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Good governance and enhanced quality in education

Report¹

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

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Summary

Council of Europe member States devote significant efforts and means to education. However, the level of education of European students, as well as the scores of European universities are not progressing and are even declining in comparative terms according to international classifications. There is a need to rethink education policies and strategies to secure the right to education of adequate quality, but also to increase the competitiveness of European education – and labour force – at global level.

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media calls for inclusive and innovative education policies aimed at students' well-being and achievement and at the promotion of European common values. They should oppose exclusion and foster gender equality, promote teachers' professionalism and build on new information and communication technologies, combat corruption and increase ethical standards in education, and develop democratic governance in education institutions, with an active participation of students and their families.

To achieve these objectives, member States should establish mechanisms for assessment and quality assurance to monitor the quality of education systems and the consistency of educational achievements with the needs in terms of professional qualifications, on one hand, and democratic citizenship, on the other. The Council of Europe should encourage and facilitate co-operation between international organisations and relevant professional networks and quality assurance agencies.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 13015](#), Reference 3908 of 5 October 2012.



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A. Draft resolution²

1. The member States of the Council of Europe are confronted with important challenges: economic crisis, massive unemployment, rising tensions and hostility against minority and migrant communities. The Parliamentary Assembly considers that quality of education is critical in determining our societies' capacity to thrive, and that enhanced European education systems are a fundamental tool to deal effectively with today's crucial societal challenges.
2. Public authorities are responsible for securing the right to education of adequate quality. The budgetary restrictions resulting from the financial crisis considerably limit States' margin for action. It is vital that we invest in education, but such investment must be made on the basis of global strategies for improving the governance and quality of the general educational framework and a thorough assessment of the functioning of education systems.
3. Education systems should be inclusive and quality education should be ensured without discrimination. This is a crucial objective for primary and secondary schools, but it must also be pursued in the context of university education. This means not only that the right of access to the education system must be guaranteed, but also that the system must take account of the diversity of learners' educational and social needs to foster the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for life in society.
4. Moreover, it is not enough to aim at improving people's capacity to take up professions of their choice: it is indispensable that education helps their personal development and prepares them for responsive and active citizenship. Schools must be the place where young people learn to live in harmony in an environment which respects freedom of thought and conscience, which encourages learners to open up to others and develop a critical mind, which rewards effort and merit while providing those in difficulty with the support they need.
5. The Assembly therefore recommends that the member States:
 - 5.1. put in place coherent education policies focusing on students' well-being and achievement, on the need to prevent social exclusion and to improve teachers' professional abilities and on the effectiveness of the education system as a whole, as well as to ensure a better contribution of schools to the socio-economic progress;
 - 5.2. involve all stakeholders in framing and implementing such policies so as to improve communication and synergies;
 - 5.3. establish mechanisms for assessment and quality assurance so as to monitor the quality of the education system, the consistency of educational achievements with needs in terms of professional qualifications and democratic citizenship, and the effective and efficient use of resources;
 - 5.4. ensure non-discrimination in access to education and take positive steps to counter educational inequalities and the under-performance of certain pupils or students and of certain educational establishments by means of support programmes for the pupils and students who are most frequently victims of discrimination or exclusion, and incentives to attract talented teachers to take up employment in the most difficult classes and schools;
 - 5.5. promote gender equality in and through education; in this respect:
 - 5.5.1. guarantee to all students the freedom to choose their field of studies;
 - 5.5.2. identify and spread good practice in gender-sensitive education;
 - 5.5.3. revise teaching curricula and methods with a view to reinforcing non-discriminatory language and non-sexist teaching and to placing greater emphasis on equality and non-violence;
 - 5.5.4. meet the needs of young parents, and in particular young women engaged in higher education and research, in terms of family support and childcare;
 - 5.5.5. seek more gender balance in teaching and managerial positions at all levels of education;
 - 5.6. promote the comprehensive approach to education in the European humanistic tradition, which is key to strengthening democratic citizenship, upholding the respect of human rights and promoting solidarity and social cohesion;

2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 11 March 2014.

- 5.7. reconsider initial and in-service training programmes for teachers, as well as teaching methods, in particular to take account of new challenges which result from interculturalism, the information society and the pace of innovation in science and technology;
- 5.8. seek to make the teaching profession more attractive; in this respect, consider increasing teachers' salaries and offer incentives for high-achieving students to enter and stay in the profession;
- 5.9. make better use of the possibilities offered by Internet to modernise the management of educational establishments and to develop innovatory teaching methods and tools that are more suited to the diversity of learners, and promote the acquisition of digital and media skills;
- 5.10. enhance accountability and transparency in education governance to fight corruption; to this end, develop robust audit, monitoring and compliance mechanisms, and reinforce parliamentary control over anti-corruption policy implementation;
- 5.11. develop codes of conduct in schools and higher education institutions with the participation of all relevant stakeholders;
- 5.12. make education management less bureaucratic, seeking to reduce the time that teachers and university professors spend dealing with purely administrative matters;
- 5.13. ensure families' access to complete and clear information about the educational offer, and transparency of the performance of the education institutions;
- 5.14. take into account, in education policy formulation, the assessment of learning outcomes by international quality assurance programmes;
- 5.15. support co-operation on quality assurance, in particular in higher education, with a view to achieving the aims of the Bologna Process and the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area;
- 5.16. look for co-operation and synergies, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of European education at global level, making full use of the Council of Europe's longstanding expertise in this field;
- 5.17. encourage co-operation between the Council of Europe and active partners in this field, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements (IEA), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the Educational Testing Service (ETS), and the networks of national quality assurance agencies.

B. Draft recommendation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution ... (2014) on good governance and enhanced quality in education, believes that enhancing the quality of education should be fully integrated into the design of education policies at the national, European and international level.
2. The Assembly underlines the value of tools developed at international level to assess the quality of the education systems and considers that the Council of Europe should play a stronger role in encouraging the development of national policies coherent with the findings of international quality assurance programmes and in supporting member States in their implementation.
3. The Assembly welcomes the proposals put forward by the Conference of Ministers of Education held in Helsinki on 26 and 27 April 2013 and urges the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to ensure adequate follow up to these proposals.
4. In addition, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers instruct the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE) to analyse the relevance and impact of the existing national and international quality assessment instruments in the field of education, seeking to identify ways of reinforcing co-operation and synergies between the Council of Europe member States and of increasing the competitiveness of European education at global level.
5. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers consider establishing a permanent committee of experts on higher education.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Corsini, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Contemporary societies are facing a wide range of challenges, including globalisation, rising unemployment, societal tensions originating in the complexity of building cohesion between communities of different cultural backgrounds. I am firmly convinced that the proper functioning of the European education systems is needed in order to create the conditions necessary for us to address these challenges effectively.

