is eradicated, striving for pupils from a migrant background to achieve the same educational standards as their native peers.

SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation

SOLIDAR is a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide with over 50 member organisations are based in 26 countries (19 of which are EU countries) and include national CSOs in Europe and abroad. SOLIDAR organises its work for lifelong and life-wide learning through the SOLIDAR Foundation for progressive education and citizenry participation. The network is brought together by its shared values of solidarity, equality and participation.

UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union

UNIMED, the Mediterranean Universities Union, founded in October 1991, is an association of Universities from Mediterranean basin countries. It counts with more than 150 members coming from all over the Mediterranean Region and beyond. UNIMED's mission is to facilitate international academic and research cooperation in order to enhance the scientific, cultural, social, and economic development of the region.

Volonteurope

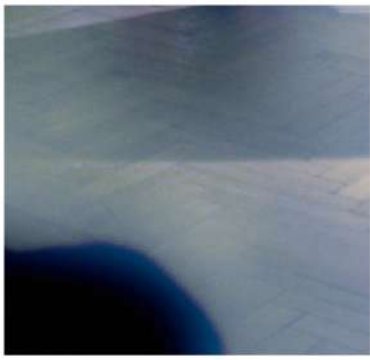
Volonteurope is an international network working to achieve more social justice in Europe and beyond, through active citizenship and volunteering, to foster civic engagement, social action and volunteering, as a way to build inclusive, tolerant, diverse and resilient communities.

WOSM - World Organisation of the Scout Movement

The Scout Movement is a voluntary non-political educational movement for young people, open to all without distinction of gender, origin, race or creed. Scouting offers young people the opportunity to develop their full emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible global citizens, and as members of their local, national and international

YEU - Youth for Exchange and Understanding

YEU is an international youth led organisation working on mainstreaming youth issues in society by encouraging development of young people's competences by using non-formal education and youth work as tools. With members from over 30 countries across Europe and Africa, YEU aims to promote peace, understanding, and co-operation among young people worldwide, respecting human rights.



LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

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