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Proposal for a
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION
on Pathways to School Success

(Text with EEA relevance)

{SWD(2022) 176 final}

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

'I want Europe to strive for more when it comes to social fairness and prosperity.

This is our Union's founding promise'

President von der Leyen, Political Guidelines

Education and training systems can and should play a major role in making European societies fairer, more inclusive and prosperous. Education can strengthen social cohesion and make the EU economy more resilient: research shows that access by children and young people from low-income groups to quality education helps tackle unemployment and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. However, these goals can only be achieved if education and training systems are truly equitable and inclusive. Schools must ensure that all learners have the opportunity to succeed and reach their potential, irrespective of their personal characteristics¹, family, cultural and socio-economic background. This is reflected in Principles 1 and 11 of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**².

Educational outcomes, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes developed during schooling, are strong predictors of a balanced, healthy and successful adult life. Measured in terms of 'educational achievements'³ and 'educational attainments'⁴, they lay the foundations for further learning, future employment and a fulfilling life. The acquisition of basic skills (literacy, mathematics, and science)⁵ is essential for learners' academic and personal development, while the skills and competencies gained in upper secondary education are increasingly seen as the minimum credentials for employment or, the basis for further learning and a fulfilling life. However, socio-economic patterns and stratification exert a strong influence on the educational experiences and outcomes of individuals; learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are over-represented among underachievers and are more likely to leave education and training without an upper secondary qualification. This is why **reducing the share of low-achievers in basic skills** and countering **early leaving from education and training**⁶ are key targets of European cooperation in education and training. The Commission Communication on achieving the **European Education Area** by 2025⁷ announces 'Pathways to School Success' as a flagship initiative to boost the inclusive dimension of education, which is a goal that was also shared by the Conference on the Future

¹ See full analysis in the Staff Working Document.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

³ Educational achievement focuses on learners' learning progress and their actual functional literacy, like reading, writing, numeracy and scientific abilities (basic skills).

⁴ Educational attainment refers to the successful completion of specific education levels, for example primary, lower or upper secondary education.

⁵ Basic skills are to be understood according to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. Underachievers are therefore those 15-year-old pupils, still in education, who fail to reach OECD PISA proficiency level 2, which is considered to be the minimum level necessary to participate successfully in society. While digital skills are to be considered amongst the basic skills, they are not directly addressed by Pathways to School Success, as already at the centre of other initiatives such as the Digital Education Action Plan.

⁶ The EU 'early leaving from education and training' (ELET) indicator measures the proportion of 18-24 year-olds with, at most, lower secondary educational attainment (i.e. ISCED 0-2 levels) who are no longer in formal or non-formal education and training.

⁷ COM(2020)625 final.

of Europe in its final report of May 2022, calling for “*an inclusive European Education Area within which all citizens have equal access to quality education ...*”. The initiative on Pathways to School Success’ puts the emphasis on reducing low-achievement in basic skills and by increasing secondary education attainment. The Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)⁸ supports this action and sets **EU-level targets for 2030**: the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%⁹ and the share of early leavers from education and training less than 9%¹⁰.

In this context, the Commission is putting forward a proposal for a Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success. The proposed Recommendation will repeal and replace the **2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving**¹¹, while building on the experience gained in the latter’s implementation. Since the 2011 Council Recommendation was adopted, European countries have faced new situations, challenges and opportunities deeply influencing education and training systems, among which the rising number of non-EU migrants, including refugees¹², of school age coming to the EU, and the COVID pandemic. Concerns about the deteriorating trend in basic skills performance (as revealed by the results of PISA 2018) have emerged prominently in policy discourse. Educational research has provided new insights and policy cooperation at EU level has highlighted gaps and areas for further work, making it appropriate to review, update and improve the 2011 Council Recommendation. The new proposal is broader in scope as it addresses simultaneously the two EU-level targets on basic skills and early leaving from education and training. This reflects the complementarity of these two challenges, their triggers and the measures to tackle them. In addition, the proposal expands the perspective to address other aspects that have not been covered before and have a strong impact on educational outcomes, such as well-being at school.

- **Challenges to be addressed by the proposed Council Recommendation**

Extensive work has been conducted at European level and in Member States since the adoption in 2011 of the Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving. An independent assessment of the implementation of the Recommendation¹³ draws an overall positive picture of the impact of this recommendation and associated EU policy instruments (monitoring and reporting mechanisms within the European Semester; mutual learning and cooperation between Member States within the ET2020 framework; funding, in particular through Erasmus+ and the European Structural and Investment Funds; investment in research and communication). The assessment concludes that the implementation of the Council Recommendation has contributed to a **decrease in the rate of early leavers from education and training (ELET) at EU level** (from 13.4%¹⁴ in 2011 to 9.7% in 2021, and has encouraged changes within educational institutions and policies.

⁸ OJ C 66, 26.2.2021.

⁹ The data source is the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA).

¹⁰ The data source is Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey. This main indicator will be complemented by a supporting indicator on upper secondary level attainment, measuring the share of people aged 20-24 with at least an upper secondary qualification through data made available by Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey.

¹¹ OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1–6.

¹² The term ‘refugee’ is used in this text in a broad political sense rather than as defined in the Geneva Convention and the EU asylum acquis.

¹³ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2019), Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes, P., *Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving: final report*, Publications Office.

¹⁴ EU28. EU27 value is 13.2%.

However, despite this significant progress, **early leaving from education and training remains a policy challenge in Europe, which is particularly serious in a number of countries and regions and for specific target groups.** Today, more than 3.2 million young people in the EU (18-24 years old) are early leavers from education and training and only 84.3% (of the 20-24 year olds) have completed upper secondary education. Considerable differences still exist across and within countries and inequalities persist among specific population groups: the average share of early leavers from education and training is 3.5 percentage points higher among young men (11.4%) than it is among young women (7.9%)¹⁵ and there are striking disadvantages for foreign-born young people and learners living in specific suburbs, rural and remote areas¹⁶. Overall, the socio-economic background of learners has a strong impact on early leaving from education and training¹⁷.

