



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



16753/13

(OR. en)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

PRESSE 499

PR CO 59

PRESS RELEASE

3275th Council meeting

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Brussels, 25 and 26 November 2013

Presidents

Dainius PAVALKIS

Minister for Education and Science

Algimanta PABEDINSKIENĖ

Minister for Social Security and Labour

Šarūnas BIRUTIS

Minister for Culture

Alfonsas Dailis BARAKAUSKAS

Minister of Interior
of Lithuania

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press>

16753/13

1
EN

Main results of the Council

Education

The Council adopted conclusions on

- *effective leadership in education;*
- *the global dimension of European higher education*

It also held a debate, in public deliberation, on open educational resources and digital learning.

Youth

The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training.

*In public deliberation, ministers discussed the future **EU Work Plan for Youth**.*

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS..... 5

ITEMS DEBATED

EDUCATION 8

Leadership in education 8

European higher education..... 9

Open Educational Resources and digital learning 10

Any other business 11

– Cyprus data in the OECD surveys 11

– Work programme of the incoming Presidency 12

YOUTH..... 13

Young people not in employment, education or training..... 13

EU Work Plan for Youth 13

Any other business 14

– EU Youth Conference 14

– Work programme of the incoming Presidency 15

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

– EU action against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons 16

– Association of overseas countries and territories with the European Union 16

¹

- 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>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

- Common Security and Defence Policy..... 16

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

- EU-Azerbaijan visa facilitation agreement..... 16

TRADE POLICY

- EU-Guatemala trade provisions - Provisional application..... 17

DEVELOPMENT

- Contributions to the European Development Fund 17

TRANSPORT

- Galileo - cooperation with Ukraine 17

ENVIRONMENT

- 18th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention..... 18

APPOINTMENTS

- Committee of the Regions 18

PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:

Mr Olivier PAASCH

Ms Fadila LAANAN

Mr Philippe MUYTERS

Mr Pascal SMET

Minister for Education, Vocational Training and Employment

Minister for Culture, the Audiovisual Sector, Health and Equal Opportunities

Flemish Minister for Finance, the Budget, Employment, Town and Country Planning and Sport

Flemish Minister for Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels Affairs

Bulgaria:

Ms Mariana GEORGIEVA

Mr Ivan KRUSTEV

Mr Vasil VASILEV

Minister for Youth and Sport

Deputy Minister for Education and Science

Deputy Minister for Culture

Czech Republic:

Mr Jiří BALVÍN

Mr Jindřich FRYČ

Minister for Culture

First Deputy Minister for Education

Denmark:

Ms Christine ANTORINI

Ms Marianne JELVED

Minister for Children and Education

Minister for Culture

Germany:

Mr Helge BRAUN

Mr Guido PERUZZO

Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Education and Research

Deputy Permanent Representative

Estonia:

Mr Clyde KULL

Deputy Permanent Representative

Ireland:

Mr Ruairí QUINN

Ms Frances FITZGERALD

Mr Jimmy DEENIHAN

Mr Michael RING

Minister for Education and Skills

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Minister of State with responsibility for Tourism and Sport (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)

Greece:

Mr Panagiotis PANAGIOTOPOULOS

Mr Symeon KEDIKOGLOU

Mr Panagiotis KANELLOPOULOS

Mr Ioannis PANAGIOTOPOULOS

Mr Andreas PAPASTAVROU

Minister for Culture and Sport

State Secretary for Education and Religious Affairs

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs – General Secretary for Youth

General Secretariat for the Media – General Secretary for the Media

Deputy Permanent Representative

Spain:

Ms Monserrat GOMENDIO KINDELAN

Mr José Pascual MARCO MARTINEZ

State Secretary for Education, Vocational Training and Universities

Deputy Permanent Representative

France:

Mr Vincent PEILLON

Ms Aurélie FILIPPETTI

Ms Valérie FOURNEYRON

Mr Alexis DUTERTRE

Minister for Education

Minister for Culture and Communication

Minister for Sport, Youth, Community Education and the Voluntary Sector

Deputy Permanent Representative

Croatia

Mr Željko JOVANOVIĆ

Ms Andrea ZLATAR VIOLIĆ

Mr Goran ŠTEFANIĆ

Minister for Science, Education and Sport

Minister for Culture

Deputy Permanent Representative

Italy:

