



6TH EUROPEAN EDUCATION SUMMIT



building the
EUROPEAN
EDUCATION AREA

European
Education Area

Foreword by the Commissioner

“At the Summit, we agreed that the European Education Area can only become a reality if we stay focused and work on all fronts together.”



On the journey towards a genuine European Education Area, where learners and knowledge circulate freely, 2023 marked a significant milestone.

EU institutions, the Member States and wider education community assessed the progress that we have collectively made so far in building the European Education Area and examined the main challenges to overcome before the next strategic milestone set for 2025. The 6th European Education Summit on 30 November 2023 was a pivotal event. It gathered policymakers, stakeholders, experts, and practitioners not only to take stock of the progress, but also to develop new ideas for a strong and steadfast European Education Area that will stand the test of time.

This summit brought together 22 Ministers from EU Member States and partner countries as well as Members of the European Parliament, of the European Committee of the Regions and of the European Economic and Social Committee. Over 500 participants on site and 2500 people following online made of this impressive event a true success.

Eleven high-level panels offered valuable insights

and sparked lively debates on shaping education and training policy over the coming years, covering topics from early childhood education and care to digital education, from the future of the teacher profession to citizenship education, from quality investment in education and training to the future of learning mobility.

It was encouraging to see the wide agreement at the Summit on the importance of working across various domains together and of leveraging shared successes to make further progress. We demonstrated that we can make significant strides forward with clearly defined priorities translated into policy objectives and quantified targets, and supported by policy instruments and adequate funding both at the EU and national levels.

The European Education Area serves as an effective framework to address shared concerns, coordinating actions in the EU countries and Europe-wide.

The European Commission remains committed to achieving the 2025 milestone, ensuring the foundational elements of a solid European Education Area are in place.

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Opening Speech



Commissioner Iliana Ivanova

opened the sixth European Education Summit that took place on 30 November 2023, in Brussels. She stressed that Europe's education was at a pivotal moment as we have passed the halfway point on our way to 2025.

She said the Summit was a good opportunity to take stock and see how our years of work have translated into change on the ground as well as to consider what should be enhanced, and what needs to be recalibrated.

Commissioner Ivanova expressed gratitude for stakeholders' input to the European Education Area midterm review that took place over the course of 2023. She emphasised the value of the collaborative effort shaping education across the EU. Significant achievements, including the delivery of strategic actions under the European Education Area, including the Learning Lab for Quality Investment in Education and Training and the two new recommendations on digital education were noted. The Commissioner also highlighted the success of the Erasmus+ programme that supported national reforms and empowered over a million learners, teachers, trainers, and young people.

Commissioner Ivanova acknowledged existing challenges, especially the ones concerning basic skills. She recalled that teachers are facing growing challenges, with staff shortages and demographic change. She reiterated that the Commission is turning its attention to teachers'

situation, as she presented the 2023 edition of the Education and Training Monitor, focusing on teachers across the EU.

The Commissioner also highlighted the forthcoming Learning Mobility Framework and the Joint Degrees as the last two packages of the European Education Area until 2025. She referred to the 'Europe on the Move' proposal of the Commission that is to make learning mobility more inclusive and accessible, aiming to broaden its scope and set targets for the percentage of graduates and learners benefiting from mobility. She stressed that the work goes hand-in-hand with efforts on a joint European degree in order to give more people the opportunity to benefit from a joint study programme, studying in multiple EU countries. She recalled as well that for a joint degree other fundamental building blocks should also be set. This is why this blueprint will be accompanied by Commission proposals for Council Recommendations on a European quality assurance and recognition system and on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education.

Commissioner Ivanova stressed the need for continued support from the education community, including policy-makers, stakeholders, social partners, and educators. As the European elections are approaching, Commissioner Ivanova emphasised the role of education in informing peoples' choices, fostering responsibility, and empowering individuals. She concluded her opening speech with a call for support in achieving the European Education Area and building a more connected, empowered and resilient Europe.



European Education Area Midterm Review

The sixth European Education Summit convened for a plenary session on the mid-term review of the European Education Area (EEA). The EEA, a collective effort involving Member States, the Council, the European Parliament, and various stakeholders, aims to be a reality by 2025.

The sixth European Education Summit convened for a plenary session on the 2023 European Education Area (EEA) mid-term review process now concluding, that has involved Member States, the Council, the European Parliament, and the wider education and training community.



As moderator, **Director-General Pia Ahrenkil-de Hansen** opened the session by emphasising the importance of this joint reflection process on the progress made and the work that is still to be done to achieve our common vision for education in the EU.



Commissioner Iliana Ivanova highlighted three persisting deep challenges to building the EEA: boosting equity and inclusion at all levels of education and training, addressing teacher shortages and increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession, and promoting European citizenship education. She also stressed the importance of sufficient budget and funding.



