



Informal video conference of the ministers of Education

19 February 2021

The videoconference will take place on Friday 19 February 2021, at 10.00. The meeting will be chaired by **Tiago Brandão Rodrigues**, Minister of Education, Portugal.

Ministers will first hold, in public, a policy debate on **equity in access, inclusion and success for all in education and training**. Following the debate, the presidency will inform ministers about a resolution on a **strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area** and beyond (2021-2030), as well as on a presidency initiative on **coping with COVID-19 in education and training**.

A virtual press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 13:00) with **minister Rodrigues** and **Commissioner Gabriel**.

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[Informal video conference of ministers of Education - meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Office.

Equity in access, inclusion and success for all in education and training

Ensuring equity in access, inclusion and success for all in education and training has been a long-standing principle in the EU. It has been addressed through various policy initiatives over the years - the most recent being a 2020 Council [recommendation](#) on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. Education and training systems across the EU have been able to improve results in this area, but the proportion of underachievers is still too high (according to the 2018 PISA study, the EU has not met its target to reduce underachievement in basic skills to less than 15%). Moreover, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including from rural and remote areas, are overrepresented among underachievers and early school leavers.

Moving forward, a number of new legislative initiatives will provide substantial financial support to member states in their efforts to further improve equity in education (e.g. the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme, the European Social Fund Plus and the new Recovery and Resilience Facility).

In this context, the presidency will host a policy debate to reflect on best policy practices and share exemplary achievements in this area. Ministers will be invited to provide input on the following three questions:

1. What are, in your view, the most relevant achievements reached at EU, national, regional and local level, that improved and can continue to improve equity in access, inclusion and success for all in education and training?
2. What are, in your opinion, the main actions, measures or policy reforms to be taken in education and training at EU, national, regional and local level, in order to improve equity in access, inclusion and success for all in education and training, and make full use of funding available at EU and national level?
3. How should EU cooperation address the combined challenges of ensuring equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training in the long term, and managing the additional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the expected increase in early leaving from education and training and effects on learners' mental health?

The discussions will provide a good basis for a set of Council conclusions on equity and inclusion in education and training to promote educational success for all. Ministers will seek to adopt these conclusions at the forthcoming education Council meeting in May.

Cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area

The presidency will inform ministers about a Council resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). This resolution establishes the framework for European cooperation in education and training for the next decade and represents the Council's reply and follow-up to a communication by the European Commission on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. The resolution would highlight five strategic priorities:

- Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training
- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all
- Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession
- Reinforcing European higher education
- Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training

[European Education Area \(background information\)](#)

[Communication from the Commission on achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#)

Coping with COVID-19 in education and training

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the Croatian and German presidencies, education ministers have intensively exchanged information about the state-of play and the measures taken in the member states.

Recognising the importance of continuing such exchanges, the chair will inform on a presidency initiative to launch an online platform to facilitate data sharing between the member states on how to best address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in education and training. The presidency will share a first analysis of the data already gathered through the platform and provide a state-of-play.

[COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the EU's response \(background information\)](#)
