[Building a stronger Europe: new initiatives to further boost role of youth, education and culture policies](#)

EDUCATION

1. Automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and learning periods abroad

What currently complicates the mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary school education diplomas and learning periods abroad?

Students often have no guarantee that their diplomas acquired in one Member State will be recognised in another, and also have to face long waiting periods or costs in the recognition process. These obstacles not only give students uncertainty, but also hinder the creation of an integrated European learning space, and impede the emergence of a truly open European labour market. This was confirmed in recent consultations with stakeholders where respondents highlighted the lack of automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and expressed support for an EU action in this area.

What are the key steps that Member States need to take?

Member States will be invited first to make a voluntary commitment to automatic recognition. They will then be invited to implement a technical step-by-step approach to build trust in each other's education and training systems. It will take account of the situation in different education and training sectors. The proposal sets out the conditions, such as quality assurance and transparency, that must be fulfilled for automatic recognition to become a reality, as well as the existing EU tools, such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and European Qualifications Framework, which can support Member States, and their education and training institutions, in the realisation of this goal.

What is the difference between the approaches to mutual recognition in upper secondary and higher education?

With regard to the recognition of **qualifications**, there will be no difference in approaches between higher education and upper secondary education. However, as procedures and tools are more developed in the recognition of mobility periods at higher education level, there will be a distinction concerning the recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad. For example, the [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System](#) is already in place to recognise the outcomes of **learning periods** abroad at higher education level, but no such process exists at secondary level in general education. Therefore, at this level, competences acquired abroad will be checked against the competences defined in the national curriculum of the country in which the learner is studying.

2. High quality early childhood education and care systems

Why is high quality early childhood education and care so important for the EU?

The first six years in life are essential. This is when the foundations for later educational achievement and a sense of belonging are laid, with big implications for people's prospects on the job market and their ability to seize opportunities and become independent, engaged citizens. The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) states that children have the right to quality and affordable early childhood education and care.

What can the EU do to improve early childhood care and education?

The EU strives to help in two ways: by providing funding under the [Structural and Investment Funds](#) and the [Erasmus+](#) programme as well as by encouraging Member States to cooperate in improving early childhood education and care systems.

The proposal for a Council Recommendation adopted today focuses specifically on improving access to and the quality of early childhood education and care systems. The Quality Framework annexed to the proposed Recommendation is a result of cooperative work between Member States. It is an attempt to define quality with regard to access, workforce, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, and governance and funding, and describes the main features of high quality services. For example, it underlines that staff need initial and continuous professional development and supportive working conditions to ensure that children benefit as much as possible from early childhood education and care. It also outlines key elements of curricula in the early years, taking into account the specific cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language development needs of young children.

3. Teaching and learning of languages

Why is there a need for these measures?

Being able to speak foreign languages is not only a competence needed on increasingly international job markets. It also opens new perspectives and enables people to discover other cultures.In 2002, that Barcelona European Council set the goal of every European citizen having the possibility to learn two foreign languages from an early age. However, all available data sources, including a Eurydice Report on [Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe 2017](#), show that Member States are not advancing towards this objective fast enough – at a time when increasing mobility within the EU, as well as high numbers of children of school age arriving from third countries, pose challenges that need to be addressed.

What is the EU doing to support language learning?

Support for language learning and linguistic diversity is an over-arching objective of the Erasmus+ programme and its mobility actions for learners and teachers. eTwinning, the world's largest online platform for teachers with over half a million registered users, allows language teachers to

communicate, collaborate and develop projects together across different languages.

Additionally, the Commission is planning to increase the impact of its funding programmes by including new target groups, for example smaller schools with fewer resources and learners from a less-favoured socio-economic background, fostering language awareness in schools, supporting cross-border collaboration between schools and enabling language teachers to spend time abroad to improve their own competences.

How will reporting on language learning be monitored and made compatible between countries?

There is no monitoring and compatibility tool for reporting in place at the moment. However, we need to re-launch the discussion on indicators, benchmarks and targets for language competences, taking certain past developments into account in order to make any kind of monitoring meaningful. Technical details about how the monitoring can be arranged will be discussed with experts from the Member States before the Commission can present a new proposal.