Ms Maria Chiara CARROZZA

Ms Cécile KYENGE

Mr Graziano DELRIO

Minister for Education, Universities and Research

Minister responsible for Integration

Minister responsible for Regional Affairs and Autonomy

Mr Marco PERONACI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Cyprus:

Mr. Kyriakos KENEVEZOS

Minister for Education and Culture

Latvia:

Ms Sanda LIEPIŅA

Mr Juris ŠTĀLMEISTARS

State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Science
Deputy Permanent Representative

Lithuania:

Mr Dainius PAVALKIS

Ms Algimanta PABEDINSKIENE

Mr Šarūnas BIRUTIS

Mr Dailis Alfonsas BARAKAUSKAS

Minister for Education and Science
Minister for Social Security and Labour
Minister for Culture
Minister for the Interior

Luxembourg:

Ms Mady DELVAUX-STEHRES

M. Georges FRIDEN

Minister for National Education and Vocational Training
Deputy Permanent Representative

Hungary:

Ms Rózsa HOFFMANN

Mr Olivér VÁRHELYI

State Secretary for Education, Ministry of Human
Resources
Deputy Permanent Representative

Malta:

Mr Evarist BARTOLO

Minister for Education and Employment

Netherlands:

Mr Sander DEKKER

Mr Wepke KINGMA

State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science
Deputy Permanent Representative

Austria:

Ms Claudia SCHMIED

Mr Gerald KLUG

Mr Harald GÜNTHER

Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture
Federal Minister for Defence and Sport
Deputy Permanent Representative

Poland:

M. Grzegorz KARPIŃSKI

Mr Maciej JAKUBOWSKI

Ms Monika SMOLEŃ-BROMSKA

State Secretary, Ministry of Sport and Tourism
Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of National Education
Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Culture and National
Heritage

Portugal:

Mr Nuno CRATO

Mr Jorge BARRETO XAVIER

Mr Pedro LOMBA

Mr Pedro COSTA PEREIRA

Minister for Education and Science
State Secretary for Culture
State Secretary attached to the Minister attached to the
Prime Minister and Minister for Regional Development
Deputy Permanent Representative

Romania:

Mr Remus PRICOPIE

Mr Daniel Constantin BARBU

Mr Cristian COSMIN

Ms Carmen TOCALĂ

Minister for National Education
Minister for Culture
State Secretary for Youth
State secretary for Sport

Slovenia:

Mr Jernej PIKALO

Mr Uroš GRILC

Minister for Education, Science and Sport
Minister for Culture

Slovakia:

Mr Marek MAĎARIČ

Mr Alexander MICOVČIN

Minister for Culture
Deputy Permanent Representative

Finland:

Ms Marianne HUUSKO-LAMPONEN

Deputy Permanent Representative

Sweden:

Mr Jan BJÖRKLUND

Ms Lena ADELSON LILJEROTH

Ms Ulrika STUART HAMILTON

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education
Minister for Culture and Sport
State Secretary to the Minister for Gender Equality

United Kingdom:

Mr Ed VAIZEY

Mr Ken SKATES

Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative
Industries
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology for the Welsh
Government

.....

Commission:

Ms Neelie KROES

Ms Androulla VASSILIOU

Vice President

Member

.....

ITEMS DEBATED

EDUCATION

Before starting on the agenda items, Minister Pavalkis wished to draw attention to the state of play on two important files in the field of Education:

- the declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (14986/13), a joint employment/education initiative, adopted by the Council (EPSCO) on 15 October 2013, aiming to support youth employment by promoting work based-learning;

the Erasmus+ Programme, adopted by the European Parliament at its last week's plenary session. Following the formal adoption by the Council in the beginning of December, the new programme can start, as scheduled, on 1 January 2014. It will benefit from a significant increase in funding in real terms: over 40% more than the programmes which it replaces. The minister underlined that In times of economic difficulty, this demonstrates that expenditure on education is a vital investment for jobs and growth. It also sends a clear signal that the European Union remains committed to supporting young people, offering them other opportunities to improve their life prospects.

