

## The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning



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### Belgian takes over EU Council Presidency on 1st July: priority areas in education and training

Working in tandem with the **eighteen-month common work programme** set up as a "trio" with Spain and Hungary, Belgium set out its own priorities which it will pursue throughout its Presidency of the Council of the EU. It is calling for a "*stronger, more coherent and determined Europe, focused on guaranteeing and developing its social model and prosperity*" with a strong focus on employment and social affairs. The first meeting of the European Education Committee under the Belgian Presidency was held in Ostend on 1 and 2 July 2010. At this conference the Belgian Presidency introduced its programme. Under the Belgian Presidency, the Council will:



- adopt guidelines with a view to setting up a new work programme on the education and training of professionals until 2020 (Informal Meeting of Ministers in Bruges);
- adopt conclusions on education in the field of sustainable development;
- continue the work on the strengthening of EU cooperation in the domain of school education with a particular attention to drop outs and core skills and on the role of education and training in social inclusion;
- adopt the recommendation on the promotion of mobility for young people - depending on the presentation by the Commission of its flagship initiative "Youth on the move";
- work towards modernising higher education in Europe and on the interaction between higher education, research and innovation.

Conference planned under the Belgian presidency:

- Bologna Follow-up Group Meeting, Alden, 24-25 August 2010
- Conference on Social Inclusion in and through education, Gent, 28-29 September
- Youth on the Move, Achieving mobility for all!, Antwerp, 5-6 October 2010
- Quality assurance and Transparency to support easier pathways to lifelong learning, Bruges, 6 December 2010
- Towards a stronger European collaboration on vocational

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education and training, Bruges, 7 December 2010.

Programme of the Belgium Presidency [[here](#)] and specific website on education and training [[here](#)].

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## EU2020 adopted with two benchmarks on education and training, 17 June 2010



European leaders meeting in Brussels on 17 June adopted "Europe 2020", the new 10-year strategy for jobs and growth. They confirmed the five EU headline targets which will constitute shared objectives guiding the action of Member States and the Union as regards employment; innovation, research and development; climate change and energy objectives; and education and social inclusion in particular through the reduction of poverty.

Concerning Education and Training the Council adopted two benchmarks "improving education levels, in particular by aiming to reduce school drop-out rates to less than 10% and by increasing the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%". It also clearly reminded the competence of Member States to define and implement quantitative targets in the field of education. More information from the EU [[here](#)] and follow us on this topic [[here](#)].

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## EPSCO Council - echo from SOLIDAR "Austerity policies - the short and long term costs"

At the Informal Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) which met this week under the Belgian Presidency, Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs focused on the conditions of job creation from the angle of social cohesion, but particularly as a matter of competitiveness and growth. Whereas trade unions and social NGOs, who addressed the Presidency Trio at the Council meeting, drew attention to the realities of working poor and the increasing number of people living in poverty and excluded from full participation in society.



"Social NGOs are directly in the line of fire of austerity programmes, meaning drastic cuts in public and social spending, resulting in the difficulty, or sometimes the impossibility, for these organisations to continue to offer high quality social, educational and cultural services.

These cuts are part of the short-termist thinking which is currently prevailing alongside financial orthodoxy. The long-term

- DG EAC new organisation chart
- more by following the links...

*follow us*



*agenda*

### September

- FREREF Summer University "Lifelong Learning, a new economic and social development for the regions", 8-10 September, Brussels, Belgium
- AEGEE meeting "Many Countries, ONE Europe: 25 years of young democracy", 7-9 September, Cagliari, Italy
- ECSWE Conference "Social Inclusion by Intercultural Education", 9-10 September, Mannheim, Germany

### October

- EURASHE 20th Annual conference, 14-15 October 2010, Tallin, Estonia
- EfVET annual conference "VET in Europe. We can do it! But even better!", 13-16 October 2010, Lisbon, Portugal
- ISCA Congress "Sport for all and health, a strategic partnership, 20-24 October, Frankfurt, Germany
- More events on our website...

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*will show that this thinking only leads to even more exclusion and more poverty. There are however alternative proposals on the table, like the call for a new deal on economic policies by President of the PES, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and President of the S&D Group, Martin Schulz. Social NGOs need to contribute to the debate to identify alternatives for investment in social infrastructure and public and social services. Time for social consolidation!"* said Conny Reuter, Secretary General of SOLIDAR.

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## First meeting of EUCIS-LLL enlarged steering committee, Brussels, 1 July 2010



The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) steering committee met on 1st July 2010. The newly-elected members, Joke van der Leeuw-Rood, Georges Van Steene, Christopher Harrison and René Clarijs, joined their colleagues

from the committee for the first time ([more here](#)). It terms of priorities they set a high agenda focused on education to citizenship, skills and competencies and lifelong learning sustainability.

