European Commission

Education and Training 2020

Highlights from the Working Groups

2014-2015

Education and Training

Education and training systems in Europe offer citizens great learning opportunities throughout their lives. Yet, more than one in ten pupils leave school without sufficient qualifications, less than four young people out of ten have completed higher education and two adults out of ten have low literacy and numeracy skills.

This shows that there is still a lot to do to ensure that our education systems equip Europeans with the skills they need to find their place in the job market and in society. Sharing information on common challenges, on successful reforms and on good practices across Member States is invaluable. The Education and Training 2020 Working Groups are an important vehicle for this kind of policy cooperation.

Over the past two years, six Working Groups have been exchanging good practices in the fields of schools policy, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning, transversal skills, and digital and open learning. They have involved more than 400 experts from the 28 EU Member States, the candidate countries and the countries of the European Economic Area, as well as European social partners and European-level associations representing interest groups.

I am pleased to present to you the 'Highlights' of the work of these six Groups – an online toolkit, three competence reference frameworks and several policy handbooks – as well as important policy messages and lessons learnt.

As six new Working Groups are starting work this month, I trust this brochure will prove a useful and inspirational document to support the development of quality education and training systems throughout Europe. We need to keep working on reforms. To preserve our prosperity and competitiveness – and to ensure all Europeans can make the most of their lives.

Tibor Navracsics

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

February 2016

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The highlights presented in this document have been drafted by the Commission in cooperation with Working Group members. These messages do not necessarily reflect the Commission nor the Member States' positions, but are intended to summarise the main conclusions of the informal work undertaken in the Groups.

More information on the Working Group outputs can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups_en.htm

ET 2020 Working Groups, involving over 400 experts from Member States' administrations and other stakeholders, are one of the main instruments of the **ET 2020 tool box**. Through **mutual learning and the identification of good practices** they support Member States in addressing the key challenges of their education and training systems and the common priorities agreed at European level. Between 2014 and 2015, there have been **six ET 2020 Working Groups**.

The **Working Group on School Policy** has delivered two main outputs:

1. An **online school toolkit,** with accompanying **policy messages,** on how to implement a whole school approach to promote inclusive education and reduce early school leaving;
2. A **guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education**, entitled "Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching", illustrating suggested policy actions with examples from across Europe.

The **Working Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education**, relying on peer learning activities and policy discussions at DG level, has elaborated **key messages** contributing to the implementation of the modernisation agenda, more specifically on the following issues:

1. Restructuring the higher education landscape
2. Performance-related funding and performance agreements
3. The Regional Knowledge Triangle
4. Internationalisation, mobility and newly arrived migrants
5. Improving employability
6. Improving completion of higher education

The **Working Group on Vocational Education and Training** has developed **20 guiding principles**, targeted primarily to policy-makers, social partners and training providers, on how to create the most favourable conditions for **high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning**. These guiding principles cover the following policy challenges:

1. National governance and social partners' involvement
2. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering apprenticeships
3. Attractiveness of apprenticeships and improved career guidance
4. Quality assurance in work-based learning

The **Working Group on Adult Learning**, relying on peer learning activities and informed by two studies, has elaborated key messages and policy recommendations with the aim of:

1. Increasing adults' basic skills
2. Developing ICT skills for adults and use of open education resources
3. Strengthening the policy efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of policies

The Working Group on Transversal Skills has contributed to the take-up of the EU common competence reference framework for language and digital competences, and the development of such a framework for entrepreneurship education.

The Working Group on Digital and Online Learning has contributed to the development of:

1. a **reference framework** to help educational organisations unleash the full potential of digital and online learning, the "Digitally-Competent Educational organisation" framework;
2. **key messages** on the following components of an open education: quality assurance, production and use of open educational resources.

This document provides more information on these outputs. It is targeted at policy-makers.

WORKING GROUP ON SCHOOL POLICY

The objective of this Working Group was to assist countries in improving school education by advancing policy development through peer learning and the sharing of good practices. Under this mandate, the Group focused on two key challenges: tackling early school leaving and improving initial teacher education.

Major outputs of the Working Group are:

- An online **'European Toolkit for Schools'** with accompanying **policy messages**, on how to implement a whole school approach to promote inclusive education and reduce early school leaving

- A **'Guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education'**, which explores ways for countries to enhance the relevance and quality of how teachers are prepared for their challenging role. Suggested policy actions are illustrated with a wide range of examples from across Europe.

Early School Leaving

In a context of decreasing early school leaving rates across the EU but also of striking differences among European countries, regions and groups of learners, the Working Group explored how collaborative approaches at local and school can best respond to the complex and multidimensional nature of early school leaving and promote educational success for all children and young people. Acknowledging that learners leave education for many different and intertwined reasons, at the end of a long process of progressive disengagement, often linked to underachievement, the group concluded that school is only one agency that can tackle early school leaving, but that it cannot work in isolation, as there are factors outside the school that will influence a child's level of engagement and success.