Finally, the Presidency updated ministers on the situation concerning the financing issues related to the **secondment of teachers in the European Schools**, which was an information point at the last Council in May. Following several rounds of discussions, the Board of Governors of the European Schools reached agreement last week on a new set of cost-sharing principles.

Leadership in education

The Council adopted conclusions on **effective leadership in education** ([15587/13](#)), inviting member states to make educational leadership more attractive, supporting the autonomy of educational institutions and educational leaders in pedagogical matters and the internal allocation of resources, while ensuring that they have the necessary means as well as to adapt and respond effectively to specific and changing local conditions.

The conclusions also call for the development of innovative approaches to educational leadership, for instance through the Strategic Partnership actions of the Erasmus+ programme, including by encouraging educational leaders to cooperate with companies, civil society associations and different levels of educational institutions, both internationally and within the local community.

The Presidency underlined that school leadership is considered second only to quality of teaching among the school-related factors that determine educational success. Leadership is clearly a major factor in raising aspirations, in providing support for pupils, parents and staff alike, and thus in fostering higher achievement levels.

The Commission also suggested that it would be important to lighten the administrative burden on leaders so that they can devote more of their time to fundamental issues such as the quality of learning, curriculum content and staff performance. But this will also imply greater accountability.

The French delegation pointed out that in its view the main factor for effective school leadership and educational success was not the administrative autonomy of schools but their pedagogical autonomy.

European higher education

The Council also adopted conclusions on the **global dimension of European higher education** ([15117/1/13](#)), which call in particular for comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation, in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, covering three main areas: student and staff mobility; the internationalisation of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity-building.

The main purpose of internationalisation is to improve the quality of higher education and to better prepare learners in Europe to live in a global world and work in a global economy. The modernisation and internationalisation of higher education are also seen as key elements in enhancing the EU's drive for growth and jobs through innovation and research¹.

The Presidency underlined that the strength of Europe's higher education systems lies in the provision of high quality education and research, in the diversity of its institutions, and in its support for cooperation in areas where this provides added value, such as joint and double degree programmes, doctoral schools and studies, and international partnerships.

The Commission recalled the major role of the new Erasmus+ programme in the field of student and teacher mobility but underlined that this is a very complex process and that in this field "one size does NOT fit all". It also underlined that not only students but also university teachers will benefit from the possibilities offered by the new programme.

¹ See also

- Commission communication "European higher education in the world" ([12453/13](#))
- Council conclusions on the modernisation of higher education ([16746/11](#))

Open Educational Resources¹ and digital learning

Ministers were invited to outline during the debate the overall approach being adopted at national level concerning digital learning, in particular massive on-line open courses (MOOCs), and to share their views on how issues such as quality assessment and the recognition of skills and competences acquired by such means might be addressed. They could also indicate how action at EU level might provide added value in this process.

The debate was launched by one of the guest speakers: Ms **Uschi SCHREIBER**, from Ernst and Young. Ms Schreiber stressed that digital learning is not an option, it's already happening, in particular in countries like China and in Southeast Asia), where for instance in South Korea already at primary level schools are fully equipped with modern technologies and learning is already entirely digital.

She underlined that employers will increasingly require staff who is not just "digitally adapted" but who is "digitally natural." Therefore, the EU should review its education system, in particular regarding higher education. She considered that it's the user that defines quality and the EU is already lagging behind other regions of the world in this sector.

Professor **AZZONE**, rector at the "Politecnico di Milano", described his institution - which is a pioneer in distance learning in Italy - as a "traditional university between "Moocs" and globalization". He argued that European universities should not try to replicate american massive investment in on-line courses, but rather capitalize on European specific features and added value.

He explained that developing a single on-line course is very expensive (around EUR 100.000) and very time-consuming, since many European public universities have a high staff/student ratio and furthermore students fees are limited by law. He believes that in any case MOOC's cannot replace "traditional" education and gave a concrete example from Milano Politecnico: the completion rate of "in class" course is 70% and "on-line" 12%!

MOOC's should be used to support a new educational model, focused not only on technical/scientific contents, but also on developing cross-cultural, cross disciplinary and innovation skills.

