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## OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3388th Council meeting

### Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Brussels, 18 and 19 May 2015

Presidents      **Māriņe Seile**  
Minister for Education and Science  
**Dace Melbārde**  
Minister for Culture

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- <sup>1</sup>
- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
  - Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

EDUCATION

**ET 2020 mid-term stocktaking**

Ministers expressed their views on the achievements of **European cooperation in education and training** to date and how and in which direction it should develop. The debate took place in the context of the mid-term stocktaking and the 2015 Joint Report, which is due for publication this summer.

ET 2020 is the key European-level framework that helps member states to modernise their education and training systems, thus contributing to the overall political priorities set under the Europe 2020 strategy. The ET 2020 strategic framework was adopted in May 2009 ([OJ C 119, 28.5.2009](#)) and established four broad long-term objectives which European cooperation in education and training should seek to achieve by the end of this decade.

The Commission considered that the ET2020 framework needs to become more operational and focused. One of its main priorities should be to improve basic skills and competences, as well as digital literacy, in a lifelong learning perspective.

The main outcomes of the ministerial debate were the following:

- ET 2020 strategic objectives remain relevant but the current priority areas should be streamlined focusing on a few headline priorities with clear European added value, while also increasing the efficiency of working methods;
- The ET 2020 work cycle should be extended from three to five years, thus enabling better synchronisation between the objectives of ET 2020 and the broader EU 2020 strategy for jobs and growth and at the same time reducing the reporting burden on member states;
- in the follow-up to the back to back meeting of EPSCO and Education ministers in December 2014, cooperation and closer synergy between the education and training sector and the employment policy sector should be pursued and strengthened, thereby acknowledging the role of quality education in promoting employability and competitiveness;

- more efficient use should be made of available EU financial instruments, such as Erasmus+ and the Youth Guarantee, as well as the recently proposed Investment Plan for Europe, which emphasises the need to swiftly increase the volume of investments in certain key policy areas, including education and training, by attracting private capital towards strategic projects;
- vocational education and training must be developed in parallel with formal education, as is already the case in some member states, and the exchange of best practices should be conducted on a regular basis:
- though important, education cannot only be limited to finding a job. It should also promote personal development, critical thinking and active citizenship, focusing on European common values. In this context, ministers stressed the importance of ensuring concrete follow-up to the declaration they adopted at their informal meeting in Paris in March on education for citizenship and ways of countering radicalisation.

The Commission concluded that main priorities to be developed in the post-2015 ET 2020 should be promoting inclusive education and active citizenship, increasing youth employability, and encouraging the exchange of best practices,

### **The role of early childhood education and primary education**

The Council adopted conclusions on the **role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence** ([8397/15](#)).

The conclusions examine ways and means of ensuring that today's young people are equipped with the skills needed to meet the challenges of an increasingly digital economy and society.

They also emphasise the part which creativity, innovation and digital resources can play in the learning process itself, as well as the importance of ensuring that teachers are suitably trained and schools adequately prepared for this task.

**Other business**

- ***Paris declaration: Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education***

The Council took note of information from the Presidency, the French delegation and the Commission on the follow-up to the informal meeting of EU education ministers on 17 March 2015 in Paris (8496/15).

The meeting was organised by the French delegation - supported by the Latvian Presidency and the Commission - in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris in January this year. It brought together all the member states - 26 at ministerial level - and adopted a declaration calling for the education sector to play its part in preventing radicalisation by promoting citizenship and fostering social inclusion, and common European values such as tolerance and mutual respect.

The French minister stressed again that employability must be promoted in parallel with citizenship education. She also suggested that the Horizon 2020 programme could support research on the reasons that lead to radicalisation among young people and called for the regular exchange of best practices on this topic.

The Commission stated that preventing radicalisation was a strong priority, which explains why the recently published European Agenda on Security ([8293/15](#)), gives such a large place to the role of education. Furthermore, EU instruments such as ET 2020, and Erasmus + can also be used in this field,.

The Commission considered that any measures taken should reach down to grassroots level and signalled that a number of projects are already being implemented. It announced that the Commission will present a specific initiative in this area in the context of the 2016 Erasmus + work programme .

Member states briefly indicated some of the programmes and measures under way at national level to promote inclusion and fight radicalisation. Ministers also underlined that concrete actions at both national and European level should seek to involve sports clubs, NGOs, youth associations, parents and families, as well as develop specific teacher training programmes aimed at preventing radicalisation.

– ***Work programme of the incoming presidency***

The Council took note of information from the Luxembourg delegation concerning its main priorities in the education field for the coming six months.

- Develop linguistic diversity at both formal and non-formal level
- Improve early childhood facilities
- Increase access to tertiary education
- Promote inclusive education

**YOUTH**

**Structured dialogue**

Before starting with the formal items on the agenda, the Presidency briefly outlined the main outcome of the informal meeting with representatives from youth organizations which took place before the Council meeting in the morning.

The youth representatives acknowledged in particular the value of the “structured dialogue” and of a cross-sectoral approach, called for an effective implementation of the rights of young people, the recognition of the value of youth work, further measures to combat youth unemployment, in particular through increased implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

The "structured dialogue" is an important tool to promote the participation of young people in the decision-making process in the EU. It serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field.