However, the assessment also highlighted some **gaps and areas in which further work is needed:**

- Measures and actions are often project-based and short term, addressing only one issue, or not taking into account all school dimensions, hence with limited impact; more systemic approaches are needed at both school and system level as the current ones are still insufficiently developed;
- In many countries, the policy measures that have been implemented are not sufficiently monitored and evaluated;
- Cooperation across different policy areas (such as education and training, health, social services, employment, housing, justice, inclusion of migrants including refugees, non-discrimination) and levels of government (national, regional, local), as well as dialogue with stakeholders, are still too limited and disjointed;
- While compensation measures are well established, in many countries prevention and early intervention actions are insufficiently developed or lack in implementation/enforcement;
- The needs of specific groups are too often not appropriately addressed (such groups as learners with visible and non-visible disabilities, learners with special educational needs or mental health issues, learners with a migrant background, including refugees, learners belonging to ethnic minorities such as the Roma, victims of bullying); this is particularly serious for learners with complex needs (such as children with a parent in prison, victims of domestic violence, children in care, etc.);
- Measures aimed at tackling learning difficulties are insufficiently integrated with measures promoting well-being at school, or bullying and mental health;

¹⁵ 2021 data.

¹⁶ Learners born outside the reporting country are at even greater risk of becoming ELET (22.4%), particularly if that country was outside of the EU27 (23.2%). On average, the likelihood of early school leaving is higher for young men born outside of the EU27 (25.2%) than young women born outside of the EU27 (20.9%). The degree of urbanisation also plays a role, with cities on average yielding the lowest shares of early leavers (8.6%). Whereas young men are more likely to be early leavers in towns and suburbs (13.5%) than in rural areas (11.7%), young women are actually at higher risk in rural areas (9.2%) than in towns and suburbs (8.7%). It is worth noting that these EU averages hide a very heterogeneous picture across the Member States. These data refer to 2020.

¹⁷ A thorough analysis of trends can be found in the Staff Working Document and the 2021 Education and Training Monitor.

- Learners, families and key stakeholders (including socially excluded parents, migrant communities and NGOs) are often not sufficiently involved in policy design, implementation and evaluation;
- School leaders, teachers, trainers and other educational staff are often not sufficiently prepared to address underachievement and early leaving from education and training, to accommodate diversity, to give appropriate support to children with difficulties or at risk or to learners with well-being and mental health needs.

Significant efforts have been deployed to reduce early leaving from education and training in the last decade, in particular following the adoption of the 2011 Council Recommendation. More recently, **underachievement in basic skills** has gained increased attention in the policy debate at EU level, especially since the publication of the findings of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018¹⁸, which reveal a **deteriorating trend** at EU level over the period 2009-2018¹⁹. In particular, PISA 2018 shows that:

- today **one in five 15-year-old Europeans are underachievers** (22.5% cannot perform basic tasks in reading, 22.9% in mathematics and 22.3% in science). The EU average has not been improving and there are wide differences among Member States, though some countries managed to improve their performance over time.
- Socio-economic background strongly affects pupils' performance and their academic expectations in most EU countries. Moreover, countries with a large share of underachievers also tend to have large performance gaps between pupils from advantaged and disadvantaged socio-economic background.
- The proportion of underachievers in reading among pupils with a migrant background (as defined by OECD PISA)²⁰ is much higher than among pupils with a non-migrant background in many EU Member States²¹.
- Overall, countries with small proportions of underachievers tend to also have high proportions of top performers, suggesting that excellence and equity of school education systems can go hand in hand²².
- Girls strongly outperform boys in reading proficiency, and there is a persistent gender gap in favour of girls in science²³. This is confirmed by national data,

¹⁸ Every 3 years PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

¹⁹ A thorough analysis of trends can be found in the Staff Working Document and the 2021 Education and Training Monitor.

²⁰ The concept of 'people with a migrant background' includes both immigrants and their native-born children (the so-called 'second generation'). While the Commission considers that migrants are only third country nationals, the OECD PISA definition for pupils with a migrant background comprises all foreign-born students (both EU and non-EU), as well as native-born students with foreign-born parents.

²¹ The situation is usually worse for pupils born abroad than for native-born pupils with parents born abroad. A disadvantaged socio-economic status is often found in combination with a migrant background.

²² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2019), *PISA 2018 and the EU: striving for social fairness through education*, Publications Office, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/964797>. For a detailed analysis, see the Staff Working Document.

²³ For mathematics, the picture is more mixed, with PISA 2018 data showing that on average boys marginally outperform girls, but that the gap is steadily narrowing: girls outperform boys in more and more countries. See OECD (2019) *PISA 2018 results (volume II) – Where all students can succeed*. PISA, OECD

which also shows that boys are more likely to be absent from school than girls²⁴.

Also the results of the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)²⁵ 2018 show that **a fifth of young people in the EU do not possess basic digital skills** while revealing the impact of socio-economic status on digital literacy: on average, students from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds have significantly higher computer information literacy scores and students with a parent who had completed a Bachelor's degree or higher also score higher than those whose parents do not hold a degree.

In the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 to support Member States in their implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to which all are a party,²⁶ the Commission highlights the gap in educational attainments between young persons with disabilities and those without, due to a lack of inclusiveness and accessibility of the education system. Many children and young persons with disabilities are enrolled in special schools which do not always offer effective bridges to mainstream education.

