BRIEFING

Requested by the CULT Committee

The European Education Area: bibliographical review

Early research on European policies in the field of education

From the late 1990s, academic research began focusing on the phenomenon of 'Europeanisation' in education, and put forward the idea of a 'European education(al) area' (Berggreen-Merkel, 1999; Lawn & Nóvoa, 2005; Dale, 2006; Antunes, 2009), and related concepts such as the 'European Education Policy Space' (Grek, Lawn et al. 2013) and the 'European area of lifelong learning' (Pépin, 2006). Beyond national or comparative perspectives, the European Education Area (EEA) became an 'autonomous study object' (Lawn & Nóvoa, 2005) for the first time.

Research shows that the first signs of 'Europeanisation' in education can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. This research points out the puzzling absence of any education policy during the first 20 years of the European integration process, while at the same time significant steps were taken at international level, such as the launch of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement in 1958, as well as the founding by UNESCO of the International Institute for Educational Planning in 1963 (Grek & Lawn, 2012).

Academic literature examined the development of major community programmes in education during the 1980s and 1990s (Erasmus, Socrates, Comenius, etc.) which prompted researchers to state that 'the new European teachers began to have homes which were not local, bounded or merely regional and national, they were also of a new European form' (Grek & Lawn, 2012). It then explored the second wave of European education policies which began at the beginning of the 21st century, in particular the Bologna Process which paved the way for the European Higher Education Area, the increasing use of indicators and benchmarks (Dale, 2006) and the impact of the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' on European policies. This shift to 'governing by numbers' turned Europe into a space of 'comparison and commensurability' (Grek, Lawn et al., 2009), consistent with a market approach (Antunes, 2020).

- Antunes, F. (2009), 'Governance and the European Education Area: Regulating Education and Visions for the 'Europe' Project', in: RCCS Annual Review, pp. 125-154.

- Antunes, F. (2020), 'Europeanisation and adult education: between political centrality and fragility', in: Studies in Continuing Education, Vol. 42(3), pp. 298-315.

- Berggreen-Merkel, I. (1999), 'Towards a European educational area', in: European Journal for Education Law and Policy, Vol. 3(1), pp. 1-7.

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- Dale, R. (2006), 'Construire l'Europe en bâtissant un Espace Européen de l'Éducation', in: Education et Sociétés, Vol.18(2).

- Grek, S., Lawn, M. et al. (2009), 'National policy brokering and the construction of the European Education Space in England, Sweden, Finland and Scotland', in: Comparative Education, Vol. 45(1), pp. 5-21.

- Grek, S. & Lawn, M. (2012), 'Europeanising education? Governing a new policy space', Oxford.

- Grek, S., Lawn, M. et al. (2013), 'Governing by Inspection? European Inspectorates and the creation of a European Education Policy Space', in: Comparative Education, Vol. 49(4), pp. 486-502.

- Lawn, M. & Nóvoa, A. (2005), 'L'Europe réinventée: regards critiques sur l'espace européen de l'éducation', L'Harmattan, Paris.

- Pépin, L. (2006), 'The History of European Cooperation in Education and Training: Europe in the Making – An Example', European Commission.

The European Education Area in policy documents

The 2017 Commission communication on strengthening European identity through education and culture marked the very first time that the concept of an EEA had appeared explicitly in a policy document. In this communication, the EEA was expected to serve the dual purpose of fostering 'job creation, economic growth [and] social fairness' and experiencing 'European identity in all its diversity'.

In May 2018, building upon the very positive results of a Eurobarometer survey on the EEA carried out among young Europeans, the Commission elaborated on its vision through another communication presenting four flagship initiatives: European universities, the European Student Card, the mutual recognition of diplomas and improved language learning.

In September 2020, the Commission published a more ambitious strategy on the EEA revolving around six dimensions and with 46 proposals for action. It suggested the setting-up of an 'enabling framework' that would be a first step towards a fully-fledged governance body.

- European Commission (2017), Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture – The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' Meeting in Gothenburg.