State Secretary José Manuel Bar Cendón pointed out the Spanish Presidency's initiatives focused on promoting common values and democratic citizenship highlighting the crucial role of education in addressing societal challenges. He stressed the need to unite efforts to ensure shared values and the importance of implementing proposed measures throughout the whole European Union.



Elisa Gambardella, President of the Lifelong Learning Platform, President of the Lifelong Learning Platform, shared insights from the Lifelong Learning Stakeholders' Forum, stressing its representative factor. She highlighted equity and inclusion as the main challenge when achieving the EEA, and the plea for the recognition of the key role of civil society as an actor in this process. She mentioned funding and adequate resources and a robust and democratic governance structure as essential elements for success. Concrete recommendations from the Stakeholders' Forum were mentioned, including a 20% target of public expenditure to be invested in education and training, the establishment of a "Vice President for Lifelong Learning" in the next mandate of the European Commission, and the participation of stakeholders in the High Level Group in Education and Training.



President Horia Onița, representing the European Students' Union, emphasized the need for the EEA to really benefit students and for them to actively contribute to its development. He called for an inclusivity framework at all levels, increased mobility, adequate funding, and a focus on mental health and student well-being, as well as notable student involvement in relevant decision-making processes. He also brought attention to the significance of student support services, which should be available and accessible to all students.

When asked about the future of the European Education Area in 2030, Elisa Gambardella hoped for the prioritization of education and of its holistic and inclusive approach in a culture of policy co-creation including stakeholders, while Horia Onița emphasized a student-centered, well funded and accessible higher education. José Manuel Bar Cendón envisioned a Europe

where young people have a common project, with the EEA playing a crucial role in the EU's political agenda.

As for the next steps, Commissioner Ivanova highlighted the recently adopted proposal for the learning mobility framework and the upcoming higher education package, including a Commission communication on joint European degrees and proposals for Council recommendations on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education, and European quality assurance and recognition system, and the preparation of the 2025 evaluation report of the European Education Area.

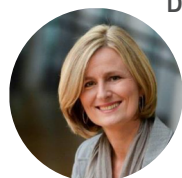
The panel discussion provided a comprehensive overview of the mid-term review, highlighting challenges, achievements, and future aspirations. The commitment to building an inclusive and quality European Education Area was evident throughout the dialogue, with a clear emphasis on collaboration, funding, and student involvement for its success.



Improving the Attractiveness of Teachers' Careers



Highlighting the key role of teachers in ensuring high quality education, moderator **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot** opened the session by underlining the issue of shortages, a problem facing all Member States. Mrs Waterschoot invited the panelists to reflect on the recent findings of the 2023 Education and Training and to discuss the measures already taken at different levels in EU Member States to attract and retain teaching talent.



Director General Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen stressed that schools in disadvantaged areas are most likely to suffer from teacher shortages, which risks further reinforcing inequalities in education. She also reiterated the need for more young people to embrace the teaching profession. Financial incentives need to be paired with attractive career structures and support for

continuing professional development in order to make teaching more appealing to young people. She concluded by reiterating the European Commission's support for the Member States in addressing these challenges.



Minister Mariëlle Paul (NL) highlighted the importance of improving teacher's working conditions and mapping career paths for teachers with more tracks for development. She mentioned a national initiative in the Netherlands regarding the professionalisation of teachers that allows teachers to take 80 hours annually for professional development. At the same time, she emphasised the role of Erasmus+ Teacher Academies that fit in with the aim of further development after initial teaching training.



Minister Kristina Kallas (EE)

began by mentioning a successful programme started 5 years ago in Estonia that focuses on the training of teachers on digital competences.

With the arrival of digitalisation and AI, it is imperative to teach children higher level cognitive skills including analytical skills, critical thinking and thinking on ethical issues, and to move away learning by repetition. However, the Minister made clear that IT and AI should be "assistants" to the teachers, the latter ones keeping the main role in education.



MEP Marcos Ros Sempere

reminded that there is a need for updated, reinforced training for teachers that are in line with the goals of sustainable digital transition. Focusing on the issue of students' wellbeing and the fight against bullying and cyberbullying in schools, he reinforced the need for teachers to be trained on how to deal with diversity in the classroom. The MEP also stated that teachers must be well remunerated for their work, and that international mobility of teachers can bring them experience about diversity. He concluded by reminding that there are already initiatives that improve teacher training such as Jean Monnet actions and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies, and that the ultimate goal of

all existing initiatives is to ensure quality and inclusive education.