The latest PISA results also shed light on additional and equally worrying shortcomings in the education systems, which may influence educational outcomes: **pupils' well-being at school²⁷ (measured as pupils' sense of belonging at school) is declining and bullying/cyberbullying is widespread and on the rise²⁸**. Research underlines that school bullying has devastating consequences on learners' well-being and academic achievements and increases the risk of leaving school prematurely²⁹. Research also confirms that **improving learners' well-being**, including through social and emotional education³⁰ and bullying prevention, is **key to improving educational outcomes³¹**. Emotional well-being and mental health in children and young people has also become a major issue in Europe, with around 10 to 20% of school children experiencing mental health issues during their school years, and with half of them developing problems before the age of 14, in particular anxiety and depression. This is a major problem which negatively affects educational outcomes. If schools

publishing. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2018-results-volume-ii_b5fd1b8f-en.

²⁴ OECD (2015). *The ABC of Gender Equality in Education. Aptitude, Behaviour, Confidence*. PISA, OECD publishing. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264229945-en.pdf?expires=1610634769&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=66B1763A84CB2A7C21B3829FBC7B8E3B>

²⁵ <https://www.iea.nl/news-events/news/icils-2018-results>

²⁶ COM(2021) 101 final: Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

²⁷ The concept of 'well-being' at school is complex and encompasses many dimensions (including physical, emotional and mental health). Definitions are provided in the Staff Working Document glossary.

²⁸ According to PISA 2018, in 19 EU Member States more than 1 in 5 pupils reported being bullied at least a few times a month. Moreover, the percentage of bullied pupils increased significantly in most countries between 2015 and 2018.

²⁹ See <https://www.oecd-forum.org/posts/can-children-believe-in-us-to-invest-in-mental-health>

³⁰ Social and emotional learning is part of one of the eight competences for lifelong learning ('personal, social and learning to learn competence') defined by the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, OJ C 189, p. 1-13.

³¹ Evidence from the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and PISA 2018 confirms that higher levels of well-being (measured as pupils' sense of belonging at school) are generally associated with higher educational aspirations, lower absenteeism and better learning outcomes in mathematics.

alone cannot solve these problems, they can help address well-being and mental health issues in cooperation with local community and external professionals and agencies³².

Poverty and socio-economic factors are a connecting thread underpinning these challenges: **the socio-economic background of learners and their family continues to be the strongest determinant of educational outcomes**, pointing to a persistent risk of intergenerational transmission of disadvantage and reduced upwards social mobility for learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Findings from international research and feedback received from the consultation process preceding this proposal confirm **the need to address educational achievement and attainment jointly**. Underperformance in basic and digital skills and early leaving from education and training are interconnected issues, triggered by a combination of factors (individual, family-related, social and economic, etc.). Their triggers are not purely educational; however, certain features of the education and training systems (such as limited access to quality early childhood education and care, early assigning to different educational tracks, segregation, grade repetition, special schooling etc.)³³ can further aggravate their incidence, with a particularly negative impact on those belonging to more disadvantaged groups.

The **COVID** crisis has made these challenges even more significant. Even though more time and work will be necessary to assess the long-term impacts of the prolonged school disruptions on learning and academic progress, several preliminary studies suggest that the crisis may have hindered learners' progression and increased the likelihood for those at risk of disconnecting from school to actually drop out. They also indicate that the crisis had negative consequences for learners' well-being, due among other things to increased stress and anxiety resulting from isolation and lack of contact with peers, increased exposure to domestic violence and decreased access to essential services. Socio-economically marginalised children, who already had lower average achievements before the pandemic are those that were likely to suffer most during the lockdowns³⁴ including due to lacking access to internet and/or electronic devices needed for virtual learning³⁵. As a result, **the share of underperforming learners in Europe might have risen considerably during the pandemic**. Similarly, the rate of early leavers from education and training is expected to increase in the coming years, even though this will only be reflected in statistics in a few years.

This calls for a **renewed effort to promote better educational outcomes and an inclusive school environment for all learners**, irrespective of their personal characteristics, family, cultural and socio-economic background, with a stronger focus on improving achievement in basic skills.

³² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Simões, C., Caravita, S., Cefai, C., *A systemic, whole-school approach to mental health and well-being in schools in the EU : analytical report*, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/50546>

³³ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2020), *Equity in school education in Europe: structures, policies and student performance*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

³⁴ Detailed analysis and references can be found in the Staff Working Document.

³⁵ For example, during the COVID crisis, excluded and disadvantaged Roma communities have been exposed to severe negative health and socioeconomic impacts. The 2021 Council Recommendation on Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation advocates reducing structural inequalities faced by Roma by tackling, where relevant, the lack of facilities and digital skills that would enable Roma to actively participate in society, including in distance education, as well as by eliminating the high levels of economic precariousness, overcrowded households, segregated settlements or camps.

There needs to be an increased attention to well-being at school, taking into account lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on reducing early school leaving, recent insights from research and from the consultation process and the new challenges highlighted by the COVID crisis.

Building on the lessons learnt from the 2011 Council Recommendation, the **Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success set out a renewed framework for action** for Member States to develop their own integrated strategy for enhancing success at schools, at the appropriate level according to the structure of each education and training system, and supported by effective data collection and monitoring. The updated framework outlines a set of policy measures which include monitoring, prevention, intervention and compensation³⁶ but with a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention. Member States can apply and combine the policy measures according to their specific circumstances and needs.

- **The objectives of the proposed Council Recommendation**

The Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on Pathways to school Success aims to:

- decouple educational attainment and achievement from social, economic and cultural status;
- reduce the share of low-achievers and early leavers from education and training at EU level to reach the European Education Area EU-level targets for 2030;
- promote inclusive education and training, which encompasses equity, quality, academic performance, engagement, well-being at school, mental and physical health and respect for diversity;
- further develop by mutual learning a shared understanding of the enabling factors to foster educational outcomes and well-being, with a special focus on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- **International dimension**

The proposal complements work at international level. It contributes to actions supporting the **UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**³⁷, in particular SDG 4, Quality education. The proposal is consistent with the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**³⁸, Article 24 of which provides for inclusive education systems. It resonates with the UN Global Education Monitoring 2020 Report on Inclusion. It supports **UNESCO**

³⁶ Prevention measures aim to create the conditions to avoid disengagement, underachievement and early leaving issues, mental health issues, etc. before they arise, including through actively promoting and supporting well-being and mental health at school. Intervention measures address emerging difficulties at an early stage, including in early childhood education and care, with effective supporting measures for groups or individuals. Compensation measures offer opportunities to support those underachieving or disengaged or who have dropped out.

