

The Changing Labour Market and the Demand for Creativity-Related Competences: The EU Key Competences Framework and the European State of Play Concerning Creativity Development

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Abstract

*The paper deals with the emergence of the demand for creativity-related competences within the changing labour market in the EU. The paper initially proceeds in a brief overview of the characteristics and trends of the changing labour market, as well as of the key challenges for Europe today. It emphasizes issues of unemployment and youth unemployment in the European Union, Skills Mismatch, Precarious Work (rising) and it maps the key challenges to EU's social cohesion. Then it proceeds in analyzing the role of Education and Training in Creativity, initially via sketching the recent historical background in terms of the development of Creativity and Key Competences and then via presenting the key-aspects and facets of the EU Policy on Creativity and Key Competences. Emphasis is laid on the agenda on Creativity within the EU2020 Strategy as well as on the new EU Policy Initiatives towards the enhancement of creativity. The present paper is based in the following: Papadakis, N. (2019), *The changing Labour Market and the Demand for Creativity-related Competences in the Era of Globalization: The EU Key Competences Framework and the European state of play concerning Creativity Development*, Keynote Speech at the Soochow University International Conference entitled "The mode of educational innovation from the global perspective and the path of China". Suzhou, China: 22 June 2019*

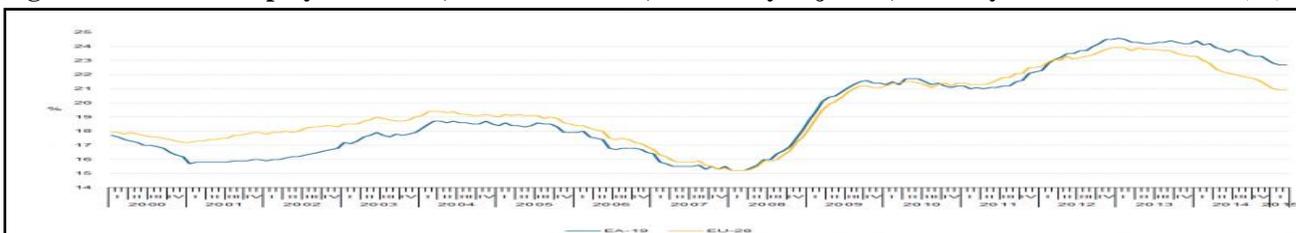
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1. Introduction: The Changing Labour Market and the Key Challenges for Europe

1.1. Unemployment and Youth Unemployment in the European Union: On the State of Play

Historically the rate of youth unemployment is higher, double or more than double, than the totally unemployment rate. The onset of the economic downturn resulted in a dramatic increase in the rates of youth unemployment, culminating in the years 2009-2013, as shown in the diagram below, reflecting the difficulties and obstacles that young people face in finding jobs and getting integrated in the labour market. *Diagram 1 clearly shows the change in youth unemployment rates in the European Union from 2000 to 2015, and, in particular, the sharp increase in the rate from the onset of the financial crisis (2008) until 2013* (Eurostat, 2015: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics) (see Figure 1).