Building on the results of the Thematic Working Group on early school leaving (2011-2013), the Working Group took the perspective that a whole school approach to tackling early school leaving is needed, in which the entire school community engages in a cohesive, collective and collaborative action, with strong cooperation with a range of external stakeholders. The Group identified the necessary policy conditions and steps for effective implementation of such approaches, as well as a wealth of good practices at school level from a range of Member States. Examples of good practices and other resources are being made available to policy-makers and practitioners through the new 'European Toolkit for Schools'[1], a unique online platform which will remain open for further collaboration of school stakeholders across Europe. Promoting inclusive education and whole school approach, the Toolkit covers a wide range of topics and will be updated and expanded on a continuous basis.

The key **policy messages** of the Working Group include:

- Ensuring each child and young person has an equal chance to access, participate and benefit from **high quality and inclusive education**, with engaging and relevant curricula and inspiring and dedicated staff, is the most effective way to prevent early school leaving.

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[1] Available at the School Education Gateway: http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm

- **All learners and their diverse needs** should be **at the centre of the school** – they should set high expectations for all learners to reach their full potential.

- **Effective leadership and governance** is needed to promote teamwork and collaborative practices within the school community and bring the school actors and other stakeholders together to ensure educational success and prevent early school leaving.

- There needs to be a commitment towards investment for **continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and other school staff** with a focus on awareness of early school leaving processes, and on the competences and skills needed to address educational disadvantage and student disengagement.

- **School development and improvement processes** should include targets to address the underlying factors of early school leaving and involve the entire school community, stakeholders, multi-professional teams, external local services, parents and families.

- Education is a **shared responsibility between parents and the school** – it must be built on a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation between the two.

Initial Teacher Education

The Working Group identified Initial Teacher Education (ITE) as a fundamental area for education policy to support a shift towards new working cultures and teaching practices, to lay the foundations for teachers' capacity to adapt to changing contexts and circumstances and to increase the attractiveness of teaching as a career choice.

Summarising the results of its work in **"Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching. A guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education"**, the Working Group sets out why the quality and relevance of ITE programmes should be a key concern for policy-makers and points to possible policy solutions.

The Guide focuses on three major policy challenges around ITE.

Firstly, the Guide argues that enabling change requires comprehensive policies that seamlessly **link the different phases of teachers' professional development by adopting a career-long perspective**. It provides examples of policies that are based on a view of **the teaching profession as an integrated continuum** and take care to link different interrelated perspectives, including teachers' learning needs, systems to support them, career paths, the organisation of competence levels and the impact of school culture. In this context, ITE is the first part of a longer and dynamic process, not a stand-alone and complete phase.

Secondly, teachers are increasingly expected to collaborate to improve both their teaching practice and their own learning. The Group found that successfully **promoting collaborative learning** among teachers not only requires changes to practice and work environments; it also necessitates a shift in mindsets and the development of new work cultures, with a key role for ITE. Shared country evidence includes ways to incentivise and support collaboration, such as action research, networking and training for collaborative leadership.

Thirdly, the Guide argues that in increasingly complex education systems the **governance of ITE** is stronger if it is based on collaborative approaches, in which governments closely involve ITE providers and other stakeholders. Country evidence points to different forms of **collaborative governance** (including new structures, fora, funding mechanisms and frameworks) that are based on dialogue and participation and enable stakeholders to share part of the responsibility for a well-prepared teaching force.

On each of these themes the Guide combines a discussion of the key concepts with an examination of **recent policy action** across Europe, examples for **measures to support change**, and concludes with **suggested policy actions**.

WORKING GROUP ON THE MODERNISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The key messages below were formulated - based on exchange among peers representing national authorities and higher education institutions – as outcomes of country-focussed workshops and supported by evidence.[2]

Restructuring the higher education landscape

Member States wish to promote better quality, efficiency and responsiveness of higher education (HE) systems. At a structural level, one policy response is reforming the HE landscape through encouraging vertical or horizontal diversification and specialisation between institutions and/or consolidation based on mergers and alliances. **In order to create a HE landscape that balances the objectives of quality, efficiency and responsiveness, governments should, with key stakeholders, determine the purpose of the reform and establish the overarching vision for HE.** They should analyse options for HE system improvement and the causal chain between the planned changes and the expected impacts and outcomes. Consultation on the need for, and content of, the planned changes is important to make all parties aware of the connection between the proposed reform and the targeted improvement in performance. **Legal frameworks to facilitate system restructuring, and assess estimated costs** should be developed. Finally, they should **offer incentives for HEIs**, and **monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the reform**. The reforms should be accompanied by incentives for HEIs and by appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures.