2. For this reason, in September 2012, I tabled a motion for a resolution, together with 19 other members of the Parliamentary Assembly (Doc. 13015), highlighting the need to reconsider the link between good governance (both in terms of policy-making processes and management practice) and quality in education.

3. In the preparation of this report, I took account of previous work of our Assembly and of the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe. I would also like to thank the experts who contributed to the work of the committee.³

4. In the following sections, I will first discuss what “quality in education” means and how to assess it. I will then consider areas for improvements in education policies, seeking to identify which changes in the governance of education systems could help enhancing the quality of education.

2. Defining “quality” in education systems

2.1. A complex multifaceted concept

5. There is no unique shared definition of “quality in education”. However, there seems to be a common understanding of various elements that quality in education should imply.

6. Basing itself on Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13,⁴ the 24th Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Helsinki, 26-27 April 2013), on the theme of “Governance and quality education”,⁵ agreed that quality of education was closely linked to four inter-related purposes, namely:

- preparation for sustainable employment;
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

7. The conference also stressed that the education systems of the 21st century should:

- be inclusive, open, transparent and founded on ethics;
- foster the participation of pupils and parents in decision making;
- rely on qualified professionals;

3. Mr Germain Dondelinger, Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), and Mr Sjur Bergan, Head of the Education Department, Directorate General of Democracy (exchange of views on 27 June 2013); Mr João Paulo Batalha, Board member of *Transparencia e Integridade*, Portugal, representative of Transparency International (exchange of views on 25 October 2013); Mr Radu Damian, Director of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ARACIS (exchange of views on 4 December 2013), and Mr Michael Davidson, Head of Division at the Directorate for Education Skills, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (exchange of views on 29 January 2014).

4. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers on ensuring quality education identifies, in its paragraph 6, a set of specific criteria that “quality education” should meet.

5. The sub-themes of the Conference were: A) “Decentralisation, social participation and empowerment of local authorities in the Governance of Education”; B) “Ethics and integrity in education (with special focus on the ethical behaviour of teachers and the integrity of higher education and research)”; and C) “Parent, teacher and student involvement in educational Governance and management and Quality Education”. The entire documentation relating to the conference and the full report of the proceedings may be consulted at the following address: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/standingconf/Default_en.asp. The results of the conference were discussed at the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group on Education, Culture, Sport, Youth and Environment (GR-C) on 2 July 2013 (see document CM(2013)78).

- provide students with the skills needed for work, but also with democratic and intercultural competencies and critical thinking.

8. The Scottish Government approaches the question of quality in education in a different way: education should contribute to the well-being of each individual.⁶ On this basis, the Scottish Government proposes a methodology to assess the children's well-being which, in essence, implies that children feel and should be:

- safe – protected from abuse, neglect or harm;
- healthy – high standards of physical and mental health; support to make healthy, safe choices;
- achieving – receiving support and guidance in learning; boosting skills, confidence and self-esteem;
- nurtured – having a nurturing and stimulating place to live and grow;
- active – having opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities;
- respected – given a voice and involved in the decisions that affect their well-being;
- responsible – taking an active role within their schools and communities; students must be active players, not passive recipients;
- included – getting help and guidance to overcome inequalities; full members of the communities in which they live and learn.

9. These examples clearly show that quality education is a very complex multifaceted concept. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss it from different perspectives. In an attempt to streamline the analysis, I believe that the essential quality elements can be grouped under three main areas, which correspond to a three-pronged approach to quality in education:

- the quality of “results”, namely what is (should be) achieved through education;
- the quality of what is referred as “the initial contribution”, namely what the education systems (should) provide to pupils and students in order to reach the targeted quality results;
- the quality of “governance” of the education system, namely the guiding principles and internal processes which (should) ensure that the education system can provide a quality initial contribution and lead to quality results.

2.2. Quality of results

10. When discussing results (and taking account of the texts referred to in section 2.1), it is important to make a distinction between three distinct, though closely interconnected, wide-ranging educational aims:

- adequate learning outcomes;
- personal development and well-being;
- societal enhancement.

2.2.1. Learning outcomes

11. Learning outcomes should be coherent with two key end-results which must go hand in hand: the first one – on which we often put emphasis – is “employability”; the second – but not less important – one is “responsible citizenship”. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 asks for a system that “enables pupils and students to develop appropriate competences, self-confidence and critical thinking to help them become responsible citizens and improve their employability”. The recommendation also links “quality” with the capacity of the system to pass on “universal and local cultural values to pupils and students”. In the same direction, the Parliamentary Assembly, in its [Resolution 1929 \(2013\)](#) “Culture and education through national parliaments: European policies”, and the 2013 Helsinki Standing Conference of Ministers of Education insisted on the need to prepare for sustainable employment, providing students with the skills needed for work, but also on the need to prepare for life as active citizens in democratic societies, providing students with democratic and intercultural competencies and the ability of critical thinking.

6. See the Summary of Scottish Government Policy on Supporting Young People's Health and Wellbeing (2013) (www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00418332.pdf) and the Online Guide on Wellbeing indicators (www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/background/wellbeing).

2.2.2. Personal development and well-being

12. The accent on learning outcomes in relation to employability and responsible citizenship captures the link between an adult person and society; in other terms, his or her capacity to play an active role within society. But for the education system to be successful in this direction, it is also necessary that education leads to personal development and well-being. This is what Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 highlights when requiring an education that “develops each pupil’s and student’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” and which provides “a secure and non-violent learning environment in which the rights of all are respected”.

13. Moreover, the education system not only provides a “learning environment”, but is a “life environment” in which each member of society should be supported to flourish and mature as a fulfilled person. In this respect, the Scottish Government’s approach is enlightening: quality education necessarily implies that schools must be a place where pupils and students grow up nurtured, safe and healthy. The Council of Europe has developed a methodology aimed at defining various factors affecting well-being and relevant indicators as a tool for policy making.⁷ The OECD, as well, initiated a programme to identify the “better life index”.⁸ Indeed, making informed choices as to the policies to be put in place to enhance well-being is crucial for societal development.

2.2.3. Societal enhancement

14. Taking care of personal development eventually equates taking care of society itself and upholding societal enhancement. As Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 states, quality education means “an education which promotes democracy, respect for human rights and social justice”. In Helsinki, the Ministers of Education highlighted the connection between education and democracy, and the value of education as a cornerstone of equality, well-being, prosperity, civilisation and culture. The Ministers also pointed to the need to ensure, through teaching, learning and research, the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base. In other terms, quality education builds societies capable of living together in harmony and keeping pace with technical and scientific progress.

2.3. Quality of the initial contribution

15. Education results are of course highly dependent on the quality of what the system offers to pupils and students. In this respect, among other factors – including those that I have already mentioned in relation to the learning and life environment –, I will insist on the following:

- teachers’ qualifications and attitudes;
- teaching methodology;
- programmes.

