



# European Education Area Strategic framework Working Groups Highlights (September – December 2023)



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As part of the new cycle of strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, the European Commission launched seven new Working Groups (2021-2025) at the end of 2021, enabling mutual learning on education and training policy reforms and exchange of good practices. The Working Groups bring together experts from EU Member States' authorities and other participating countries, EU level stakeholder organisations, as well as international organisations. To help meet the EU-level ambition of achieving the European Education Area (EEA), the Working Groups contribute to the implementation of the relevant EEA EU-level actions, while reinforcing synergies with other related EU policies.

There are seven Working Groups in the 2021-2025 cycle:

1. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC);
2. Schools:
  - a. Pathways to School Success;
  - b. Learning for Sustainability;
3. Higher Education;
4. Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA);
5. Equality and Values in Education and Training;
6. Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Green Transition;
7. Adult Learning: Opening up Opportunities for All.

In June 2023 the Working Groups published the [Periodic Report \(November 2021 - March 2023\)](#) with an overview of their activities and main deliverables thus far.

The Working Groups have continued to promote mutual learning on policy reforms of national education and training systems during 2023. A brief summary of activities from September to December 2023 is provided below for each Working Group (WG).

### Early Childhood Education and Care

The WG's main focus under the 2022-2023 work cycle has been the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of quality in the ECEC sector, with a key emphasis on the:

1. Purposes, values and principles that should underpin the design of M&E processes;
2. Best practices to coordinate and streamline M&E processes across centre and system levels; and
3. Benefits of, and best practices for, engaging children, parents, and other stakeholders in M&E processes.

Since September 2023, the ECEC WG held two online and one in-person meeting in Brussels. Between September and December 2023, the following reports have been published:

- Policy brief on [Staff Shortages in ECEC](#);
- 3<sup>rd</sup> WG report on ['Involving children, parents, staff and stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC'](#);
- 4<sup>th</sup> WG report on ['Making ECEC more inclusive through monitoring and evaluation of quality'](#);
- Final Working Group Activity report (2022-2023) – currently being finalised, will be published by the end of January 2024.

For the 2024-2025 mandate, the WG will focus on leadership in ECEC, with a specific focus on ECEC leadership models and practices across Europe; training, recruiting and motivating leaders; and system leadership.

### Schools – Pathways to School Success

As of September 2023, the WG has been focusing on the topic of combining targeted support for learners at risk with more universal approaches.

Two plenary meetings took place:

- An online plenary on 26 September 2023 aimed to introduce the topic, with a special focus on identification of learners' needs, map Member States (MS) priorities, understand the



- persisting challenges in addressing diverse needs of learners and explore which groups of learners have been most prioritised by MS education policies, and which groups have been 'left behind' during policy formulation;
- The joint meeting with the WG on Equality and Values on 26-27 October 2023 in Brussels focused on students with special educational needs (SEN) and the effectiveness of existing inclusion policies, as well as the possible interventions and solutions around the provision of targeted support to other groups of learners (looking beyond the specific group of learners with disabilities).

Between September and December 2023, the following reports have been developed:

- A reflection paper '[Targeted support: identifying groups at risk of exclusion and providing adequate support - challenges and opportunities](#)' and a summary report;
- An input paper '[Special educational needs? Working towards more flexible systems of support to meet all learners' needs](#)' and detailed meeting reports.

In 2024, the WG will continue to focus on the topic of targeted support for learners at risk before moving onto the topic of students' and teachers' well-being.

### **Schools – Learning for Sustainability**

Between September and December 2023, three events involving the Working Group on Learning for Sustainability (LFS) took place:

- An online webinar on eco-anxiety on 26 September 2023;
- An online seminar on synergies between Vocational Education and Training and green skills on 17 October 2023;
- A peer learning activity (PLA) on student engagement and action in LFS from 6-8 December 2023 in Paris.

The following reports have been developed:

- An input paper for the event on eco-anxiety, it's challenges and how to address them;
- An input paper on student engagement and action in LFS;
- [Key messages from events](#).

