



European Education Area strategic framework Working Groups Highlights (January – June 2024)



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As part of the new cycle of the 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. School Education (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.

During the first half of 2024, the Working Groups have continued to promote mutual learning on policy reforms of national education and training systems. A brief summary of activities from January to June 2024 is provided below for each Working Group (WG).

Early Childhood Education and Care

The WG's key theme for the 2024-2025 WG work cycle is leadership in ECEC, structured around three key topics:

1. ECEC leadership models and practices across Europe – current focus;
2. Training, recruiting and motivating leaders – focus from September 2024 onwards;
3. System leadership – focus from February 2025 onwards.

Since January 2024, the WG on ECEC held three online meetings and a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in person in Berlin, Germany. The PLA focused on 'Strengthening leadership for quality development and staff retention', and it included a mix of thematic and country case presentations, as well as site visits and group discussions.

The outputs prepared in this period include:

- ['Policy brief on Staff Shortages in ECEC'](#) – published in November 2023, and now translated;
- [Final Working Group Activity report \(2022-2023\)](#) – published and translated;
- Input paper 'Leadership in ECEC: an overview of existing models and practices in Europe. Literature review', prepared by the two experts of the WG which will form the basis of this mandate's first WG report (due in September 2024);
- Reports of the three online meetings;
- Mapping of ECEC leadership functions and tasks;
- Reflection tool for stakeholders to use the Mapping of ECEC leadership functions and tasks to improve quality of ECEC systems and provision – being finalised and then tested;
- Report on the PLA in Germany – currently under preparation.



Schools – Pathways to School Success

During the first semester of 2024, the WG continued exploring the theme of targeted support to learners at risk within inclusive education systems.

Since January 2024, several activities took place:

- A plenary meeting, including a joint session with the Expert Group on supporting learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting wellbeing at school, took place on 18-19 January 2024 in Brussels. The meeting zoomed into the just released [PISA 2022](#) results and experimented with the design thinking method around different scenarios for inclusion. On the second day, the WG discussed the guidelines on wellbeing in schools, drafted by the Expert Group. The key outputs linked to this meeting were an internal input paper and Inclusion scenarios, as well as a detailed minutes report and the short flash report.
- The online seminar on the role of municipalities in implementing inclusion in schools took place on 24 April 2024.
- The PLA, which took place in Malta from 15-17 May 2024, delved in detail into the topic of educational staff capacity building to serve as key agents of inclusion.
- A peer learning focus session on the remaining challenges for the school attendance of displaced children from Ukraine in EU host countries took place on 26 June 2024, for the attention of the WG as well as of a broader set of country representatives and stakeholders, following a launch webinar of the report “Inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems 2023/24”.
- An online plenary meeting took place on 20 June 2024.

The outputs of this period include reports of the meeting and seminar, a PLA report, currently in preparation, and a final deliverable – Roadmap for School Success, which aims to provide practical guidance on the implementation of the Pathways to School Success.

The next thematic cycle of the WG will focus on the topic of students’ and teachers’ wellbeing.

Schools – Learning for Sustainability

During the first semester of 2024, the WG on Learning for Sustainability (LFS) has explored new angles that can help upscale and improve LFS by going beyond formal textbook education.

Since January 2024, the following activities took place:

- A plenary meeting in Brussels on 4-6 March 2024 on the twin transitions in school education – the interlinkages of LFS and digital education. Having recognised that there are three main ways to engage with the digital agenda (digital as a tool, a driver of change and digital competences), the meeting explored synergies, tensions and ways forward for LFS and digital education. The key outputs linked to this meeting were an input paper introducing WG members to the topic and a key messages document summarising the main take-aways for policy.
- A peer learning activity in Hamburg on 4-6 June 2024 on networking of non-formal and formal education programmes – strategies at national and municipal level. During the PLA, WG members learned about multi-level and multi-stakeholder place-based approaches to LFS through the example of Hamburg. The city has become a learning landscape and learning city for LFS through strong partnerships with local agencies and the non-formal and formal education sector. The key outputs linked to this event were an input paper and key messages document.
- A webinar in June presenting findings of the newly published [report](#): GreenComp in practice: case studies on the use of the European competence framework.

The next thematic cycle of the WG will focus on the interlinkages of LFS with citizenship education.

Higher Education

Between January and May 2024, two events engaging the WG in Higher Education were organised, both focused on the higher education package and its key initiatives to advance transnational cooperation between higher education institutions:

- On 21 February 2024, a WG meeting was organised in Brussels to discuss the progress towards the European Degree as a key priority for the Commission in 2024. A deep dive was made into the Erasmus+ pilot projects, the pathways and award of the European Degree and its criteria. The Commission also updated on the ideas for an investment pathway for European Universities covering the different missions to provide simplification and more sustainable funding.
- On 7 May 2024, following the publication of the higher education package, an online webinar was organised to bring together WG members as well as other Ministry members for a presentation and initial discussion.