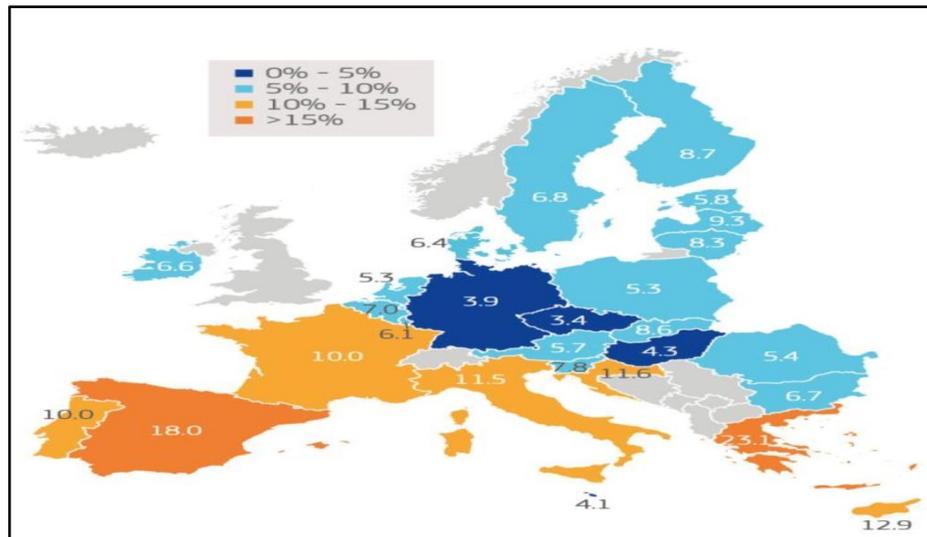
Figure 1: Youth unemployment rates, EU-28 & EA-19, seasonally adjusted, January 2000 - March 2015 (%)



Source: Eurostat (une_rt_m) as cited in Eurostat, 2015: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics.

In December 2018, the youth unemployment rate in the EU28 was 14,9% (Men: 15,5%, Women: 14,1%- see Eurostat, 2019a), namely scaled back by 4,9% since September 2015 (20%) (see Eurostat 2016). The decrease of youth unemployment, especially comparing to its historical high in April 2013 (23.8%- see Eurostat 2014), even relieving, cannot hold back the increasing asymmetries among the M-S. Regarding the state of play in total unemployment, the rates are remarkably improved, given that in December 2018, the total unemployment rate in the EU28 was just 6,6% (Men: 6,4%, Women: 6,8%- see Eurostat, 2019b). Yet the unemployment rates differ significantly across Europe, while in the Southern Countries the total unemployment is more than the double comparing to the EU average (see also Figure 2).

Figure 2: Unemployment rates across Europe (in %, February 2017)



Source: European Commission, 2017b: 10.

Another critical issue that substantially affects young people's life chances and life courses is the over-representation of long-term unemployment among youth. The long-term youth unemployment rate in the EU "increased considerably, from 23% in 2008 to around 30% in 2016, meaning that almost one-third of unemployed young people have been looking for a job for 12 months or more without success. As the data show, of these, the majority have been out of work for more than two years, illustrating the risk of job-seekers becoming trapped in protracted spells of unemployment. The extent of long-term youth unemployment varies considerably across Member States, with the highest rates recorded in Greece (53%), Italy (52%) and Slovakia (47%), while the lowest rates are found in all countries with very well-developed policy interventions, including well-functioning Youth Guarantee schemes, such as Denmark (8%), Finland (7%) and Sweden (5%) (Eurofound 2017: 3).

It should be mentioned at this point that there is **a strong association between educational attainment and social outcomes including the risk of poverty and/ or social exclusion** (see European Commission 2017a: 9). According to the European Commission, "the overall number of low-qualified adults has been falling with each younger cohort. For example, in 2017 around 4.6 million young adults aged 20-24 did not possess at least a medium-level qualification, compared with 10.2 million adults aged 60-64. However, the relative decline — i.e. the decline of the share of low-qualified among the total population in the appropriate cohort — has been very slow for the four youngest cohorts in the labour market" (European Commission 2018a: 70). This is another clear indication of the disassociation of the younger population from the labour market. Additionally it should be noted that clearly the younger people and especially the ones with less qualifications and skills face enormous difficulties to be integrated in the changing labour market. As Andy Green (2017: 7) points out, "the 2007/2008 financial crisis and the ensuing recession and austerity dramatized the situation of young people because they were the age group which was hardest hit in terms of rising unemployment and declining real wages" (Figures 3 & 4).

Figure 3: Employment rate of recent graduates



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2016) as cited in European Commission, 2017a:4.