2.3.1. Teachers’ qualifications and attitudes

16. The quality of the results of our students’ education depends primarily on our teachers’ professionalism. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 refers to an education which “relies on qualified teachers who are committed to continuous professional development”. Quality education needs teachers who are knowledgeable and able to communicate their knowledge, understand diversity, pay attention to different needs and can adapt to them, take care of their pupils and students and not only support their learning process but also help them to develop their own personality and prepare for life. Qualifications are not everything however: teachers’ attitudes and behaviour are amongst the key factors of quality education. For this reason, the Ministers at the Standing Conference in Helsinki envisaged the drafting of a framework instrument on the ethical principles of good conduct and professionalism for teachers.

7. www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/GUIDEINVOLVINGCITIZENS_EN.pdf.

8. www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/.

2.3.2. Teaching methodology

17. Within the education system, it is normal that different teaching methodologies coexist: they should be adapted to specific needs and uniformity would be an obstacle to this. However, to achieve quality education it is necessary that teaching methodologies meet some fundamental principles. In particular, I consider it essential that specific methodologies are designed to uphold students' confidence and self-esteem, stimulate their creativity and critical thinking, and offer them opportunities to take an active part in learning activities.

2.3.3. Programmes

18. Education is a step-by-step process and the required knowledge, competencies and skills are of course acquired gradually. This means that specific learning outcomes are to be identified for each education level, and that the respective curricula must be devised to be consistent with each other. The curricula should be consistent with expected learning outcomes, and these should be consistent with the employment requirements, in order to prevent the mismatch between market needs and competences acquired through formal education. This also means that the system needs a certain capacity to adapt to developments.

19. Proper results in educational processes also depend on research programmes deepening our knowledge and conferring even greater value on the education dispensed in our schools and universities.

2.4. Quality of education governance

20. It would not be possible to ensure the quality of the initial contribution and of the education results without good governance of the education systems. The concept of education as an individual right and a public good suggests that public authorities are responsible for establishing a framework (applicable to private providers as well) in which quality education can be ensured.

21. The Council of Europe's Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level⁹ lists 12 key principles which, *mutatis mutandis*, are relevant for the education sector too. I should also refer to the thorough analysis by Elisabeth Bäckman and Bernard Trafford of the concept and implications of "democratic governance at school".¹⁰ It highlights the positive impact that democratic governance of the education system may have on educational achievements. As the authors explain, "democratic" indicates that school governance is based on human rights values, empowerment and involvement of students, staff and stakeholders in all important decisions in the school".

22. My analysis will be limited to four key elements which I consider as reliable benchmarks of good governance applicable to any education system:

- inclusiveness;
- participation;
- co-operation;
- ethics.

2.4.1. Inclusiveness and non-discrimination

23. Education systems must be inclusive. The term inclusiveness should be given a wide meaning. In particular, an inclusive education system responds to the following essential requisites:

- be not only "open to all", but also "accessible to all" and, to use the terms of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13, give "access to learning to all pupils and students, particularly those in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups";
- recognise everyone's learning and social needs and be adapted to these different needs, providing opportunities for all students, in order to uphold the development of each of them;
- offer help and guidance to overcome inequalities and encourage all students to complete their educational programmes.

9. See the Brochure (www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy_Innovation/StrategyBrochure_en_Oct2009.pdf) and the Council of Europe's website on the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level and related projects (www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy_Innovation/default_en.asp).

10. Elisabeth Bäckman and Bernard Trafford: *Democratic Governance at School*, Council of Europe Publishing, January 2007, www.synigoros.gr/resources/2007_demgovernchoolspublic_en.pdf.

2.4.2. Participation

24. The Ministers of Education at the meeting in Helsinki stressed that the democratic conception of education and the participation of all players were important factors that would influence quality. Through its European Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, the Council of Europe had provided important waymarks in that direction. The Ministers also proposed exploring possibilities to develop indicators for measuring participation of major stakeholders in education in Europe.

25. I would pinpoint, together with the Scottish Government, that quality education should trigger – and guarantee – responsibility and respect. Students should not be seen as passive recipients; they should become active players and play an active role within the education system, being involved in the decisions that affect their well-being. This is also enshrined (as explained above) in the concept of “democratic school governance”.

2.4.3. Co-operation

26. The ministers suggested placing more trust in local authorities and non-governmental players for the accomplishment of the educational mission. They also considered that co-operation between parents and teachers was decisive for pupil achievement. Devising a partnership in terms of education and training with parents would only become a reality if, on the school’s side, this partnership was pursued in a climate of trust, co-operation and communication. As the ones accountable for education policies, the ministers undertook to create suitable conditions for this and to support all the stakeholders. Mr Eero Heinäluoma, Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, underlined the need for close co-operation between school and parents. He emphasised that if parents and teachers pursued different goals, if parents lost interest in their children, the school had little chance of achieving its objectives.

2.4.3.1. Ethics

27. Quality of education is closely linked to, and depends on, the ethical behaviour at systemic level involving teachers, administrators in education, researchers, etc. The teaching profession may benefit from a code of ethics, similar to the Hippocratic Oath taken by physicians and other health-care professionals swearing to practise medicine honestly. To cite but one example, I should like to refer to the Code of Ethics of the American Association of Educators¹¹ that refers to the educators’ commitment to:

- make a meaningful contribution for each student’s progress toward realisation of his or her personal potential and as a citizen of the greater community;
- deal considerately and justly with each student, and seek to resolve problems, including discipline, according to law and school policy;
- not intentionally expose the student to disparagement and to make a constructive effort to protect the student from conditions detrimental to learning, health or safety.

3. Assessment of quality in education: main mechanisms and their impact

28. In the previous sections, I have identified a number of elements which should feature in quality education and good governance of the education system. A cross-cutting issue is how to assess whether and to what extent, these quality elements are present in the system. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 mentions the certification of the outcomes of formal and non-formal learning which must be done “in a transparent way based on fair assessment”.

29. Nationwide monitoring and evaluation processes exist in all countries, though not explicitly linked to key competences in every case. Though widespread, it should however be noted that these mechanisms focus mainly on compulsory education or education up to the upper-secondary leaving examination. Countries generally refer to several complementary mechanisms, including: the definition of competence thresholds; final requirements and/or specific performance indicators; and the analysis of results of national assessment, school self-evaluation and/or external examinations.

30. All countries have dedicated authorities to monitor quality in education. Quality assurance in higher education is monitored by independent associations. As regards school level, national school inspectorates play this role. The outcomes of the assessment carried out by the national school inspectorates are usually

11. www.aeteachers.org/index.php/about-us/aae-code-of-ethics.

compiled in annual reports submitted to the central administration and may be translated into indicators to provide evidence to policy makers (for example to modify or discontinue existing programmes or to propose new ones). In Finland, the National Board of Education also carries out longitudinal monitoring, using findings of previous evaluations. These evaluations produce: basic indicators, which describe pupils' and students' knowledge, skills and attitudes in the content areas of the curriculum; contextual indicators, which describe how pupils' and students' knowledge and skills relate to demographic, social, economic and educational factors; and trend indicators, which describe changes in the basic and contextual indicators.