³⁷ <https://sdgs.un.org/>

³⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>

activities on School violence and bullying³⁹. Pathways to School Success is in line with the OECD Learning Compass 2030 framework⁴⁰.

The results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) inform the proposal and allow for international comparisons, which can be further explored in the context of the EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Schools.

- **Tools for supporting the implementation**

The proposed Council Recommendation will be supported by a number of different instruments:

- reporting and monitoring, in particular under the European Semester, the Social Scoreboard and the EEA Strategic Framework;
- peer learning, exchanges of information and experience between Member States, in particular through the EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Schools;
- EU funding (notably through Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Social Fund+, European Regional Development Fund, Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe, the Technical Support Instrument, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, etc.) through adopted programmes/plans;
- an updated practical European Toolkit for Schools to share resources and practices⁴¹;
- an expert group on strategies for creating supportive learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting well-being at school;
- research through the Horizon Europe programme;
- setting-up (as from December 2022) of the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training, which will enhance evaluation and monitoring of education policies and investments at European level.

- **Complementarity with other initiatives**

The Recommendation complements other Commission actions presented under the European Education Area Communication and the Digital Education action plan. Such actions include the:

- 2019 Council Recommendation for a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages⁴²;
- 2019 Council Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems⁴³;

³⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/school-violence-and-bullying/action>;
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374794?posInSet=4&queryId=N-EXPLORE-c62a920d-2b9e-49c7-92cd-fb700d28f564>

⁴⁰ The OECD Learning Compass 2030 is an evolving learning framework that sets out an aspirational vision for the future of education. It offers a broad vision of the types of competencies students will need to thrive in 2030 and beyond. It also develops a common language and understanding that is globally relevant and informed (<https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/learning-compass-2030/>)

⁴¹ <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools.htm>

⁴² OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 15–22.

- 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching⁴⁴;
- 2021 Council Recommendation on blended learning for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education⁴⁵;
- structured dialogue on the enabling factors for successful digital education and the development of common guidelines for teachers and educational staff to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation,
- Skills Agenda for Europe⁴⁶,
- 2020 Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience⁴⁷, which proposes a modernised EU policy vision of VET including its digitalisation and use of blended learning, and
- 2020 Council Recommendation on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the 2013 Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee⁴⁸.

The proposed Council Recommendation will also contribute to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and its action plan, the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025 (2020)⁴⁹, the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030 (2020)⁵⁰ and its related Council Recommendation (2021)⁵¹; the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (2020)⁵²; the action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 (2020)⁵³; the strategy on rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 (2021)⁵⁴; the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 (2020)⁵⁵; the EU strategy on combatting antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021)⁵⁶; the EU strategy on the rights of the child (2021)⁵⁷; the Child Guarantee (2021)⁵⁸; the European Year of Youth (2022)⁵⁹; the new EU strategy for a better internet for kids (2022)⁶⁰; and the HealthyLifeStyle4All (2021)⁶¹.

The Erasmus+ programme supports this initiative: organisations and participants with fewer opportunities are at the heart of the programme's overarching priority 'Inclusion and Diversity', and specific mechanisms and resources are put at their disposal. The Erasmus+ programme also supports teachers and all school staff in acquiring new competences and

⁴³ OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4–14.

⁴⁴ OJ C 195, 7.6.2018, p. 1–5.

⁴⁵ COM(2021)455 final.

⁴⁶ COM(2020) 274 final.

⁴⁷ OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16.

⁴⁸ OJ C 372, 4.11.2020, p. 1–9

⁴⁹ COM (2020) 152 final.

⁵⁰ COM (2020) 620 final.

⁵¹ COM (2020) 620 final.

⁵² COM (2020) 698 final.

⁵³ COM (2020) 758 final.

⁵⁴ COM (2021) 101 final

⁵⁵ COM (2020) 565 final.

⁵⁶ COM (2021) 615 final

⁵⁷ COM (2021) 142 final

⁵⁸ COM (2021) 137 final.

⁵⁹ Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022), OJ L 462, 28.12.2021, p. 1–9.

⁶⁰ <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/en/home> and COM (2012) 196 final

⁶¹ Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle, https://sport.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ewos-tartu-call_en.pdf

developing inclusive strategies and curricula with actions such as the new Erasmus+ Teacher Academies.

2. LEGAL BASIS, SUBSIDIARITY AND PROPORTIONALITY

• Legal basis

The proposed Council Recommendation is in conformity with Articles 165(4) and 166(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Article 165(1) states that the Union is to ‘contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education systems’. Article 165(2) further specifies that Union action in education will aim, in part, at encouraging the development of distance education. Article 166(1) provides that the Union is to implement a vocational training policy to support and supplement the action of Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training.

The initiative does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments on Member States. The Member States will decide, according to their national circumstances, how they implement this Council Recommendation.

• Subsidiarity (for non-exclusive competence)

This proposal is in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity as provided for in Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

Member States are responsible for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education and training systems. At the same time, evidence shows that they face a number of common issues relating to educational outcomes and well-being at school.

This Council Recommendation will fully respect the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity, while reflecting the supplementing and supporting role of the EU and the voluntary nature of European cooperation in education and training. In the context of the European Education Area, the initiative will support Member States’ efforts in developing and implementing policies and mechanisms, as appropriate to their national systems and structures.