Director of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)

Susan Flocken underlined the need to raise the status of the teaching profession. She highlighted that the focus should be on an approach that allows not

just the recruiting of new teachers, but also the retention of the already employed teachers. For that, it will be necessary to raise the status of the teaching profession. The key issues raised by teachers are salaries, working conditions and professional autonomy and development. Mrs. Flocken finalised by stating that education must be a priority for governments.



General Secretary of the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) **Daniel Wisniewski** proposed a rethinking of the learning environment with a better use of the time of the teachers, effective use of digital tools

and building a relation between teachers and the digital world. He added that it is necessary to look at alternative pathways for teaching, by making the profession more open.



The Future of Education in an Artificial Intelligence-Driven World



Moderator **Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva** opened the discussion by underlining artificial intelligence's profound impact on every-day life, including education, and highlighted that global AI spending is set to reach EUR 100 billion by 2024. With the AI Pact, the European Commission is at the forefront when it comes to regulating AI and supports educators with the publication of ethical guidelines as well as the provision of digital skills with the recent adoption of the Digital Education and Skills Package.



Minister Kyriakos Pierrakakis (EL) highlighted that AI can better meet students' needs by personalising educational materials and that the integration of AI tools into existing IT systems can ease tasks such as searching for learning materials and data. In terms of challenges, the Minister pointed to the need for ethical guidelines and codes of conduct as well as the need to monitor the impact of AI and to train teachers on how to use AI tools in a classroom.

Deputy Minister Jiří Nantl (CZ) stated that schools



should prioritize students' personal development, self-esteem building, and the provision of tutoring to support their well-being. He underlined that this focus on wellbeing as well as digital skills and literacy are part of the soon-to-be-adopted Czech national education strategy. Finally, the Minister emphasised the challenges in teaching an ICT curriculum while facing a critical teacher shortage, particularly in rural areas.



State Secretary Elina Laavi (FI) pointed out that Finland is a frontrunner when it comes to AI and digital education and underlined a need for more research to better understand their impact. This research should form the basis for a common ethical and legal framework and support teachers' skilling and upskilling so they can make the best use of AI to support learning processes.



Aurel Laurențiu Plosceanu, Vice-President of the EESC, stressed that by 2027, 75% of companies are expected to have adopted AI. At the same time 40% of adults in Europe currently lack or have low digital skills. He pointed out that AI will be a net job creator, especially in the automotive and space industry and that to tap into those opportunities, people need to have the right skills. He recalled the need to combine soft and cognitive skills such as analytical thinking with specific skills related to technologies like AI and machine learning.



MEP Victor Negrescu, Vice-Chair of the CULT Committee, stressed the need for a collective societal and stakeholder approach to tackle AI issues. The European Parliament is calling for an EU strategy on AI and robotics education. Mr. Negrescu also called for a coherent approach to digital skills provision, with clear indications of which competences need to be taught on each level and sector. He underlined discrepancies in the use of AI across Member States, particularly in rural areas and emphasised

the necessity for allocating specific resources to AI in education.



Professor **Inge Molenaar** recalled the importance of cross-sectorial cooperation. As an example, she highlighted a Dutch co-creation program, where new technologies are developed by the private sector in cooperation with teachers. She stressed that AI is often used as a replacement tool rather than an augmentation. More research is needed on how to use AI to build higher-order skills of students, and crucial pedagogy and pedagogical innovation is often overlooked. She also highlighted the current fragmentation of the policy landscape and the EU's role in bringing national AI strategies together.

Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva concluded the session by highlighting that the discussion showed the enormous potential and challenges of AI in education and the need to keep the conversation going.



Resilient Investment: Navigating the Future of Education and Training Funding



Opening the session, moderator, **Stefan Zotti** highlighted that inclusive education and training are key for Europe's recovery and its future competitiveness. Therefore, there is a need to preserve public investment in this area while making it more effective and efficient. He recalled that significant European funding has been made available for Member States, and that the European Commission provides technical support through the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training.



Undersecretary of State Paola Frassinetti (IT) stressed that Italy has allocated 9% of their National Recovery and Resilience Plan's resources to reinforce their education system, aimed at boosting digital competences, reducing territorial gaps, promoting personalised teaching, and supporting educational staff. She mentioned that Italy

has a national system of school evaluation and national longitudinal testing on students' results that allows collection of data and monitoring. It is used to measuring the effectiveness of policy interventions.

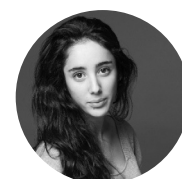


Deputy State-Secretary Veronika Varga-Bajusz (HU) explained that Hungary has introduced a new model for universities to improve their competitiveness at international level.

Around one-third of Hungarian universities are now foundations, that is private institutions. The aim was to make them more flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. Hungary allocates half of its financial resources for higher education on the basis on performance indicators. In this way, performance is based on quantifiable facts and figures.