For the rest of 2024, the topics to be covered will focus on discussing the higher education package and continuing to implement the European Strategy for Universities.

Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA)

The DELTA WG 4th PLA was held in the Hague from 19-21 March 2024. The event focused on three key issues: how to prepare teachers and schools leaders for working in a digital world, artificial intelligence (AI) in education and data privacy. In advance of the PLA, members received an input paper outlining a range of professional development approaches and a review of recent DELTA discussions on AI. The input paper was accompanied by an online survey to capture current digital education professional development practices in Member States. Members also received a background paper on data privacy and the work being undertaken by the Netherlands in this area. At the conclusion of the event, a paper entitled 'Teacher Professional Development Survey – Report' was shared with the WG. In addition, as an output of the discussions, Key Policy Messages were compiled and shared with the WG members.

The WG also met online on 20 June 2024 to discuss how Member States are addressing the assessment of digital competences. A short input paper was shared with the WG members in advance of the meeting to introduce the topic.

Equality and Values in Education and Training

Since January 2024, the following activities were organised:

- On 29 January 2024, the 11th plenary meeting of the WG took place. The aim of the online meeting was to discuss the draft guidelines prepared by the Expert Group on supportive learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting well-being at school. During the discussion, feedback was sought on both the content and format of the guidelines, which were published in May 2024.
- On 19-20 March 2024, a PLA titled "Towards quality, inclusive and accessible education – policy initiatives to ensure all learners' needs are met", hosted by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), was held in Brussels, jointly with the WG Schools- Pathways. The PLA brought together members of both WGs from 15 participating EU and candidate countries and several stakeholder organisations active in the field of education and social inclusion. It sought to identify key learning points on policy implementation relating to inclusive education. The PLA included

an onsite visit to two European Schools in Brussels to understand the challenges they are facing as well as to see inspiring practices.

- On 20-21 June 2024, an online plenary meeting took place to discuss the issue of hate speech, including online [hate speech](#). An input paper set the scene for the discussion and already compiled a few inspiring examples, including from EU funded projects.

For the rest of 2024, the Working Group will focus on bullying, including cyberbullying.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Green Transition

Since January 2024, the following activities took place:

- In a webinar held on 27 February 2024, the WG focused on 'Social partners' initiatives in greening of VET and the Green Transition'. This webinar highlighted that – in line with national systems – social partners can make major contributions to greening VET, not only in education, but also in broader economic sectors, and they assist in the identification of skills needs, updating VET curricula and standards, providing tools and resources to their memberships, as well as through collective bargaining.
- The WG meeting held on 27 March 2024 (online) offered an update on the 2024 draft Compendium of inspiring practices, as well as the timeline for the final review stages of the document. This meeting also gave participants an update on recent developments at EU level and gave an overview of the upcoming PLA taking place in April 2024.
- On 24 - 25 April 2024, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research jointly organised a PLA in Graz. The event took place in HTL BULME, the Higher Technical College of Graz. The programme offered participants with theoretical and practical insights on the Austrian VET system and green transition, as well as on-site visits and the showcasing of best practices.
- On 19 June 2024, the WG online meeting reported back from the PLA in Graz and discussed the finalisation and dissemination of the Compendium of inspiring practices (due to be published in September 2024). The meeting featured presentations on inspiring practices from the national level (Belgium-Flanders, Hungary and Romania) and EU level developments (European Year of Skills). The work programme was updated for 2024, with an outlook to 2025 and a final publication for the WG.

Adult Learning: Opening up Opportunities for All

Since January 2024, the following activities took place:

- On 26 March 2024, 25 high level experts and key stakeholders (including members of the Adult Learning WG) met in Brussels to discuss the [Reference foresight scenarios on the global standing of the EU in 2040](#) (published in 2023), to feed into the discussions and reflections in the framework of the European Year of Skills. DG EMPL, with the support of the Joint Research Centre (JRC), organised this expert meeting to discuss the four reference scenarios in view of their implications for EU skills policy. The use of the foresight methodology allowed for a fresh look at skills policies today and in the future. The experts analysed the current solutions implemented, including the EU skills policy framework, to identify possible gaps and blind spots in the forthcoming context, and collected ideas for potential policy actions.
- On 23 May 2024, an online meeting was held with the Adult Learning WG to reflect on the outcomes and legacy of the European Year of Skills. The first part of the meeting was dedicated to a policy update by DG EMPL for the members of the Adult Learning WG and the National Coordinators for Adult Learning, including on the outcomes and legacy of the European Year of Skills at EU and national level, and how to take these forward. During the second part of the meeting, the Work Programme of the WG was discussed and agreed for the biennia 2024-2025.

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



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