Figure 4: Rates of “at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion” of people aged 18 and over by level educational attainment level, EU-28, 2015

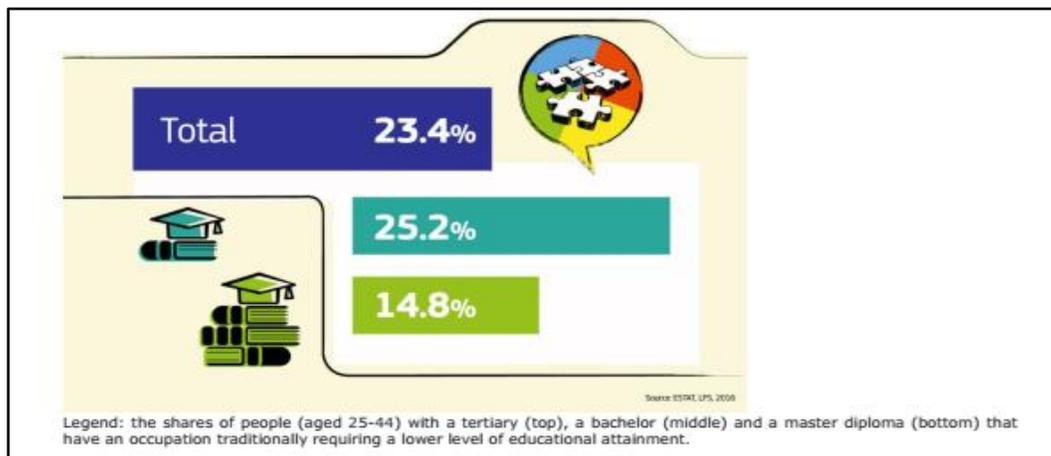


Source: Eurostat, EU SILC, 2015 as cited in European Commission, 2017a: 10.

1.2. Skills Mismatch

The employment rates of recent graduates target continues to recover from the 2008 crisis and have improved slightly since the previous year, standing now at 80,2%, higher than the 78,2% in 2016 and close to reach the benchmark of 82% in 2020 (European Commission, 2018a: 56 & Eurostat {EU-LFS, 2013-2016}, Online data code: [edat_lfse_24], as cited in European Commission, 2017a: 118). The employment rates of recent graduates was, in 2017, “84.9 % for tertiary graduates, 76.6 % for those with upper-secondary or post-secondary vocational qualification and 64.1% for those with a general upper-secondary qualification” (European Commission 2018a: 56). The abovementioned highlight the role of the qualifications and skills in the integration in the labour market. Indeed “the differences between the types of graduates are substantial..... (while) the mismatch remains high, particularly among bachelor’s diploma holders” (European Commission 2017a: 12- 13) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Mismatch between the educational attainment and the occupation, 2016



Source: ELSTAT, LFS, 2016 as cite in European Commission 2017a: 13.

Further, it should be noted at this point that there are major differences between the Member States in terms of the employment rates of recent graduates, since youth unemployment remains remarkably high in Southern Countries, heavily affected by the Crisis and the Recession, such as Greece, Spain and Italy (see Papadakis, Drakaki, Kyridis, Papergirls 2017: 8- 10 and analytically European Commission 2018a: 56).