The Commission agreed that digital revolution is already happening in schools, but we are perhaps not yet ready to take in these new modes of learning, new solutions are required and the new Easmus + can support this adaption.

¹ Teaching, learning, and research tools in the public domain that can be freely used.

Every European classroom should be digital by 2020, but Commissioner Vassiliou also recalled that less than 30% of children are being educated by digitally experienced teachers and 50% of them have not had any contact with digital learning, which means that if the EU member states don't act soon one million ICT jobs will come up and there won't be a skilled workforce to take them on.

Most member states have already developed initiatives in this field. In general, ministers acknowledged that digital distance learning tools offered considerable opportunities: broadening access to education thus benefiting isolated communities and less favoured students and increasing cost-efficiency, as well as by their very nature, fostering innovation in education. However, most ministers were also of the view these developments raise important issues at both national and European level.

Several ministers recalled that the required Infrastructure is not available everywhere and access to open resources is not always free . There are also relevant copyright issues.

A number of ministers also stressed that open on-line courses cannot be just a trade experience, digital learning should not be the only approach to education, digital and more traditional learning are not mutually exclusive. Teachers training was deemed crucial by many, as well as the development of critical spirit among students and graduates.

Some ministers considered that we don't have enough data yet on the outcomes from MOOC's so it's perhaps too early to decide on a European strategy. Many of them underlined the utility of sharing good practices at European level and make the best use of Erasmus + , as well as of Horizon 2020 programmes.

Any other business

– *Cyprus data in the OECD surveys*

The Council took note of information from the Cyprus delegation on the difficulties it encounters to become a member of OCDE ([15903/13](#)). It requested the support of its EU partners in order to ensure equal treatment in OECD activities in the field of education and that in the future, data contributed by Cyprus is handled in the same way as all other EU member states.

The French, Greek and Romanian delegations supported CYPRUS. The Commission, expressed its solidarity with CY, and informed ministers that it had sent a letter to OCDE's general-secretary on this issue, asking him to find a solution to the problem.

– ***Work programme of the incoming Presidency***

The Council took note of information from the Greek delegation on the work programme of the future Presidency, which will include the following priorities:

- Innovative education and training in the context of social cohesion
- Fight against early school leaving
- Foreign languages skills
- Promotion of vocational training
- Pre-school education
- Fight against early-school leavers
- Recognition of formal and non-formal learning

YOUTH

Young people not in employment, education or training

The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the **social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training** ("NEETS") ([15770/13](#)), which seek to address the problem of NEETs in a more systematic way, by including a series of policy measures covering prevention, education, training and non-formal learning, voluntary activities, the transition from education to employment, and employment itself.

Ministers acknowledged that this is a major priority for the EU since the exclusion of unemployed young people from social security rights is also becoming an increasingly serious social issue.

The Commission recalled that the EU had already put into place several important schemes and initiatives to deal with youth unemployment. The Commissioner underlined that NEET's are not an homogeneous group, so measures to tackle the problem must be adapted accordingly.

Several ministers also recalled that youth work - although not replacing paid employment - can contribute to reduce social exclusion and increase employability.

EU Work Plan for Youth

Most ministers acknowledged during the debate that the economic and financial crisis that has dramatically shaken the youth sector since 2008 has changed the whole environment in which youth policy operates. The EU and its member states therefore need to address urgently the high youth unemployment rates¹ and the consequences of the current crisis on young people, in particular since it is likely that youth unemployment will remain high in the coming years.

Ministers agreed in general that there was a clear need to develop a medium-term structured plan, with a limited number of key initiatives in specific youth policy areas to be achieved within realistic timetables to enable years. This plan should be capable of responding quickly to developments affecting youth and focus on social inclusion. It should also adapt the aims of youth policy to the targets of the EU 2020 Strategy².

¹ More than 5.7 million young people (23.6 %) in the EU were without a job in January 2013 and 30 % of unemployed people under the age of 25 in the Union have been unemployed for more than twelve months. The economic cost of this situation - in terms of benefits paid out, lost tax revenue and earnings foregone - was estimated by the EU Agency Eurofound at 153 billion per year, or 1.2 % of EU GDP.