- European Commission (2018), Communication on building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies.

- European Commission (2018), The European Education Area: Flash Eurobarometer 466.

- European Commission (2020), Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025.

As of 2018, a number of measures were taken under this new strategy in order to support the 'promotion of common values', key competences for lifelong learning, digital education, the recognition of diplomas, the teaching and learning of languages, and early childhood education and care.

- Council of the European Union (2018), Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning.

- Council of the European Union (2018), <u>Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad</u>.

- Council of the European Union (2018), <u>Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching</u>.

- Council of the European Union (2019), <u>Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages</u>.

- Council of the European Union (2019), <u>Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems</u>.

- European Commission (2018), <u>Communication on the Digital Education Action Plan</u>.

- European Commission (2020), <u>Communication on the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027</u>.

In its resolutions on modernisation of education in the EU and on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19, Parliament announced its support for the EEA and invited Member States to do likewise. It also called on the Commission 'to propose a bold policy framework for the future European education policy, transforming the European Education Area from a loose vision based on broad principles into a concrete work programme with a set of measurable objectives'. In a motion for a resolution of May 2021 on the EEA, the rapporteur called for bridging institutional and stakeholder approaches, promoted the establishment of a concrete 'European Education Area Strategic Framework 2030' **and advocated** a greater European dimension in education.

The Commission's strategy generated two Council resolutions that both welcomed the EEA, but insisted on the need to develop 'the future strategic framework for cooperation in education and training as a tool to support and implement the European Education Area' and recalled the Council's adherence to 'the tried and tested mutual learning arrangements, tools, instruments and policy support available, namely those from ET 2020 and under the open method of coordination'.

The European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee reacted through opinions in which they emphasised the need to further take into account the regional and local authorities, to draw lessons from the COVID-19 crisis as regards education in local and regional communities and to pay closer attention to 'learners in geographically and demographically challenged EU regions'. They advocated a holistic vision of education covering formal, non-formal and informal learning as well as the setting up of a roadmap. They also suggested that national investment in education should not be below 5 % of GDP.

- Council of the European Union (2019), <u>Resolution on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems</u>.

- Council of the European Union (2021), <u>Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)</u>.

- European Committee of the Regions (2018), <u>Opinion on building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies</u>.

- European Committee of the Regions (2018), <u>Opinion on strengthening European Identity through education and culture</u>.

- European Committee of the Regions (2021), <u>Opinion on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025</u>.

- European Economic and Social Committee (2018), <u>Opinion on the education package</u>.
- European Parliament (2018), <u>Resolution on modernisation of education in the EU</u>.
- European Parliament (2020), <u>Resolution on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19</u>.
- European Parliament (2021), Motion for a resolution on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach.

The European Education Area as seen by stakeholders

The announcement of the creation of the EEA generated a large number of reactions from the main European stakeholders in education, as well as a series of position papers and statements regarding measures taken in the framework of the EEA (not all listed below). However, these reactions emanated mostly from organisations representing higher education. Given that the EEA addressed primary, secondary and vocational education to a much greater extent than European policies had done previously, it was rather surprising that the EEA received so little attention from stakeholders representing these sectors. Reactions mainly centred on perceived deficiencies in the implementation strategy, the unclear geographical scope of the project and the lack of information on the interplay of the future EEA with the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

