

**Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on effective teacher education<sup>(1)</sup>**

(2014/C 183/05)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THIS ISSUE, AS SET OUT IN THE ANNEX TO THESE CONCLUSIONS,

CONSIDERS THAT:

1. High quality teaching is widely acknowledged to be one of the key factors in achieving successful learning outcomes, by developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners need in order to realise their full potential both as individuals and as active members of society and the workforce.
2. In a fast changing world, the role of teachers — and the expectations placed upon them — are evolving too, as they face the challenges of new skills requirements, rapid technological developments and increasing social and cultural diversity, and the need to cater for more individualised teaching and special learning needs.
3. Teacher educators have a crucial role to play in maintaining — and improving — the quality of the teaching workforce. The provision of high quality initial teacher education, early career support ('induction') and continuous professional development is a significant factor in ensuring that suitable candidates are attracted into the teaching profession and that teachers possess and maintain the relevant competences they require to be effective in today's classrooms.
4. Improving teacher education programmes and recruitment processes requires the prior identification of the professional competences needed by teachers at different stages of their careers. Professional competence frameworks can be used to raise quality standards, by defining the knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers, including in the fields of vocational education and training (VET) and adult learning, should possess or acquire. Similarly, the teacher educators who prepare teachers to undertake their tasks can benefit from frameworks of this kind.

ACKNOWLEDGES THAT:

1. It is not uncommon for new teachers to leave the profession prematurely, a phenomenon which can result in a significant loss to the individuals concerned and systems as a whole. Initial teacher education programmes which adequately prepare teachers from the very start, together with induction measures, mentoring and greater consideration for teachers' personal and professional well-being, can help to remedy this.
2. Teacher education should be seen as an integral part of the broader policy objective to raise the attractiveness and quality of the profession. This requires adequate selection, recruitment and retention policies, effective initial teacher education, early career support, career-long professional learning and development, pedagogical feedback and incentives for teachers.
3. Teacher education programmes, whether aimed at prospective teachers before they begin their careers or at practising teachers in the context of continuous professional development, should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in teaching and learning. They should draw on teachers' own experience and seek to foster cross-disciplinary and collaborative approaches, so that education institutions and teachers regard it as part of their task to work in cooperation with relevant stakeholders such as colleagues, parents and employers.

<sup>(1)</sup> For the purposes of this text, the term *teacher* encompasses school teachers, VET teachers and trainers, as well as adult educators. The term *teacher educator* is used to describe all those who actively facilitate the formal learning of student teachers and teachers, whether at the level of initial teacher education or continuing professional development.

4. The rapid expansion of digital learning tools and Open Educational Resources also creates the need for teachers to acquire sufficient understanding of these to be able to develop relevant digital competences and make effective and appropriate use of them in teaching. These new tools can also contribute to ensuring equal access to high quality education for all.

AGREES THAT:

1. Initial teacher education should provide prospective teachers with the core competences required to deliver high quality teaching, as well as stimulate the motivation to acquire and update competences throughout their careers. While taking full account of national contexts, it should not only include subject knowledge and pedagogical competences reinforced by integrated periods of practical teaching experience, but also encourage both self-reflection and collaborative working, adaptation to multicultural classrooms and acceptance of leadership roles.
2. Specific issues to which teacher education programmes should give more consideration include effective methods for helping learners to acquire transversal competences such as digital literacy, learning to learn, entrepreneurship and creative and critical thinking, as well as to strengthen language competences. In addition, attention should be paid to effective ways of supporting diverse groups of learners, including those with special needs and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. Initial teacher education could benefit from quality assurance arrangements and regular reviews, with emphasis being placed on achieving the required learning outcomes, on the quality and adequate duration of practical experience and on ensuring the relevance of what is taught.
4. Higher education institutions providing initial teacher education could be strengthened as hubs for educating both teachers and teacher educators, and for conducting research into teacher competence development and effective teaching and learning methods.
5. Dialogue and partnerships between teacher education providers and education institutions, as well as with representatives of the labour market and the community, can provide useful insights and ideas when designing and delivering teacher education programmes. Such partnerships can also contribute to promoting a more coordinated approach to qualifications, competence standards and the corresponding training provision, particularly in the fields of VET and adult learning.
6. Both initial teacher education and the continuous professional development of teachers should be based on sound pedagogical research and apply adult learning methods based on communities of practice, online learning and peer learning. They should ensure that teachers have regular opportunities to update their subject knowledge and to receive support and training in effective and innovative modes of teaching, including those based on new technologies.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, WITH DUE REGARD FOR SUBSIDIARITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, TO:

