

Council resolution on The European Education Area: Looking to 2025 and beyond

(2023/C 185/08)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLS the political background regarding the European Education Area as set out in the Annex to this resolution.
2. REAFFIRMS that the European Education Area can become a reality by 2025 only through the strong political commitment of Member States and STRESSES the need for continued efforts by both Member States and the Commission, within their respective competences, and as appropriate with the involvement of relevant stakeholders at national and European level, to take the necessary steps to achieve the European Education Area.
3. TAKES NOTE of the Commission communication on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area ⁽¹⁾.
4. UNDERLINES that education and training in all contexts, at all levels and in all forms are crucial to ensure social cohesion, competitiveness and sustainable growth in the European Union and its Member States and to prepare them for and support them through the green and digital transitions. Especially at a time when it is essential for citizens to find personal fulfilment and well-being as well as to adapt to the challenges of the changing world and to further engage in active and responsible citizenship, STRESSES the importance of high-quality, inclusive and equitable education, training and life-long learning for everyone – children and adults alike.
5. EMPHASISES that the European Education Area should be underpinned by a life-long learning approach that encompasses education and training systems in an inclusive and holistic manner, and covers teaching, training and learning in all contexts, at all levels and in all forms, whether formal, non-formal or informal, from early childhood education and care right through to school education and vocational education and training as well as higher education and adult learning.
6. REITERATES that cross-sectoral cooperation should be enhanced between relevant EU initiatives in education and training and those in related policy areas and sectors — in particular the employment, social policy, research, innovation, environment and youth and cultural and creative sectors while fully respecting the legal basis for the respective policy areas as set out in the Treaties. UNDERLINES the need for coordination and coherence of all EU initiatives in the area of education and training, in particular those concerning skills and competences.
7. NOTES that European cooperation in education and training is crucial for social cohesion and a well-functioning economic landscape in the European Union to ensure the Union's long-term competitiveness and the success of the green and digital transitions and to reduce social, regional and economic inequalities. RECOGNISES therefore the important contribution of European cooperation in education and training, including within the strategic framework, to relevant parts of the European Semester.
8. STRESSES the importance of promoting synergies between the European Education Area, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, while avoiding duplication of resources, structures and instruments, as well as using the full potential of the European Universities alliances in all their missions, including supporting their sustainability and continuing to strengthen their research and innovation dimension, in line with the Council Recommendation of 5 April 2022 on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2022) 700 final.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 160, 13.4.2022, p. 1.

9. RECOGNISES that the fundamental and democratic values of Europe are being challenged and that Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has changed the geopolitical landscape. AGREES that joint efforts and transnational cooperation in education and training not only facilitates and strengthens the Union's and Member States' responses to the needs that have arisen as a consequence of the aggression but also helps reinforce our key educational values and principles, such as inclusion, equity, academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as well as our common values and our unity in the Union.

10. EMPHASISES that identifying and removing the remaining obstacles to learning and teaching mobility is key to the full achievement of a European Education Area and the creation of a resilient, safe, sustainable and prosperous Europe. Transnational cooperation strengthens the inclusiveness, equity, excellence, diversity, attractiveness and global competitiveness of European education and training. AGREES, therefore, that efforts should be made towards making automatic mutual recognition in education and training a reality. Also AGREES that possibilities should be promoted for learners and teachers to be mobile and for institutions in Europe and beyond to cooperate with one another.

11. ACKNOWLEDGES that progress has been made since 2017 towards establishing the European Education Area and that a broad range of measures to achieve the strategic priorities set out in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (2021-2030) have been implemented across the EU. Through various initiatives, cooperation and co-creation, the European Education Area is gradually being shaped.

12. AGREES that focusing on implementation at both national and European level, in the context of the strategic framework, in line with the respective competences of each level, and robust monitoring within existing structures, with due regard to administrative burdens, will be key for the remaining period of the first cycle till 2025.

13. UNDERLINES that the five strategic priorities, as set out in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (2021-2030), constitute the basis for the work and for continued European cooperation in education and training, including towards the achievement of the European Education Area. AGREES that the ongoing midterm review process and the full report on the European Education Area to be published by the European Commission in 2025 should focus on those five strategic priorities, including a more in-depth analysis of the specific areas listed below.