Performance-related funding and performance agreements

It is legitimate for authorities to seek to ensure that public investment in HE facilitates HE institutions' contribution to society and economy. While transparent formula funding provides the basis of institutional funding allocation, governments are increasingly using performance agreements to strengthen the strategic planning and outcome focus of institutions. **Performance agreements provide a flexible tool that can complement formula funding because they include both qualitative and quantitative goals with differentiated targets between institutions**. Careful selection of quantitative goals and their indicators ensures that the mechanism and causal links through which the institution can achieve them are clear and that data collection is feasible. **Performance-based systems should be relatively simple** because the steering impact of a specific indicator depends on the percentage of funding with which it is linked. Funding connected to performance agreements should ideally be **additional to existing funding**. If non-attainment of targets leads to financial consequences, the amount of funding **should not risk the financial stability of institutions**.

The Regional Knowledge Triangle

HE institutions can contribute to development and growth in their regions by: a) enhancing innovation through research; b) promoting enterprise and business development; c) contributing to the development of human capital and skills; and d) improving environmental and social conditions through regeneration and cultural development. To develop a strong regional knowledge triangle, **HE institutions, industry and local and regional authorities should identify common priorities to guide collaborative work and actions**, which take into account the needs and potential of the region where they are located. Alignment of HE institutions' education provision and RDI with regional needs, as well as **strengthened cooperation and**

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[2] http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups_en.htm

knowledge exchange between HE and the wider economy and society, are important. To mobilise the potential of HE institutions in regional development, governments should **ensure institutional autonomy over funding, payroll and estate**, align financial incentives with goals and facilitate public accountability by monitoring and evaluating the results.

Internationalisation, mobility and newly arrived migrants

Comprehensive HE internationalisation strategies are called for to ensure that Europe remains the most attractive destination for international students and that non-mobile students will also benefit. HE institutions can also play a key role in the **integration of newly arrived migrants** who tend to be at prime working age, half of them under 25 years. Their early integration can be facilitated through: i) expeditious systems of recognition of prior learning, along with customised upskilling and bridging courses; ii) intense language and cultural training; iii) information, advice and guidance; and iv) widening access to HE by removing restrictions based on residency status.

Improving employability

While HE graduates generally fare better than their less qualified peers on the labour market, **HE systems need to ensure that students get an education which prepares them for the changing future**. Governments can facilitate this by: a) identifying future demand for knowledge and skills; b) providing career guidance; c) developing relevant HE offer; and d) building links between HE and the world of work. To take full advantage of skills forecasting, priority should be given to the **prediction of broad skills and competencies**.

HE programme design and career guidance can be improved by making aggregated and anonymised national level career tracking data available. Developing relevant HE course offer requires **moving away from teacher-centred classroom practices** towards student-centred models and **practical, problem-based learning approaches**. Governments can support this development by incentivising the use of active learning, new modes of learning and teaching and programmes such as short-cycle degrees, multidisciplinary and professional bachelor degrees and professionally-oriented HE. **Embedding work-based learning and transversal skills in HE** is one of the key measures to improve HE completion thanks to its positive impact on all students in terms of motivation, completion and employability. The WG agreed that policy-making should balance the importance of HE institutions responding to labour market needs and the need to provide students with a well-rounded education for the long-term and for society at large.

Improving completion of higher education

Improving completion or study success is closely linked to access and quality in HE. **Setting clear objectives and priorities linked to access and success** and mutually reinforcing goals generate more effective policy mixes. Evidence-based policies require **measuring study success on the basis of the entire student life cycle**. A **combination of national and institutional student tracking and student survey systems** can effectively inform policy-development. **Results should be made easily accessible** for all relevant stakeholders, through transparent publication and promotion.

Governments should promote **comprehensive and transparent knowledge and skills development systems stretching from pre-primary to tertiary education and lifelong learning**. Challenges in HE completion may be associated with similar challenges in secondary education. Through active collaboration with local schools, HE institutions can raise aspirations and academic performance of potential students. Governments can **use competitive funding incentives to enhance transition to HE**

of special groups and address the needs of non-traditional students. Removing educational dead ends, improving links with different levels and actors and improving recognition of prior learning help **build functioning pathways to encourage mobility across and within the system**.

WORKING GROUP ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Working Group on Vocational Education and Training has developed **20 guiding principles** on how to create and support high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning. These guiding principles address four key challenges in offering apprenticeships, namely national governance and social partners' involvement, support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering apprenticeships, attractiveness of apprenticeships and improved career guidance, as well as quality assurance in work-based learning. The principles are illustrated with real-life examples from the countries which participated, which show how certain elements of apprenticeships and work-based learning can be put in place.

Representatives of EU Member States, EFTA countries, Candidate Countries as well as EU Social Partner and VET Provider organisations, Cedefop and European Training Foundation (ETF) participated in the Working Group, which was chaired by the Commission.

National governance and social partners' involvement

Governments should provide a clear and consistent legal framework enabling apprenticeship partners to act effectively with mutual rights and responsibilities (1). The "apprenticeship partners" are the apprentice, the training company and the VET school or training centre. The legal framework should recognise the status of the apprentice as a learner and ensure his/her right to high-quality training that develops strong, transferable skills.