31. The European Union monitors¹² educational achievements in secondary education based on the objectives set at European Union level, and in particular the key competences based on the *Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training*.¹³ School inspectorates are, in most cases, the agencies responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

32. All countries use at least some of the international evaluation mechanisms established to assess quality in education, which focus mainly on learning outcomes. I will briefly present the most important ones in the following sections.

3.1. Pre-primary and primary education

33. The key expected achievement of pre-primary and primary education is literacy. However, the 100% literacy rate is not yet a reality in the Council of Europe member States. The adult and youth illiterate population in central and eastern Europe¹⁴ alone reaches the level of almost 5 million people, of which 77.5% are women (3.8 million). As regards youth, there were 386 000 illiterate in 2011, of which 59.4% were young women. This is a very serious problem, a sombre threat to sustainable socio-economic development and to equal opportunities.

34. UNESCO has been at the forefront of global literacy efforts since its foundation in 1946. It monitors global literacy levels through the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS),¹⁵ the Education for All Global Monitoring Report¹⁶ and regional assessment programmes (RAMAA,¹⁷ SACMEC¹⁸ and LLECE¹⁹). Knowing that the majority of the world's illiterate are women, UNESCO also developed targeted initiatives such as the Global Partnership for girls' and women's' education.²⁰

35. The Education for All Global Monitoring Reports²¹ raise the international community's attention to specific challenges in education. These reports have an impact on the co-ordination of world efforts to ensure access to good quality education. For example, the adoption in 2007 of the Global Monitoring report on "Strong foundations – Early childhood care and education" discussed the impact of early childhood education on overall child development and opportunities for future progress in life. As a result, in September 2010, UNESCO convened in Moscow its first ever World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).²²

12. See the Commission Staff working document, accompanying the Communication Com(2009) 640: Key Competences for a Changing World, "Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training, Analysis of Implementation at the European and National Levels" (Sec(2009)1598), http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/joint10/sec1598_en.pdf.

13. The key competences include: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF>.

14. <http://huebler.blogspot.fr/search?updated-min=2013-01-01T00:00:00-05:00&updated-max=2014-01-01T00:00:00-05:00&max-results=1>.

15. www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/pages/default.aspx?spslanguage=en.

16. www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/.

17. <http://uil.unesco.org/home/programme-areas/literacy-and-basic-skills/ramaa-measuring-learning-outcomes/>.

18. www.iiep.unesco.org/capacity-development/networking/sacmeq-in-africa.html.

19. www.llece.org/public/index.php?lang=en.

20. www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/gender-and-education/about-us/global-partnership/.

21. See the following reports: "Gender and Education for All – The leap to equality" (2003/4); "Education for All – The Quality Imperative" (2005); "Literacy for life" (2006); "Strong foundations – Early childhood care and education" (2007); "Education for all by 2015: will we make it?" (2008); "Overcoming inequality: why governance matters" (2009); "Reaching the marginalized" (2010); "The hidden crisis: armed conflict and education" (2011); "Youth and skills: putting education to work" (2012); "Learning and Teaching for Development" (in preparation) (2013/14).

36. The conference offered a unique global opportunity for broad dialogue on educational priorities. It called for education systems that encourage inclusion, quality learning, flexibility and innovation, and it provided guidance to policy makers and other stakeholders on paths for transforming education systems. At UNESCO's initiative, an Interagency Quality Assurance and Reference Committee was established in December 2010 following the World Conference on ECCE.²³

37. UNESCO has launched the joint development of a Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (HECDI). Monitoring of Education For All Goal 1 has been limited – often to health monitoring for children ages 0 to 3 and to education monitoring for pre-primary education. Existing composite child well-being indices cover childhood outcomes, but do not examine the array of services for children. The HECDI intends to overcome these fragmented perspectives on early childhood by adopting a holistic vision of monitoring ECCE that would include measurements of health, nutrition, protection, welfare and education.

3.2. Secondary education

38. The programmes of international assessment of educational achievements in secondary education vary in scope and target group. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is intended to evaluate educational systems based on assessment of literacy in reading, mathematics and science. It evaluates 15-year-old students. The assessment of education results under the PISA programme²⁴ has a major impact on educational policies in the Council of Europe member States.

39. In Norway, the results for 2000 and 2003, which are now commonly referred to as “PISA Shock” – the country was ranked below the OECD average and lower than other Scandinavian countries – have triggered substantial policy reforms. The 2009 results placed Norway above average on the reading scale and average on the science and mathematics²⁵ scale, which led to political rhetoric about the need for continued improvement and educational reform.

40. In 2006 and 2009, the United Kingdom's rankings and performance were average.²⁶ The government has signalled in the “Importance of Teaching” White Paper (2010) that it values international comparisons and required the examinations regulator (Ofqual) to conduct research on the comparability of United Kingdom examinations with those abroad to ensure that they meet international standards.

41. The 2012 PISA study²⁷ focused on proficiency in mathematics, which is considered to be a strong predictor of positive outcomes for young adults, influencing their ability to participate in post-secondary education and their expected future earnings. Around 510 000 students between the ages of 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months completed the assessment in 2012, representing about 28 million 15-year-olds in 65 countries and economies.

42. The 2012 PISA study concluded that high average performance and equity are not mutually exclusive. Excellence through equity – this was the message that had to be brought back to policy makers. PISA found that high-performing school systems tend to allocate resources more equitably across socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged schools. In these systems, there are smaller differences in principals' reports on teacher shortage, the adequacy of educational resources and physical infrastructure, and smaller differences in average mathematics learning time between schools with more advantaged and those with more disadvantaged students. For example, Estonia, Finland and Korea all show higher-than-OECD-average performance in mathematics. In these countries, principals in disadvantaged schools tended to report that their schools had adequate educational resources as much as, if not more than, principals in advantaged

22. www.unesco.org/new/en/education/events/calendar-of-events/education-global-conferences/2010/. Around 1 000 participants attended the conference from 101 member States, including 67 ministers and vice-ministers and representatives of United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, foundations and other civil society institutions.

23. The committee oversees the joint planning and joint implementation of the Moscow Framework, and ensures the quality and relevance of the outputs of such joint efforts. It is composed of representatives of major organisations working on ECCE (for example the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the consultative Group, Save the Children, UNESCO, Un Kilo de Ayuda, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank).

24. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), OECD, www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaenfrancais/.

