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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Accompanying the document

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area

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ANNEX 2:

CO-CREATION OF THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA WITH EU MEMBER STATES AND A WIDER STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY

1. INTRODUCTION

Making the European Education Area a reality by 2025 has been a truly **co-creative process between the European Commission, the EU Member States and other education and training stakeholders**. This annex provides an **overview of the main governance bodies, mutual learning arrangements, cooperation tools and other forms of collaboration** contributing to the achievement of the European Education Area (EEA) under the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training¹.

The overview in section 2 is structured in the following sub-sections:

- 2.1. Formal governance bodies
- 2.2. Informal groups of high-level officials
- 2.3. EEA strategic framework Working Groups
- 2.4. Other Commission expert groups
- 2.5. Other peer learning arrangements in education and training
- 2.6. Other fora and channels for co-creation:
 - Conferences and seminars including the European Education Summits
 - Targeted and open public consultations
 - EU online tools and communities of practice
 - Networks of experts
 - Cooperation with EU agencies
 - Cooperation with international and other organisations
- 2.7. Support through EU funding and related bodies

¹ The new strategic framework 2021-2030 has been established through the [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#) of February 2021.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN GOVERNANCE BODIES, MUTUAL LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS, COOPERATION TOOLS AND OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION CONTRIBUTING TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EEA

2.1 FORMAL GOVERNANCE BODIES

Political steering and decision-making of cooperation in education and training take place formally in the **Council of the European Union**, in the **Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration** (EYCS). Cross-cutting issues pertaining to education are also **discussed jointly with other Council formations** such as the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs configuration (EPSCO), Competitiveness configuration (COMPET), or Economic and Financial Affairs configuration (ECOFIN).

At preparatory level, the **Education Committee** (EDUC) collaborates on relevant issues with **Council preparatory bodies in other policy areas**, such as the Youth Working Party, the Working Party on Social Questions, the Research Working Party etc.; or with Council advisory committees such as the Employment Committee (EMCO) in relation to the European Semester or the Social Protection Committee (SPC).

2.2 INFORMAL GROUPS OF HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS

In addition to formal bodies, informal groups of high-level officials such as the High Level Group on Education and Training or the Directors-General formations provide possibilities for mutual learning and are important also for giving political assessment and direction.

➤ High Level Group on Education and Training

The [November 2021 Council Resolution](#) assigns the High Level Group on Education and Training (HLG) a central role in linking the technical level to the political level in the governance structure of the strategic framework towards the EEA and beyond. The HLG is an informal group of high-level officials from Member States and the Commission who meet in order to identify, discuss and steer strategic and transversal issues for European cooperation in education and training in a forward-looking manner. Third countries and/or stakeholders can be invited by the Presidency, if and when appropriate, to join HLG meetings as observers for agenda items of common interest. The Council, through its relevant preparatory body – the Education Committee, is regularly informed about the outcomes of the HLG discussions.

HLG Coordination Board

Following the adoption of the [November 2021 Council Resolution](#), the High Level Group's role was strengthened through the creation of the HLG Coordination Board. The Board's mission is to support and prepare the HLG's work, and thus support the governance and continuity of work within the strategic framework towards the EEA and beyond. The Board is an informal coordination and support group. It provides for regular exchanges between the two preceding Presidencies, the current Presidency, the two incoming Presidencies and the Commission. It reports to the High Level Group.

As set out in the November 2021 Council Resolution and the Board's terms of reference, the Board's main tasks are to:

- contribute to the HLG's agenda setting;
- inform the HLG of the progress made within the strategic framework towards achieving the EEA;
- support the HLG with broad orientations for possible future policies and for interaction between education and training and other relevant policy areas;
- support the HLG in enhancing synergies between education and training and other relevant policy areas; and
- support the work on the evaluation of the governance structure in place up to 2025.

The Board met for the first time in March 2022 and since then several other meetings followed.

➤ **Directors-General formations**

Directors-General formations for schools (DG Schools), vocational education and training (DG VT) and higher education (DG HE) are informal groups of high-level officials from Member States and the Commission who meet to discuss issues relating to their respective education and training sectors as well as cross-cutting topics where appropriate. The Presidency can invite third countries and stakeholders, if and as appropriate, to attend these meetings.

➤ **High Level Group of national coordinators for the Structured Dialogue on digital education and skills**

As a part of building the EEA, a structured dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills was launched in October 2021. It is a time-limited process of exchange with Member States and stakeholders that will last until the end of 2022. It is supported by national coordinators for digital education and skills, who form a dedicated High Level Group. Each national representative has been nominated with an overall mandate of representing relevant departments in their country responsible for different aspects of digital education, training and skills (including education, labour, digital, industry and finance). It brings together the different strands of policy into an integrated, coherent and more ambitious approach on digital education and skills, making the most of the synergies between the different policy fields – education, digitalisation, labour, finances. The Dialogue is taking place through bilateral exchanges, discussions in different Council configurations and the High Level Group. Based on the outcomes of the Structured Dialogue, the Commission will present in 2023 proposals for two Council Recommendations - on the enabling factors for digital education and on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training.

2.3 EEA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUPS

The [2021-25 EEA strategic framework Working Groups](#) represent a key pillar of co-creation towards achieving the European Education Area under the strategic framework. The Working Groups are informal Commission expert groups composed of experts from EU Member States, candidate countries, and from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as representatives of international organisations and stakeholders. The overall objective of the Working Groups is to promote mutual learning on policy reform of national education systems with a view to effectively contribute to the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025, and as relevant, the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027). More specifically, the 2021-25 Working Groups support the implementation of the February 2021 [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#) and of the [Commission's Communication of 30 September 2020 on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#). Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Working Groups – as part of the EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine – have been an important instrument in mobilising the European Commission's support to the education systems of the EU Member States that are hosting refugees from Ukraine.

Sector-focused Working Groups:

- **Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care** (ECEC)
- **Working Group on Schools** (composed of two subgroups: i. Pathways to School Success, ii. Learning for environmental sustainability)
- **Working Group on Vocational Education and Training and the Green Transition** (VET)
- **Working Group on Adult Learning – Opening Up Opportunities for All** (AL)
- **Working Group on Higher Education** (HE)

Issue-focused Working Groups:

- **Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment** (DELTA)
- **Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training**

The first meetings of the Working Groups took place between November 2021 and January 2022. The Working Groups will run until December 2025, throughout the first cycle of the strategic framework. If needed, their mandates can be reviewed and updated at their mid-term (i.e. in 2023) to reflect emerging policy needs.

2.4 OTHER COMMISSION EXPERT GROUPS

In addition to the EEA strategic framework Working Groups, other Commission expert groups have been contributing to European cooperation in education and training and to building the European Education Area. These can be divided into two broader categories: expert groups involving representatives of EU Member States' authorities, and expert groups composed of independent experts.

Expert groups involving representatives of Member States' authorities

➤ **Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT)**

The [Advisory Committee for Vocational Training](#), a formal permanent Commission expert group, has the task of assisting the Commission in implementing a Union vocational education and training policy. Vocational Education and Training (VET) – both initial and continuing – is embedded in a broader framework that includes upskilling and reskilling of adults, graduate tracking systems, skills anticipation mechanisms, career guidance, recognition of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, etc.

