



Council of the European Union

PRESS
EN

BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 16 February 2017

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (Education issues)

Brussels, 17 February 2017

The Council will start at 10.00, chaired by Mr Evarist Bartolo, the Maltese minister for Education and Employment. The Commission will be represented by Commissioner Navracsics.

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on

- **investing in Europe's Youth**, focusing on **the European Solidarity Corps**
- **Inclusion in diversity to achieve a high quality education for all**

Ministers will also discuss, in public deliberation, **the contribution of education and training to social cohesion and the fostering of common European values** in the framework of the 2017 European Semester.

During a working lunch, ministers will discuss the Commission's communication "Improving and Modernising Education" which is the education strand of the New Youth Initiative.

Press conference: +/- 12.45

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*Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery:
<https://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/permalink/90513>*

*More information about the Council can be found on the Meetings page
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/eycs/2017/02/17/>*

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Investing in Europe's Youth

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on investing in Europe's Youth with particular regard to the European Solidarity Corps ([5860/17](#)). The conclusions offer a political response to the Commission's Youth Initiative presented in December 2016.

The conclusions underline that greater opportunities to take an active role at community level will significantly contribute to the development of those social and civic skills and competences required for young people's active participation in building more inclusive and democratic societies;

They also recall the need to renew efforts to promote and safeguard the values of the EU, in particular its values of respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, so as to continue strengthening young people's sense of European identity and enhance their trust and positive view of the EU project,

The Commission communication proposed a package of measures aimed at improving young people's skills and opportunities in order to tackle youth unemployment and increase youth participation and learning mobility.

This package included communications on "Investing in Europe's Youth" (15420/16), "Improving and modernising education" ([15418/16](#)) and on the **European Solidarity Corps** (ESC) ([15421/16](#)), whose aim is to allow more young people to participate in a wide range of solidarity activities, either by volunteering or through a job, traineeship or apprenticeship. All young people should be able to participate irrespective of their background, education, level of skills, or any disability.

The European Council conclusions of December 2016 ([EUCO 34/16](#)) called for work to be taken forward on these three Commission initiatives. In addition, the Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2017 includes setting-up the ESC.

The ESC will be set up gradually. In the first phase, funding will come from existing programs and budget-lines, in particular the Erasmus+, to support placements of participants in the ESC.

In the second phase, foreseen for late May 2017, the Commission will propose a legal framework that will be financed through its own budget-line and have a separate legal basis.

The ESC will also make use of existing structures, mainly the [European Voluntary Service](#), with the objective of seeing the first 100,000 young Europeans taking part in its activities by 2020.

Inclusion in Diversity

The Council is due to adopt conclusions **on inclusion in diversity to achieve a high quality education for all** ([5741/17](#)), also in response to the Commission communication "Improving and modernising education"([15418/16](#)).

The conclusions recall that education policy plays a key role in fostering inclusion and respect for diversity in the European Union and that ensuring inclusive high quality education should be seen in a life-long perspective covering all aspects of education, and including the whole school community and the community at large.

They stress that high quality education and training for all based on inclusivity, equality , appropriate competences and values also helps encourage employability, innovative thinking, digital skills and competences, and promotes the development of active citizenship.

The conclusions also argue that equal opportunities for all are crucial, but not sufficient: 'equity' in the aims, content, teaching methods and forms of learning being provided for by education and training systems must be developed. It is also important to come up with concrete actions that address the needs of teachers and educators facing the increasing diversity in schools.

While education and training remain a national competence, EU-level policies, such as Europe 2020 and the European Semester can be used to complement and support member states' actions.

Education and training contribution to the European Semester

Ministers will discuss the **contribution of education and training to social cohesion and the fostering of common European values** in the framework of the European Semester 2017.

This policy debate is part of the thematic discussions that are being held in many Council configurations, the Maltese Presidency's overarching theme being "enhancing the socio-economic climate for a better Europe".

On the basis of a Presidency background document ([5740/16](#)), ministers will be invited to address the following issues:

- What can member states do to mitigate educational inequalities due to the negative impact of socio-economic disparities on a learner's overall educational attainment, as shown by the recent PISA 2015 results?
- Can the education and training programs provided by the EU member states be improved through the establishment of national and European objectives? How are member states supporting continuous professional development of teachers, educators and other teaching staff?

The outcome of the debate will be summarised by the Presidency and included in the synthesis report to be forwarded to the General Affairs Council and subsequently presented to the March European Council.

Other business

- Conference of ministers of Education entitled "Securing democracy through education" (Nicosia, 22 - 23 March 2017)
 - Information from the Cyprus delegation
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