25. See also AS/Cult/Inf (2013) 9 “Country profiles presenting key indicators in education”.

26. See “Policy Effects of PISA”, Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment, May 2011: <http://oucea.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Policy-Effects-of-PISA-OUCEA.pdf>.

27. www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf.

schools so reported. This being said, beyond a certain level of expenditure per student, excellence in education requires more than money: how resources are allocated is just as important as the amount of resources available.

43. The 2012 study revealed also that in most countries and economies, far too many students do not make the most of the learning opportunities available to them because they are not engaged with school and learning. Attendance at and engagement with school do not just vary among students and schools, but also across countries. In particular, the high-performing East Asian countries and economies, such as Hong Kong (China), Japan, Korea, Macao (China) and Shanghai (China), have relatively small proportions of students who reported that they had arrived late for class or skipped a class or a day of school.

44. The extent to which the educational aspirations of students and parents are the result of cultural values or determinants of these, and how such aspirations interact with education policies and practices is an important subject that merits further study. Whatever the case, it seems that if a country seeks better education performance, it is incumbent on political and social leaders to persuade the country's citizens to make the choices needed to show that they value education more than other areas of national interest.

45. The 2012 PISA results indicate that drive, motivation and self-confidence are essential if students are to fulfil their potential. Practice and hard work go a long way towards developing each student's potential, but students can only achieve at the highest levels when they believe that they are in control of their success and that they are capable of achieving at high levels. In Shanghai (China), for example, students not only believe they are in control of their ability to succeed, but they are prepared to do what it takes to do so: for example 73% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they remain interested in the tasks that they start. The fact that students in some countries consistently believe that achievement is mainly a product of hard work, rather than inherited intelligence, suggests that education and its social context make a difference in instilling the values that foster success in education.

46. In addition to the PISA programme, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements (IEA)²⁸ runs its own programmes, such as the "Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study" (TIMSS), aimed at measuring students' specific knowledge, skills, and concepts in mathematics and science, and it is addressed to 4th and 8th grade students. The Educational Testing Service (ETS),²⁹ as well as the networks of national quality assurance agencies³⁰ provide thematic assessment of educational achievements – including, for example, the assessment of linguistic competences. The ETS-run tests, such as the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – are used as criteria determining access to higher education or employment.

3.3. Higher education

47. Assessment of quality in higher education is a key element of the Bologna Process aimed at the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The goal of putting in place a broad framework of comparable higher education qualifications in order to achieve increased mobility, employability, and competitiveness across the EHEA can only be achieved if it is underpinned by reliable and effective quality assurance systems in each country.

48. Quality assurance in higher education³¹ is a driving force behind progress in education methods³² and approaches, and strengthened co-operation between universities all over Europe. Every year, European quality assurance bodies meet at the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF).³³ The forum provides a unique platform to foster dialogue on quality assurance that bridges national and organisational boundaries, thus contributing to reaching a common European understanding of quality assurance.

28. www.iea.nl/.

29. www.ets.org/.

30. Such as, for example, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx.

31. www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/quality-assurance/eqaf.aspx.

32. See, for example, the work of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) on quality assurance of e-learning: www.enqa.eu/files/ENQA_wr_14.pdf.

33. The Forum has been organised since 2006 and has gained increasing popularity over the years. The event is co-organised by the European University Association (EUA), ENQA, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Students' Union (ESU). In 2013, the EQAF was held at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) on 21-23 November, entitled "Working together to take quality forward".

49. In higher education, international assessment mechanisms are developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).³⁴ ENQA contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education at a high level and acts as a driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna signatory countries. ENQA members are quality assurance organisations from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) member States that operate in the field of higher education.

50. ENQA has produced, in co-operation and consultation with its member agencies and the E4 Group,³⁵ the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area,³⁶ which were submitted to the European Ministers of Education meeting in Bergen in May 2005 and presented to the Bologna Follow-Up Group on 1 March 2005. The Standards and Guidelines have been translated³⁷ and are now put into practice through the series of conferences and workshops on quality assurance in higher education and research³⁸ organised by ENQA and its members. The Standards and Guidelines specify measures that should be taken to improve quality of higher education through both internal and external quality assurance. Finally, ENQA has specified European standards for external quality assurance agencies, which refer to their official status, activities, resources, and their independence and accountability procedures.

51. Assessment of quality has an impact on the way universities are chosen by the new generations of students. A well-known form of assessment are the charts and other types of rankings or classifications of universities. Renowned universities, at the top of these charts, draw students from all over the world. That being said, the place that a University has on such lists is not necessarily a reliable indicator of the quality of education as we have defined it. Indeed, a clear distinction must be made between the quality assurance systems, on the one hand, and rankings and classifications, on the other hand.

52. Classifications – like, for example, the *Carnegie classification* in the United States and the *U-Map* in Europe – group universities by categories (for example on the basis of their specialisation in certain subjects such as new technologies, science, arts, etc.).

53. The rankings list universities according to a certain order, establishing ranks compared to other universities according to objective criteria defined in advance. These may include the following:

- global league tables and rankings, for example the *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU or the Shanghai ranking³⁹); and *The Times Higher Education (Supplement) Ranking*⁴⁰;
- National league tables and rankings, for example *US News & World Report* (USA); *The Times Good Education Guide* (United Kingdom); *The Guardian ranking* (United Kingdom);
- Specialised league tables and rankings, for example *Financial Times ranking of business schools and programmes* (global); *Businessweek – business schools' ranking* (USA, global), and the evaluation proposed by *Emerging/Trendence*,⁴¹ with a ranking prepared by employers.

54. These rankings were conceived as a marketing tool pointing towards universities enjoying global recognition. They also show the levels of knowledge transfer, looking into how much the university works with industry, which is important for future employment prospects.⁴² Thus, the rankings became vital for prospective students (more than 170 million across the world) and their families, helping them to decide where to study. Academics use them to guide partnerships and career decisions, and industry and philanthropists find them useful for investment decisions. Moreover, they are emerging today as geopolitical indicators: governments are using them not only to help shape policies but as a strategic tool, as a benchmark of their competitiveness.

34. ENQA was established in 2000 to promote European co-operation in the field of quality assurance in higher education. In 2004, it was transformed into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, but its acronym remained the same (ENQA). ENQA is a membership association which represents its members at the European level and internationally: www.enqa.eu/files/Assessing_educational_quality_wr6.pdf.

35. The E4 Group: ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB).

36. [www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20(2).pdf).

37. www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso.

38. www.enqa.eu/pubs_workshop.lasso.

39. www.shanghairanking.com/.

40. www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2012-13/world-ranking.

41. <http://emerging.fr/20131028133143512.pdf>.

42. Interview with Mr Phil Baty, Editor of the Times Higher Education Ranking, on the World 2013-2014 ranking (www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdRp7GHrcVU and www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2012-13/world-ranking).