1.3. Precarious Work Rising

According to the European Commission *“the global financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 left many parts of our Union with high levels of unemployment, public debt and private debt. For many people and families, it meant unprecedentedly difficult situations and struggling to make ends meet. The crisis aggravated problems that already existed for some time, and therefore hit some countries harder than others”* (European Commission 2017b: 12). The Crisis has heavily affected the state of play in the labour market, provoking severe modifications. Precarious work is gradually expanding. By precarious work we mean *“work that is uncertain, unstable and insecure and in which employees bear the risks of workand receive limited social benefits and statutory protections”* (Kalleberg and Vallas 2017: 1). Precarious work *“has moved to the centre of debates on the future of employment as a spreading consensus expects globalisation, new technologies, employer risk shifting and more heterogeneous workforces to continue to promote more commodified forms of labour”* (Rubery, Grimshaw, Keizer, & Johnson 2018: 510). A growing share of people, especially young ones, even having jobs *“are increasingly employed in temporary and low-qualified positions....The effects of precarious employment are particularly negative and persistent on young workers, as difficult early experiences of transition into work are likely to be associated with deterioration in long term life chances (“scaring effect”)*” (Lodovici & Semenza 2012: 7). Precarious employment is associated with skills mismatch (as in the case of Italy), deconstructed labour markets (as in the case of Greece), random transitions, where the *“employment trajectories do not seem to lead anywhere, and the sensation of being trapped is profoundly embedded”* (Lodovici & Semenza 2012: 13-14), such as in Spain. As Kalleberg and Vallas point out, the rise of precarious work *“holds great importance, not only for the work situations and career opportunities that workers can expect but also for broad macro-social issues involving the role of the welfare state and the nature of economic policy”* (Kalleberg & Vallas 2017: 1). It seems that the *“digital economy”* further affects the industrial relations and increase precariousness.

1.4. The Key Challenges to EU’s Social Cohesion

Unemployment, youth unemployment, poverty and their persisting correlation constitute probably the major challenges in the EU, at the moment. According to the Euro- barometer, more than 8 out of 10 Europeans consider unemployment, social inequalities and migration the top challenges, that the EU is facing, while more than the half of the Europeans consider that not everyone has chances to succeed and life changes would be more limited for the young- next generation (see Eurobarometer 2017, as cited in European Commission 2017b: 20). *Unemployment rates “are falling (constantly since 2014) but differ substantially across Europe....(while) the crisis has affected parts of Europe in different ways, but across the Union, it is younger generations that have been hit particularly hard”* (European Commission, 2017b: 9). Further, it seems, *that precarious work gradually becomes “the new norm to which employment and social protection systems must adjust but the motivators for, and likely consequences of, legitimising and normalising these employment forms are complex and potentially contradictory. Precarious work is best defined as the absence of those aspects of the Standard Employment Relationship (SER) that support the decommodification of labour”* (Rubery, Grimshaw, Keizer, & Johnson 2018: 511).

Additionally, according to the European Commission *“child poverty also remains high and is rising in several Member States. This means that these children have limited access to health care, a higher risk of school drop-out and later, as adults, higher risks of unemployment and poverty. In 2010, EU leaders had committed to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty by 20 million by 2020, yet today, Europe is far off track to deliver on this objective. So far, there has been an increase of 1.7 million people at risk of poverty”* (European Commission 2017b: 11). Even though youth unemployment is falling, since 2014, it still remains high, while the total unemployment rates differ substantially across Europe, which eventually affects youth unemployment. What is indeed alarming is the fact that *“for the first time since the Second World War, there is a real risk that today’s young adults – the most educated generation we have ever had – may end up less well-off than their parents”* (European Commission 2017b: 9). Education and LLL have (despite its existing dissociation from the labour market) a key role to play in life chances, since at the European level there is currently a strong association between educational attainment and social outcomes: *“people with only basic education are almost three times more likely to live in poverty or social exclusion than those with tertiary education. In 2016, only 44.0 % of young people (18-24) who had finished school below the upper secondary level were employed. And in the general population (15-64), unemployment is much more prevalent among those with only basic education (16.6 % than for the tertiary educated (5.1 %)”* (European Commission 2017a: 9).