In her intervention, Director for Innovation and Competitiveness **Felicitas Riedl** recalled that education is the foundation of innovation. Nevertheless, many companies around the EU say that skills shortages remain a barrier to investment and innovation. The EIB is determined to address this challenge by supporting education and training at all levels to foster and create a highly competitive ecosystem in Europe. The EIB has teams of experts that look deeply into project proposals – they check if they are fit-for-purpose, embedded in the local demands and needs, and if they offer sustainable and inclusive education and training.



Lou Aisenberg, Strategic Development Manager for the IDEE programme, explained that J-PAL Europe is supporting the French government in generating more evidence about what

works in education using impact evaluations. It is also trying to bridge the gap between education and research, and between research and education practitioners. She advocated for promoting experimental research and impact evaluation as they can be powerful tools to identify the most effective policy measures.

Reflecting on how Member States, the European Commission, international organisations and educational stakeholders could work better together to make investment in education more resilient and fit for the future, panellists concluded that education should be put back at the heart of the EU agenda, called for a greater collaboration between Ministers of Education and Ministers of Finance, and stressed the importance of enhancing and creating structures at EU level that could ease the collaboration between academia and policy-makers.



Quality Early Childhood Education and Care in Practice



Moderator **Michael Teutsch** opened the discussion by outlining the main objectives of the EU Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Systems (2019) – making accessible, affordable, and inclusive ECEC a reality. He pointed out the key challenge of member states wanting more quality and inclusive ECEC while at the same time struggling with increasing staff shortages.



Agata D'Addato, Head of programmes at Eurochild, stressed how despite the foundational role of ECEC in children's development and well-being, early years are often invisible in policy-making. She emphasized the rights of all children to experience safe, inclusive, and nurturing learning environments. However, universal access to education and care across Europe is not yet a reality and particularly vulnerable groups of children are unable to access quality ECEC. She concluded by stressing the need

for more public investment in ECEC and more diversity in staff to reflect local communities.



Associate Professor **Arianna Lazzari** highlighted the shared responsibility for high quality and accessible ECEC, requiring commitment of actors at different levels from ECEC professionals to local and national policy-makers. She highlighted the EU Council Recommendation on high quality ECEC systems (2019) and Child Guarantee (2021) as landmarks supporting policy makers in this demanding task. Finally, she shared three key priorities emerging from her work as a consultant for the ECEC working group – addressing staff shortages by improving working conditions and investing in professional development, facilitating collaboration among local educational, social and health services to provide all-round support for vulnerable children and families, and involving children, families, and local communities in democratic decision-making processes.



Minister **Athena Michaelidou** (CY) shared her government's strong commitment to ECEC and teacher well-being. Cyprus does not face an ECEC teacher shortage. The Minister shared various factors contributing to the teacher surplus – the respect and prestige associated with the job, comparably high salaries, access to free and continuous professional development and opportunities for promotion, and participation in ongoing innovative projects experimenting with new learning methodologies.



State Secretary Iva Ivanković (HR) shared how Croatia is addressing ECEC professional shortages. The average percentage of children in ECEC in Croatia is 78%, below the EU average. Aiming to increase ECEC attendance to about 90%, Croatia is investing in building infrastructure and re-training primary school teachers to work in ECEC. The program is already seeing positive results with higher uptake of university education training programs.



MEP Dragoș Pișlaru stressed the need for systemic transformation, cautioning against future challenges if ECEC is not prioritized. The demographic transition stresses the urgency of investing in the young generation with initiatives such as the European Year of Skills and European Year of Youth. Generational changes also mean that educational systems built on a factory model do not apply anymore and need to be adapted to the current reality. Finally, technological innovations are changing education dramatically. Mr Pișlaru stressed that ECEC is more than a children's rights issue and highlighted the importance of involving youth as experts in the discussion. He concluded by advocating for collaboration across sectors to achieve a more integrated and holistic approach to ECEC on policy level.

Michael Teutsch closed the session by highlighting the valuable work of Erasmus+ and the Working group on ECEC in facilitating peer learning and cooperation across Europe.



The Future of Learning Mobility in the European Education Area



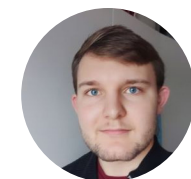
Opening the session, moderator **Ute Haller-Block** introduced the objective of the panel discussion, focused on the future of learning mobility in the European Education Area (EEA) in the light of the Commission's proposal of 15 November 2023 for a Council Recommendation and the recommendations of the European Citizens' Panel on learning mobility. She underlined that the proposed Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' is a key building block of the EEA. Three main features of the Recommendation were highlighted – integrating learning mobility as part of curricula in all education and training sectors, more ambitious targets for higher education mobilities (25% of graduates having mobility experience) and for vocational education and training (VET) mobilities (15% of VET learners), and new targets for inclusion, implying that at least 20% of all learners are people with fewer opportunities.