The initiative does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments on Member States. Its European added value lies mainly in the ability of the EU to mobilise political engagement at national level and to support education and training systems through policy guidelines, common tools and instruments (Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Social Fund+, European Regional Development Fund, Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe, the Technical Support Instrument, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, etc.), while fully respecting subsidiarity.

• Proportionality

This proposal complies with the principle of proportionality as provided for in Article 5(4) TEU.

Neither the content nor the form of this proposed Council Recommendation exceeds what is necessary to achieve its objectives. The commitments Member States will make are of a voluntary nature and each Member State remains free to decide on which approach to take.

- **Choice of the instrument**

To contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, that Treaty provides for the adoption by the Council of recommendations, on a proposal from the Commission.

A Council Recommendation is an appropriate instrument within the field of education and training, where the EU has a supporting responsibility, and is an instrument that has been used frequently for European action in these areas. As a legal instrument, it signals the commitment of Member States to the measures presented and provides a stronger political basis for cooperation in this area, while fully respecting Member State authority in the field of education and training.

3. RESULTS OF EX-POST EVALUATIONS, STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- **Ex-post evaluations/fitness checks of existing legislation**

An independent assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving was published in 2019⁶². The study covered 37 EU and non- EU countries. It addressed:

- the situation and trends at European and national level and the national arrangements for monitoring and evaluating early leaving from education and training;
- overview and examples of the measures implemented at national level for prevention, intervention and compensation, as well as evidence of effectiveness;
- an analysis of the role and influence of the 2011 Recommendation and associated EU policy tools in terms of their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability;
- the need for future EU- level support to tackle early leaving from education and training, and the nature of such support.

- **Stakeholder consultations**

The proposal is based on input gathered during an extensive consultation process⁶³. This included:

- a 14- week open public consultation on the new initiative, running from 24 June to 30 September 2021;
- discussions at the meetings of Directors-General for Schools;
- a series of dedicated online workshops between May and September 2021 with ministry representatives and stakeholder organisations (including representatives of teachers and trainers, learners, parents and youth, social

⁶² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2019), Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes, P., *Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving: final report*, Publications Office.

⁶³ A short synopsis report is attached to the Staff Working Document; the full summary report is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13019-Pathways-to-school-success-tackling-underachievement-in-basic-skills-and-early-leaving-from-education-and-training/public-consultation_en

partners and NGOs representing a variety of stakeholders) as well as with experts in the field.

- **Collection and use of expertise**

The proposal is based on:

- lessons learnt from the implementation of the strategic framework for policy cooperation Education and Training 2020 (reports of working groups, practices gathered and shared through the European Toolkit for Schools, etc.);
- an independent assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (see above);
- a wide range of existing and recently commissioned reports and studies on: expected impact of the COVID crisis on educational outcomes, equity in education, inclusive systems, school bullying, social and emotional education, well-being at school, parental involvement, quality of school life, policy reforms explaining successful PISA stories, etc.;
- mapping of Erasmus+ projects relating to promoting better educational outcomes, fighting underachievement and early leaving from education and training and supporting well-being at school.
- expertise of academics and other external experts who have contributed evidence-based knowledge and advice through the Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training (NESET)⁶⁴ and the Editorial Board of the European Toolkit for Schools.
- the analysis of reports and studies from the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, as well as the work of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Cedefop and Eurydice.

This information is included in the accompanying Staff Working Document.

- **Impact assessment**

Given the activities' complementary approach to Member State initiatives, the voluntary nature of the proposed activities and the scope of the impacts expected, an impact assessment was not carried out. The development of the proposal was informed by previous studies⁶⁵, consultation of Member States and the public consultation.

- **Regulatory fitness and simplification**

Not applicable.

- **Fundamental rights**

This proposal for a Council Recommendation is in keeping with the fundamental rights and principles recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, notably the right to the protection of personal data laid down in Article 8, academic freedom enshrined in Article 13, the right to education laid down in Article 14, and the right to non-discrimination provided for in Article 21.

⁶⁴ <https://nesetweb.eu/en/>

⁶⁵ Full references are available in the Staff Working Document.

The measures will be carried out in accordance with EU law on the protection of personal data, in particular Regulation (EU) 2016/679⁶⁶ of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation).

4. BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

This initiative will not require additional resources from the EU budget.

5. OTHER ELEMENTS

- **Implementation plans and monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements**

To support implementation, the Commission proposes to develop, in cooperation with Member States, peer learning activities and identification of good practice, as well as research, guidance material, handbooks and other concrete evidence-based deliverables. The Commission plans to further develop the European Toolkit for Schools within the new European Platform for School Education to communicate findings, successful examples and any other relevant resources.

The Commission intends to report on the use of the Council Recommendation in work on implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in the area of education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond.

- **Explanatory documents (for directives)**

Not applicable.

- **Outline of the proposal for a Council Recommendation and staff working document**

Building on experience of the 2011 Council Recommendation, the proposed Council Recommendation combines novelty with continuity, offering new solutions and extending and updating some components of the text it will repeal.

In continuity with the 2011 Recommendation, the proposal underlines the need to combine prevention, intervention and compensation measures. However, it places stronger emphasis on preventive measures and acknowledges that different needs/publics require different types of actions. It incorporates aspects which were not (or not sufficiently) addressed in the 2011 text, such as school governance and quality assurance mechanisms; the concept of whole school approach and of collaboration and partnership in and around schools; the key role of ensuring well-being, social and emotional learning; and safer, healthier and more supportive learning environments.

It proposes guidance and action that can be pursued by Member States to promote better educational outcomes for young Europeans, and set out the European Commission's commitment to supporting and complementing Member State actions in this area.