They also discussed the main outcomes of the EUCIS-LLL conference held in Barcelona in April and its impact on the Council Conclusions on the social dimension of Education and training [[here](#)]. They also discussed about the next Stakeholder's Forum to be held in October 2010. Finally, they agreed to organise a European Fair on Lifelong Learning in the European Parliament in February 2011.

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## Partnership agreement between EURASHE and EUCIS-LLL, 1 July 2010

EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and EUCIS-LLL (European civil society platform on lifelong learning) have agreed to reinforce their cooperation in the field of lifelong learning through a partnership agreement. This partnership implies that the two organizations will develop their cooperation by exchanging competencies and experiences, sharing their good practices and positions and sending invitations to their respective events and activities on a regular basis.



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## EUCIS-LLL meets Mrs Vassiliou's cabinet members, 6 July 2010

Gina Ebner, president, and Audrey Frith, director of EUCIS-LLL, met Themis Christophidou, deputy head of cabinet, and George Michael Zissimos, member of cabinet, on 6 July 2010. This first encounter with representatives of Mrs Vassiliou's cabinet was a good opportunity to present the platform and its vision on lifelong learning.



Gina Ebner presented our main activities and priorities such as the need to raise awareness on lifelong learning and to implement comprehensive lifelong learning strategies at all levels. M. Zissimos explained that the current review of the Key Competences 2006 recommendation was meant to move towards more lifelong learning skills. He invited us to exchange on priority areas such as Youth on the Move, New Skills for New Jobs or Early School Leaving. Gina Ebner expressed our will to organise annual or biannual encounters in order to implement a regular dialogue between our members and the Commission to discuss such issues. Audrey Frith also mentioned the concept of "Lifelong Learning Weeks" as a good tool to raise awareness on the European dimension of education and training and on its transectoral dimension. EUCIS-LLL looks forward a long-term cooperation on various topics that have an impact for all of its members.

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## Meeting of the "Active European Citizenship Group", DG Communication, 22-23 June 2010

Audrey Frith, director of EUCIS-LLL, participated in the Active European Citizenship Group meeting that was organised - for the first time - by DG Communication (instead of DG EAC). Many organisations had outlined the risk of disconnecting citizenship from education and culture when M. Barroso announced this structural change within the European Commission. Representatives of the Directorate reassured us that citizenship was not communication and that their goal was to implement as more structured dialogue with civil society. This day was followed by a conference on the future of the Europe for Citizens' programme.



Around 200 participants took part in this very participatory conference and highlighted some key points for the future programme: raising the profile of volunteering activities, strengthening partnerships and encouraging a structured dialogue with civil society organisations, bringing the programme closer to young people and the "hard to reach" public and focusing on mutual understanding. Audrey Frith volunteered to host a workshop on mutual understanding. This group put forward the need to strengthen media education and critical thinking, to support intercultural and interreligious dialogue as well as to improve language skills.

If we really appreciated the way the consultation was run with the possibility for everyone to have his say, we do regret that some issues could not be raised particularly on financial and administrative obstacles. For instance, if volunteering appears as a priority especially in the frame of the European Year 2011, how do we take into account their role in our call for proposals?

A public consultation will soon be published by the European Commission.

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## Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Liaison Group, 5 July 2010

EUCIS-LLL Director, Audrey Frith, participated in the meeting of civil society organisations (CSO) member of the EESC Liaison Group on 5th July. This encounter was meant to take stock of the recent functioning of the Liaison Group. This group is composed of 17 European civil society networks for half and representatives of EESC Groups for the other half. The CSO members believe that the EESC has a particular responsibility in implementing article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty that states that *“The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society”*.



Indeed, the EESC claims to be a bridge between *“Europe and organized civil society”*. The balance is rather negative today; cooperation between CSO and EESC members is still very limited.

Our networks are rarely consulted within EESC working groups. On the other hand, CSO members were able to strengthen their own cooperation notably through the organization of a second very successful “Civil Society Day” in March. M. Staffan Nilsson will take over the presidency of the EESC in October 2010. We do hope that the situation can improve during his presidency. Some concrete proposals will be made by CSO co-president, Jean-Marc Roirant, in order to improve the cooperation between European networks member of the Liaison Group and the EESC.

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## Meeting of the Civil Society Contact Group, Brussels, 8 July 2010

Gina Ebner, President of EUCIS-LLL, represented the platform at the last meeting of the Civil Society Contact Group. This group brings together eight large rights and value based NGO sectors - culture, environment, education, development, human rights, public health, social and women. During this meeting, the group decided to send a letter to President Barroso concerning the Better Regulation Agenda - “Smart regulation”. Indeed, they felt that it puts too much emphasis on conditions to improve

competitiveness in economic sectors without due attention to the public interest.

The CSCG also wished to remind civil society organisations to register in the lobby register and/or to update their information [[more](#)]. In September, the CSCG will discuss its priorities for 2011.

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