The ACVT rolling work programme serves as the main tool for monitoring the objectives laid down in the Skills Agenda, VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration, and to follow up the EU activities undertaken to support their implementation. This allows the ACVT to assess progress, ensure coordination between the different work strands including the links with the European Education Area, and provide additional steer when and where needed. The ACVT is hence a forum where Member States, social partners and the Commission engage in information exchange, discussion and policy steer on VET and adult learning.

➤ **Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB)**

The [Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks](#) is an informal Commission expert group and “the first forum of discussion on the shared EU-level targets and indicators and future areas of focus” ([February 2021 Council Resolution](#)). SGIB members are representatives of EU Member States and EEA/EFTA countries (except Switzerland) who work on evidence monitoring and education analysis. Eurostat, EACEA, CEDEFOP, the European Training Foundation and relevant external bodies (such as OECD, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, etc.) are invited to the meetings as appropriate.

The SGIB provides technical support to the Commission with respect to the work stemming from the [February 2021 Council Resolution](#) and the [September 2020 Commission Communication](#). This comprises, in particular, the commitment to:

- track progress on existing EU-level targets;
- develop, in collaboration with stakeholders, a new approach to quantitative and qualitative indicators and targets along the five strategic priorities as set out in the February 2021 Council Resolution and the six dimensions as stated in the September 2020 Commission Communication;
- improve the use of disaggregated data (e.g. gender, socioeconomic status, special educational needs, and racial or ethnic minority background) for the purposes of (impact) assessment of education and training policy reforms and interventions;
- continue to work with Member States and the wider education and training community to collect comparable evidence and develop indicators to support evidence-based policymaking and the achievement of the EEA;
- work with Member States and stakeholders to develop indicators in areas which are not covered by existing international data collections, but which emerged as priority objectives of the EEA.

Concretely, the SGIB will support the Commission in responding to the Council's invitation to:

- conduct work on proposals for possible indicators or EU-level targets in areas of inclusion and equity, the teaching profession, as well as environmental sustainability (including greening of education and training systems);
- analyse how to improve data collection and analysis for existing EU-level target domains (main indicators and supporting indicators), with a view to fostering evidence-informed policy making;
- examine the EU-level targets and indicators for which the set timelines do not coincide with the ten-year period encompassed by this framework, reporting back to the Council on possible new values for these targets and indicators.

➤ **European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group (EQF AG)**

The [European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group](#) is an informal Commission expert group following up the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the EQF for lifelong learning of May 2017. Furthermore under the EQF Recommendation, National Coordination Points (NCP) are co-funded under the Erasmus+ programme.

The EQF AG plays a key role in discussing the referencing of national qualifications frameworks to the EQF and acts as a forum of trust-building between EQF countries. As all EU Member States, except one, have finalised their initial referencing, the focus of the referencing work has now shifted to updates of initial referencing reports.

Under the EQF AG work programme one method of working is the establishment of project groups, on a thematic basis and with a limited duration in time. Project groups usually involve EQF AG members and EQF-NCP representatives, depending on expertise required.

Project groups have carried out activities focussing on the implementation of specific recommendations in the EQF Recommendation, namely: consistency of referencing across countries, allocating levels to international qualifications within national frameworks and the third country dimension of EQF.

A new Joint EQF-Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes was set up in September 2021. Building on existing material at EU and national level, the project group will elaborate guidelines on how to draft short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications for publication on databases/registers of qualifications. One of its tasks is to propose a revision of the certificate supplement, in particular the section 'profile of skills and competences', and discuss the possibility of transforming it into a broader digitalised qualification supplement. The project group has met twice already and expects to finalise its work by end 2022.

➤ **Europass Advisory Group**

The [Europass Advisory Group](#), as an informal Commission expert group, advises the Commission on the implementation of the [Europass Decision](#). As such, the Advisory Group ensures active participation and involvement of Member States and relevant stakeholders in Europass' strategic planning, its quality assurance and financing, and the development, updating and evaluation of the Europass online platform.

➤ **Ad hoc expert group on the European Universities initiative**

This group comprises government representatives of the EU Member States and third countries associated to the Erasmus+ programme. It has played an active role in co-creating the European Universities initiative since its launch, i.e. under the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programme, and continues to play an important role in steering its further roll-out under the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027. The group also actively contributed to the co-creation of the European strategy for universities and is involved of the follow-up and co-creation of the various initiatives therein linked to the European Universities initiative.

➤ **ERA Forum for Transition and ERA Forum**

The [ERA Forum for Transition](#) was an informal Commission expert group that advised and supported the Commission in the implementation of the ERA Roadmap and served as the platform for exploring and discussing

further actions. In 2021, the Forum supported the Commission as regards the new ERA governance framework and kick-starting the work on the new ERA priorities.

Under the new ERA governance, the ERA Forum for Transition was replaced by the [ERA Forum](#). As a Commission expert group with the participation of representatives from Member States, countries associated to Horizon Europe and stakeholders, the Forum provides advice and support in relation to the implementation, monitoring and revision of the [ERA Policy Agenda](#), including as regards actions related to the higher education sector. Close cooperation with the ERA Forum, as well as with other bodies in the area of research and innovation such as ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee), supports the implementation of the European Education Area in particular in relation to higher education, as well as the implementation of the European Higher Education Area under the Bologna Process.

Expert Groups composed of independent experts

➤ Expert Group on Quality Investment in Education and Training

The [Expert Group on Quality Investment in Education and Training](#) was launched in May 2021. The group's overall mission is to carry out an evidence-based evaluation of education and training policies to identify those that have the potential to boost education outcomes and inclusiveness, while improving the efficiency of spending. The group was asked to provide robust evidence on the expected costs and benefits of selected education and training policies, on the challenges associated with their implementation and on the methodology for their evaluation. The group has focused its analysis on those areas that represent the bulk of education and training expenditure, encompass multiple dimensions of the EEA, and that may have a big impact on education outcomes, notably: i) teachers and trainers; ii) management of education infrastructure and related physical and human resources; iii) digital education, both in terms of infrastructure and competence development; and iv) equity and inclusion. The analysis covers all levels of education and training, from early childhood education and care to adult learning, taking into consideration specificities related to different levels of education to identify for each level the most appropriated policy findings.

The expert group published its [interim report](#) in January 2022. This was followed by a workshop to discuss the preliminary findings and policy conclusions with social partners, civil society, EU Member States' representatives, and international organisations. The interim report was also presented at the ministerial conference 'Investing in Education' organised by the French Presidency of the Council of Ministers in February 2022. The expert group has integrated all feedback and comments received in the [final report 'Investing in our future: quality investment in education and training'](#), which was published in October 2022.

➤ Expert Group on supportive learning environments and well-being at school

The expert group will be launched in the 1st quarter of 2023. The aims of the expert group will include: (1) developing policy recommendations on promoting supportive learning environments for groups at risks, promoting mental health and well-being, and for preventing bullying and violence at school; classroom and school climate; increasing participation in meaningful decision-making in school; school leaders and teachers' training on well-being; collaborative practices in and around school, including the participation of parents, the local community and external agencies and professionals; (2) developing proposals for effective up-take of successful practices in schools; (3) suggest awareness raising activities at EU and national level addressed to the general public, practitioners and policy makers.

