European Commission

ROADMAP	
Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.	
TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Communication on Achieving the European Education Area
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	EAC – A1
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Commission Communication
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q3 2020
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en
This Roadmap is provided for information purposes only and its content might change. It does not prejudge the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Roadmap, including its timing, are subject to change.	

A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

Context

Education and skills play a key role in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and building a resilient, sustainable, innovative and fair Europe. Commission President von der Leyen set the goal to make the European Education Area a reality by 2025 through bringing down barriers to learning; improving access to quality education and training; enabling learners to move easily between countries; and changing the culture of education and training towards lifelong learning for all. This follows the commitment by European ministers of education and training to create a European Education Area. The European Parliament supported these goals in its 2018 Resolution, calling for enhanced cooperation among Member States in modernising education and implementing the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

In line with these political commitments, the Communication on the European Education Area will lay out the Commission's vision of the European Education Area. It will set out means and actions to achieve the European Education Area by 2025, together with an enabling framework for education and training cooperation with the Member States and stakeholders. The proposal will build on the success of the current strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), which expires this year.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed 100 million Europeans, who are part of the education and training community, to new realities, new ways of learning, teaching and communicating. It has brought out the strengths and weaknesses of European education systems even more strongly, as well as ideas on what the new normal might look like. Joint action is needed to prevent that the crisis becomes a structural barrier eroding social and economic well-being and to reinforce the commitment to make quality and inclusive education and training available to all.

Basic and higher skills and competences will be key for a successful recovery and building a greener, digital and more resilient society and economy. Cedefop projects that 26 million new jobs for high qualifications will open until 2030. Europe will need more people with quality tertiary education, yet students with a lower socioeconomic status are less likely to enter and finish higher education. More than one in five EU 15 year-olds do not even have basic skills in reading, science and maths (PISA 2018) and early school leaving remains a challenge, particularly for learners from vulnerable groups.

Educators play a central role in providing quality education and training for key competences and higher skills alike. Still, according to the OECD TALIS 2018 survey, less than one in five teachers consider their profession valued in society.

Building sustainable, resilient and fair societies and economies rests on a real **culture of lifelong learning.** In the short term, battling unemployment will require learning new skills or improving the existing ones (up- and reskilling), including through short-term higher education courses (micro-credentials) and flexible study programmes. At the same time, Europe needs to invest in the learning competences and habits from the earliest age: quality early childhood education and care leads to better learning results and jobs.

The move to sustainable and digital societies and economies will require new skills and competences. Two in five European adults do not have basic digital skills. Education and training institutions can become the drivers of the digital and green transformations, promoting sustainability competences and digital skills for all.

The diversity and complexity of these challenges can only be met with comprehensive and coherent action

across all education and training sectors and levels. Yet there are still significant obstacles to **cross-border learning and cooperation**. People and organisations should have the freedom to learn, volunteer or cooperate outside their countries.

Action on all these fronts requires **smart investment at the EU, national and regional levels**. The Next Generation EU instrument will play a key role in addressing these challenges, in cooperation with the Member States.

Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

Article 165(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes the legal basis for EU action in the areas of education and training. Article 166 further defines actions to implement EU's vocational training policy. Action at the EU level 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; reflecting the supplementing and supporting role of the EU, and the voluntary nature of European cooperation in education and training. The initiative does not propose an extension of EU competences.

The initiative will further develop the European Education Area vision, objectives and main principles, lay out new actions and renew the cooperation with Member States fully in line with the subsidiarity principle. The European Education Area adds value by focusing European education and training cooperation on common goals in a lifelong learning perspective, and on building the resilience of systems. The Area's cooperation framework will continue to promote mutual learning; provide comparative evidence, indicators and benchmarks; encourage peer support for national reforms; develop common tools for policy development and reform; and encourage cross-border mobility and cooperation.

B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how

The objective of the initiative is to strengthen quality, inclusive, competitive and green education and training systems in Europe. It will support the implementation of the Next Generation EU, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal.

The Communication will **outline the vision** of how the EU dimension enriches the quality of education systems of the Member States and how together they shape a true European Education Area, based on mutual learning and freedom to be mobile and for institutions to associate across Europe. It will set out common objectives and targets, which will focus efforts on the challenges shared by all Member States. An analysis framework will track progress.

In addition, the initiative will propose **EU-level flagship actions** to achieve the European Education Area by 2025 in line with President von der Leyen's commitment to create a genuine European space of learning. Actions will cover all sectors and levels of education and training, and all modes of learning, addressing challenges in basic skills and inclusion for educational equity; teachers and trainers, including professional development and demographic aspects; digital and green transition and innovation; investment, and sustainable learning mobility.

To support reforms addressing shared challenges, the initiative will lay out an enabling **framework for cooperation with Member States** and engagement with stakeholders, succeeding ET 2020, across all education and training sectors and levels. The mechanisms will include bodies such as working and expert groups, and tools for mutual learning such as peer learning activities, conferences, open fora, expert meetings, panels, peer counselling and reviews, seminars, studies and analyses. The initiative will also strengthen opportunities for tailor-made support to Member State reforms.

The implementation of the initiative will be politically steered by the Council of the European Union and its relevant working committee. It will be supported by the Erasmus Programme and EU funds and instruments.

Since each Member State decides the approach to implement the new actions and pursue the agreed objectives in their national systems, the principles of proportionality will be respected by the initiative.

C. Better regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

Targeted consultation activities with Member States, stakeholders and experts have already taken place, in the form of surveys, meetings, public events (such as the Second European Education Summit) and expert groups. Further targeted consultation events will be organised before the finalisation of the proposal.

The consultation activities have aimed to identify the main challenges, future priorities, cooperation arrangements and future quantitative targets across all sectors and levels of education and training. They targeted Member State authorities at national and regional level; education and training stakeholders; teachers and trainers at all levels; pupils and students; parents; education and training institutions; civil society organisations; social partners and business organisations; beneficiaries of the EU funding programmes; international organisations; experts and academics, as well as the general public.

Evidence base and data collection

This initiative is supported by a strong evidence base, including academic literature, survey data, annual analytical reports, evaluations and monitoring reports, and reports on indicators and benchmarks. The new framework will build on this knowledge, including, but not limited to:

- All stakeholder consultation evidence, including Member States and stakeholder surveys on ET 2020 and the results of the Education and Training Expert Panel
- An external assessment of the ET 2020 tools and deliverables, conducted in 2019
- Annual Education and Training Monitor, reporting on the implementation of ET 2020 and wider education and training reforms, both on the national level and in a comparative perspective
- Eurostat reports on ET 2020 benchmarks
- Other providers' education and training data, including international standardised assessments of educational performance (e.g., PISA)
- Results from Erasmus+ policy experimentation projects
- Thematic reports and analyses from expert networks, such as from EENEE or NESET
- The expert opinion of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks
- The tri-partite opinion on the future of vocational education and training
- 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

An impact assessment is not considered to be necessary, as the Communication sets out a general policy approach. Proposals resulting from this initiative, in cases when they have significant expected impacts, will be subject to impact assessment(s), in line with the Better Regulation guidelines. The framework for cooperation with the Member States and engagement with stakeholders in and by itself is not expected to result in direct economic, environmental or social impacts, and other policy tools do not present different policy alternatives. With the above considerations taken into account, potential impacts will be assessed as part of the Staff Working Document accompanying the initiative.