The accompanying staff working document sets out research evidence, stakeholder opinions and experiences collected in the consultation phase, and provides examples of existing policies and projects that underpin the policy promoted in the proposed Council Recommendation.

⁶⁶ OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1–88.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on Pathways to School Success

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165(4) and 166(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) The European Pillar of Social Rights⁶⁷ emphasises in its first and eleventh principles the importance of guaranteeing a quality and inclusive education for all, from a young age. The effective implementation of those principles depends on the resolve and action of Member States. EU-level actions can complement national actions and the Commission presented its contribution in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan⁶⁸.
- (2) On 30 September 2020, the European Commission adopted a Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, considering inclusiveness as one of its six dimensions⁶⁹. On 18 February 2021, the Council adopted the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 – 2030)⁷⁰.
- (3) In her 2021 speech on the State of the European Union, the President of the European Commission proposed to make 2022 the European Year of Youth, to offer increased opportunities for young people to shape Europe's future and be involved in decisions which affect their lives.
- (4) In the final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe citizens call on the Union to establish by 2025 an inclusive European Education Area within which all citizens have equal access to quality education and life-long learning, including those in rural and remote areas⁷¹. The 2020 Commission Communication sets inclusion and gender equality as a key dimension of the European Education Area to be achieved by 2025, and calls for decoupling education outcomes from socio-economic status. The Council agreed that, by 2030, the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15% and committed to reducing the share of early leavers from education and training to less than 9%.

⁶⁷ COM (2017) 250

⁶⁸ COM (2021) 102

⁶⁹ COM (2020) 625 final

⁷⁰ OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1–21

⁷¹ *Conference on the Future of Europe – Report on the Final Outcome*, May 2022, Proposal 46 (p. 88).

- (5) Even though the rate of early leavers has significantly improved at EU level, decreasing by 3.9 percentage points in the period 2010-2021, many learners continue to leave education prematurely. The share of early leavers from education and training was 9.7% in 2021 across the EU on average, just below the EU level ET2020 target of 10% set for 2020. Still more than 3.2 million young people in the EU (18-24 years old) are early leavers from education and training and therefore deprived of a fair chance of a successful professional career. Considerable differences still exist across and within countries, with persisting inequalities among specific groups (e.g. migrants, young men, ethnic minorities such as Roma, young people in rural and remote areas perform less well).
- (6) Results of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 reveal a deteriorating trend in the number of low achievers in basic skills over the period 2009-2018. Today, still one in five 15-year old Europeans lack adequate reading, maths or science competences. Moreover, the results of the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) 2018 show that a fifth of young people in the EU do not possess basic digital skills, while also revealing severe performance discrepancies in terms of socio-economic status, posing risk for deepening the digital divide⁷².
- (7) Data confirm that the socio-economic background is the strongest predictor of educational outcomes. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are overrepresented among those who leave education and training without an upper secondary qualification in most EU countries. PISA 2018 revealed that the proportion of underachievers in reading in most EU countries is much larger in the bottom quarter of the economic, social and cultural status index (ESCS) compared with pupils in the top quarter of ESCS up to more than 40 percentage points in some EU countries. Academic literature confirms that pupils with a low socio-economic background tend to experience more difficulties in developing academic and linguistic skills. They display learning-related behaviour problems more often, show lower motivation towards learning, leave education and training earlier, and leave with lower qualifications and insufficient competences for full participation in society.
- (8) Over the last years, Member States have integrated a high number of third country migrants (including refugees⁷³) of school age into their education systems. Further challenges arise in the context of persons fleeing from the war in Ukraine, a large proportion of whom are children of school age requiring targeted learning support (including acquisition of language of schooling) and psycho-social support.
- (9) PISA 2015 and 2018 also shed light on pupils' declining sense of belonging at school and widespread and increasing bullying/cyberbullying. Research highlights the importance of emotional, social and physical well-being in schools to enhance children and young people's chances to succeed in education and in life. It confirms that mental health issues, as well as violence and bullying, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance have devastating effects on children's and young people's emotional well-being and educational outcomes. Research shows also that disadvantaged groups are

⁷² While digital skills are to be considered amongst the basic skills, they are not explicitly addressed by Pathways to School Success, as already at the centre of other initiatives such as the Digital Education Action Plan.

⁷³ The term 'refugee' is used in this text in a broad political sense rather than as defined in the Geneva Convention and the EU asylum acquis.

more at risk of being bullied, and learners from social-economically disadvantaged schools feel a weaker sense of belonging than their more affluent peers.

- (10) The COVID pandemic has made these challenges even more important to address. Several studies suggest that the crisis may increase the likelihood for learners at risk of disconnecting from school to actually drop out and had detrimental effects on learners' mental health and well-being in general.
- (11) In 2011, the Council adopted a Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving⁷⁴. Extensive work has been carried out at European and national level to implement the Recommendation, in particular through peer learning and exchanges of good practices between Member States within the ET 2020 framework for policy cooperation⁷⁵. A wide range of resources, examples of successful measures and resource material is available online through the European Toolkit for Schools⁷⁶ and Cedefop's VET toolkit for tackling early leaving. An independent assessment of the implementation of the Recommendation published in 2019⁷⁷ provides strong indication that this Council Recommendation and the accompanying set of EU policy tools have encouraged transformations within educational institutions and policies and supported the reduction of early leaving from education and training. It also highlights areas in which further work is needed.
- (12) The Erasmus+ programme has supported several transnational projects on inclusion in various educational sectors, addressing underachievement and early leaving from education and training. For the 2021-2027 period, inclusion is one of the overarching priorities of Erasmus+. The programme also includes a specific policy priority to tackle learning disadvantage, early school leaving and low proficiency in basic skills, allowing stakeholders to Erasmus+ funding to implement policy recommendations.
- (13) The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2014-20 have mobilised significant investments to tackle early leaving from education and training supporting numerous large-scale projects in alignment with the 2011 Council Recommendation. The European Social Fund+ supports individuals, regions and Member States facing distinct challenges - from recovering from the COVID pandemic to meeting the EU's targets for employment, social inclusion, education and climate. The use for programming interventions under the ESIF and the 2021-2027 cohesion policy funds is informed, among others, by the Country Specific Recommendations issued in the framework of the European Semester.
- (14) The Technical Support Instrument offers Member States the possibility to receive support, upon demand, for tailor made reforms in a variety of areas, such as, for example, improving educational outcomes for children, improving early childhood education and care, setting national strategies and action plans on addressing and preventing early leaving from education and training, developing tools to support teacher recruitment and professional development, or preparing and rolling out curriculum reform. The Technical Support Instrument and the Structural Reform Support Programme, its predecessor, have been used by several Member States to