55. The top 10 universities in *TheTimes* and Shanghai rankings are American and British universities, but Asian universities are emerging. Asian countries have understood that universities drive the economy, especially the knowledge economy which has the capacity to bring innovation. Therefore, they invest in their universities at incredible levels, while in the West we have seen austerity hitting universities.⁴³ Looking at the rank of major European universities, I believe we really need to reconsider our policies and discuss what European universities should do better.

56. However, I must also draw attention to the fact that the guidance provided by these rankings remains partial and that the indicators used often show preference towards scientific universities and do not necessarily render justice to the leading universities in the field of literary studies, especially if their publications are not in the language of Shakespeare. For example, if a study on Italian mediaeval philosophy is published in Italian (and is not translated into English), it is not taken into account in certain ranking systems. In addition, rankings do not take into account the differences that exist between the schools within a university: some may be excellent, others mediocre. The need to promote pluralism of European languages and cultures in the scientific world and at global level should be underlined.

57. Rankings and classifications provide comparative performance information on certain aspects of a programme or institution – namely the success rate of students and graduates, or the number of Nobel Prize winners in the staff. But this information tells little about the quality of the programme or institution. Thus, rankings and classifications, even if they contribute to transparency, cannot be considered as tools for quality assurance. It should be noted that rankings and classifications give assessments of individual universities. I would suggest that, in addition, they should provide an assessment of the entire university system.

4. Conclusions: strategies for improving the quality of education and the governance of education systems

58. Committee of Ministers Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)6](#) on the public responsibility for higher education and research stresses the responsibility of public authorities in the establishment of adequate political, legislative and financial frameworks for higher education and research. Guidelines therein also offer a sound basis for building comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing governance of education systems and quality in education. I want to develop here some elements which, I believe, should find their place in such strategies.

59. I believe that we should start from the premise that pupils, teachers and families should be at the heart of any strategy to improve the quality and governance of education and that our governments should invest in education to better effect.

60. Strategies to ensure quality and good governance in education should take into account gender equality, which should be guaranteed in and by the education systems. Governments should strive to make further progress, namely by ensuring effective implementation of Assembly [Recommendation 1281 \(1995\)](#) on gender equality in education.

4.1. Combating exclusion, improving pupils' performance and safeguarding their well-being

61. The education system should be open and accessible to all, but we are a long way from achieving this objective. Ms Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, observed during the 24th Standing Conference of Ministers of Education held in Helsinki that the European systems of education and training were all more or less strongly marked by inequalities in access to quality education and in results. These inequalities had grave consequences for the persons concerned, for the economy and for the cohesion of our societies.⁴⁴ Equality of opportunities in education – and, in particular, in higher education – is not only a question of social justice, but also the precondition for ensuring the best use of the social and human capital of a country.

62. Pluralism of educational processes and cultural visions needs to be promoted in the light of an open debate and in compliance with the principle of secularism in order to combat fundamentalism, nationalism and a focus on identity, which encourage exclusion.

43. In Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and Austria, top-level universities had seen their levels falling in the 2013-2014 Times Higher Education Ranking.

44. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2074145&Site=CM>.

63. The Final Declaration of the Helsinki Conference of Ministers of Education refers to the need to assist member States in developing specific policy measures favouring access to learning to all pupils and students, particularly for those who do not complete their schooling and are for that reason at higher risk of possible unemployment and poverty. For example, as regards ensuring inclusiveness of education systems for children with learning disabilities, I commend the work of the European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education that promotes the implementation of the “Key principles for promoting quality in inclusive education”.⁴⁵

64. I should like to emphasise that the aim is definitely not a levelling down: equality is not egalitarianism, and education for all does not mean pupils automatically moving up from one class to another. Assessment should nevertheless neither stigmatise nor become a “sanction”; it should remain an instrument for detecting needs, also enabling pupils to be monitored on a more personalised basis, particularly those who are at the greatest disadvantage.

65. Teaching methodologies – and even the overall approach to the relationship between teachers and students – should therefore be reconsidered. There is a balance to find between the need to have a certain selection based on students’ merit and performance, namely knowledge and skills they acquire, and the need to encourage all of them and support their personal development. Stress increase due to pressure put on students, who are overloaded with work, is a reason why some drop out of schools and universities. A more thorough consideration might be needed to determine the right volume of work. In any case, teachers should avoid attitudes which humiliate their students, making them feel incapable of learning and unable to progress.

66. The PISA programme statistics show that some education systems have managed to reduce the discrepancies correlated to ethnic and socio-professional origins. Those discrepancies are not therefore inevitable: children need to be helped from their earliest years to overcome school integration difficulties, so that they can face up to and overcome social integration difficulties.

67. Several policy options, which could be applied in combination, can improve performance and equity in education.

68. A first set of measures should target low performance, regardless of students’ socio-economic status, either by targeting low-performing schools or low-performing students within schools, depending on the extent to which low performance is concentrated in each school. These could consist of the provision of a specialised curriculum or additional instructional resources for particular students, based on their academic achievements. For example, some school systems provide early-prevention programmes for children who are deemed to be at risk of failure when they enter early childhood programmes or schools, while other systems provide late-prevention or recovery programmes for children who fail to progress at a normal rate during the first few years of primary school. The objective is to bring low-performing students, regardless of their socio-economic status, up to the level of their peers.

69. A second set of measures should target disadvantaged children through additional instructional resources or economic assistance. These programmes select students based on their families’ socio-economic status, rather than on the students’ cognitive abilities. While policies targeting disadvantaged children can aim to improve those students’ performance in school, they can also provide additional economic resources to those students.

70. A third set of measures should aim at applying more universal policies to raise standards for all students. These measures may involve altering the content and pace of the curriculum, improving instructional techniques, introducing full-day schooling, changing the age of entry into school, or increasing the time spent in classes. Some countries, such as Denmark and Germany, responded to the PISA 2000 results by introducing major school and curricular reforms that included some of these changes. Some countries have introduced system-wide reforms that are aimed at moving towards more comprehensive schooling (Poland) or less tracking (Germany). These reforms simultaneously address various sources of inequity, such as socio-economic disadvantage, immigrant background, or challenging family structure.

71. A fourth set of policy measures should aim to build a positive learning climate. It is encouraging that learning environments generally improved between 2003 and 2012, even if there are still schools with poor learning environments in all countries and economies. PISA results show that, when comparing two schools, public or private, of the same size, in the same kind of location, and whose students share similar socio-economic status, the disciplinary climate tends to be better in the school that does not suffer from a shortage of qualified teachers.

45. <https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/key-principles/key-principles-files/Key-Principles-Matrix.pdf>.

72. Also to be remembered is the need to show no quarter in combating isolation and violence in schools. The Assembly, in [Resolution 1803 \(2011\)](#) on education against violence at school, made some very practical proposals in this respect: it is for us to promote these actively, so that our parliaments and governments put them into practice.