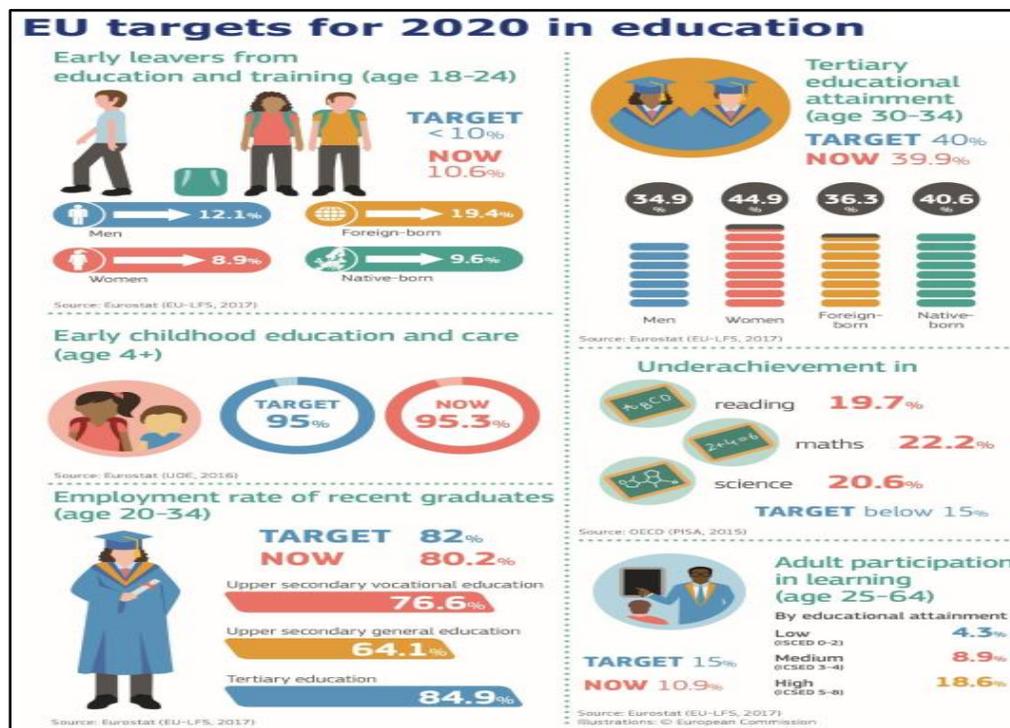
To conclude: *the persistent high youth unemployment rates, the growing share of precarious work and its “normalization” within the labour markets in EU, the skills mismatch, the broader modifications in the labour market raise several challenges that among others concerns the skills-set required to adapt in the changing labour market and improve the life-changes in a gradually uncertain context. Given all the above mentioned, the role of creativity becomes more and more crucial.*

2. The Role of Education and Training in Creativity

2.1. Education and Training within the EU2020 Strategy. On the Current State of Play

Based on the recent data, published in the Education and Training Monitor 2018 (see European Commission 2018a and Figure 2), we can be optimistic in terms of the achievement of objectives set for tertiary education attainment, preschool education, early school leaving and even employment rate of recent graduates. At the same time we cannot be equally optimistic concerning the achievement of goals related to the reduction of low achievers in key competences, and participation in LLL till 2020. There is a clear progress within the recent 5 years, yet several key challenges remain (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Performance in EU2020 Targets in Education



Source: European Commission, 2018a: 4.

2.2. The Stake of Developing Creativity in the EU: Preliminary Remarks

Nowadays, the gradual involvement of interest politics reshape the Education Policy making procedures and the redistributive action of educational systems, while learning is getting gradually (co-)related to employability and competitiveness (Papadakis & Tsakanika, 2006: 289-290; Papadakis & Drakaki, 2016: 171-185; Papadakis, 2018). There is an obvious request for a new policy paradigm for Life Long Learning, while the EC's approach on LLL policies (Volkers, 2006) highlights that national and supranational LLL strategy should:

- take a systemic, coordinated view on E&T, covering all E&T systems (formal, non-formal) and levels
- provide flexible learning pathways
- emphasise reskilling, creativity and innovation and involve the development of qualification systems
- include allocation of targeted financial means, involving partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and local actors, while including dissemination and implementation (see Volkers, 2006, European Commission, 2018a, European Commission 2014: 11 & 13, Papadakis 2009a: 30).

The EU policy in Education, Training and LLL, within the ongoing EU2020 Strategy, concerns many aspects and facets of the human recourse development (HRD) and subsequently has a certain impact on the ongoing transitions in economy, society and the relevant decision making processes.