⁷⁴ OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1–6

⁷⁵ See <https://education.ec.europa.eu/levels/school/early-school-leaving>

⁷⁶ <https://www.schoolgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools.htm>

⁷⁷ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2019), Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes P., *Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving: final report*, Publications Office.

support reforms on preventing early leaving from education and training, especially as regards children from vulnerable backgrounds.

- (15) Children and adolescents need a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional competences to achieve positive outcomes in school and in life. The Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning⁷⁸ defines personal, social and learning to learn competences. This includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, support one's physical and emotional well-being, maintain physical and mental health, develop collaborative and positive relationships, and lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, while managing conflict in an inclusive and supportive context.
- (16) The Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future⁷⁹ recognise that teachers, trainers and school leaders are an indispensable driving force of education and training and emphasise the need to further develop and update their competences. The European Education Area communication and Council Resolution acknowledged the critical role of teachers and trainers.
- (17) The Council Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care⁸⁰ underlines that access to quality early childhood education and care services for all children contributes to their healthy development and educational success, helps reducing social inequalities and narrows the competence gap between children with different socio-economic backgrounds.
- (18) The Council Recommendation on blended learning for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education⁸¹ promotes blended learning approaches, combining school site and distance learning environments as well as digital and non-digital learning tools, with a view to building more resilient and inclusive education and training systems. Such practices allow diversified approaches and tools to better support pupils with specific needs or from disadvantaged groups and enhance their learning motivation.
- (19) The European Skills Agenda⁸² defines actions to strengthen sustainable competitiveness and build resilience to react to crises and help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills, based on the lessons learnt during the COVID pandemic. The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience⁸³ proposes a renewed EU policy vision of VET, which has a key role in preventing and counteracting early leaving from education and training and promoting equality of opportunities.
- (20) The Digital Education Action Plan⁸⁴ sets out actions to enhance digital skills and competences for the digital transformation, to ensure that no learners are left behind and that graduates have the competences needed on the labour market. It foresees the development of common guidelines for teachers and educational staff to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation, an update of the European Digital Competence

⁷⁸ OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 1–13

⁷⁹ OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, p. 11–19

⁸⁰ OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4–14

⁸¹ COM (2021) 455 final

⁸² COM (2020) 274 final

⁸³ OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16

⁸⁴ COM (2020) 624 final

Framework and a planned Proposal for a Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training. The Action Plan also encourages closing the gender gap in STEM.

- (21) The Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee invites the Member States to guarantee effective and free access to education and school-based activities for children in need (i.e. at risk of poverty or social exclusion, particularly Roma). The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child calls for building inclusive and quality education. The new EU Strategy for a better internet for kids calls for building a digital environment where children are protected, empowered and respected and highlights that children in vulnerable situations should have equal chances to harness the opportunities of the digital decade.
- (22) A new generation of EU equality strategies and inclusion policy frameworks adopted in 2020 and 2021⁸⁵ put a strong focus on promoting equity and inclusion and fighting discrimination in education with targeted support to the most disadvantaged and discriminated.
- (23) The Council Recommendation on a Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee⁸⁶ recommends to ease young people's way back into education and training by diversifying the continued education offer, ensuring, where appropriate, the validation of non-formal and informal learning. In addition, the ALMA⁸⁷ (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) initiative helps disadvantaged young people aged 18-30 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) find their way to the job market in their home country by combining support for education, vocational training or employment with a work placement in another EU Member State, in order to improve their skills, knowledge and experience.
- (24) Lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation, new insights from research and stakeholder consultations call for a broader, more inclusive and systemic approach to school success, addressing simultaneously the EU-level target on basic skills and the one on early leaving from education and training, and fully embedding the well-being dimension. Such an approach should ensure the development of the competences necessary to thrive in education and life, and lead to meaningful learning experience, engagement, wider participation in the community and transition to a stable adulthood.
- (25) The objective of reducing underachievement and early leaving from education and training and promoting school success need to be systematically addressed by education and training across the EU. At system level, consistency of policy measures, coordination with other relevant policy areas (such as health, social services, employment, housing, justice, migration and integration), and effective cooperation between different actors at all levels (national, regional, local, school) is needed for a coordinated support to children, young people and their families. In parallel, at school level whole-school approaches should be promoted, incorporating all areas of activity

⁸⁵ Gender equality strategy 2020-2025 (2020), EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 (2020), EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020-2030 (2020) and its related Council Recommendation (2021), LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025 (2020), Action Plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 (2021), Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 (2021), EU strategy on combatting antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021).

⁸⁶ OJ C 372, 4.11.2020, p. 1-9.

⁸⁷ See <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1549&langId=en>

(teaching and learning; planning and governance; etc.) and engaging all key actors: learners, school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and families, and local and wider communities⁸⁸.