Director of the Finnish National Agency for Erasmus+ **Mika Saarinen** underlined that the proposal reflects a life-long perspective of learning for all and mobility for all, as the skills of all citizens are needed to create future successful Europe. In his view, learning mobility should be at the heart of the EEA and it is crucial to focus on strengthening existing structures and integrating them into each other, in order to facilitate a more mobile Europe. Mr Saarinen pointed to the importance of learner-centred way and called for mobilities which are motivating, recognised, adding skill value, and integrated to the learning programmes. He also flagged the potential of blended mobility to enhance the overall quality of learning mobility.



Ismael Paez Civico, board member of the European Youth Forum, stated that the title of the proposed recommendation 'Europe on the move' shows a continuous development towards a more inclusive EU and highlighted the importance of the contribution of the European Citizens' Panel. He stressed that the target in the proposal focusing on the inclusion could be more ambitious, but the proposed target value of 20% is a very good start. Beside the crucial part of the learning mobilities in higher education, embedded in the curricula, it is necessary to put emphasis on mobilities of young people outside of education paths and happening through civil society organisations, youth organisations, student networks and informal groups.



Representatives of the European Citizens' Panel **Karolina Karkusińska** and **Kasper Beierholm Brix**



appreciated that all 21 recommendations from the Panel were incorporated into the proposal. They shared their experience on the Panel and highlighted significance of the recommendations on learning languages for all, intergenerational aspect of the proposal as well as the focus of the proposal on expansion of mobility opportunities and green mobility promotion.

After the exchange of reflections, the moderator opened the floor to the Q&A, both from on-site audience and citizens from the European Citizens' Panel following online. The questions were related to the accessibility of information on mobility opportunities, support structures, financial inclusivity of mobilities and on education as shared competence of member states and the EU.

Concluding the session, **Ms Haller-Block** emphasised the substantial role of all stakeholders in the co-creation process of learning mobility programmes.



Education for Active Citizenship



The moderator, **Stefan Zotti**, opened the discussion by highlighting that democracies are as strong and resilient as the citizens are committed to actively engage with them. As democracies depend on their citizens, it is

imperative to have education systems that contribute to the formation of active European citizens. The discussion would focus on the challenges identified by the European Parliament's report on the implementation of citizenship education and the adoption of 2018 Council's recommendations.



MEP Domènec Ruiz Devesa claims that there is a knowledge deficit on the EU that needs to be addressed. He reminded that there are initiatives that already foster civic education such as Jean Monnet for schools and The European Parliament Ambassador School Programme. However, to further encourage citizenship education, he proposes the introduction of a module on European Citizenship Education to all the students that participate in Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps projects.



Minister Caroline Désir (BE) mentioned that in Wallonia-Brussels Federation every school actively engages in educating on citizenship and democracy. To that extent, a new common syllabus for compulsory education came into

force in 2022 as part of the Pact for Education Reform that focuses on topics such as philosophy and ethics, civic and democratic participation, and human rights. Teachers are supported by having access to digital tools such as the Eclass platform where they can find over 100 resources on Europe, European integration and democratic practices.



Minister Clifton Grima (MT) underlined that educating children on active citizenship cannot rely solely on the educational system. In Malta, people are more involved in the political sphere from a young age - 16-year-olds can

vote - and there is an on-going debate about them being able to become mayors. Active citizenship starts with giving trust to people, as young people can make societal differences.



Minister João Costa (PT) stated that seven years ago, Portugal designed an educational policy based on 3 pillars which are tightly connected - success, inclusion, citizenship. He highlighted

the importance of building inclusive educational systems that develop empathy among students and teaching them how to become members of a community. He further added that inclusion and citizenship are dependent on each other.



Tanya Hristova, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, reminded the panel that local authorities are greatly contributing to the engaging of the young population. She reiterated that all levels of governance need to contribute to citizenship education and to

work on establishing trust. According to the Charter of Youth and Democracy drafted last year by young people, learning by doing is the best way to learn democratic participation.



Britta Breser, Professor for Citizenship Education, warned that democracies are in crisis. Citizenship education needs a strong institutional implementation in educational institutions.

She highlighted the need for chairs in democracy education in all teaching training institutions, education seminars for teachers in all universities, and for building transnational networks to exchange good practices. She also mentioned the International Civic Citizenship Education Study published in November 2023 which showed that trust in politics and society has fallen and a decline in citizenship knowledge.



Education Challenges in the Neighbourhood East Region



Moderator **Antoaneta Angelo-Krasteva** opened the panel by recalling that on the 8th of November, the European Commission issued a recommendation to the Council to open negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova and granted candidate status to Georgia. It is crucial to support the integration of these countries in the field of Education and Training. The vision to create the European Education Area is a source of inspiration for many countries facing challenges from digital transformation to gender equality and inclusion.