More than any other form of education and training, apprenticeships are often subject to different legislation (education, labour, etc.). Therefore, consistency should be given particular attention in national governance. To be effective, legislation should safeguard the rights and responsibilities of the main partners (VET providers, employers, apprentices and social partners), while duly involving employer and employee representatives in questions of apprenticeship content, assessment and certification. Thus, governments should not attempt to micromanage apprenticeships, but rather establish an adequate legal framework.

National governance should facilitate a structured continuous dialogue between all apprenticeship partners including a transparent method of coordination and decision-making (2).

Attention should also be given to strengthening the role of the social partners by capacity building, assuming ownership and taking on responsibility for implementation (3). The commitment of the social partners is an important component of a successful apprenticeship system. The social partners can for instance ensure that apprenticeship programmes are high performing and that they are regularly reviewed to meet the needs of the labour market.

Furthermore, good-quality apprenticeships require promotion of **systematic cooperation between VET schools or training centres and companies (4)**. In particular, SMEs with limited administrative resources may benefit from such continuous cooperation and support provided through business-education partnerships at the local level.

Apprenticeships should benefit the learners as well as the training companies. Many training companies benefit from offering apprenticeship programmes, because they can provide a supply of people trained to meet the company's specific needs. Furthermore, apprenticeship training can increase interest in training among other employees; this creates a 'training culture' in the training company as well as in the sector. Therefore, it is important that governance **ensures a balanced sharing of resources and benefits to the mutual advantage of companies, providers and learners (5)***.*

Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering apprenticeships

A clear and consistent legal framework is an important precondition but may not be sufficient to motivate companies to take on apprentices. Many companies, in particular SMEs, still regard it as a burden to take on apprentices because of the administrative costs involved in appointing trainers for apprentices, cooperating with VET schools, and so on. Therefore, **support measures that make apprenticeships more attractive and accessible to SMEs (6)** may be needed to motivate companies to take on apprentices.

In order to ensure the employability of young people the content and provision of apprenticeships should be updated continuously to labour market needs while still respecting the skill needs of the individual training company. This requires **finding the right balance between the specific skill needs of training companies and the employability of apprentices (7)**.

It is important to **focus on companies with no prior experience with apprentices (8)** that may need both financial and non-financial support measures.

VET including apprenticeships can also play an important role regarding the social inclusion of disadvantaged young people who are often not in employment, education or training. However, this may imply extra costs for the companies providing such apprenticeships placements. Consequently, it may be important to **support companies that provide apprenticeships for disadvantaged learners (9).**

In addition, it may be important to motivate and support companies to assign qualified trainers and tutors to their apprentices (10)*.*

Attractiveness of apprenticeships and improved career guidance

Promoting apprenticeships not only depends on motivating companies, but also on young, potential learners and their parents finding VET including apprenticeships attractive compared to other educational paths. It is important that VET is not perceived as a 'dead-end' that makes it difficult to move to other educational or career paths. Therefore, it is important to **promote permeability between VET and other educational and career pathways (11)***.* For instance, permeability can be enhanced by giving VET graduates formal access to higher education, creating bridging programmes, and/or integrating transversal skills at all levels of VET.

VET including apprenticeships currently do not have the same standing as general education or academic education and are often regarded as second-rate education and training in many countries. This calls for **improving the image of VET and apprenticeships by promoting excellence (12)**. Promoting excellence means that all stakeholders involved in the provision of VET including apprenticeships (learners, schools, teachers, training companies and the social partners) should attempt to enhance the professional pride of their vocational trade by doing their best to develop high-quality skills and making them visible to the public.

Career guidance that empowers young people to make well-founded choices (13) is an important element in relation to helping young people in the transition from school to work. Career guidance is a continuous process, which can start at an early stage in primary school and may continue as young people mature and make their choices on educational paths and careers. To ensure that guidance is accessible to young people, a good solution could be to adopt a multi-channel approach that combines personal face-to-face guidance with other modes of delivery such as the internet, hotlines, etc.

Whether young people find learning attractive and complete their education also depends on their relationship with VET teachers and trainers and on their competences. In order to **enhance the attractiveness of apprenticeships by raising the quality of VET teachers (14)**, it may therefore be important to continually update the vocational and pedagogical skills of VET teachers and trainers. In addition, cooperation between schools and enterprises is important to ensure good-quality apprenticeships and improve teachers' knowledge of current work practices and trainers – of pedagogics and didactics.

Improving the attractiveness of VET including apprenticeships also requires influencing the mindset of young people and their parents who may have outdated ideas about VET. Influencing such ideas requires **promoting the attractiveness of VET and apprenticeships through a broad range of awareness-raising activities (15)**. Awareness-raising activities such as work 'tasters' and job shadowing can help young people to make well-founded choices on education and career. At the same time, awareness-raising activities can combat prevailing stereotypes and prejudices about VET and apprenticeships. To be effective, awareness-raising activities should be launched at both the national and sector levels and involve the social partners.