The expert group will support the implementation of the forthcoming Council Recommendation on Pathways to school success following the Commission's proposal. The group is expected to deliver its outcome in early 2024.

➤ Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data in education and training

An [informal Commission Expert Group on AI and data in education and training](#) was launched in July 2021 in order to assist the Commission in the development of ethical guidelines on the use of AI and data in teaching and learning for educators. This expert group was chaired by the Commission (co-led by DG EAC and DG CNECT), under strategic priority 1 'Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem' of the

Digital Education Action Plan 2021-27 (DEAP). Activities took place between July 2021 and June 2022, including four formal meetings, a series of informal workshops, internal surveys and desk research. Complementing the work of the Group, the development of the guidelines has been a subject of discussion and consultation with other key stakeholders, such as the eTwinning community and representatives from Member States via the DELTA Working Group. The Expert Group's one-year mandate ended in June 2022.

The guidelines use an analysis and overview of the philosophy of ethics and research on education and training, as well as developments in AI and educational technologies. They build on existing guidelines, including the work of the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, including the Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI and The Assessment List for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (ALTAI). They were designed to help educators understand the potential that applications of AI and data usage can have in education and to raise awareness of the possible risks, so that they are able to engage positively, critically and ethically with AI systems and to realise their full potential.

The [guidelines](#) were presented in October 2022 with a dedicated communication and dissemination campaign being rolled out throughout the end of 2022 and into mid-2023.

➤ **Expert Group on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy**

An informal [Commission Expert Group to develop guidelines for teachers and educational staff to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation through education and training](#) brings together the Commission, education and training institutions, educators, parents, young people and various stakeholders (civil society organisations, European technology companies, media, journalists, Safer internet centres, etc.). The objective is to create guidelines to support teachers in addressing the issues of tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy at all levels of education in age- and context-appropriate manner. The development of the guidelines will contribute to DEAP's Strategic priority 2 'Enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation'.

The Expert Group held five formal meetings between October 2021 and July 2022. Complementing the work of the Group, the development of the guidelines has been a subject of discussion and consultation with other key stakeholders, such as members of the eTwinning community during the thematic annual conference 'Media Literacy and Disinformation' in October 2021. An online roundtable discussion gathering the views of young people took place in the framework of the Safer Internet Day in February 2022, as well as through an online survey for teachers. Furthermore, the DELTA Working Group was consulted in June 2022.

The [guidelines](#) were launched in October 2022 with a dedicated communication and dissemination campaign being rolled out throughout the end of 2022 and into early 2023.

➤ **Platform of European Associations of VET providers**

The Expert group was set up in 2015 by the European Commission, as a follow-up to the 2010 Bruges Communiqué which called for cooperation with VET providers' organisations at European level. The involved associations in the group are [EfVET](#), [EUproVET](#), [EVBB](#), [EVTA](#) as initial and continuing VET centred organisations, and [EURASHE](#) and [EUCEN](#), representing higher education and lifelong learning.

The reference to partnerships and cooperation with VET providers was renewed in the Council Recommendation on VET and in the Osnabruck Declaration in 2020.

The Expert group has a [new mandate for the period 2021-2023](#).

2.5 OTHER PEER LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Besides peer learning events organised as part of the EEA strategic framework Working Groups' activities, there is also the possibility of the more tailor-made tool of peer counselling. In addition, ad-hoc peer learning activities can also be organised.

As part of formal governance, multilateral surveillance under the European Semester takes place.

Peer counselling

Peer counselling was introduced in 2015 as a demand-driven and tailor-made tool to support policy development, implementation and evaluation at national level. It provides country-specific policy advice by peers from other Member States' administrations, European stakeholder organisations as well as independent experts.

Peer counselling goes beyond knowledge sharing as it puts a few Member States - the peers and the host country - into direct contact and provides opportunities for networking. Policy suggestions by peers working on similar or equivalent reforms in their own countries are intended to help find solutions to national challenges and shape policy decisions of the host country. Therefore, through their design peer counselling activities can directly support the implementation of the objectives of the EEA.

Peer counselling can be delivered in presence, on-line or in a blended format. It is delivered in two formats. In the 'light version', a seminar kicks off a 3-6 month period in which the host country and experienced peers from other Member States are brought together. The 'full version' provides a more in-depth analysis and a more continued support to the host Member State, including possible assistance from external experts. The full version takes approximately 6-12 months from preparation to final reporting.

A total of 13 peer counselling events have taken place since 2015 across a wide range of policy areas.

Table 1 - Overview of peer counselling events

Year	Topic	Country	Peers
2015	Performance-based funding of higher education	CZ	SE, NL, IE, IT
2015	School reform	SE	UK-Scotland, AT, NL, IE, DK, OECD
2016	Special needs education	RO	CZ, BE-FL, FR, DE, LV, SI
2016	Teacher career pathways	LT	BE-FL, IE, Si, UK-Wales, FI, OECD
2017	Performance-based funding of higher education	SI	AT, DE, PL, UK-Scotland, HR, LV
2017	Inclusive education	BG	BE-FL, CZ, NO, PT, RO
2018	Governance of higher education	SK	AT, EE, IE, PL, EUA (European University Association)
2018	Internationalization in higher education	CY	EE, NL, SI, SE, ACA (Academic Cooperation Association), ESU (European Student Union), observer : EL
2019	Performance-based funding of higher education (follow-up)	SI	AT, DE, PL, UK-Scotland, HR, LV, EUA
2019	Integration of students with a migrant background into schools	CY	SE, NL, EL, BE-FR, SIRIUS (Policy network on migrant education)
2019	Citizenship education in upper secondary education	DK	FI, BE-FL, NL, SE
2019	Accreditation in school education	LV	EE, IT, IE
2019-20	Improving assessment policies and practices in school education	LT	FR, IE, IT, NO

Ad-hoc peer learning

Peer learning on national career frameworks

Following the initiative within the European Education Area, the Commission has launched a peer learning process with six countries that are developing national career frameworks for teaching professions. Based on these national projects, a final report and guidance summarising the experience made in the development of national career frameworks will be published in November 2022.

Multilateral surveillance under the European Semester

Under the European Semester, country specific recommendations (CSRs) are implemented through a multilateral surveillance mechanism which takes place annually. The exercise is organised jointly by EMCO and EDUC. Topics contributing to building the European Education Area are often the subject of exchanges between the Member States, in light of national challenges, reforms undertaken and good practices. In 2022, 8 Member States received CSRs on education and skills, including in EEA focus areas such as quality and equity in education, lifelong learning and teachers. The [country reports](#), including Annex 13 on education and skills provide an overview of challenges in education and training systems in light of the EU-level targets in the strategic framework.

2.6 OTHER FORA AND CHANNELS FOR CO-CREATION

Conferences and seminars including the European Education Summits

Co-creation of the European Education Area has been taking place also through conferences and seminars organised by Member States and the European Commission, such as through the annual European Education Summits organised by the Commission or conferences and seminars organised by Council Presidencies. These events bring together a range of stakeholders to discuss specific issues related to education and training and the achievement of the European Education Area. For example, the [4th European Education Summit](#) 'The Next Decade of European Education' in December 2021 included high-level panel discussions covering specific EEA focus areas or strategic EEA actions (such as the European strategy for universities, learning for environmental sustainability, digital education transformation, equity and inclusion in education, teachers and student's well-being, global dimension). Alongside the European Education Summit, in June 2021 the first edition of the [European Education and Innovation Summit](#) took place. The exchanges provided input to the implementation and further development of innovation actions under the [European strategy for universities](#) and the [New European Innovation Agenda](#).