A focal point of this new policy discourse is Creativity, both as a process and a product. Creativity is gradually re-contextualised and institutionally and operationally related

- to Innovation and Reskilling and subsequently
- to EU's strategic planning to re-gain the competitive advantage, namely to compete efficiently in the global knowledge society via targeting investment in human capital (see European Commission, 2018a, Papadakis 2016).

Given the key challenges that EU faces, there is no doubt that older as well as recent policy initiatives such as the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009) and the EU Framework on “Key Competences” (2006 and onwards) aim at contributing on the ongoing re-conceptualisation of skills (gradually correlated to Reskilling, Employability, Sustainability and Competitiveness) and operate within the context of a changing balance between technocracy, pedagogy and politics. I.e. according to the EU cluster on Key Competences “major themes are applied throughout the Framework: creativity, critical thinking, initiative taking, play a major role in all eight key competences”.

Indeed, any attempt to analyse education and its major determinants (namely learning and teaching) within the EU2020 strategy, cannot overlook the effects of the new forms of internationalisation and the emerging transformations in economy and labour market (Papadakis 2018, Lavdas, Papadakis & Gidarakou 2006: 131). All the above mentioned changes reflect the *dominant policy rationality within the policy complex* and the macroeconomic articulation of educational policy as active employment policy (see Hirst & Thompson 1996: 74- 75, Papadakis 2016: 120- 124, Papadakis & Tsakanika 2005 and Hviden 2001).

Europeanization, supranationalization of the public policies, the predominance of a new economic- developmental paradigm in the late modern capitalism, the social impact of the Crisis and the Recession, the dramatic changes in the labour market and the multicultural challenge in the political systems and their civic culture, constitute the context of the major challenges for education today and subsequently redefine the role of learning and “skilling” in the educational process. Within such a context, reskilling is getting institutionally and operationally correlated to creativity, while creativity itself is becoming a focal notion- point of the relevant political agenda. Obviously, policy making in LLL doesn't concern only LLL itself. In fact, it concerns many aspects and facets of the human recourse development (HRD) and subsequently has a certain impact on the ongoing transitions in economy, society and the relevant decision making processes, and the construction of a dominant knowledge paradigm (actualised within the knowledge- based economy context (see analytically Papadakis 2016). The major trend regarding the above-mentioned policy procedure is the trend towards evidence-based policy making (Policy, Practice, R n D), that inevitably affects what the European Council (March 2007) has defined as the ideal knowledge triangle (see analytically Papadakis 2009a: 29-38 and Papadakis 2009b: 217-221).

2.3. Sketching the Recent Historical Background: Creativity and Key Competences

Given all the above mentioned, creativity is embedded either as an explicit priority or as an implicit demand in all the major supranational policy agendas, such as the European Strategy for Employment, the Lisbon Strategy 2000-2010 and its preceding European Strategy, namely the ongoing EU2020 Strategy and its education branch (the Work Programme Education & Training 2020), that have led in the abovementioned transformation of the education and training structures and methods. While the new public management and the transformations of the public policy complex redefine the priorities of the educational policy regarding skills (emphasis to the development of soft skills instead of the traditional manpower requirements approach), creativity is becoming more and more crucial at both institutional and operational level. Within such a context, creativity is becoming a key-feature in both the main policy documents and policy initiatives. Taking into consideration the fact that the concept of competence and scope of creativity and innovation have broadened, Council and the European Parliament adopted, at the end of 2006, a European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. The Framework “identifies and defines, for the first time at the European level, the key competences that citizens require for their personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employability in a knowledge-based society” (E.C./ DG EAC 2008: 4).

That Recommendation has introduced **8 key competences**, namely **8 fundamental set of skills**. Key competences include not only the 'traditional' competences such as

- communication in the mother tongue,
- communication in foreign languages,
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology,
- digital competence, *but also the more transversal ones such as*
- learning to learn (related substantially to creativity),
- social and civic competences,
- sense of initiative (correlated to creativity) and entrepreneurship,

- cultural awareness and expression (see European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006).