- (26) This Council Recommendation fully respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBER STATES

1. Develop or further strengthen by 2025 an **integrated and comprehensive strategy towards school success**, at the appropriate level, in accordance with the structure of their education and training system, with a view to decoupling education outcomes from socio-economic status, promoting inclusion in education (including through addressing segregation in education) and further reducing early leaving from education and training and underachievement in basic skills, as proposed in the policy framework in the Annex. Special attention should be paid to well-being at school as a key component of school success. Such a strategy should include **prevention, intervention and compensation** measures (including measures offered as part of the Youth Guarantee), be **evidence-based** and **combine universal measures with targeted and/or individualised provisions** for learners requiring additional attention and support in inclusive settings (such as learners with a socio-economic disadvantaged, migrant - including refugee - or Roma background, learners with visible and non-visible disabilities, those with special educational needs or mental health issues). Such a strategy should also be based on structured **cooperation** between actors representing different policy areas, levels of governance and educational levels, benefit from adequate **funding** and be accompanied by a clear **implementation and evaluation** plan.
2. Develop and further strengthen **data collection and monitoring systems** at national, regional and local level which allow for the systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative information on learners as well as on factors that affect learning outcomes, especially socio-economic background. These systems must be in compliance with protection of personal data and national legislation. They should ensure that disaggregated data and information on a wide range of aspects are available at different policy levels and used for prevention and early intervention, analysis and policy design, steering, monitoring and evaluating the above strategies.
3. In the context of an integrated and comprehensive strategy, combine prevention, intervention and compensation measures as those set out in the policy framework in the Annex to support:
 - 3.1. **learners**, by combining in a systemic way different measures which put the learners' interests and needs in the centre.
 - 3.2. **school leaders, teachers, trainers and other staff**, by making sure they have the knowledge, skills, and competences, as well as time, space and adequate support to work effectively with learners at risk of exclusion, underachievement and early leaving.
 - 3.3. **schools** in developing a 'whole school approach' to school success, in which all members of the school community (school leaders, teachers, trainers and other educational staff, learners, parents and families and the local community) as well as

⁸⁸ See definition in the accompanying Staff Working Document

external stakeholders engage actively and in a collaborative way to promote educational success for all learners.

- 3.4. **system level** measures to improve equity and inclusion in education and training and educational success of all learners, including by addressing structures and mechanisms which may have a particularly detrimental impact on learners belonging to more disadvantaged groups
4. Optimise use of national and EU **resources** for investment in infrastructure, training, tools and resources to increase inclusion, equality and well-being in education, including EU funds and expertise for reforms and investment in infrastructure, tools, pedagogy and the creation of healthy learning environments, in particular Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Social Fund+, European Regional Development Fund, Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe, the Technical Support Instrument, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, etc., and make sure that the use of the funds is aligned with the overall strategy.
5. Report on their strategy, measures taken, relevant monitoring and evaluation arrangements and budget allocated within the reporting arrangements of the European Education Area and of the European Semester.

HEREBY INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

1. Support the implementation of the Council Recommendation, as well as related initiatives such as the European Child Guarantee, by facilitating mutual learning and exchanges among Member States and all relevant stakeholders on educational success for all through:
 - 1.1. the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), where reducing early leaving from education and training, enhancing proficiency in basic skills and promoting the well-being of learners, teachers and trainers are key priority areas;
 - 1.2. setting up and promoting the activities of the expert group on supporting learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting well-being at school, which will take forward the work on identifying good practice in respect of developing supportive and healthy learning environments, promoting mental health, healthy lifestyles, and physical and emotional well-being (including by addressing post-traumatic stress), and for preventing bullying and violence at school, as well as proposals for effective up-take of successful practices in schools and recommendations for awareness raising activities at EU and national level.
 - 1.3. actively involving young people in the implementation of the Council Recommendation, including through the European Youth Dialogue, to ensure that the opinions, views and needs of young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are fully taken into account.
 - 1.4. sharing successful practices (including peer-learning and peer mentoring), guidelines and practical tools to support the design, implementation and evaluation of national, regional and local policies and practices, including those targeting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, using the EU online platforms and communities for education and training, including eTwinning, the new European Platform for School Education, Erasmus+ Alumni, Cedefop's ambassadors for tackling early leaving, Learning Corner for multilingual learning materials on the EU.

- 1.5. disseminating and encouraging the use of opportunities to promote, support and enable inclusion, equity and well-being in education within EU funds, such as Erasmus+, Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Social Fund+, European Regional Development Fund, Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe, the Technical Support Instrument, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, etc..
- 1.6. supporting EU-wide research and surveys; encouraging the creation of research networks and supporting dialogue between research and policy as well as research and practitioners.
- 1.7. taking into account the Structured Dialogue on digital education and skills including the proposals for Council Recommendations resulting from it.
2. Support the development and dissemination of guidance material and resources on educational success for all learners (including on integration of migrants and language learning), in cooperation with Member States, including by further developing and promoting the European Toolkit for Schools ‘Promoting inclusive education and tackling early school leaving,’ the Compendium of Inspiring Practices on Inclusive and Citizenship Education, and Cedefop’s VET toolkit for tackling early leaving.
3. Support professional development opportunities for educational staff and other stakeholders by:
 - 3.1. sharing good practices from Erasmus+ staff exchanges, projects and networks, including through the eTwinning online community, the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies as well as the Centres of Vocational Excellence.
 - 3.2. Making available massive open online courses (MOOCs) and micro-credentials for teachers, trainers, school leaders and teacher educators, hosted by the new European Platform for School Education and promote the wide use of these courses.
4. Monitor and report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation within the framework of the European Semester, (including through the revised Social Scoreboard) and of the European Education Area.
5. Monitor and report periodically on progress against the EU-level targets within the framework of reports on the European Education Area; consider how monitoring at EU level can be enhanced, in particular by assessing existing EU level indicators and proposing new ones, in particular on inclusion and equity, as appropriate and necessary.
6. The Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving is repealed. [This Recommendation repeals and replaces the Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving of 28 June 2011, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011]

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*