



Press release

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Karliczek: Education teaches European values

At their last meeting during the German Presidency of the Council, EU Education Ministers give a clear signal for freedom of expression and pave the way for a digital and climate-friendly European Education Area

The Ministers of Education met today for an informal videoconference chaired by German Federal Education Minister Anja Karliczek. In response to the murder of the French teacher Samuel Paty, they started by holding a minute of silence to remember the victims of recent terrorist attacks in Europe. The focus of the meeting was on discussing the creation of a European Education Area and gaining an overview of the state of negotiations about individual educational dossiers, particularly Erasmus+. Prior to their meeting, the Ministers had endorsed the Osnabrück Declaration on the future of vocational education and training (VET). Federal Education Minister Anja Karliczek said on this occasion:

“The Education Ministers meeting today have sent a signal for tolerance, freedom of expression, pluralism and democracy. These are our basic values in Europe that are taught by educators. Samuel Paty was murdered in Paris on 16 October because he taught the principles of Enlightenment in his everyday work as a teacher. We are firmly committed to our European values as stipulated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Today’s meeting sends a clear signal: Our teachers can count on the Ministers of Education in the European Union rallying behind them. There is no room for violence and terrorism in our European societies. We will hold steadfastly to our basic values in the European Union and continue to attach high priority to value education, of which the freedom of expression is an integral part. We unanimously reject any form of religious illiteracy and fanaticism.

Today, we have taken a major step forward towards strengthening vocational education and training and developing digital education in Europe. I would like to highlight in particular the successful endorsement of the Osnabrück Declaration by the Ministers. We have jointly expressed our great respect for the professionals working in VET and the excellent job they are doing every day. The Declaration emphasizes the contribution made by vocational education and training to economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis and to shaping a digital and green future. Inclusion and excellence are central pillars of modern VET which Member States, the European social partners and the European Commission are committed to implementing.

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Today's meeting provided an opportunity for me to review progress in the field of education during the German Council Presidency. I believe it was important that we focused our attention on excellent advanced VET in Europe during the past six months. Good communication with the social partners and VET stakeholders from industry, science and practice was essential for us. A major topic of our Presidency was how to jointly cope with the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. The crisis has strengthened digital learning. We should make every effort to use this momentum to modernise our education systems.

Close cooperation with our Trio partners Portugal and Slovenia on all our topics was of great importance to me. I therefore look forward to further progress on our way towards the European Education Area under the Portuguese Presidency.”

At today's informal meeting, the Education Ministers also adopted a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training as well as Council Conclusions on digital education. The Council Conclusions stress the importance of digital education for individual educational pathways and for the education system as a whole. They are based on a holistic understanding of education which considers digital tools as a valuable means to an end. The aim is therefore to provide relevant training for teachers and to develop teaching approaches and infrastructures. At the same time, the Council Conclusions support the new Digital Education Action Plan, the European Commission's roadmap for digital education over the next seven years.

The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training paves the way for preparing individuals for modern labour markets, e.g. through flexible initial and continuing training as well as adaptation to an increasingly digital and greener economy.

The policy debate on the European Education Area also highlighted our joint goal of ensuring the viability of European education systems with new objectives and instruments for cooperation. Education and training play a key role in making our future European society and economy more inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Background:

On 1 July 2020, Germany took over the rotating six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In this role, the German delegation chairs the negotiations on EU legislative proposals and other initiatives and can set its own priority topics. The programme of the German Council Presidency is part of the expansive programme of the Trio Presidency of Germany, Portugal and



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Slovenia. Portugal will take over the Presidency of the Council on 1 January 2021.

In addition to presiding the Education Council and numerous expert conferences, Germany's Presidency programme features informal meetings of relevant ministers, including meetings of the ministers of education and research. An Informal Meeting of Education Ministers was held in Osnabrück on 16-17 September 2020.

The videoconference of the Ministers of Education on 30 November 2020 replaced the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council which could not be held as a face-to-face event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Decision-making therefore took place in the Permanent Representatives Committee.

Further information:

<https://www.bmbf.de/en/germany-s-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union-2020-11935.html>

https://www.bmbf.de/upload_filestore/pub/Programme_of_Germanys_Presidency_of_the_Council_of_the_European_Union_in_the_Fields_of_Education_Research_and_Innovation.pdf

<https://www.eu2020.de/eu2020-en>