4.2. Developing teachers' professionalism and promoting the modernisation of education

73. The core current expenditure of education systems relates to teachers. Qualified and committed teachers are the backbone of any successful education policy. For this reason there is often a call for the upgrading of the status of the teaching profession.⁴⁶ In this respect, it is fundamental to ensure that teacher selection and appointment procedures are transparent, objective and based on merit.

74. Teacher shortage and disciplinary climate are inter-related. The quality of a school cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and principals. Countries that have improved their performance as reflected in PISA, including Estonia and Poland, have, for example, established policies to improve the quality of their teaching staff by adding to the requirements to qualify for a teaching diploma, providing incentives for high-achieving students to enter the profession, increasing salaries to make the profession more attractive and to retain more teachers, or offering incentives for teachers to engage in in-service teacher-training programmes. While paying teachers well is only part of the equation, higher salaries can help school systems to attract the best candidates to the teaching profession. PISA results show that, among countries and economies whose per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is more than US\$20 000, high-performing school systems tend to pay more to teachers relative to their per capita national income.

75. The role of teachers is somewhat hampered by a certain bureaucratisation, maybe resulting from progressive standardisation in all education areas. I believe that quality education needs teachers to be more available to their students; therefore, it would be better to avoid situations where teachers and university professors spend large amounts of their working time filling in administrative forms instead of teaching and guiding students.

76. School systems need to ensure that schools and students are allocated those teachers who can make the greatest difference. They could re-examine teacher recruitment/allocation systems to ensure that disadvantaged schools get enough qualified teachers, develop incentive programmes to attract qualified teachers to those schools, and ensure that teachers in disadvantaged schools participate in in-service training (results show that those teachers are less likely to participate in vocational training).

77. There is a need to modernise teacher training programmes, at both the initial and further training levels. In particular, further training for educators and teachers should be expanded so that they can better cope with swiftly changing realities and the complex challenges which result from interculturalism, the information society and the pace of innovation in science and technology.

78. In this last regard, schools should encourage the acquisition of digital and media literacy. This is a precondition not only for effectively combating the digital divide in our countries, but also for ensuring that they remain competitive in the long term in the context of globalisation.

79. Investment is necessary in information technology equipment for our schools, firstly in order to modernise their management and facilitate the collection and analysis of data at national level, and secondly in order to make computer rooms with Internet access available to pupils who have no Internet access at home. That may seem utopian in the current context of financial crisis and budgetary restrictions, but either we invest in our future or our countries will not keep pace, and the cost to be paid will be far higher.

80. Furthermore, the potential of the Internet can be used to improve the teaching of traditional subjects (languages, mathematics, history and geography, sciences, etc.). The use of new technologies at school may help to arouse pupils' interest, to develop innovative teaching methods and tools better geared to pupils' diversity. Consideration could be given, for example, to online tutoring and to providing progressively more difficult educational content which could help pupils experiencing problems to revise, help those with the most inquiring minds to explore and examine in greater detail matters which interest them, and help all pupils to become more creative.

46. See the "2013 Global Teacher Status Index", Professor Peter Dolton and Dr Oscar Marcenaro-Gutierrez: <https://www.varkeygemsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/documents/2013GlobalTeacherStatusIndex.pdf>.

81. In order to take the system forward and improve its capacity to meet specific needs, thought should be given not only to the role and training of teachers but also to the systematic inclusion in schools' teams of professionals other than teachers, and to genuine teamwork. I am thinking, for instance, of the role that child psychiatrists could play in helping teachers to develop targeted support work, taking account of each pupil's individuality.

4.3. Combating corruption and raising ethical standards in education

82. Education upholds democracy and the development of civil society; thus corruption in education robs us of democracy and weakens civil society. Transparency International⁴⁷ underlined that it not only distorts access to education, but also affects the quality of education and the reliability of research findings.

83. From corruption in the procurement of school resources and nepotism in the recruiting of teachers to the skewing of research results for personal gain, corruption risks can be identified at every level of education and research systems. The Ministers of Education, in Helsinki, acknowledged this threat and the need to combat it. The Transparency International Global Corruption Report on Education⁴⁸ proposes innovative solutions in this respect, to which we should give serious consideration.

84. For example, in this context, transparency and accountability in the management of public funds are of paramount importance. To promote them, we have to ensure easy access to information, deliver clear guidelines for stakeholders, set up robust audit systems and effective monitoring and compliance mechanisms, including the protection of whistle-blowers and legal means not only to punish corrupt officials but also to reclaim diverted funds. In addition, there is a need to enhance the capacity of relevant parliamentary committees to assess the effectiveness of action taken in this field.

85. Schools and universities should have codes of conduct, and these should be drafted with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. It might be important to review administrative procedures, such as the licensing of the education offered by private education institutions (for example the opening of new universities or the offer of vocational education and training programmes in highly demanded professions such as medical schools). Measures should be taken to prevent the commercialisation of diplomas and combat the proliferation of virtual schools/universities of dubious quality.

86. It is equally necessary to foster ethical behaviour amongst students and help them develop attitudes that are based on values of respect and mutual understanding. Bullying and harassment among pupils are cited amongst the main reasons for school drop-out. The Assembly, in [Resolution 1803 \(2011\)](#) and [Recommendation 1965 \(2011\)](#) on education against violence in school, calls on member States to combat all forms of violence in school with the greatest determination.

87. I believe that the Council of Europe can play a fundamental role in supporting enhanced national policies in this domain. In this respect, I welcome the proposals by the Helsinki Ministerial Conference to adopt ethical codes for teachers and to establish a pan-European platform of exchange of information and best practices on ethics and integrity in education.

4.4. Promoting active participation by families and integrating schools better into their communities

88. Schools need to make room for families and ensure that parents can play an active part in the educational process, for which they are – and should feel – jointly responsible. Education professionals and families often distrust each other. The barriers between home and school should be removed, and parents more involved in the life of schools.

89. The results of the latest PISA study suggest that there is a positive correlation between students' performance and family values favouring work ethics and achievement.

90. Generally speaking, many actors play a part in education (educators, teachers, school principals, representatives of local authorities and central government), and a primary role of education authorities should be to bring them together. To this end, they should consider the establishment of national or local stakeholder platforms to promote better communication between them and eventually foster their active involvement.

47. www.transparency.org/topic/detail/education.

48. www.transparency.org/gcr_education (executive summary in English: www.transparency.org/files/content/publication/2013_GCR_Education_ExecSum_EN.pdf).

91. Schools should be made into special places for harmonious coexistence. This can be achieved only if educational establishments, and even the education system as a whole, are well integrated into their social and economic ecosystem.