1. Seek to ensure that initial teacher education programmes provide opportunities for prospective teachers to acquire all the relevant competences they require to make a successful start to their careers.
2. Promote the development of comprehensive professional competence frameworks for teachers<sup>(1)</sup>, which define the competences and qualities they require at different stages of their careers or in different teaching situations. Such frameworks should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing needs and be discussed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.
3. Similarly, encourage the establishment of professional competence frameworks for teacher educators, setting out the competences they require, while reinforcing collaboration and the exchange of peer practices and developing areas such as the school-based mentoring of new teachers.
4. Further explore the potential of enhanced cooperation, partnerships and networking with a broad range of stakeholders in the design of teacher education programmes.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Drawing on the July 2013 report of the former Thematic Working Group on Teacher Professional Development (Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes).

5. Promote effective digital teaching and learning, by ensuring that teacher educators and teachers themselves acquire a sufficient level of digital skills, and that they learn how to help learners to use digital resources wisely and safely and how to better manage individual learning processes, by means of updated teacher education programmes and improved access to — and use of — quality Open Educational Resources.
6. Use the funding opportunities in EU instruments, such as the *Erasmus+* programme and, where appropriate, the European Social Fund, to:
  - (i) support Member States' policies aimed at enhancing the quality of initial teacher education and teachers' continuous professional development; and
  - (ii) promote the mobility of prospective teachers, teaching staff and teacher educators, and encourage strategic partnerships, policy experimentation and forward-looking projects on teacher education, in particular to enable new methodologies to be tested and competence frameworks to be put into practice.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

1. Make best use of the *ET 2020* structures under the Open Method of Coordination to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and to develop and disseminate successful policy practice on:
  - effective teacher education programmes, with a focus on initial teacher education and ways in which collaborative approaches to teaching should be addressed;
  - the professional development of in-company VET trainers, given their crucial role in delivering high-quality apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning;
  - reinforcing the relevance of teacher education curricula and the professional skills of teachers and trainers, where appropriate through closer cooperation with employers, including companies.
2. Exploit the results of relevant studies and surveys, such as TALIS <sup>(1)</sup>, in order to address the policy implications of teachers' and school leaders' views and opinions on teacher education.
3. Identify, through research, examples of the most efficient methods and practices for teachers to help learners manage their learning effectively in today's multidimensional learning environments.

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

1. Build communities of teachers, in particular prospective and recently recruited teachers, by making use of existing European platforms for teachers such as eTwinning, with a view to further developing collaboration among peers on teaching practices across the EU.
2. Support cooperation with partners, networks and organisations which can offer experience and know-how on designing effective teacher education programmes, in particular initial education programmes.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey.

## ANNEX

**Political background**

1. Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
2. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning <sup>(1)</sup>.
3. The conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007, on improving the quality of teacher education <sup>(2)</sup>.
4. The Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 establishing a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 (*ET2020*).
5. The Council conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the professional development of teachers and school leaders <sup>(3)</sup>.
6. The Bruges Communiqué of 7 December 2010, and the conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020 <sup>(4)</sup>.
7. The Council Resolution of 28 November 2011 on a renewed European agenda for adult learning <sup>(5)</sup>.
8. The Council conclusions of 26 November 2012 on education and training in Europe 2020 — the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs <sup>(6)</sup>.
9. The Council conclusions of 15 February 2013 on investing in education and training — a response to *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better social-economic outcomes* and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey <sup>(7)</sup>.
10. The Council conclusions of 25 November 2013 on effective leadership in education <sup>(8)</sup>.
11. Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing *Erasmus+*: the Union programme for education, training youth and sport <sup>(9)</sup>.
12. The Council conclusions of 24 February 2014 on efficient and innovative education and training to invest in skills — supporting the 2014 European Semester <sup>(10)</sup>.

**Other background**

1. The Commission communication of 20 November 2012 on *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*.
2. The 2013 Eurydice Report entitled *Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe*.

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 300, 12.12.2007, p. 6.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 302, 12.12.2009, p. 6.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 324, 1.12.2010, p. 5.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 1.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 393, 19.12.2012, p. 5.

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ C 64, 5.3.2013, p. 5.

<sup>(8)</sup> OJ C 30, 1.2.2014, p. 2.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ C 62, 4.3.2014, p. 4.