In 2024, the WG will focus on the topics of interlinkages of LFS and digital education, youth and student voices and the interlinkages of LFS with citizenship education.

### **Higher Education**

In autumn 2023, the WG organised two events:

- A PLA on the financing of European Universities at national level, in Paris on 17 and 18 October 2023, brought together 19 HE systems to share and discuss coherent approaches to national funding support for

the European Universities alliances to ensure a level-playing field among the Member States.

- On 13-14 November, an online WG meeting was organised with a particular focus on the upcoming higher education package, comprising a blueprint for a future joint European degree and two Council Recommendations: one on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System and one on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education.

The following reports were prepared:

- A background analysis and policy conclusions for the PLA.

In 2024, the WG will focus on the upcoming higher education package announced in the Commission's 2024 work programme, such as the blueprint for a joint European degree, and a potential legal status for alliances of higher education institutions.

### **Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA)**

During autumn 2023, the WG organised two meetings. Firstly, an ad-hoc webinar on Digital Well-being that took place on 28 September, aiming at presenting the results of the digital well-being survey conducted among members of the WG and their colleagues, while putting the whole area into its policy perspective. Secondly, the WG organised its 6<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, held online on 15-16 November and centred on two core themes: "The Work and Progress of Digital Education Hub Squads: AI Squad & Interoperability Squad" and "Improving transparency and data on digital education in Europe." Objectives included a) a detailed comprehension of the European Digital Education Hub's operations and in particular the work of the AI and Interoperability Squads and b) consulting the Working Group regarding the Digital Education in Europe survey's development.

For 2024, the WG will focus on the following topics: AI's impact on educators and schools, preparing teachers for a digital world, effective digital education practices and Digital Education Content. In addition, the WG will contribute with insights to the review of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 through a dedicated PLA meeting.

### **Equality and Values in Education and Training**

Between September and December 2023, the WG organised three events:

- The joint meeting with the WG Schools subgroup Pathways to School Success on 26 October 2023 in Brussels focused on students with special educational needs (SEN) and on work needed towards more flexible systems of support to meet all learners' needs.
- The 9<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting in Brussels on the

27 October 2023. Several key themes were addressed, including transition from special needs education to inclusive education, multidisciplinary teams for inclusion, funding and resource allocation, EU cohesion policy funds supporting quality inclusive and accessible education, infrastructure and equipment.

- During the 10<sup>th</sup> online WG meeting on the 7 December 2023, the WG members discussed the 2024 Roadmap.

Between September and December 2023, the following reports have been developed:

- The [Issue paper on Citizenship Education](#).
- An input paper '[Special educational needs? Working towards more flexible systems of support to meet all learners' needs](#)'.

During 2024, the WG's main focus will be on inclusive and accessible education including special needs as well as on countering and preventing hatred (hate speech and bullying).

### **Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Green Transition**

During Autumn, the WG organised two meetings:

- The WG meeting held on 2 October 2023 was used to discuss the dissemination of the Compendium of inspiring practices in greening VET (published June 2023); and to collect additional practices that will feature in the 2024 edition.
- The WG meeting held on 14-15 December 2023 was used to discuss the structure and content of the next edition of the compendium of inspiring practices. The meeting also provided updates on developments at the EU level, from Member States (Greece, Luxembourg, Ireland), and other stakeholders (Cedefop, European Training Foundation).

In the first half of 2024, the WG will focus on the next edition of the Compendium of inspiring practices.

### **Adult Learning: Opening up Opportunities for All**

During September – December 2023, the WG organised two events:

- The 5th plenary meeting took place on 5 October 2023 in Brussels. The meeting covered skills in different sessions, as well as key elements to implement the Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts, the most recent Council Recommendation in the policy area of adult learning.
- On 6 October 2023, there was a joint meeting with the WG and the National Coordinators for Adult Learning.

Reports and details of news and events for each of the Working Groups are available by visiting the dedicated [EEA strategic framework working groups webpage](#)

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## Timeline toward 2025