Many of the key competences “*overlap and interlock....many themes are applied throughout the Framework: critical thinking, creativity, initiative taking, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and managing feelings constructively play a major role in all eight key competences*” (E.C./ DG EAC 2008: 4-5). In order to promote implementation of the Recommendation and spread the key competences’ perspective, the Commission established (in 2006) the Cluster on “Key Competences and Curriculum reform”, within the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme of the Lisbon Strategy and under the supervision of the EU Education & Training Coordination Group (ETCG) (see EACEA Euro2007). The Cluster has undertaken three Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) in Belgium, (Flanders), Hungary and Greece, and number of meetings in Brussels, while it has also proceeded in 3 mappings (from 2004, 2007 and 2010) on how national policy agendas for lifelong learning and school curricula recognise the key competences. The abovementioned PLAs focused on “the implementation of key competences and in particular the cross-curricular or transversal key competences (learning to learn related to creativity and post- cognitive skills, social and civic, initiative taking and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression). Member States' experts have looked into policies and measures at national contexts that are needed to enable schools and other learning organisations to support the development of key competences among young people”, emphasising creativity (E.C./ DG EAC 2008: 3).

Among the major findings of these PLAs, the following are of vital importance: “*In order to support the political intentions on schools as part of lifelong learning strategies, key competences should have an appropriate status in curricula and syllabi.... Teacher education, both initial and in-service, needs to reflect the paradigm change as it requires different approaches to teaching and learning*” (E.C./ DG EAC 2008:11- 14), emphasising alternative forms of learning that promote creativity though a cross curricular perspective (CIDREE 2004). The latest should be supported by the proper learning material and pedagogical approaches focusing on the development of key competences.

According to the Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the MS (22 May 2008): more emphasis should be laid on creativity and the capacity to innovate, in the future, correlation between cultural diversity and creativity should be highlighted and strengthened (see also the Decision of the Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Creativity& Innovation- March 2008), partnerships within the educational community and between learning organization and society at large, in order to increase creativity should be promoted and fostered, teacher institutions and teachers have a key contribution to support everyone’s creative potential and should contribute to this by “*exemplifying creativity in their own teaching (more personalised and learner- centered approaches to education)*”, while “*all levels of E&T can contribute to creativity and innovation in a LLL perspective- the early stages of education concentrating on motivation, learning to learn skills and other key competences and subsequent stages focusing on more specific skills and the creation, development and application of new knowledge and ideas*” (Council of the European Union, 2008).

3. The EU Policy on Creativity and Key Competences: Trends and Facets

3.1. The Agenda on Creativity within the EU2020 Strategy

Given all the abovementioned there is no doubt: Creativity is rising. And it is placed in the agenda of several fundamental ongoing policy initiatives, attempting to draw up the actual LLL Framework in EU. That trend became even more evident in the ongoing EU2020 Strategy. Within its context, the promotion of creativity and innovation is institutionally and operationally correlated to the request for efficiency and equity. In fact, Creativity is gradually empowered within the EU policy agenda. Instead of being a marginalized issue, it becomes a fundamental topic for the new policy paradigm on education and training. And that’s the major challenge, creativity faces. Creativity “*is conceptualised as a skill for all. It is an ability that everyone can develop and it can therefore be fostered or, likewise, inhibited. Educational actors have the power to unlock the creative and innovative potential of the young..... Creativity has been defined as a product or process that shows a balance of originality and value. It is a skill, an ability to make unforeseen connections and to generate new and appropriate ideas. Creative learning is therefore any learning which involves understanding and new awareness, which allows the learner to go beyond notional acquisition, and focuses on thinking skills. It is based on learner empowerment and centeredness. The creative experience is seen as opposite to the reproductive experience*” (Ferrari, Cachia and Punie 2009: iii). What is more than evident in all the current EU policy initiatives, towards the enhancement of creativity, is the acknowledgement of the fact that creativity and innovation can play an important role in the knowledge society, since they can substantially contribute to economic prosperity as well as to foster social and individual wellbeing, while they are essential factors for a more competitive EU (see Ferrari, Cachia and Punie 2009: iii).