Quality assurance in work-based learning

Quality assurance in VET has been in focus in European cooperation for more than a decade. Recently, the quality of work-based learning has also been brought into focus. Work-based learning requires **a clear framework for quality assurance of apprenticeship at the system, provider and company levels ensuring systematic feedback (16)**. Conditions for quality assurance of apprenticeships should be agreed upon at all levels (policy makers, industry, VET providers) and clear roles and responsibilities for the various partners as well as mechanisms for cooperation should be defined. However, the existence of legal and formal arrangements alone cannot guarantee quality in work-based learning.

A key issue is that systems and institutions should be able to accommodate change. Governance should institute mechanisms **ensuring that the content of VET programmes is responsive to changing skill needs in companies and the society (17)**. This may call for a systematic, evidence-based VET policy approach with regular forecasts of skill needs and evaluations of VET reforms and pilot projects.

Quality also requires **fostering mutual trust and respect through regular cooperation between apprenticeship partners at all levels (18)**. At the local level, for example, cooperation can involve final examinations of apprentices jointly conducted by in-company trainers, teachers and representatives from the professional community to ensure coherence between school and company training. At the national level, it may involve dialogue between the involved public authorities.

Ensuring a fair, valid and authentic assessment of learning outcomes (19) is an important element of quality assurance of work-based learning. As learning may take place in different learning environments, learning outcomes should serve as a common reference point for assessment. Furthermore, assessment should take place in a business

or business-like context to be as realistic as possible. The qualifications and training of assessors is also an important aspect when ensuring the quality of assessment.

In order to ensure the quality of in-company training it is important to **support the continuous professional development of in-company trainers and improve their work conditions (20)**. National recognition of trainer qualifications should be encouraged. However, a high degree of regulation of in-company trainers should be avoided as this may discourage skilled workers from becoming in-company trainers.

High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles

National governance and social partners' involvement	• **Principle 1:** A clear and consistent legal framework enabling apprenticeship partners to act effectively and guaranteeing mutual rights and responsibilities • **Principle 2:** A structured, continuous dialogue between all apprenticeship partners including a transparent way of coordination and decision-making • **Principle 3:** Strengthening the role of social partners by capacity building, assuming ownership and taking on responsibility for implementation • **Principle 4:** Systematic cooperation between VET school or training centres and companies • **Principle 5:** Sharing costs and benefits to the mutual advantage of companies, VET providers and learners
Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering apprenticeships	• **Principle 6:** Supporting measures that make apprenticeships more attractive and accessible to SMEs • **Principle 7:** Finding the right balance between the specific skill need of training companies and the general need to improve the employability of apprentices • **Principle 8:** Focusing on companies having no experience with apprentices • **Principle 9:** Supporting companies providing apprenticeships for disadvantaged learners • **Principle 10**: Motivating and supporting companies to assign qualified trainers and tutors
Attractiveness of apprenticeships and improved career guidance	• **Principle 11:** Promoting the permeability between VET and other educational and career pathways • **Principle 12:** Improving the image of vet and apprenticeships by promoting excellence • **Principle 13:** Career guidance to empower young people to make well-founded choices • **Principle 14:** Enhancing the attractiveness of apprenticeships by raising the quality of VET teachers • **Principle 15:** Promoting the attractiveness of vet and apprenticeships through a broad range of awareness-raising activities
Quality assurance in work-based learning	• **Principle 16:** Providing a clear framework for quality assurance of apprenticeship at system, provider and company level ensuring systematic feedback • **Principle 17:** Ensuring the content of VET progammes is responsive to changing skill needs in companies and the society • **Principle 18:** Fostering mutual trust and respect through regular cooperation between the apprenticeship partners • **Principle 19:** Ensuring fair, valid, and authentic assessment of learning outcomes • **Principle 20:** Supporting the continuous professional development of in-company trainers and improving their working conditions

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WORKING GROUP ON ADULT LEARNING

> The **Working Group on Adult Learning**, relying on peer learning activities and informed by two studies, has elaborated key messages and policy recommendations with the aim of: increasing adults' basic skills, developing ICT skills for adults and strengthening the policy efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of policies.

Adult learning can improve lives and economies.

Adult learning benefits individuals, companies and society. Adults that continue to learn earn more, are more employable, enjoy better health and are more active citizens. Adult learning improves companies' innovation performance, productivity, profitability and workforce motivation. It helps to improve a country's economic competitiveness and growth.

The high number of adults with poor basic skills is a major challenge for society. Too few adults have access to adult learning. The EU is far from attaining its benchmark of 15% adult participation in learning by 2020.

A major boost is needed to raise adults' basic skills.

Adult basic skills include reading, writing, spoken language, numeracy and digital skills. Improvements in these skills can enhance individuals' personal development, employment opportunities and nations' economic competitiveness. Education in basic skills can reduce social inequality, increase inclusion, cohesion and active citizenship; and improve mental and physical health.

All EU Member States need to help many more adults to improve their competences in the basic skills they need in order to thrive in today's society.

Member States need proactive policies to improve opportunities and incentives for their citizens to take part, and to facilitate the integration of adult migrants and refugees.