Minister Giorgi Amilakhvari (GE) highlighted that the candidacy status is a milestone that Georgian people have been waiting for. Human capital development is one of the key priorities for the Georgian government, and the budget for Education and Science in 2024 will be increased by 25% to continue the modernisation of the education system, including investments in the school infrastructure and increase of teachers' salaries. Minister Amilakhvari also highlighted a new vision on VET and the goal of raising the employment rate by making the state not only a technical partner but also an investor in bringing together the public and the private sector.



Minister Dan Perciun (MD) recalled that the European decision to open negotiations with Moldova is crucial. The country is facing challenges, including the integration Ukrainian students, which would lead to an increase of 8% of the school population. Moldova asked for the EU support in this regard. The enrolment rate in pre-school is less than 3%, which represents a barrier for women participation in the workforce despite investment in ECEC. Access to high quality education in rural areas also remains a big challenge. Teacher deficits are a common problem, and Moldova is working on increasing salaries and allowances to address this challenge.



First Deputy Minister Yevhen Kudriavets (UA) highlighted that the country's commitment to ensuring access to education to all citizens, including national minorities. Soon, Europe will have Ukrainian children speaking more EU languages and able to open new businesses around Europe, increasing competitiveness. Ukraine is facing three main challenges – maintaining the system despite the war and the destruction of infrastructure; providing emergency-response services and safety; and the impossibility splitting emergency response and development into separate factors within the sphere of education.



Elizabeth Fordham, Senior Advisor for Global Relations at OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, underlined the key strengths and weaknesses of the three countries. Their participation in PISA tests shows commitment and willingness to learn and improve. PISA also shows insights into policy and political commitment – there are changes underway to transform the education, where the EU Framework of competences is a benchmark. There is also a need to transform teaching practices, and working on the urban and rural divide is crucial to reduce inequalities in each country.



Pilvi Torsti, Director of the European Training Foundation, recalled that the ETF was founded 30 years ago to support work in the field of human capital development outside the European Union. The ETF works mainly on three services, from monitoring and assessment to skills validation and anticipation, as well as policy advice. The demographic transition shows that there is a need to increase reskilling and upskilling. The main priorities of the ongoing work are evidence-based policy, a focus on adults as well as young people, and on teachers. The goal is to look at the efficiency and professionalism of the governance, capacities, and programming of the EU.

Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva closed the panel session by underlining the importance of working together and thanking the speakers for the commitment in carrying on modernisation of the education and training system despite the difficult circumstances.

Higher Education: Towards a European Degree



Moderator **Sophia Eriksson-Waterschoot** opened the panel by presenting key elements of the idea behind the joint European degree – removing barriers and establishing a common framework for the design, delivery, and award of joint degrees based on common European criteria. She highlighted that the joint European degree builds on a co-creation exercise done by policy experimentation projects working on a joint European degree label and will be done in full respect of subsidiarity.



Rector **Amaya Mendikoetxea Pelayo** pointed out that transnational joint programmes already exist but take the form of double or multiple degrees. Joint degrees, which are only awarded by a small minority of institutions, constitute a significant step further namely easing in a significant manner the coordination between institutions and providing added value to the students in view of employability. Rector Mendikoetxea Pelayo presented the main lessons learned so far regarding the potential establishment of a joint European degree label. Among others, the importance of removing bottlenecks in higher education regulation was highlighted, as well as defining a clear procedure for the award of the joint European degree (label), highlighting the benefits, and prioritising accessibility. Moreover, the balance between institutional autonomy and national requirements, the creation of an internationalisation culture in higher education, and funding streams to support the sustainability should also be considered.



Deputy minister Genka Petrova (BG) presented the main components of the Bulgarian higher education strategy 2021 – 2030, and the main efforts related to the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Building Bridges for effective higher education cooperation. The most relevant changes were related to quality assurance and accreditation processes, facilitating the institutional accreditation of degrees. A proposal to improve the sharing of resources between universities

participating in European Universities alliances is also being explored, and there are further conversations with Bulgarian institutions regarding recognition of degrees and the sustainability of the initiative.



Student representative **Dana Reignier-Tayar** from the EPICUR University Alliance and the European Student Assembly reflected on her experience and the experiences of her colleagues from the assembly to list her key expectations on the joint European degree and its criteria. She highlighted the international dimension through mobility and intercultural learning, including multilingualism, and aspects related to interdisciplinarity and the diversity of learning experiences. She also gave specific recommendations on the extension of Erasmus Mundus to bachelor programmes, student support mechanisms and the importance of ensuring that future joint European degrees are accessible to students from all backgrounds.