92. Essentially, the idea of defining priority areas – characterised by difficult social situations and hallmarked by large numbers of failing pupils – to be allocated additional resources (so as, for example, to increase staff numbers, pay bonuses to teachers, develop support mechanisms for pupils) is one way of taking account of the school environment. Such an approach would doubtless be more effective if it were part of a more comprehensive strategy.

93. Consideration could be given, for example, to forms of co-operation between schools in different neighbourhoods (involving both pupils and teachers). New thought could also be given to approaches to extracurricular activities, for example exploring forms of learning through fun, and to developing pupils' potential in fields covered by a very limited number of teaching hours, such as art and music. Out-of-school activities could become the main opportunity for a link between the school and the community, and for a partnership with the world of culture and the labour market.

94. In this respect, there is a need for what is learnt during education to be appropriate to the needs of the labour market. In order to bring the results of education more closely into line with actual needs in terms of skills, member States should set up mechanisms whereby those needs can be periodically assessed, ensure that school curricula can be speedily altered, and also provide appropriate advice to students and their families.

95. Measures should be taken to better connect research and education, seeking to bring innovations back into educational processes. Also, formal education should seek to benefit from the richness of non-formal learning and the possibility to acquire new competences, which are complementary to those acquired through formal learning. The recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal learning should be developed.⁴⁹

4.5. Providing adequate resources and monitoring their use

96. Up to a certain level of expenditure at least, the higher the level of resources invested in education (in terms of percentage of GDP), the better the results. According to the findings of the 2009 PISA survey, there is a positive correlation between GDP percentage devoted to education and overall results in terms of literacy.⁵⁰ This is the reason why the Assembly called on member States to secure the provision of adequate resources for education, not below 6% of GDP.⁵¹

97. One factor thought to affect the quality of learning outcomes is the teacher-pupil ratio. It is generally assumed, particularly where primary education is concerned, that the fewer pupils a teacher has, the better the educational outcomes. Analysis of statistical data shows, however, that even when you have few children per teacher, the end results in reading and mathematics are not necessarily higher than the OECD average.⁵²

98. We therefore have to conclude that other factors – such as teaching methods, teachers' professionalism and pupils', and even their parents', motivation – influence learning quality at least as much as does class size. It might be more effective to invest in those other factors than to try to reduce the number of pupils per class.

99. Whatever their level, resources may be wasted or allocated inadequately, because of corruption in some cases, but more often because of lack of managerial capacity. It is therefore essential that public authorities monitor financial flows in the education sector and assess to what extent resources available are used effectively.

49. See also the advocacy programme of the European Youth Forum on quality education (www.youthforum.org/claims/quality-education/) and the Quality Assurance Framework on Non-Formal Education (www.nfenetwork.eu/).

50. In Iceland, Denmark, Finland and Estonia (AS/Cult/Inf (2013) 9).

51. See [Resolution 1930 \(2013\)](#) and [Recommendation 2014 \(2013\)](#) "Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge".

52. I presented these data in document AS/Cult/Inf (2013) 9. See also "Education at a glance: 2013" www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oece/education/education-at-a-glance-2013_eag-2013-en#page1.

4.6. Developing national assessment mechanisms

100. In order to detect problems, improve resource allocation and gauge the effectiveness of political decisions and adopted measures, it is necessary for each education system to equip itself with mechanisms making it possible to measure the performance of both individual educational establishments and the education system as a whole on the basis of a regular analysis of objective, relevant and reliable information.

101. The overview of assessment mechanisms (see section 3 above) shows that a range of methods are used to analyse the results of the learning process. However, sometimes the criteria adopted obscure the overview of the students' progress in fields which are not defined in statistical terms – for example the development of creative skills and initiative, which in fact impact on their capacity to find a job, including entrepreneurship.

102. Therefore existing assessment mechanisms should be complemented by the evaluation of other important aspects – at present neglected – which determine the quality of initial contribution and of the “governance” of the education systems.

103. For example, PISA's references to “skills for life” include reading, and mathematical and scientific literacy. This, however, does not cover the capacity to live together in a multicultural society or the individual's personal initiative geared towards bringing new positive developments. The IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, which is due in 2016, might lead to a different approach: the study will investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens. It will report on students' knowledge and understanding of concepts and issues related to citizenship, as well as their value beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour.⁵³

104. I believe that such a wider approach would be consistent with the conclusion of the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report “Overcoming inequality: why governance matters”, according to which the monitoring of education quality should include three dimensions: i) input or enabling conditions for learning (from infrastructure and learning materials to qualified, trained teachers and adequate budgets); ii) pedagogy and the learning process (including an appropriate language of instruction) and learning time; and iii) learning outcomes.⁵⁴

105. Quality assessment is the first step towards a more comprehensive quality assurance, which should include the systematic measurement of education results and the performance of the education system, comparison with set standards, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback that contributes to error prevention. A clear mapping of quality assurance in education would certainly help member States to design better education systems. The development of quality assurance systems is therefore essential.

106. Of course, quality assurance systems should not only produce reliable and relevant information. It is also important that educational establishments use this information to improve their activities. This is about the possibility to steer by information, not control.

107. This brings me to the following remark: the education authorities should provide complete and clear information about the educational offer. Students should be informed in the event that a diploma issued by an education institution is not recognised by the national authorities in a given country (meaning that it is not valued in the given labour market).

108. Public information on education institutions must be communicated transparently in order to avoid misinterpretation.⁵⁵ This should concern all types of education providers and should be true with regard to:

- information, recommendations or accreditation outcomes used by decision makers in charge of steering higher education policies;
- information and guidance for students;
- evaluations and recommendations intended to help higher education institutions and programmes in their continuous improvement strategies and actions;
- benchmarking or rankings developed for the purpose of external communication.

53. www.iea.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/Studies/ICCS_2016_Brochure.pdf.

54. www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2009-governance/ (see Chapter 5).

55. Quality Assurance and Transparency Tools, ENQA, www.enqa.eu/files/QA%20and%20Transparency%20-%20Final.pdf.

109. Finally, it is important to engage all stakeholders, especially students, in school self-evaluations. Most schools use various forms of evaluations, such as self-evaluations, external school evaluations and teacher appraisals for quality control.⁵⁶ In systems that attain a high level of equity, more schools tend to seek written feedback from students regarding lessons, teachers or resources. Some countries engage students in school evaluations by establishing student councils or conducting student surveys in schools. In order to use the feedback from students effectively, school staff may need assistance in interpreting the evaluative information and translating it into action. Trust among school staff and students and strong commitment from the school community are the key to making this practice work.

110. The draft resolution and draft recommendation take up these ideas in the form of practical proposals.

56. PISA shows that, on average across OECD countries, 92% of students are in schools that use at least a self-evaluation or external evaluation to ensure and improve school quality, and around 60% of students are in schools that seek written feedback from students regarding lessons, teachers or resources in addition to using self-evaluations and/or external evaluations of the school.