



Challenges and Priorities for the EU Education and Training 2020 Framework: an Overview

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Back in 2009, the European Commission established Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) framework to offer a forum to exchange best practices, information and advice for policy reforms among the member states.

As such it set four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020 namely: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship; enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

The framework also target that for 2020: at least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education; fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science; the rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 should be below 10%; at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education; at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning; at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad; the share of employed graduates (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at least 82%.

The [recent draft joint report by the EU Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training \(ET 2020\)](#), however, shows that serious challenges still remain in the member states. For instance, 20% of 15 year-olds in the EU score poorly in reading, science and mathematics; 20% of adults have low levels of literacy and numeracy, and 25% have low levels of digital skills – yet only 10.7% take part in lifelong learning and very few low-skilled adults; early school leaving now stands at 11.1% and 19 Member States have reached the Europe 2020 headline target, but there are still more than 5 million early school leavers, with high unemployment rate (41%); though higher education continues to improve, employability of graduates remains a serious problem, especially in countries most affected by the crisis.

Against the challenges set out above and to better align ET 2020 strategic framework with the EU's political term and priorities, the recent draft also outlines some of the main progresses identifying new priorities for further work up to 2020. The report recognizes the relevance and the quality of learning outcomes as the first priority and a means for skills development that needs to be stimulated in a lifetime perspective. Given the lifelong learning plan, the draft considers “early childhood education and care” (ECEC) as the starting point, which should be accomplished by reducing “early school leaving” (ESL). Further, the draft emphasizes the role of “higher education” (HE) systems and the “vocational education and training” (VET) in achieving better employment rates and boosting the knowledge economy. On the other end of the spectrum, there is adult learning (AL), which is the basis for up-skilling and re-skilling, the draft added.

Attention in the draft is also given to the contribution of education to social cohesion, equality, non-discrimination and civic competences as the second priority. Lastly the report puts the requirements for the relevant and high-quality learning in the limelight as the third priority indicating the necessity of a more active use of innovative pedagogies such as digital skills and tools namely by providing strong support for educators, facilitating learning mobility, strengthened and simplified EU transparency and recognition tools as well as filling the investment gap.

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