- Academic Cooperation Association (2020), <u>'ACA on EEA consultation: coordination, cooperation, continuity'</u>.
- Academic Cooperation Association (2020), <u>'ACA's contribution to the EC's public consultation on the European Education Area'</u>.
- CEEMET (2019), <u>'Building a European Education Area by 2025'</u>.
- CEEMET (2019), <u>'A "European Education Area" by 2025? A shared goal for all stakeholders'</u>.
- CESAER (2020), <u>'Towards a dynamic European education area driven by excellence'</u>.
- CESAER (2020), <u>'Vision for the European Education Area (EEA)'</u>.
- European Association for the Education of Adults (2018), <u>Statement entitled 'European Education Area must not leave adults behind'</u>.
- European Association for the Education of Adults (2020), <u>'Where are the adults in the European Education Area?'</u>.
- European Students' Union (2018), <u>Statement on the future of education in Europe and a prospective European Education Area</u>.
- The Guild (2020), <u>Recommendations for developing the European Education Area</u>.
- European Students' Union (2018), <u>Students views on the proposal of the European Education Area and the European graduate survey</u>.
- European University Association (2017), <u>'A European education area: How to make it work for Europe'</u>.
- European University Association (2018), <u>'European Education Area: EUA welcomes latest proposals on cross-border cooperation and recognition'</u>.

- European University Association (2020), 'Equal footing is the key to a strong European Education Area'.

- European University Association (2020), 'European Commission presents flagship package for education, research and innovation'.

- European University Association (2020), 'EUA response to the European Commission Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025'.

- Lifelong Learning Platform (2017), Policy statement entitled 'LLLP welcomes the European Commission's vision for a European Education Area laying the foundation for a Social Europe'.

- Lifelong Learning Platform (2018), Policy statement on the second package of measures on the European Education Area.

- Lifelong Learning Platform (2020), 'Education, research and innovation for a new digital Europe'.

- Lifelong Learning Platform (2020), Reaction to the European Education Package.

- Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (2020), 'Achieving the European Education Area by 2025: A great ambition that requires substantial funds'.

The European Education Area in research after 2017

The publication by the Commission of several communications on the EEA from 2017 to 2020 gave new impetus to research. Academic and policy research describe this new EU strategy (Chircop & Schomaker, 2020; Kushnir, 2021) and provide concrete recommendations for refining it (Malet, 2021; Heriard, Prutsch & Thoenes, 2021), in particular at local and regional level (Cavallini, Soldi & Bisogni, 2021).

Other authors explore national situations in the light of the concept of the EEA, for instance in Latvia (Hernik, Grinberga-Zalite, Liepa & Papins, 2018), Croatia (Kasap, Lachner & Ziha, 2018), Georgia (Darchashvili, 2021) and Ukraine (Rayevnyeva & Stryzhychenko, 2018; Bondarenko & Semenova, 2020).

- Bondarenko, V. & Semenova, A. (2020), 'Targets of strategic development of educational policy of Ukraine under integration into the European Educational Area: social and personal dimensions of cultural and historical integrity', in: Education Modern Discourses.

- Cavallini, S., Soldi, R. & Bisogni, F. (2021), 'The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Achieving a European Education Area by 2025', European Committee of the Regions, Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture.

- Chircop, D. & Schomaker, L. (2020), 'European education area', European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service.

- Darchashvili, M. (2021), 'Georgia in the Context of the European Educational Area', in: International Journal of Educational Spectrum, Vol. 3(1), pp. 70-79.

- Heriard, P., Prutsch, M.J. & Thoenes, S., (2021), Research for CULT Committee – 'Making the European Education Area a reality: state of affairs, challenges and prospects', European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

- Hernik, J., Grinberga-Zalite, G., Liepa, E. & Papins, A. (2018), 'Evaluation of Latvian students' learning experience in the European education area', in: Latgale National Economy Research, Vol. 1(10), pp. 54-62.

- Kasap, J., Lachner, V. & Ziha, N. (2018), Conference paper – 'Through legal education towards a European Education Area', in: EU Comparative Law Issues and Challenges Series, pp. 252-274.

- Kushnir, I. (2021), 'The Role of the European Education Area in European Union Integration in Times of Crises', in: European Review.

- Malet, R. (2021), Research for CULT Committee – 'Towards a European Education – Critical Perspectives on Challenges Ahead', European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

- Rayevnyeva, O. & Kostyantyn, S. (2018), 'Autonomy of the system of higher education in the conditions of integration of Ukraine into the European educational area', in: Problems and Perspectives in Management, Vol. 16(3), pp. 501-510.

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