² See also: Council conclusions on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy ([8576/13](#)).

Many ministers considered that cross-sectoral cooperation should be strengthened and implemented on all levels, in particular regarding education and training and employment policy areas.

A number of ministers also called for a positive youth policy vision: young people should be at the heart of European construction, should be involved in democratic life of their countries.

Several ministers recalled the challenges relating to immigration.

One of the priorities for the work plan should be developing useful skills for youth, therefore traineeships and apprenticeships should also be increased, as well as recognition of formal and non formal learning.

A number of ministers underlined the importance of investing on vocational training and several others ministers considered that health and well-being issues should also be addressed. Youth entrepreneurship should also be promoted.

It was suggested by many that the EU Work Plan for Youth should be an instrument to speed up the practical implementation of current initiatives, such as the Youth guarantee scheme and the Youth Employment package.

Any other business

– *EU Youth Conference*

The Council was briefed by the Presidency on the outcome of the EU Youth Conference ([14177/13](#)), which was held from 9 to 12 September in Vilnius, under the general theme of social inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

The EU Youth Conference is an element of the "structured dialogue" process, which brings together young people and policy makers across the European Union to jointly discuss and inform the development of youth policy at national and European level.

– *Work programme of the incoming Presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Greek delegation on the work programme of the future Presidency, which will include the following priorities:

- Social inclusion (in particular, through culture and entrepreneurship)
- Promote access to new technologies, in particular in remote areas

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU action against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons

The Council agreed to support a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms, light and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade. The project is intended to create user-friendly global information management system on diverted or trafficked weapons ("iTrace") and to conduct in-field research into weapons and ammunition circulating in conflict-affected areas. € 2.32 million have been allocated from the EU budget.

Association of overseas countries and territories with the European Union

The Council revised the decision that is the basis for the association between the EU and overseas countries and territories (OCTs), which constitutes a partnership to support the OCTs' sustainable development as well as to promote the values and standards of the Union in the wider world.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Common Security and Defence Policy

The Council adopted conclusions on the Common Security and Defence Policy, with a view to the December European Council. The text is set out [here](#).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EU-Azerbaijan visa facilitation agreement

The Council adopted a decision ([15553/13](#)) approving the signing of an agreement with Azerbaijan on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, subject to its formal conclusion at a later stage ([15554/13](#)).

The agreement will allow the issuance of visas for an intended stay in the EU territory of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days to the citizens of Azerbaijan.

In accordance with the EU provisions, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom do not take part in the adoption of the decision and therefore are not bound to the application of the agreement.

TRADE POLICY

EU-Guatemala trade provisions - Provisional application

The Council decided to notify Guatemala of provisional application, as of 1 December, of part IV concerning trade matters of the EU-Central America¹ association agreement, following notification by Guatemala in June of the completion of its own internal procedures.

The Council authorised in June 2012, on behalf of the EU, the signature of the agreement and, pending its ratification, provisional application of part IV on trade matters. The agreement was signed in Tegucigalpa on 29 June 2012.

DEVELOPMENT

Contributions to the European Development Fund

The Council set out financial contributions to be paid by member states to finance the European Development Fund (EDF), including the annual amount of the contributions for 2014, the first instalment for 2014 and the ceiling for the annual amount of member states contributions for 2015.

TRANSPORT

Galileo - cooperation with Ukraine

The Council approved the conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Ukraine, signed in December 2005, aimed at encouraging cooperation on a civil global navigation satellite system (GNSS) (decision on conclusion: [6373/13](#); text of agreement: [13242/05](#)).

The sectors of cooperation are: radio spectrum, scientific research and training, industrial cooperation, trade and market development, standards, certification and regulatory measures, development of a global and regional GNSS ground augmentation systems, security, liability and cost recovery.

¹ Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

ENVIRONMENT

18th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken on behalf of the EU at the Eighteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, as regards the proposal for amending Annexes II and III to the Protocol concerning Special Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean and as regards the proposal for adoption of a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

The meeting will take place from 3 to 6 December 2013 in Istanbul (Turkey). For more information see the following [website](#).

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed Mr Jānis VĪTOLIŅŠ (Latvia) as a member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([16227/13](#)).