Targeted and open public consultations

Furthermore, the wider stakeholder community has been engaged in the process of co-creation of the EEA actions through participating in **numerous targeted and open public consultations organised by the Commission**. For example, a **higher education stakeholder group**, composed of the main representatives of the higher education sector at European level, is being consulted on important developments in European higher education policy. They are fully involved in the co-creation of the European Universities initiative, as well as in the European strategy for universities and its implementation.

EU online tools and communities of practice

Feedback and interaction with stakeholders and national and local authorities has been taking place also through various EU online tools and communities of practice, such as the main examples below:

- **School Education Gateway** (merged with e-Twinning into the **new European School Education Platform**)

The [School Education Gateway](#) is a multilingual online platform for teachers, school leaders, researchers, teacher educators, policy-makers and other professionals working in school education – including Early

Childhood Education and Care and Vocational Education and Training. It is funded by Erasmus+, steered by the European Commission and implemented by its European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The School Education Gateway supports the European Commission's policy priorities towards the EEA in the field of school education. Users can stay informed with new content every week, get familiar with Erasmus+ opportunities, find resources such as teaching materials created in European projects and training courses, and the European Toolkit for Schools. They can also find professional development opportunities with the Teacher Academy, offering free online courses and webinars.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Gateway – as well as eTwinning – have proven as useful tools to share effective practice and resources to support Member States in including displaced children from Ukraine in education.

➤ **eTwinning** (integrated with the School Education Gateway into the **new European School Education Platform**)

eTwinning is an initiative of the European Commission that aims to encourage European schools to collaborate, communicate and develop projects, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by providing the necessary infrastructure (online tools, services, support). Therefore, teachers registered in the eTwinning action are enabled to form partnerships and develop collaborative, pedagogical school projects in any subject area with the sole requirement to employ ICT to develop their project and collaborate with teachers from other European countries. eTwinning also offers opportunities for free and continuing online professional development for educators.

eTwinning is a bottom-up initiative that has been launched at a micro level in the school classrooms of 43 European and neighbouring countries by inspired and committed teachers and school heads. Launched in 2005 as a main action of the European Commission's eLearning Programme, eTwinning is co-funded by the Erasmus + since 2014.

➤ **European Toolkit for Schools promoting inclusive education and tackling early school leaving**

The [European Toolkit for Schools](#) offers concrete ideas for improving collaboration within, between and beyond schools with a view to enabling all children and young people to succeed in school. School leaders, teachers, parents and other people involved in different aspects of school life can find helpful information, examples of measures and resource material to inspire their efforts in providing effective and high-quality early childhood and school education. The aim of the Toolkit is to support the exchange of experience among school practitioners and policy makers. The European Toolkit for Schools is the result of work undertaken at EU level since 2011 in relation to early school leaving. It is part of the School Education Gateway and its content is continuously being developed with the support of an Editorial Board.

➤ **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)**

[EPALE](#) is a European, multilingual, open membership community of adult learning professionals, including adult educators and trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers and academics, and policymakers. EPALE is funded by the Erasmus+ programme. It is part of the EU's strategy to promote more and better learning opportunities for all adults. EPALE does this by supporting and strengthening the adult learning professions. It enables members to connect with and learn from colleagues across Europe, through its blog posts, forums, the Partner Search tool, complemented with online and physical gatherings. EPALE provides a wealth of high-quality, accurate information relevant for adult learning practitioners. EPALE is now available also in the form of a mobile app.

➤ **Education for Climate Coalition**

The [Education for Climate Coalition](#) is a bottom-up, co-created initiative aiming to engage the education community at EU, national and local level. The Coalition is a key instrument for effectively capturing and sharing initiatives and projects of the educational community in support of the transition to climate neutrality. It supports the creation, testing and implementation of innovative solutions with teachers, pupils

and students, focusing on five priorities: green skills development; teacher training; change in behaviour; citizen science; awareness raising. The Coalition is managed jointly by DG EAC and the Joint Research Centre.

The Coalition has been closely linked to the work on the [proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability](#), as well as to the [European sustainability competence framework](#). It also seeks to build links with other initiatives, such as the European Bauhaus, Researchers at Schools and also contributed to the European Year of Youth.

➤ **Digital Education Hub**

The Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 sets a strong role for the Commission in driving the digital transformation of teaching and learning. One of its flagship initiatives is the creation of a [Digital Education Hub](#). A number of different stakeholders called for a space for exchange to provide guidance and support, to allow peer-learning and networking, to bring together existing research, studies, stakeholders and communities.

The Hub is a space for exchange and cooperation, information sharing and mapping, and enabling acceleration in digital education. It is a cross-sector space, a community that shares best practices and solutions for digital education. The Hub aims to stimulate dialogue between private and public sectors, and broker information, data, and choices across policies, research, and practices, thus linking top down and bottom up approaches to digital education issues.

During 2021, an open call was launched and awarded for support services for the Hub. Activities started in early 2022 with a testing phase. The Hub was officially launched in June 2022 and the main activities (monthly knowledge building, design thinking workshop, information sharing) started in September 2022.

Within the community of the Digital Education Hub, the Commission set up a **network of National Advisory Services** (NASs) on digital education. The main purpose of the network is to bring together, on a voluntary basis, existing bodies and organisations that are working on the implementation of digital education in Member States and to support exchange on hands-on experience and good practices on the enabling factors of digital education. The first two meetings of the Network took place in March and June 2022, with the first one focusing on *Cooperation for Innovation in Digital Education* and the second one on *Funding and investment for innovation in digital education*. The third meeting is planned for December 2022.

➤ **Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges**

Virtual exchanges in Higher Education and Youth are online people-to-people activities that promote intercultural dialogue and soft skills development between individuals from third countries not associated to the programme, EU Member States or third countries associated to the programme. They take place in small groups and are always moderated by a trained facilitator. These activities are based on the experience of the 2018-2020 virtual exchange pilot project. They target young people, especially in third countries, who have no access to physical mobility, a situation that could be aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Erasmus+ virtual exchanges contribute to the 2022 European Year of Youth.

➤ **Pact for Skills**

Pact for Skills is a shared engagement and approach to skills development. Businesses (large and small), social partners, education and training providers, associations, clusters organisations, national, regional and local authorities, chambers of commerce and employment services are among the key players who contribute to making up and reskilling a reality. A shared vision, pooling expertise and resources can bundle the efforts of individuals and companies throughout the value chain, deliver impactful results, achieve economy of scale, reduce costs and increase the return of investment in skills exponentially.

The Pact aims to mobilise private and public stakeholders to take concrete action for the upskilling and reskilling of people of working age, and in particular support large scale, multi-stakeholder partnerships in industrial ecosystems and value chains, building on blueprints for sectoral cooperation on skills, where possible. Individual commitments from organisations, and partnerships at regional level between social partners and various stakeholders are also very much encouraged. In addition, pledges under the renewed European Alliance of Apprenticeships and the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition can also be included under the umbrella of the Pact.