**Cross-sectorial policy cooperation**

The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing **cross-sectorial policy cooperation to effectively address the socio-economic challenges facing young people** ([7863/15](#)). Cross-sectorial policy cooperation is also one of the three main priorities set out in the recently adopted EU Work Plan for Youth 2014-2015 ([OJ C 183/02, 14.6.2014](#)).

Although significant steps have been taken to improve the situation of young people in Europe, youth unemployment rates remain high with increasing numbers of long term unemployed and demotivated young workers who have a higher risk of social exclusion. There is still a skills gap between education and the world of work and the transition from school to work is often difficult.

The conclusions consider strategies to strengthen the cross-sectorial approach to youth issues so that policy-makers can react more effectively and promptly to problems, making the best use of all available EU funding and programmes in this field, such as the Youth Guarantee and Erasmus+.

They also underline that certain core elements of the youth sector (youth work, non-formal learning) could be integrated into other sectors (education, employment, social policy and health) and could play a crucial role in addressing the main socio-economic problems of young people in the EU.

The Commission said that the forthcoming Youth Report (scheduled for early Autumn) will be an important tool to assess youth policy to date and will also show that the cross-sectorial approach is already bringing results. The report will also include a list of member states best practices in this field.

### **Youth work**

The Council adopted conclusions on **reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies** ([8407/15](#)), which highlight the contribution of youth work to personal development, social inclusion, cultural diversity and active citizenship.

The conclusions also underline that these values are at the core of European democracies and should also be promoted and supported outside the formal education structures.

There are estimated to be around 3 million youth workers (both voluntary and paid) in the EU, often neither recognised nor regulated by any kind of framework.

A number of member states were in favour of the Commission presenting a proposal for a Council recommendation, which would strengthen the recognition of youth work, addressing the persistently high level of youth unemployment and its negative consequences in terms of social exclusion, marginalisation, extremism and potentially radicalisation.

Many ministers underlined that youth work plays an important role in reaching out to all young people of different backgrounds, including marginalised young people and those not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

The Commission is examining this issue at several levels and is preparing a study on quality youth work.

### **Political participation of young people**

Ministers discussed how to improve **young people's political participation in the democratic life of Europe**. This is one of the overall thematic priorities of the trio presidencies in the framework of the "structured dialogue" and was also the subject of the last EU Youth Conference that took place in Riga on 23–26 March,<sup>1</sup>.

Member states are already implementing a large number of measures to counter the falling political participation of young people, although it was also underlined that the young are not indifferent to political issues but they address them in less conventional ways.

In general ministers agreed that the focus should be put on the following measures:

- strengthen civil and political education and increase support from families and school in order to combat extremism and radicalisation
- make the best use of social media, the [European Youth Portal](#) and user-friendly tools for political participation
- develop tailored projects mainly at local level aiming to increase the dialogue with and between young people
- continue to exchange best practices

The Commission announced that it was preparing a set of measures in this field to be presented in the current year.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint recommendations ([8095/15](#), p.8).

**Other business**

- *European declaration on youth work in the context of the Second European Youth Work Convention*

The Council was briefed by the Belgian delegation on the [outcome Second European Youth Work Convention](#) which took place from 27 to 30 April 2015, in Brussels, in the framework of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe ([8491/1/15 REV 1](#)).

- *Work programme of the incoming presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Luxembourg delegation concerning its main priorities in the youth sector for the coming six months.

- Adoption of a recommendation on the political participation of young people
- Adoption of the 2015 Joint Report
- Adoption of new Youth Work Plan

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

**GENERAL AFFAIRS**

**Inland waterway transport in Europe - Report of the European Court of Auditors**

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report entitled "Inland Waterway Transport in Europe: No significant improvements in modal share and navigability conditions since 2001", as set out in [8331/15](#).

**TRANSPORT**

**Fishing vessel personnel**

The Council decided to authorise member states to become parties to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F). The European Parliament gave its consent to the decision in April 2015, after agreement by the Council in December 2014.

The STCW-F is an International Maritime Organisation convention aimed at making safety standards for crews of fishing vessels mandatory worldwide.

For more information, see [Transport Council press release from December 2014](#)

[Council decision authorising member states to become parties to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel](#)

**Port state control\***

The Council adopted a decision that contains the position to be adopted by the member states in the Port State Control Committee (PSCC) of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MOU). The decision covers the 48th session of the PSCC, which will be held in the Netherlands from 18 to 22 May 2015. During that session, the PSCC is expected to decide on certain issues which have direct legal effect on the EU directive on port state control.

Port state control means monitoring the compliance of ships with the international standards for safety, pollution prevention and on-board living and working conditions. While the primary responsibility for compliance rests with the flag state, inspections by port states play an important role as a second line of defence against substandard shipping.

[Statement on the adoption of the decision concerning Paris MOU PSCC](#)

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **List of restricted substances**

The Council did not raise objections to a Commission delegated act amending Annex II to Directive 2011/65/EU on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment as regards the list of restricted substances ([8108/15](#)+ *ADD 1*). The Commission and the European Parliament will be informed thereof.

This implies that, unless the European Parliament objects to it, the delegated act shall be published and enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Public access to documents**

On 18 May 2015, the Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application No 07/c/01/15 (7861/15).

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