Better outreach and collaboration are needed to promote the participation of adults in learning, leading to their inclusion.

More effective, targeted outreach strategies at national, regional and adult learning providers' level can raise awareness of the basic skills gap and increase individuals' motivation to improve their skills.

Member States should provide high quality, well-targeted learning opportunities, and generate demand for formal, non-formal and informal basic skills training. This provision should also be part of the service given to unemployed adults; training and upskilling are most effective when participation is voluntary.

Many adults are motivated to learn for employment, and **workplace basic skills programmes produce benefits for employees and employers alike.** Member States need to work closely with employers and unions to increase the number and scope of workplace basic skills programmes.

To improve national adult skills levels, high quality programmes are essential.

Adult basic skills education requires adult-specific teaching methods and high quality curricula that include authentic materials from all areas of everyday life.

Member States should develop initial, formative and summative assessment and self-assessment strategies that motivate adults and support their learning.

Teaching adult basic skills is a challenging job and requires specialised training. Member States need to provide adult basic skills educators with attractive career pathways and appropriate employment conditions, as well as high quality initial training and ongoing professional development that focus on adult-specific teaching strategies as well as subject matter.

Adult learners who need to improve their basic skills often need extra support to complete their learning journey, such as specialised guidance services, clear progression routes, and opportunities for the accreditation and certification of their prior learning. Effective support increases the likelihood that adults will take the next step up.

To encourage participation and persistence, programmes need to be offered as close as possible to where people live. Practical support on matters such as course fees, travel costs; childcare and time off work should also be provided. Programmes should offer the possibility to resume after a period away from learning.

All adults now need digital skills.

Adult learners do not just need better literacy, they also need better *digital* literacy. **There is a growing 'digital skills divide' in Europe**. Digital skills are basic skills. However, many adults lack the skills they need to live and work in an increasingly digital society and labour market. They are unable to benefit fully from the opportunities offered by digital media and risk being further excluded as ever more information and services are offered 'on-line'.

Digital resources need to be more extensively used in adult education.

ICTs can and should play a more important role in the acquisition of literacy. **Mobile devices, open educational resources (OER) and social media have a great potential for widening access to adult learning.** These can support adults' informal learning and improve formal and non-formal education opportunities. However, the potential of ICTs in adult learning is currently not fully realised. Learners should have the right to acquire for free digital basic skills. Outreach activities are needed to involve hard-to-reach groups. Programmes should be devised to incorporate ICTs in the development of adult literacy and numeracy.

The 'OER revolution' promises to make available high quality educational resources to anyone, anytime, anywhere and at a relatively low cost. However, a recent European Commission study[3] shows that this revolution has not hit home in the adult learning sector in many EU member states. If Member States rely only on incremental and market-driven progress to address this challenge, much of the ICT learning potential will remain unexplored, so large scale policy initiatives are needed to overcome the poor ICT infrastructure in the adult learning sector.

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[3] Adult Learners in Digital Learning Environments (EAC-2013-0563)

ICT Policies should ensure a good balance between four elements:

- a clear vision for promoting adult digital skills and harnessing digital potential;

- ensuring the availability of high quality learning resources;

- comprehensive programmes to support adult educators in updating their skills and using ICT effectively; and

- innovative approaches to ensure adequate investment in infrastructure and hardware.

Adult learning policy needs to be coherent and coordinated.

A strategic, long-term focus on sustainable adult learning provision, with strong governance and a systemic approach to improving national basic skills, will benefit a broad range of policy areas. It will also provide significant return on investment in the form of decreased social spending and a richer, more dynamic economy. Short-term, low quality adult learning programmes are wasteful and ineffective.

Adult learning is a complex policy field. It makes important contributions to many other policies (e.g. economy, health, family …). The responsibility for adult learning policy is often divided across several ministries and agencies (e.g. education, training, migration, justice …) and several levels of policy making (municipal, regional, national). This shared responsibility often results in a situation where adult learning policy is fragmented and its efficiency suffers from insufficient coordination.

The provision of adult education is delivered by a wide range of government, private sector and third sector organisations. Therefore, the effectiveness of adult learning policy and provision as a whole is often undermined by the lack of coordination between these many parties, leading to fragmented and incoherent provision.

Improved basic skills will bring important benefits in many policy areas. Effective policies require strong collaboration between, among others, Education, Employment, Welfare, Business, and Health ministries, social partners and civil society. Cooperation across policy areas needs to be improved in all Member States. It is particularly vital for implementing effective outreach strategies to difficult-to-engage groups of adults.

Member States need to ensure that adult learning policies are coherent over time i.e. based upon a long-term strategic vision, yet flexible enough to respond to new challenges, such as the refugee crisis, and to adjust in the light of feedback from users and monitoring.

Adult learning policies need to be informed by evidence and proper monitoring.