All stakeholders interested in joining the Pact are asked to sign up to a Charter. The aim of the Charter is to ensure a common understanding of key principles underlying upskilling and reskilling activities and help the members to rally around common values and priorities.

The Pact provides stakeholders with opportunities to network with peers to develop and implement up- and reskilling actions, as well as to join forces in skills partnership, both at EU level (large-scale skills partnerships) in key industrial ecosystems and at regional level.

➤ **Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE)**

The initiative on Centres of Vocational Excellence is funded by Erasmus+, with an indicative budget of at least €400 million in the period 2021-2027. Additional funding can be used from RRF, ERDF, ESF+, and InvestEU.

Implementing vocational excellence approaches features prominently in the overall EU policy agenda for skills and for Vocational Education and Training (VET). The European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area, the [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#), as well as the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), all include clear references to Vocational Excellence as a driving force for reforms in the VET sector.

CoVEs aim to respond to this policy priority supporting reforms in the VET sector, ensuring high quality skills and competences that lead to quality employment and career-long opportunities, meeting the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy². The CoVE initiative also supports the implementation of the European Green Deal, the new Digital Strategy, and the new Industrial and SME Strategies, as skills are key to their success.

The [European Training Foundation](#) (ETF) is building a strong international cooperation dimension on Vocational Excellence with a particular focus on its neighbouring partner countries. The now well established [ETF Network for Excellence](#) (ENE) is the main platform to promote partnerships, tools and peer learning. The ENE has been very successful in bringing together more than 250 CoVEs from 40 countries, including EU Member States.

The project leaders of the Erasmus+ funded CoVE projects have set-up a [Community of Practice](#) where they exchange experience, best practices and lessons learned from implementing their projects. The community addresses common issues that are of interest to all CoVEs and promote thematic debates on key VET issues. By doing so, the Community is also a key interlocutor for the European Commission to continue developing the concept of Vocational Excellence that meets the needs of VET practitioners. The Community has recently launched a mapping facility that provides a [user-friendly overview of the CoVE projects supported by Erasmus+](#). The details of the 12 pilot projects approved in 2019 and 2020 as well as the first 13 CoVE projects supported under the new Erasmus+ programme in the period 2021-2027, are available [online](#) since June 2022.

➤ **European Universities alliances**

The European Universities initiative is a flagship initiative of the European Education Area in the field of higher education. European Universities are transnational alliances that will lead the way towards the universities of the future, promoting European values and identity, and revolutionising the quality and

² <https://ec.europa.eu/SOCial/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8450&furtherPubs=yes>

competitiveness of European higher education. To achieve this major step forward, the initiative offers opportunities to support diverse cooperation models for European Universities through the Erasmus+ calls for proposals.

Following the latest 2022 Erasmus+ call for proposals on European Universities, the third one selecting European Universities alliances, there are now 44 European Universities, involving 340 higher education institutions in both capital cities and remote regions of 31 countries, including all EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Serbia and Turkey. 39 European Universities receive complementary support from Horizon 2020 for their research and innovation dimension. The target mentioned in the European strategy for universities is to expand to 60 European Universities gathering more than 500 higher education institutions across Europe by mid-2024, with an Erasmus+ indicative budget totalling EUR 1.1 billion for 2021-2027.

A consultation group managed by the European Commission consists of the coordinators of the European Universities and meets regularly to discuss progress, best practices, challenges faced by the European universities alliances, as well as possible solutions. The Commission organises regular meetings with this consultation group of the European Universities, together with other stakeholders in the field of higher education, i.e. EU Member States and countries associated to the Erasmus+ programme, higher education institutions, higher education stakeholders and student organisations. The alliances also meet informally together through two fora that they have set up and manage themselves: FOREU-1 for the alliances selected under the first Erasmus+ 2019 call and FOREU-2 for the alliances of the second Erasmus+ 2020 call.

➤ **European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)**, supported by **Apprenticeship support services (AppSS)**

The AppSS were launched by the Commission in November 2018 with the aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships across the EU and beyond and in particular to support Member States in the implementation of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The Services work through three pillars:

- The Knowledge-sharing pillar offers a dynamic and searchable catalogue of quality-checked tools, knowledge and information about apprenticeships. Under this pillar the Services also offer webinars, live discussions, online training modules and videos.
- Networking: networking and support fosters mutual learning and capacity-building through online networking and events such as EAfA stakeholder meetings or learning seminars.
- Bench-learning: Member States are supported to improve quality and efficiency of apprenticeships through the establishment of an excellence model, tools for self-assessment and targeted expert and peer support. 25 Member States were mobilised to take part in the Bench-learning process.
- The AppSS support the implementation of the EAfA Action Plans 2021 and 2022.

➤ **EU STEM Coalition**

The [EU STEM Coalition](#) is an EU-wide network that works to build better STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education in Europe. The Coalition works on promoting new ways of delivering education and finding and sharing evidence-based solutions to skills mismatch in STEM. From reducing shortages of STEM skilled people to fostering new ways in which educational institutions, companies and governments can cooperate, the Coalition provides a forum and knowledge hub for data and analysis, best-practice sharing and direct support. The EU STEM Coalition is at the heart of EU-wide cooperation between national STEM platforms. STEM platforms are national or regional organisations tasked with the coordination and implementation of the national and regional STEM strategies and policies. They include dedicated platforms, national ministries, regional authorities, research councils, innovation agencies, university networks etc.

The EU STEM Coalition has been supported through Erasmus+. The Coalition will be closely involved in implementing the EEA action, stemming from DEAP, to make the STEM fields more attractive to women.

Networks of experts

The work towards achieving the EEA under the strategic framework has benefited also from inputs from different **networks of experts supported by the Commission**. These can be divided into networks comprising governmental experts and those composed of independent experts. The main examples are listed below:

Networks comprising governmental experts

➤ **Eurydice network**

[Eurydice](#) is a network of 40 national units based in 37 European countries. Eurydice's task is to explain how education systems are organised in Europe and how they work. Its mission is to provide those responsible for education systems and policies in Europe with European-level analyses and information which will assist them in their decision-making, and to inform the broad education and training community.

Eurydice publishes descriptions of national education systems, comparative reports devoted to specific topics (such as higher education, the teaching profession, teaching of languages and science, equity in school education, integration of immigrant children or education for citizenship), indicators and statistics, as well as news and articles related to the field of education. The scope of the work includes all levels of education, from pre-primary to tertiary and adult education. Eurydice's reports show how countries tackle challenges at all education levels and provide information for Commission's work on EEA initiatives.

➤ **NARIC Network**

The [National Academic Recognition Information Centres \(NARIC\) Network](#), with the European Commission as Secretariat, brings together Erasmus+ programme countries with the objective of strengthening academic recognition, in particular the implementation of the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad. It works closely with the European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC), under the auspices of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which is focused on the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Together these networks are known as the ENIC-NARIC Network.

➤ **Network of national reference points for graduate tracking**

Since 2022, representatives of national reference points are meeting regularly in the context of [the European Network of Graduate Tracking](#) to discuss and advance topics of common interest such as the Eurograduate 2022 pilot survey, tracking of mobile graduates, using administrative data and linking this with surveys, etc.

