



**Priorities of the
Ministry of Education and Science
during the Latvian Presidency
of the Council of the EU**

Introduction

In the framework of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS) and Competitiveness Council (COMPET), the Latvian Presidency pays particular attention to addressing the broader economic and social challenges that the EU is facing, and to developing a closer link with the EU growth and jobs strategy in particular. The Presidency is committed to enhance social well-being and the quality of life of European citizens by ensuring the full use of the potential of new digital technologies in education. New technologies need to be employed to a greater extent when tackling the e-skills gap and maintaining the intrinsic values and principles of European citizens. A focus on strengthening communities at the grassroots level, specifically addressing various issues to boost child and youth empowerment, especially with regard to enhancing their skills and active participation in society, is essential for further improvement of the EU competitiveness and the global role of the region.

Education

The Presidency intends to strengthen the importance of education and training in promoting economic growth, investments and well-being. In this regard the Presidency focuses on providing a new impetus for strengthening the education agenda in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy and achieving the objectives that have been set. This should be done through developing a closer link between the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

ET 2020 Joint Report 2015 will not only assess the overall progress of the Strategic Framework in the form of an interim evaluation, but will have a much more forward-looking approach by seeking to establish priority areas and fields for cooperation during the next work cycle. The Presidency will facilitate discussions, and give input to the preparation of the Joint Report 2015.

The Presidency will continue working on enhanced cooperation in **vocational education and training**, with regard to both previous achievements and current discussions on the future of vocational education and training. It aims to strengthen cooperation in this sector among the EU Member States, candidate countries, EEA member countries, and social partners in order to ensure that education systems are able to provide people with the skills and competences they need in order to be able to succeed in the labor market.

The Presidency intends to further support the internationalization of higher education. This will be achieved

by strengthening international cooperation between European and Asian countries when holding the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting in Riga. The discussions will highlight the results and outcome of the ASEM Education Process since the 4th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME4). The ministers will also discuss the priorities and activities for the next years in order to ensure closer cooperation among the ASEM countries and to improve comparability between different education systems in both regions.

In light of strengthening the cooperation in higher education and vocational education and training, the meeting of EU – Central Asia ministers responsible for education is planned.

Furthermore, an evaluation of the Bologna process is expected in the field of higher education with a view to preparing for the Bologna Ministerial Conference to be held in Yerevan, Armenia.

Recognizing the pre-school and primary school age as being of key importance for a child's personal and intellectual development, the Presidency intends to address the role of early childhood education and **primary education** in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence. The Presidency will strive for the adoption of the Council conclusions on this issue.

Having in mind that the EU Member States are comprised of regions and territories that require different financial solutions in regard to ensuring access to education and the uniformity of its levels of quality, the

Presidency intends to hold discussions on the accessibility of education and effectiveness of investments. Last, but not least, the Presidency will explore the

possibility to facilitate discussions on issues related to transparency and the recognition of skills and qualifications for mobility and employability and the way forward for EU policies.

Education

Events

November 10-11	1 st Senior Officials' Meeting for the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting
December 17-18	Meeting of the High Level Group on Education and Training
January 26-27	Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group
March 3-5	Joint 17th ELGPN Plenary
March 12-13	Meeting of the Directors General for Higher Education
March 24-25	Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group
April 20-21	Meeting of the Directors General for Vocational Education and Training
April 26	2nd Senior Officials' Meeting for the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting
April 27-28	5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting
May 5-6	Meeting of the Directors General for Schools
May 18-19	Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council, Brussels
May 27-28	International Conference on ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning
June 17-18	6th EQAVET Annual Forum
June 22	Meeting of Ministers in charge of Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission
June 25-26	Meeting of Ministers of Central Asia and EU for Education

Youth

The Presidency works on the implementation of the EU Work Plan for Youth 2014–2015, focusing on the development and role of cross-sector approach to policy-making, especially with regard to effectively addressing the continuous socioeconomic challenges of young people. The Presidency seeks to further advance the contribution of the youth sector when it comes to achieving the broader European objectives of growth and jobs. The Presidency will propose the adoption of the Council

conclusions on this topic. Following an extensive consultation with young people across Europe in the framework of structured dialogue, the EU Youth Conference will be hosted in Riga and will address the issue of how to empower young people in political participation in democratic life in Europe. To further strengthen cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries, the Presidency will host the second Eastern Partnership Youth Forum with the main focus on how to enhance youth employment and employability.

Events

February 10-11 2nd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum

The 2nd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum will involve about 200 young people, youth workers, researchers and policy makers from both Eastern Partnership and Erasmus+ Programme countries. The Forum invites to exchange innovative ideas and explore how various mobility and partnership programs, cross-sectorial cooperation and work with policy makers can increase employability and employment of the young people.

March 23-26 EU Youth Conference

Bringing together about 260 participants, this conference will evaluate possibilities to empower youth for political participation. Taking place within the framework of structured dialogue, the conference aims at outcomes presentable to the EU Youth ministers at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council in May 2015.

March 26-27 Meeting of the Directors General for Youth

The Latvian Presidency will bring for discussion issues such as safety on the internet and digital literacy, including how to tackle cyber-bullying, cyber-crimes and youth recruitment leading to radicalization. The first exchange of views is foreseen on a possible future EU Work Plan for Youth, including discussions on how to further advance work on youth work quality systems.