Past developments we can build on: the last survey on language competences in 18 education systems in 2012; and the Eurydice Report on [Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe](#), published in 2017, which shows positive trends in the teaching and learning of foreign languages compared to the previous edition of 2012. Also, many Member States have introduced reforms in the field of language teaching. Furthermore, the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report emphasises the need to support pupils in learning the language of schooling as their first or second foreign language.

Following the proposals presented today, what still needs to be done to complete the European Education Area?

The Commission will intensify its work towards a European Education Area in partnership with Member States. The Commission is planning to achieve this by:

- working with the Council towards adoption of the proposals for Council Recommendations presented today. The Commission will then regularly report to the Council on Member States' progress in implementing them;
- proposing, still in May 2018, a successor to the Erasmus+ programme that reflects the growing consensus on the need to further increase mobility, notably of school pupils, vocational education and training learners and apprentices, as well as to make the programme more inclusive and accessible;
- making full use of the existing European cooperation framework in education and training, focusing on exchanging empirical evidence, benchmarking, and mutual learning. As this framework will expire in 2020, the Commission is currently consulting policymakers and stakeholders with a view to making proposals for a new framework for EU cooperation in education and training. This framework will be the

vehicle for setting education and training priorities and will help to better target EU funding towards EU and Member State priorities.

YOUTH

How does the new Youth Strategy link to the previous one?

The new Youth Strategy will seek to improve the EU's outreach to and dialogue with young people, building on EU youth policy cooperation between 2010 and 2018.

The interim evaluation of the existing EU Youth Strategy and a stakeholder consultation confirmed that EU youth cooperation has been successful. It has triggered both policy and legislative changes at national level. But there are areas for improvement, in particular the need to reach more young people from a diverse range of backgrounds, including at local level; to improve the impact of the dialogue with young people and to ensure their voice is heard across policy areas.

How will the EU use the strategy to encourage youth participation and engagement?

At the EU level, the Commission proposes to broaden the dialogue with young people beyond youth organisations active in the EU matters, embracing a more diverse audience and in particular targeting disadvantaged groups. The future EU Youth Dialogue should also enable alternative forms of participation, such as online campaigns or consultations via digital platforms connected to the European Youth Portal. This will increase the reach beyond the 200,000 young people involved in the EU youth dialogue since 2010.

Moreover, the Commission will work to remove obstacles to facilitate volunteering and young people's engagement in solidarity activities, for instance by updating and expanding the 2008 Council Recommendation on the cross-border mobility of volunteers.

How will the EU improve the promotion of youth issues across other EU policies?

The Commission is proposing for example to create the position of an EU Youth Coordinator who would be a visible contact point for young people in the Commission, helping to ensure coordination and sharing outcomes of the EU Youth Dialogue as well as well as give feedback to young people. Another novelty is the tracking of EU spending on young people.

CULTURE

Why is the Commission proposing a new European Agenda for Culture now?

European leaders have stated their vision of a Union which harnesses the role of culture in strengthening a European identity that preserves cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity. And according to a 2017

Eurobarometer survey, citizens regard culture as the most powerful factor for bringing Europeans together.The New European Agenda for Culture seeks to support Member States in making the most of the potential of culture in fostering innovation, economic growth and job creation, as well as in building stronger links between communities and with the EU's partners across the world. Actions include fostering the mobility of artists, better supporting the cultural and creative sectors through stronger links with industrial policy and to strengthen cooperation with third countries, for instance the Western Balkans.

How will the New Agenda build on the European Year of Cultural Heritage?

The new European Agenda for Culture aims to continue and scale up efforts launched during the European Year to (re)connect Europeans with their cultural heritage and reap the full benefits heritage brings for social and economic development. One initiative announced in the Agenda is an Action Plan for Cultural Heritage which will be presented at the end of the European Year. Member States will be invited to develop similar plans at national level and follow up through the Council Work Plans for Culture.

For more information

[Questions and Answers](#)

[Education (including factsheet)](#)

[Culture (including factsheet)](#)

[Youth (including factsheet)](#)