Reporting to the Council on the progress in the implementation of [the Council Recommendation on tracking graduates](#) is planned at the end of 2023, in order to take stock of capacity-building activities carried out in 2019-2022 concerning the five dimensions identified in the Council Recommendation, as well as of the results of the 2nd Eurograduate pilot survey carried out in autumn 2022 and of the initial work programme 2022-23 of the Network.

To support long-term developments and explore the potential in linking administrative databases, a study will map the availability and comparability of variables in administrative data across EU Member States. In addition, the European Commission has been enhancing national graduate tracking systems and their contribution to skills intelligence, career guidance and quality assurance through annual peer learning events for higher education and VET stakeholders.

➤ **EQAVET Network**

The EQAVET Network supports the implementation of the European Quality assurance reference Framework in vocational education and training (EQAVET) as defined by the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. The Network is composed of representatives of the EQAVET National Reference Points (NRPs), representatives of the Ministries in charge of VET in the EU Member States, EU social partners and EU VET provider representatives as well as ETF, Cedefop and the European Commission.

The EQAVET Network members participate in peer learning activities and webinars organised by the Commission and the EQAVET Secretariat to discuss and exchange information about quality assurance arrangements in VET. Furthermore, EQAVET NRPs have also been engaging in EQAVET peer reviews at VET system level.

➤ **Network of National Coordinators for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning**

Through the Network of National Coordinators for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, the Commission works with and supports Member States and other participating countries in developing and implementing the [new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030](#). National coordinators, designated by Member States and the other Erasmus+ programme countries, work together to harness the funds available at European level to support the implementation of the new European Agenda for Adult Learning and to report on its implementation. The network ensures effective liaison with the relevant ministries and stakeholders, the social partners, businesses, relevant non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, with a view to improving coherence between policies on adult learning and broader socio-economic policies. It facilitates the sharing of information on national policies and practices, and on their evaluation. The Network has organised a number of peer learning activities, such as on flexible provision (September 2021), on adult education staff capacity building (May 2021) or on adult learning facing digital revolution (March 2021).

➤ **Euroguidance**

The Euroguidance network, co-financed by Erasmus+, brings together national Euroguidance centres that liaise with career counsellors at national level on European opportunities for learning and work; mutual learning is taking place within the network on a variety of lifelong guidance themes.

Networks consisting of independent experts

➤ **Network of experts working on the social dimension of education and training (NESET)**

[NESET](#) provides scientific 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 consists of almost 60 experts from 31 European countries. The Network experts develop analytical reports and provide support to the European Commission in the implementation of EEA actions, in particular in relation to improving quality, equity, and inclusion in education and training. For example, a 2020 NESET study contributed to the work on micro-credentials and a 2021 study by NESET (in cooperation with EENEE) assessed the impact of COVID-19 on the education of disadvantaged children. Also in 2021, studies were published on a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being and on the governance of quality Early Childhood Education and Care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, expert support was provided during stakeholders' consultations for the Digital Education Hub, for the preparation of the proposal for a Council Recommendation on pathways to school success and for the preparation of the upcoming expert group on learning environments and well-being at school. NESET experts contributed also to the Staff Working Document 'Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: Considerations, key principles and practices for the school year 2022-2023'.

➤ **European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE)**

[EENEE](#) consists of 30 high-level experts working in the economics of education and training, covering all 27 EU Member States, the Western Balkans, Switzerland, the UK and Turkey. EENEE prepares analytical reports and policy briefs and provides expertise to support the work of the European Commission on the implementation of EEA initiatives, such as the proposal for a Council Recommendation on education for environmental sustainability and the work on investment in education and training. For example, in 2020, EENEE experts participated in the Informal Expert Group on Investment in Education that issued a report on Boosting Social and Economic Resilience in Europe by Investing in Education.

➤ **Network of Independent National Adult Learning Experts**

A network of 27 independent national adult learning experts, one located in each of the EU Member States, has provided information to the Commission concerning national developments in the area of adult learning since 2016. The work of the network has for example led to a synthesis report and country reports concerning [adult learning policy and provision in the EU](#) and concerning [adult learning statistics](#), and it has fed into the [impact assessment](#) accompanying the proposal for a Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts from December 2021.

➤ **SIRIUS – Policy Network on Migrant Education**

The [SIRIUS network](#) is an international policy network on migrant education, active since 2012. It brings together key stakeholders in migration and education from around Europe, including policy makers, researchers, practitioners and representatives of migrant communities. The overall objective is to support education policy debates with evidence by analysing, creating and sharing knowledge on the main challenges and policy approaches for education in Europe fully inclusive for migrants and pupils with migrant background. The network mobilises policy stakeholders and builds the capacity of migrant and grassroots education initiatives. The action of SIRIUS is based on policy workshops in the Member States and peer learning activities. The main results of the research and exchanges are brought public at annual conferences. The network is supported through the Erasmus+ programme.

SIRIUS was involved in the work of the ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting common values and inclusive education, contributing with evidence on integration of refugees and migrants in education. SIRIUS contributed also to the 2019 peer counselling in Cyprus on integration of students with migrant background into schools. More recently, SIRIUS contributed to supporting EU Member States in ensuring continuity of education of Ukrainian refugees, including through participating in the activities of the EEA strategic framework Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training.

Cooperation with EU agencies

In addition, to support European cooperation in education and training and the work towards the EEA the Commission has been drawing on knowledge from relevant EU agencies, in particular:

➤ **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)**

The [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training](#) has the mandate to ‘support the promotion, development and implementation of Union policies in the field of vocational education and training as well as skills and qualifications policies’. To that end, Cedefop carries out research/analysis in the fields of both VET and adult learning (AL) and provides forums for exchange of experiences and information between governments, social partners and other stakeholders. In particular, Cedefop organises each year a number of mutual learning activities - policy learning fora, conferences and other types of events on VET and AL.

➤ **European Training Foundation (ETF)**

The [European Training Foundation](#) is the EU agency supporting countries surrounding the European Union to reform their education, training and labour market systems. It aims to support each country's own process for education, training, and labour market reform, with a range of evidence-based methodologies.

➤ **Eurofound**

The [European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions](#) is the tripartite EU agency that provides knowledge to assist in the development of better social, employment and work-related policies. Eurofound has been supporting, as a member of the ECEC Working Group, work on EEA priorities in the field of early childhood education and care.

➤ **EU Agency for Fundamental Rights**

The EU founded the [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights](#) (FRA) as an independent body in 2007. It is the centre of reference for the promotion and protection of human rights in the EU, which helps safeguarding rights, values and freedoms as enshrined in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. The FRA is a member of the EEA strategic framework Working Group on Equality and Values and supports its work with expertise on equality data (comparable surveys for monitoring trends as regards groups at risk of discrimination and social exclusion).

Cooperation with international and other organisations

Furthermore, the European Commission has been cooperating closely with international organisations, especially the ones listed below:

➤ **Bologna process: Bologna follow Up Group (BFUG) and Ad Hoc Taskforce to increase synergies between EHEA, the higher education dimension of the EEA and the ERA**

Through the [Bologna Follow-up Group](#) and its working and advisory groups, of which it is a member, the Commission supports cross-sectoral cooperation and mutual learning. The Bologna Follow-up Group oversees the Bologna Process between ministerial meetings. The BFUG meetings play an important role in overseeing the implementation of the ministerial Communiqués as well as in developing the Bologna Process of the European Higher Education Area, which contains 49 countries. Every two or three years Ministerial Conferences assess the progress made within the EHEA and decide on next steps to be taken. In addition to the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) groups, policy-makers and stakeholders work on selected topics in Working Groups and Advisory Groups. The European Commission is a full member of the Bologna Process bodies.