14. RECOGNISES that the follow-up to the EU-level targets shows positive trends with regard to several longstanding indicators such as increased participation in early childhood education and care, a reduction in early school leaving and a higher share of young people with tertiary level attainment. However, it is also evident that many challenges remain, especially the effects of socio-economic status on educational achievement and students' well-being. AGREES, therefore, that a particular focus should be given to the following to achieve a European Education Area by 2025:

- Improving equity, inclusion as well as success for all in education and training and the acquisition of key competences, including basic skills, to enable the full personal, social, civic and professional development of all European citizens;
- Enhancing the teaching profession and addressing teacher shortages; promoting the professional development, mobility opportunities, working conditions and well-being of teachers as key factors in increasing the attractiveness of the profession;
- Removing the remaining obstacles to mobility while encouraging inclusive, sustainable and balanced mobility in the EU, including by achieving automatic mutual recognition in education and training (⁽¹⁾);
- Fostering life-long learning, including adult learning, upskilling and reskilling, with a particular emphasis on skills and competences for the green and digital transitions.

15. WILL REFLECT on the strategic framework and consider revising the priority areas and making any other necessary adjustments for the second cycle leading up to 2030.

(¹) In line with the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C 444, 10.12.2018, p. 1.

16. UNDERLINES that the successful use of the open method of coordination, drawing on mutual learning, sharing of best practices as well as the use and – where appropriate – the improvement of common reference tools such as DigComp and GreenComp, is key to achieving the European Education Area.
17. RECOGNISES that the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training has the potential to be a useful instrument for the Member States, to be used on a voluntary basis, in achieving strategic priorities by providing research and examples of best practice on effective investments and policy interventions while fostering evidence-informed policy making.
18. RECOGNISES that reformed governance and enhanced cooperation at EU level can help Member States to tackle emerging challenges and work together more closely towards achieving the European Education Area. RECOGNISES, also, the progress made in strengthening the High Level Group on Education and Training by redefining its role and introducing the Coordination Board. ACKNOWLEDGES that the new governance structure has proven efficient and useful during crises such as COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
19. AGREES, however, that further efforts are needed to enable better dissemination of findings as well as information and knowledge sharing between the working groups of the strategic framework, Director-General formations and the High Level Group on Education and Training in order to ensure synergies between the technical and the political level and derive maximum benefit from European cooperation.
20. UNDERLINES the need for a reinforced and purposeful dialogue between the Education Committee and the Employment Committee and, if appropriate and relevant, other parties involved in the European Semester process.
21. INVITES the Member States and the Commission to step up their efforts to co-create the European Education Area, in cooperation with other stakeholders at national and European level when relevant, including education and training providers and institutions, researchers, the social partners and civil society. AGREES that, in this regard, the High Level Group should further discuss the progress made, the remaining challenges and the future developments as well as examine the final report on the European Education Area in 2025. Also CALLS on the High Level Group Coordination Board to coordinate the preparation of a policy agenda in education and training for a period of 18 months for endorsement by the High Level Group on Education and Training, to be communicated to the Council.
22. INVITES the Commission to consider preparing and putting forward, in a timely manner, a proposal on a European Year of Teachers.
23. URGES the Commission to build further on the Council guidance and previous Council conclusions and resolutions on the European Education Area as the foundation for its work when facilitating the midterm review process in 2023 and drafting the full report on the European Education Area by 2025, including the preparatory work which could lead to a possible revision of the EU-level targets by the Council for the second cycle leading up to 2030.
24. CALLS on the Commission to pursue work, with the expert opinion of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, on proposals for possible indicators or EU-level targets in the areas of inclusion and equity, of the teaching profession as well as of learning for sustainability, and to report back to the Council.
25. EXPECTS the Commission to make further efforts in line with the strategic priorities agreed by the Council and covering education and training in all contexts, at all levels and in all forms, in close cooperation with the Council.
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ANNEX

Political background***Council of the European Union***

1. Council conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area, OJ C 195, 7.6.2018, p. 7.
2. Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C 444, 10.12.2018, p. 1.
3. Council Resolution on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems, OJ C 389, 18.11.2019, p. 1.
4. Council Resolution on education and training in the European Semester: ensuring informed debates on reforms and investments, OJ C 64, 27.2.2020, p. 1.
5. Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1.
6. Council Resolution on the governance structure of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 497, 10.12.2021, p. 1.
7. Council Recommendation of 5 April 2022 on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, OJ C 160, 13.4.2022, p. 1.

European Commission

8. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (COM(2020) 625 final).
 9. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area (COM(2022) 700 final).
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