Executive director **Sofia Costa d'Aguiar** laid out the vision of EELISA, based on the creation of a European framework for engineering education. She explained that the JEDI European degree label project is focusing on creating a new model in engineering, as well as in building new spaces for research and innovation and new communities. She also highlighted key aspects that they have learned from the experience of setting up their first master's within the alliance, such the importance of easing cross border accreditation, the challenges related to introducing innovative education and the need for a balance between flexibility and consistency. Finally, she showcased how these policy experimentations are showing the potential of collaboration between alliances.

Sophia Eriksson-Waterschoot concluded the panel by highlighting the constructive and clear ideas of participants and invited everyone to continue engaging with the joint European degree, starting with the upcoming call for evidence which will support the higher education package that the European Commission will present in 2024.

Driving Change, Aiming for Impact: Transforming Green Education for a Sustainable Future



Moderator **Gyula Cserey** led the EducationForClimate panel focusing on green skills development and transforming learning environments for sustainability. The session explored how learning spaces, both physical and non-physical, could enhance education for the green transition by providing policy and practice examples from diverse cases across Europe, emphasizing multidisciplinary approaches.



Minister Niall Collins (IE) spotlighted Ireland's efforts in greening the workforce for meeting climate action goals. The government focuses on upskilling and retrofitting, and aligning apprenticeships with green principles to meet the demand for energy-efficient improvements in homes and businesses through large-scale VET education that is short, free, and flexible offering green skills pathways regardless of prior education in the spirit of lifelong learning.



Jöran Mandik from Floating Berlin shared the success of their New European Bauhaus awarded initiative, transforming an abandoned airport rainwater basin into an educational engagement landscape and action laboratory for urban transformation. Challenges were noted in replicating this model elsewhere due to funding and constant need for substantial engagement fieldwork, permits, and infrastructure constraints.



State Secretary Bogdan Cristescu (RO) outlined Romania's national strategy for green education up to 2030, emphasizing initiatives in enhancing student skills, greening school infrastructure, creating educational resources, and teacher training. He outlined the Green Week National Initiative encouraging schools to focus on

green activities. Challenges were highlighted in funding allocation and scaling successful initiatives across diverse communities.



Secretary General Silvia Gomez Re-cio detailed YERUN's commitment to sustainability and how universities play a pivotal role in fostering local green ecosystems, noting that sustainability extends beyond environmental concerns, encompassing all SDGs. This includes reshaping university curricula towards sustainability as well as engaging staff in sustainable practices and linking research to local challenges to address real-life issues while maintaining an international perspective. In this context, challenges include the non-alignment of existing recognition and assessment systems with local community engagement or sustainability, a lack of teaching sabbaticals and support for curriculum development regarding green competences, and insufficient recognition of student-led sustainability initiatives.



Vice-President **Aurel Laurențiu Plo-sceanu** of the European Economic and Social Committee applauded efforts to disconnect educational attainment from socio-economic background, actively advocating for equality measures in line with indicators to reduce poverty and early school leaving aligned with sustainable development education. He addressed the challenges of rural depopulation due to job scarcity and limited educational opportunities and how engaging citizens, civil society, and especially youth in green competence processes can enhance their daily lives. The Challenges outlined are multifaceted – institutional constraints like insufficient financial resources and infrastructure, a scarcity of time and personnel for curriculum design, overloaded educational curricula, inconsistent national education reforms as well as imbalanced power dynamics between learners and teachers.

The Power of Sport for a Well-Rounded Education



Moderator **Georg Haeusler** opened the discussion by stressing the potential of sport as an educational tool, teaching pupils' invaluable life skills, and in transmitting European values such as fairness, teambuilding, equality, discipline, inclusion, perseverance, and respect.



Minister Zoltán Maruzsa (HU) mentioned the national plan which provides children with 5 hours a week of physical activity, the "NETFIT" programme that monitors the fitness level of students, and the programmes to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the fitness levels. He also highlighted the work done in building new sport infrastructure and, with the Hungarian presidency coming up, the importance of putting sport on the agenda.



Minister Thomas Byrne (IE) shared Ireland's view on sport as part of the overall well-being plan, and experience with the programmes 'Active School Flag' – which encourages physical activity and literacy – and the 'Olympic Movement Breaks' – through which well-known athletes go to schools to encourage kids to move. He also mentioned the 'Sports Capital Programme' that promotes the development of sports infrastructure to be used by schools and local clubs. Minister Byrne concluded by asking for more exchange of information and best practices at the European level and stressing the importance of research in sport.