The **Ad Hoc Task-Force to Increase Synergies Between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Higher Education Dimension of the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area** was established in May 2021. In December 2021, it proposed a way forward for a streamlined and strengthened cooperation between the EHEA, the higher education dimension of the EEA and the ERA, building on the respective cooperation structures. It was concluded that synergies should be created, not by adding structures or parallel processes, but rather in a fit-for-purpose and flexible manner, for example in the form of regular exchanges of information, ad-hoc invitations to attend meetings which discuss the topical areas for cooperation, joint meetings and events, and more broadly through considering the whole higher education sector when developing policies, tools and instruments.

➤ **ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

[ENQA](#) is a stakeholder organisation of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA. Originally set up in 2000 as a network and financed by the Commission, it is now a membership-based organisation which promotes cooperation in the field of quality assurance. Together with other members of the E4 Group (European Universities Association, European Students Union, EURASHE), the Commission and other stakeholders,

ENQA worked on the elaboration of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). Under ENQA's umbrella, the community of quality assurance agencies drives innovation in quality assurance and refines quality assurance processes.

➤ **OECD**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides, inter alia, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS and TALIS Starting Strong). The OECD also produces comprehensive secondary analyses, such as in the annual Education at a Glance series and the Starting Strong series. The Commission uses evidence from these studies and analyses to support work towards achieving the EEA.

The OECD and the European Commission carry out national reviews of education and training policy to support reforms in Member States. The reviews are conducted on a voluntary basis upon requests from Member States.

The OECD provides technical assistance to Member States, on their request and with the financial support of the Commission, in the development of their national skills strategies, leading first to an assessment of the situation and a set of recommendations, and then, if countries wish, to implementation guidelines. The Commission supports the OECD in preparing Skills Outlook reports, published every two years on agreed relevant themes.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The European Commission uses PISA to monitor progress towards the EU-level target of low achieving 15-year-olds in basic skills, as agreed by the Council of the European Union. The target is measured through the share of 15-year-olds who fail to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics or science.

A module for [PISA - Foreign Language Assessment \(FLA\)](#) to test foreign language competencies with students is under development, beginning with English. The first cycle will be implemented in 2025. It will focus on reading, listening and speaking, and be based on the European Framework of Reference for Language Competences. The European Commission follows the development of the test closely, assisting with expertise built on previous work at EU level. The EU is co-funding the technical design of the assessment, the development of the framework and the contextual questionnaires, the pilot run of the test as well as the international costs of the participation in the FLA. In 2022 the focus is on promotion of this module towards the Member States in view of their participation.

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

Recent technological, demographic and economic transformations are having a profound impact on the type and quality of jobs that are available and the skills required to perform them. The need for routine cognitive skills is declining, while the demand for information-processing skills, interpersonal communication, self-management and the ability to learn, for example, is growing. The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) measures the proficiency of adults in some of these skills and how they are used at work and in everyday life.

The European Commission is supporting the participation of Erasmus+ countries in the Second Cycle of the Survey of Adult Skills, implemented by the OECD as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. The European Commission has also supported the development of a complementary PIAAC employer module to better understand employers' skill requirements and how these are determined, and gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms employers use to respond to skills mismatches and gaps. It is currently supporting its implementation in a number of EU Member States as a part of the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS).

Early Childhood Education and Care

The OECD runs an international network for early childhood education and care, of which the European Commission is a member. The network meets twice a year and develops specific projects and surveys such as the Early Childhood Education and Care in a digital world. The OECD also provides country reviews which are supported and followed by the European Commission, to prepare reforms of national ECEC systems.

Strength through Diversity Project

The '[Strength through Diversity: Education for Inclusive Societies](#)' project aims to identify how education systems can become more equitable and inclusive by supporting the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations, and ensuring that all individuals are able to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies. It covers six dimensions of diversity: migration background, ethnic/national minorities (including Roma) and indigenous people, SEN, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, gifted students. In addition it considers two overarching factors: socio-economic status and geographic location. The project provides policy analysis and policy advice geared towards helping governments and schools to address diversity and to achieve more equitable and inclusive education systems. DG EAC follows the project from the policy side and co-finances country reviews in the context of the project. Until now, one Member State, Portugal, has carried out a review process.

School Resources Review and Higher Education Resources Project

The [School Resources Review](#) aims to help countries make resource decisions that support quality, equity and efficiency in school education. It provides comparative analysis on the use of financial, physical and human resources in school systems. It offers policy advice on how to govern, distribute and manage resources so that they contribute to achieving countries' educational objectives. At the same time, the [Higher Education Resources Project](#) provides an accessible international evidence-base for policy makers that need to make thoughtful decisions on how to mobilise, allocate and manage financial and human resources in higher education. All this analytical work feeds the cost-effectiveness analyses carried out by the Commission expert group on quality investment in education and training, and contribute to the EEA's ambition of strengthening the work on investment. The Commission has been supporting both projects through funding from Erasmus+ and with expertise.

HEInnovate country reviews

In order to support entrepreneurial and innovative higher education systems, the European Commission and the OECD have launched the HEInnovate country reviews. These reviews have been undertaken by the OECD within the framework of HEInnovate. So far, 13 country reports for EU Member States have been completed. These reports are published on the HEInnovate [website](#). A [policy brief](#) with the main findings and recommendations of the 13 HEInnovate country reports was published in July 2022.

Labour Market Relevance and Outcomes of Higher Education (LMRO)

The [LMRO](#) Partnership Initiative is another Commission's initiative in cooperation with the OECD. It aims to enhance the relevance and labour market outcomes of higher education by improving articulation between higher education systems and the labour market. At the moment, this activity involves 4 EU Member States. The methodology of the LMRO Partnership Initiative combines: (i) country-specific examinations of labour market outcomes and policies, (ii) peer learning activities, and (iii) support for higher education institutions to identify and address institutional-level barriers and introduce and expand the adoption of effective practices.

➤ **Council of Europe**

The [INSCHOOL Joint Project 'Making a difference for Roma children'](#) comes as an impetus to the implementation of the EEA strategic framework's priority of improving quality, equity and inclusion in education and training, as well as the [EU Roma Strategic Framework](#) for equality, inclusion and participation, through supporting the achievement of the sectoral objective to increase effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education. The Pilot project started in 2017 and is now in the third phase (INCHOOL3).

The objective of INSCHOOL3 is to strengthen further the connection between the normative frameworks and the operational aspects of the education systems. The timing of INSCHOOL3 coincides with the programming of 2021-2027 EU funds and with the development of national policy frameworks towards meeting the relevant thematic enabling conditions with a desegregation criterion. The current cycle of the project is designed to support national public authorities and stakeholders in the implementation and adaptation of inclusive education policies and to promote innovative education practices in the participating countries in line with European standards and principles.