May 18-19 Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council, Brussels, Brussels

Sports

In the field of sport, the Presidency works on the implementation of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017. The role of grassroots sport will be emphasized as an instrument for the development of European human capital, especially with regard to young people. It contributes towards acquiring and developing transversal skills that can enhance employability and personal and professional development of individuals. The Presidency plans to propose that Council conclusions on this topic be approved. The Presidency intends to continue discussions on strengthening a healthy lifestyle among people of all ages

and encouraging lifelong participation in sports. In this regard, discussions and an exchange of experiences are planned on efficient models of cooperation between public authorities and sports movements in Member States. The Presidency will follow the progress of the finalization of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, and in the area of anti-doping the Presidency will continue to ensure that the EU and its Member States cooperate and coordinate effectively in order to remain a strong voice in the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Events

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| February 16 | EU Sport conference “Sport and Physical Activity for Development of Human Capital”

Emphasizing the role of grassroots sport in promoting social integration, reduction of inequality and developing skills for employability, the conference brings together policymakers, sports NGOs and academics to share examples of good practice and define new challenges and opportunities. |
| February 17 | Meeting of the Directors General for Sports

The meeting of the Directors General for Sports traditionally takes place immediately after the informal EU sports event. The outcomes of the EU Sport conference, implementation of the revised World Anti-doping Code 2015, anti-doping in recreational sport and the European Week of Sport will be the main topics on the agenda. The Presidency will also bring for discussion the development aspects of new and emerging types of non-traditional sports, such as street sports. |
| 18-19 May | Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council, Brussels |

Research

Research and innovation provides a serious contribution to growth. With that in mind, the Presidency works on improved integration of the Innovation Union and the European Research Area (ERA), fostering Europe-wide networks without barriers while fully exploiting of the potential of national research and innovation systems. The Presidency places an emphasis on the enhancement of the ERA through the ERA Roadmap and improved ERA governance. In this regard, the Presidency focuses on the Roadmap's implementation, especially on the optimal use of public investments in research.

The Presidency facilitates the implementation of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) Roadmap and the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) instrument, and contributes to a better consistency between these instruments and smart specialization strategies as well as regional and macro regional policies.

The Presidency works to unlock the EU's digital potential towards achieving a thriving **data-driven economy**. Recognizing that data is at the center of the future knowledge economy and society, the Presidency works on raising awareness of the importance of framework conditions, including fostering the open data policies and e-infrastructure that encompass the needs of research and innovation

communities. The Presidency will explore ways of achieving faster and wider innovation through open, networked and data-intensive research.

Global societal challenges require responsible and reliable **science** which is aligned with values and needs of the European awareness of the concept of Open Science (Science 2.0) with an aim of contributing to the wider debate on fostering the quality and excellence of European science, including through the digital dimension. The Presidency therefore advances the dossiers on scientific and technological research in specific regions, notably in the Baltic Sea Area with a particular reference to joint research programmes that have been undertaken by several Member States, whilst taking into account the forthcoming evaluation of the Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS). The Presidency also facilitates work on the final evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme and closely monitors the results of the initial phase of the framework programme, Horizon 2020, to ensure the exploitation of the full potential of the programme in terms of the scientific, industrial and social growth of the EU, including the appropriate synergies with the European Structural and Investment Funds.

Research

Events

- February 12-13 Conference "Smart Specialization Strategies: New Approaches for Partnerships among Education, Research and Industry in Regions"
- March 3-4 Competitiveness Council, Brussels
- April 16-17 22nd Plenary Meeting of the ERAC and the Research Working Party Meeting
- The meeting will focus mostly on the European Research Area (ERA) Roadmap and ERA governance. At the same time there will be a meeting of the Research Working Party. The ERA is a system of scientific research programmes integrating the scientific resources of the EU.
- May 28-29 Competitiveness Council, Brussels
- June 4-5 Week of Innovative Regions in Europe (WIRE 2015)
- Each year WIRE brings together such stakeholders as policymakers, enterprises, public institutions, research communities of European level to share the latest on research and innovation.
- June 10-12 EuroNanoForum 2015
- Europe's largest networking conference on nanotechnologies and advanced materials science, innovations and business will be gathering 1100 delegates from 50 countries ensuring a dialogue among scientists, the industry and policy makers.
- June 15-19 10th Baltic Sea Science Congress
- The congress will cover areas like physical oceanography, marine biology, marine geology and long-term sustainability of ecosystem services.

Space

We realize the importance of the European **space policy** within the context of the main priorities of the Latvian Presidency. Along the lines with the decision of the Competitiveness Council in December 2014, the Presidency supports a comprehensive space policy.

Broader discussions on the future development of an integrated and comprehensive EU Space Strategy, bringing together the efforts of individual Member States and EU policy instruments. In the field of space policy, we follow the evolution of discussions in the Council on future relations between the EU and the European Space Agency, and possible lines of action on the way forward.

The Presidency recalls that the Galileo and Copernicus Programmes are expected to create substantial market opportunities for European industry and small and medium-sized enterprises through the development of downstream services and applications, which require continuous and sustained access to data. Therefore we see a need to continue this discussion. At the same time, it's essential to continue the discussion on high resolution Earth observation satellite data in order to facilitate fair and reliable access and free circulation of data throughout the EU.

Events calendar

March 3-4 Competitiveness Council, Brussels

April 30 – May 10 European Space Expo 2015

The travelling exhibition European Space Expo has visited various European cities and has been seen by more than 500 000 visitors. Organized by the European Commission, the Expo uses an engaging and entertaining language to show how European space policy and space-based technologies benefit our everyday lives and economy in general. The programme at the Expo is free of charge and covers thematic evenings, guided tours and workshops.

May 28-29 Competitiveness Council, Brussels