The choice of adult learning policy reforms must be based upon solid evidence highlighting the most effective practices and interventions. By investing in research on what works, and by monitoring the impact of their policies, countries can make provision more effective and save money in the long-term. The ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning has helped to develop a framework that can guide policymakers in their decisions on adult learning policies.

WORKING GROUP ON THE TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

> The Working Group on Transversal Skills has contributed to the **take-up of the EU common competence reference framework** for language and digital competences, and the development of such an upcoming framework for entrepreneurial skills.

Transversal skills for employability, innovation and active citizenship

The skills required in the 21st century have changed considerably due to the increasingly global, interconnected knowledge society. Next to basic skills, transversal skills, such as problem solving, entrepreneurship, critical thinking and digital competence, in line with the 2006 Key Competences Recommendation, are increasingly important. **Transversal skills are essential for employability, innovation and active citizenship.**

However, these skills are less well embedded in formal education and training and often acquired through informal and non-formal learning. They are thus **difficult to define, assess and validate, and less straightforward to teach and learn.** Education and training curricula and related learning outcomes should cover these skills.

The Working Group has addressed these challenges. The focus was put on **tools that can facilitate teaching, learning, assessment and documentation** of some of these transversal skills. The Group contributed to the development and discussion around **common competence reference frameworks for language, digital and entrepreneurship skills**.

While initially the mandate of the Working Group intended to address synergies and transferability between the transversal skills, the issues characterising these skills were not discussed due to a lack of transversal approach in the development of competences at national level. It could be part of future work.

Improving the outcomes of language teaching and learning

Thanks to a previous mapping and comparative analysis of languages in education and training, Member States had agreed on the main challenges as well as the role of the **Council of Europe's Common European Framework of References (CEFR)**[4] in order to address these challenges.

The main conclusions were the following:

- There is a need to **refocus multilingualism policy** on language teaching and learning, based on a better understanding of the CEFR principles;

- There is scope for **continued training for practitioners** through the RELANG[5] project, a collaboration between the European Commission and the European Centre for Modern Languages;

- A **better dissemination and implementation of the CEFR principles** should be pursued and promoted, in particular in curricula design, teacher training and assessment;

- More emphasis should be put on **self-assessment and formative assessment**, helping learners and educators to better orient the lifelong acquisition of language competences

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[4] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

[5] http://relang.ecml.at/

- **Transversal/transferable language competences** can be better exploited, building on the competences already acquired to improve one's linguistic repertoire

- The relevance of language learning and teaching to the **realities of the labour market**, expectations of learners, employers and tertiary/further education providers should be regularly verified;

- Increased use of CEFR levels as a transparency tool in certifications delivered by schools, job vacancies, CVs etc. should be promoted, when appropriate through the use of the **Europass language portfolio**.

EU competence framework on digital competence

Digital competence is more than just ICT functional skills; it involves critical, creative and collaborative uses of ICT.

In order to find a common understanding of the digital competence, it was broken down into "constituent parts". The objective was to form a Competence Reference Framework.

The **European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DIGCOMP)**, already available[6], outlines five areas: Information processing, Communication, Content creation, Safety and Problem solving, bringing together 21 competences in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

On this basis, self-assessment tools for learners and citizens can be developed through descriptors for various proficiency levels[7] with the support of multiple stakeholders (E&T providers, employment services, business, guidance centres, social partners and policy makers). **Self-assessment tools offer the possibility for each citizen to measure the knowledge, competence and skills they have acquired and what they are missing to facilitate their ongoing training and/or job search**.

The EU Digital Competence framework offers learning outcomes descriptors for three proficiency levels (in EUROPASS-CV), and eight proficiency levels on the user needs for other purposes (self-assessment, curricula designs, talent assessment, etc.).

DIGCOMP take-up by Member States demonstrates its usefulness[8].

Developing entrepreneurship competence for citizens

There are many interesting initiatives under way across Europe to include entrepreneurial learning into formal and non-formal education. However, substantial variations exist between different countries and even between schools. One of the challenges relates to the different understanding of what entrepreneurship education means, from a narrow understanding focusing on business creation to a broader approach encompassing creativity, risk-taking, and innovation.

To support the development of entrepreneurship education and its contribution to transversal skills, a working definition of entrepreneurship was agreed on:

"Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into values for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural or social".

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[6] http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC83167.pdf

[7] See in particular p. 14 of DIGCOMP report

[8] See map: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/implementation?search

After consultation of more than 200 stakeholders (including Working Group experts), a **European Conceptual Framework for Entrepreneurship Competence (ENTRECOMP)** has been developed, which will be available in June 2016. It is based on three competence areas and 13 competences with descriptors for each of them.

It is accompanied by an EU recognised self-assessment questionnaire to support teachers, companies and individuals in assessing their level of entrepreneurship skills.

It was further agreed that there is a need to exchange good practices between Member States as was the case in the context of policy experimentations or the Entrepreneurship 360 project[9]. Good practices are also made available on the School Education gateway[10].