[The Observatory on History Teaching \(OHTe\) of the Council of Europe](#), established in November 2020, promotes practices encouraging history teaching and learning to strengthen civic engagement and promote European values. A series of studies are conducted, leading to reports on the ways in which history education is carried out in the participating countries, i.e. 18 Council of Europe Member States, including 9 EU countries.

The Commission co-finances from the Erasmus+ programme a joint 2-year project 'Transnational History Education and Cooperation Laboratory' which started in May 2022. The project has 3 main objectives: enabling knowledge sharing and learning from national and European experience; fostering cooperation on history teaching through a dedicated online platform gathering a broad range of stakeholders; and promoting the commonalities of European history. The project will fund the development of an online hub/database, the publication of guidelines on countering history revisionism and manipulation on social media, and the organisation of events on history teaching and a series of visibility actions.

European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML)

The [cooperation agreement](#) 'Innovative methodologies and assessment in language learning' between DG EAC and ECML concerns two strands [RELANG](#) (Relating language curricula, tests and examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference) and [Multilingual classrooms](#). It has been renewed yearly since 2013 with funding from Erasmus+.

As part of the strand 'Supporting multilingual classrooms', ECML prepared together with the ECML's Professional Network Forum a survey about the effect of Covid-19 on all aspects of language education, including the impact on vulnerable groups with different linguistic backgrounds (in line with 'Supporting multilingual classrooms') but also on assessment and public examinations (in line with RELANG). The [colloquium "The future of language education in the light of Covid – lessons learned and ways forward"](#) which took place in December 2021 reported on the results of the survey. [The initiative continues in 2022 with two guides: one for language teachers and one for decision-makers](#). The first edition of a summer academy to upskill language teacher educators took place in July 2022 at the ECML.

➤ **UNESCO**

Collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is mainly focused on finding synergies with the sustainable development goals (SDGs), in particular to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and education for sustainable development. The Commission has been cooperating with UNESCO on the indicators to measure progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 – 'Education' since 2015.

EAC has been promoting EU's experience with setting up common targets and indicators and their role in evidence-based policy-making. Without being a formal member of UNESCO, the EU has an important role to play in exchanging information and expertise with the Member States. Although the indicators used to measure SDG-4 remain different on various levels of governance: global UNESCO indicators, EU-level targets and Member States' own indicator sets, the last 6 years of cooperation have shown that UNESCO and the global community have drawn from EU's experience and have some examples from the EU about how to set up a functioning indicator set.

➤ **UNICEF**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) promotes provision of early childhood education and care around the world and provides a wide range of resources (studies, guidance, project results). Its European office is very active in promoting early childhood development and is currently running pilot projects to implement the Child Guarantee.

➤ **UNHCR**

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission has been cooperating closely with the UNHCR – as well as with UNICEF and UNESCO – to support EU Member States in ensuring continuity of education of refugees from Ukraine.

➤ **International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)**

The [International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement](#) (IEA) provides, amongst others, the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The Commission uses evidence from these studies to support work towards achieving the EEA. ICILS is used to monitor progress towards the EU-level target on low achieving eight-graders in digital skills, as agreed by the Council of the European Union.

➤ **European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE)**

The [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#) is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in its member countries, including 26 EU Member States. It focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. It provides member countries and stakeholders at the European level with evidence-based information on implementing inclusive education systems, in particular through the Country Policy Review and Analysis, an exercise analysing the available information on current country policy, aiming to be a tool for stimulating discussion in the country concerned. EASNIE also develops specific projects, such as the Inclusive Early Childhood Education project, with study cases, recommendations, a literature review and a very useful self-reflection tool.

EASNIE has been a very active member of the ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting common values and inclusive education (2016-18). EASNIE has contributed to the Working Group's deliverables such as the preparation of a [Policy Framework](#) (mandate 2016-2018) and the online Citizenship [Compendium](#) of good practices. EASNIE has been contributing to the work of the EEA strategic framework Working Groups (2021-2025) on Equality and Values in Education and Training, Schools (strand 'Pathways to school success') and ECEC.

In recent years, EASNIE has cooperated with a few EU Member States providing advice and guidance for preparing reforming processes towards a more inclusive education. The European Commission, through DG Reform, has supported the work.

2.7 SUPPORT THROUGH EU FUNDING AND RELATED BODIES

The European cooperation in education and training and the building of the EEA through mutual learning and national reforms are supported through an unprecedented amount of EU funding, especially from the Erasmus+ programme, Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Social Fund Plus including the ALMA initiative, European Regional and Development Fund, REACT-EU, , Horizon Europe including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), Digital Europe, the Technical Support Instrument, or the European Solidarity Corps.

The implementation of the ongoing EU funding programmes, as well as the co-creation of new programmes, is supported by a number of bodies and groups, in particular:

➤ **Erasmus + Committee**

In the management of the Erasmus+ programme, the Commission is assisted by the Erasmus+ Committee under the comitology proceedings. The Committee is composed of representatives from EU Member States and six other countries associated to the programme (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey). The main role of the Committee is to deliver its opinions on the draft Erasmus+ work programmes prior to their adoption by the Commission.

The Committee meets in specific configurations to deal with sectoral issues. Where appropriate, in accordance with its rules of procedure and on an ad-hoc basis, external experts, including representatives of the social partners, may be invited to participate in its meetings as observers.

➤ **Erasmus+ National Agencies**

Every year, two Erasmus+ National Agencies meetings are organised. The main objective of the meetings is to provide National Agencies with a state of play of the main policy issues related to Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, as well as an update on current activities and upcoming challenges. At the same time, National Agencies' representatives have the opportunity to give feedback and discuss about issues that are considered of primary importance by Programme countries. The meetings are structured to encourage active participation and offer many opportunities for interaction, sharing and networking. The meetings are usually divided into two parts: three days are dedicated to sectoral and horizontal discussions, while one day is devoted to discussions with the directors of the National Agencies on general and strategic aspects of the programme.

➤ **Erasmus+ National Agencies consultative Working Groups**

In order to support the implementation of the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps Programmes in cooperation with the implementing National Agencies, the European Commission uses an already well-established structure of consultative working groups of National Agencies. These groups are mainly composed of members of the different National Agencies, ensuring a balanced representation of the different sectors covered by the programmes and of geographical representation.

The working groups provided a major contribution under the previous programme and have been also very active during the co-creation process for the new programmes. This resulted in more than 35 working groups' meetings with National Agencies, covering all horizontal and sectoral topics over the preparatory phase of the new programmes. Now that the programmes entered an implementation phase, these groups are also used to take on board the expertise and feedback of National Agencies about the progress on the implementation, as well as to collect ideas for continuous improvement. All the sectoral and horizontal units in charge of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps take part in this intense process.

Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies Working Groups

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme Management and Implementation ▪ Horizontal – Partnerships for Cooperation ▪ IT Tools - business ▪ Horizontal - Inclusion and Diversity ▪ Horizontal - Synergies ▪ Credit Mobility in Higher Education ▪ Erasmus Charter for Higher Education ▪ Online Linguistic Support ▪ European Language Label ▪ Erasmus+ Cooperation projects Higher Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultative Group in Youth ▪ Youth Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group ▪ School Education ▪ VET Mobility ▪ Adult Education ▪ International credit mobility in Higher Education ▪ International centralised actions Higher Education ▪ Mobility of school staff and teachers |
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