Pointing to the increase of obesity and inactivity among children, **MEP Tomasz Frankowski**, Co-Chair of the Sports Group in the European Parliament, considered that schools are not fully taking advantage of sport's potential. He underlined the importance of promoting a healthy and active lifestyle and recalled the 2021 EP resolution on EU sports policy, where Member States are asked to develop infrastructures and incentivise physical

activity. Welcoming programmes like the European Week of Sport and the BeActive campaign, he advocated for an increase of Erasmus+ funds for sport.



Believing that sport helps dealing with health-related issues and social fractures, **Laurent Petrynka**, President of the International School Sport Federation, underlined the lack of importance given to sports by schools and defended a change in their mentality is needed. He advocated for the increase of physical activity in primary schools and the education of teachers on how to use sport as an educational tool. He considered that profound transformation at the European level is needed.



Laura Capranica, President of European Athlete as Student, considered that there is lack of literacy and that the way sport is looked at needs to change. Professor Capranica emphasised the positive impact of sport on individuals' cognitive capacity, on integration and how it can be used to bridge the generational gap. She concluded by asking for incentives to research and the inclusion of sport scientists in the dialogue.



Ambassador of the European Week of Sport, **Willemijn van Aggelen** stated the benefits of physical activity on the success in other disciplines and regretted that sport is not a priority for the schools' directors. She also referred a programme in the Netherlands that aims to teach children how to swim and shared her experience on the ground training young girls and the importance it has in their personal development.

Closing the session, **Georg Haeusler** highlighted the messages put forward by the panelists to change the mindset towards sport, to educate the teachers, to keep children active, and to address the problems related with the lack of infrastructure and funding.

Statement by the Incoming Presidency of the Council of the EU



In a statement by the future Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, **Minister Françoise Bertieaux** began by congratulating Commissioner Ivanova for organising the Education Summit and highlighted the great enthusiasm of the panelists and the public. She also mentioned the importance of holding such fora for discussion in order to develop a common understanding of emerging topics such as the use of artificial intelligence in education or the necessity of a green education for a sustainable future.

She stated that the topic of mobility will be at the center of the incoming Belgian presidency. By working together with the member states and following the proposal for the Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' (2023), the presidency aims to ensure learning mobility, experiences for everyone, and remove further barriers to learning.

She recalled that Belgium is committed to achieving the European Education Area and will work on the improvement of quality and equity in the education and train-

ing systems by preparing Council Conclusions on evidence-based education in the European Education Area, and by organizing a conference on the topic in Brussels in February 2024.

Building on the excellent work of the Spanish presidency, Belgium is politically committed to ensuring that all citizens can thrive professionally in the world of today and tomorrow. The minister announced that the next Presidency Conference in Education taking place in April 2024 will be on the topic of lifelong learning, reuniting stakeholders from the national and EU level and discussing new policy ideas on adult education, higher education, and upskilling and reskilling. In addition to that, Belgium will convey national experts in the field of digital education to a dialogue on ethics, AI, and privacy to facilitate successful implementation a national digital strategy in education and training systems. She concluded by inviting the participants to collectively reflect on the progress that was made so far on the European Education Area and to further contribute to joint efforts.



Concluding Remarks

Commissioner Iliana Ivanova remains confident in the community's ability to deliver on shared ambitions.



In her concluding remarks, **Commissioner Iliana Ivanova** expressed her gratitude for the lively discussions and open exchange of ideas at the European Education Summit. Acknowledging the diversity of opinions and approaches within the community, she applauded the shared commitment to realizing the European Education Area by 2025.

Commissioner Ivanova highlighted three key take-aways from the Summit. Firstly, she underscored the value of a solid evidence base for cooperation in European education, citing the Education and Training Monitor and the Erasmus+ Annual Report as essential tools. However, she noted the lack of a culture of evaluation, especially regarding investments, and urged the community to actively contribute to the ongoing public consultation for the mid-term review of the Erasmus+ program.

Secondly, she advocated for cross-sectoral approaches to address challenges such as the green and digital transitions and skills shortages. Furthermore, Commissioner Ivanova stated that she sees the potential for innovation in areas like entrepreneurship education, digital education, and Artificial

Intelligence. She stressed the importance of empowering teachers with the skills to navigate these technologies, aligning with the core principles of the European Education Area.

Lastly, she brought attention to the significance of citizen engagement. She emphasized the role of citizens' voices in shaping policies, referencing the European Citizens' Panel and the European Year of Youth. She acknowledged the need to involve citizens actively, and she stated that she sees programs like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps as avenues for channeling citizens' energy into meaningful contributions to the education community.

Lastly, Commissioner Ivanova expressed her optimism and the inspiration drawn from the Summit. She acknowledged the challenges ahead but remains confident in the community's ability to deliver on shared ambitions. She extended her gratitude for the insights, expertise, and the success of the event, looking forward to the continued journey towards a truly European Education Area.



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