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[9] http://www.oecd.org/site/entrepreneurship360/home/

[10] http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm

WORKING GROUP ON DIGITAL AND ONLINE LEARNING

The ET 2020 Working Group on Digital and Online Learning (WG DOL) analysed research findings, shared good practice and developed methodologies and tools to improve the **quality and increase uptake of digital and online learning**.

A reference framework to help education institutions develop innovative and open learning environments

Digital technologies for education have reached a high level of maturity; appropriate infrastructure, devices, tools/software and content are increasingly available and used. Nevertheless, the uptake of digital and online learning technologies remains uneven across Member States. Institutional leadership, teacher competences, and coherent policy frameworks remain important barriers to mainstreaming.

There is a broad understanding among policy makers and practitioners that **holistic approaches are required for optimal educational use of digital and online learning technologies**. The reference framework 'The **Digitally-Competent Educational Organisation**' developed in the Working Group with the IPTS[11] will help educational organisations to become more digitally competent. It addresses six core areas for institutional change: **Leadership and Governance; Teaching and Learning Practices and Professional Development; Content and Curricula; Collaboration and Networking; Assessment; Infrastructures.**

Quality Assurance for Open and Innovative Learning Environments

The quality assurance of open and innovative learning environments was addressed at a dedicated peer-learning event. The integration of digital and online learning in education raises new questions and challenges regarding quality assurance from at least three perspectives: the learner, the teacher and the institution. **Clear and comprehensive guidelines** for quality assurance are lacking. Such guidelines could:

- encourage the development of digitally competent educational organisations as well as educators' and students' digital competence.

- enable practitioners to assess different aspects of quality in digital and online learning and promote the use of high quality digital and open educational resources

- support students in developing the ability to critically and independently assess the quality of digital and online materials.

Produce and include digital content at all educational levels

Accessible and high quality open educational resources can help to transform education and training practices towards more open and personalised learning. More efforts to improve the usability of existing platforms through **large-scale pilots**, is needed. Such pilots would also help us get a better understanding of how teachers make use of OER.

Language barriers remain an obstacle to further European collaboration on OER, particularly in school education. In addition, differences in curricula make it difficult to develop taxonomies and quality indicators that can be understood and used in a uniform way.

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[11] The Institute for Prospective Technology Studies is part of the Commission's Joint Research Centre

A fine-grained mapping of curricula to resources could be beneficial for the cross-border use of resources and support the uptake of all kinds of digital educational materials.

Finally, in countries with limited number of OER users it can be difficult to define a sustainable model for these resources. Exploring **sustainability models for cross-country collaboration on OER** could prove beneficial.

Making open educational resource repositories more accessible

The lack of coherent metadata and commonly agreed taxonomies for educational resources is a barrier to the uptake of OER as it makes it harder for teachers to assess the quality and relevance of resources for their needs.

Future efforts to promote OER should consider the dimension of quality assurance as well as taxonomy and metadata standardisation. **Minimum agreed standards on metadata could improve the uptake of OERs and other digital educational materials**.

More clarity on copyright

The existing copyright framework is overly complex for educational practitioners[12]. The current legislative frameworks also tend to favour analogue over digital practices. **Simplicity and clarity should be guiding principles for the ongoing revision of the current European copyright framework and national transposition**.

The challenges that confront practitioners in education and training under the current framework are such that they often require legal expertise. **The creation of contact points that provide educators with advice on copyright for digital and online learning could help overcome barriers to use**.

Important trends in digital and online learning have been identified

Key trends include:

Mobile technologies and faster internet access have led to **new hybrid learning forms blending formal, non-formal and informal learning.**

Education systems are now open to new actors[13] and educators and learners can build strong and inclusive communities which support rich learning experiences.

The ubiquity of **social media and digital technologies throughout society has shown a necessity for educational institutions to open the learning environment** in order to support employability and active citizenship.

Digital and open educational resources can be used, shared and adapted for different learning contexts **allowing learners to be co-producers of learning materials and enable more authentic learning experiences**.

Data generated from online activity can be used to **personalise learning, teaching and assessment** (learning analytics). At present, there is limited European research on learning analytics to guide policy and practice, including on issues such as data privacy and protection.

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[12] Creative Commons is a de-facto standard for open educational resource licensing.

[13] This is a key message of the Communication on 'Opening up Education'. COM/2013/0654 final.

Key messages of the working group

Engaging in **innovation requires a holistic approach** and the involvement of actors at all levels of the education system**.** Opening up and innovating the learning environments have many dimensions and go beyond the use of digital technologies.

New partnerships and methods of cooperation across institutions and borders have become possible and should be encouraged**.**

Personalised learning, enabled by digital technologies, can bring significant improvements in learning outcomes.

Digital competence and skills acquisition cannot be separated from how learning processes are organised and how curricula are translated into pedagogical practices.

The use of digital technologies will mean that increasing amounts of data on learning processes are collected. Such 'learning analytics' have considerable potential to personalise and improve learning. However **learning analytics also raises questions around data protection, retention and privacy** that need to be addressed. More European research should be supported to help evidence-based policy.