As the EU Leaders stated in the 2017 Rome Declaration, the main objective is the creation of a Social Europe namely of a Union “*which fights unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty; a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent; a Union which preserves our cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity.*” (op. citum in European Commission, 2017b: 4). Given the multidimensional role of creativity as an holistic skill, it becomes obvious that the constant development of citizens’ creativity, all across their life-course, is of vital importance for the future of Europe. Yet, several challenges remain when it comes to creativity. I.e. The alarmingly high rate of low achievers students in the OECD PISA, reveal the fact that there are a lot of students that underachieve in the key competences (19,7% in reading, 22,2% in maths and 20,6% in Science- see European Commission, 2018a: 4). Given that low achievers are students “*scoring below PISA level 2, i.e. failing to reach the minimum level of reading skills and competences required to participate effectively in their studies, in the labour market and ultimately in society*” (European Commission, 2018a: 97), it becomes evident that approximately 1 out of 5 European young students fail to think and response creatively in problem solving. The impact of this phenomenon is multidimensional, since “the outputs of an education system in terms of cognitive skills, attitudes and behaviors actually have indirect positive effects on several desirable social outcomes such as health, labour productivity and social cohesion” (European Commission, 2018a: 93). Creativity is not just about learning, is far more about acting and its absence has expanding effects regarding people’s life course in a dramatically changing world.

3.2. New EU Policy Initiatives towards the Enhancement of Creativity

Taking into account the need to efficiently further promote creativity, EU has undertaken a series of new policy initiatives, directly or indirectly related to the enhancement of creativity. Among others, the more important are the following:

- The year 2009 was declared to the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (Decision No 1350/2008/EC). The key message of the Year 2009 was the following: “*Creativity and innovation contribute to economic prosperity as well as to social and individual wellbeing. So creativity and innovation are thriving factors for entrepreneurship and important new skills needed in new jobs. Therefore these capacities are mentioned as key competences*” (Zentner, 2019: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/culture-and-creativity>).
- In the beginning of the current decade, the Council of the EU conclusions of 29 November 2011, emphasized the cultural and creative competences and their role in building intellectual capital in Europe (The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the EU, 2012: 1).
- The Council of the European Union publicized its Formal Conclusions on (in 11 May 2012) on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people (The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the EU, 2012).
- Following these conclusions, the EU Youth in Action Programme has integrated “the creativity and innovative capacity of young people as well as their active citizenship and social inclusion” through its priorities, since 2012 (see The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the EU, 2012: 3).
- The 2016 New Skills Agenda for Europe has announced “the review of the 2006 Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning acknowledging that investing in skills and competences and in a shared and updated understanding of key competences is a first step for fostering education, training and non-formal learning in Europe”, acknowledging the fact that “skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, ability to cooperate, creativity, computational thinking, self-regulation are more essential than ever before in our quickly changing society” (Council of the European Union, 2018: 2). Indeed, in May 2018, the Council for Education, Youth, Culture and Sports adopted a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, which replaces an earlier Recommendation in this area. The approach among others aims at “promoting a variety of learning approaches and contexts, in a lifelong learning perspective” and emphasizes Creativity as a transversal theme-competence, acknowledging its holistic role (see European Commission, 2019).
- Given that Creativity is considered as a key factor for culture and cultural expressions but vice versa culture is seen as a catalyst for creativity. “*already in the Culture Programme of the European Commission (2007 – 2013) stimulation of creativity through culture and the promotion of creative industries are set as a European Union policy*”. (Zentner, 2019: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/culture-and-creativity>).
- The development of the Digital Competence Framework and the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework aim at supporting competence development and emphasize the role of creativity as an holistic skill that should be further developed via these new frameworks.
- There is an ongoing fine-tuned effort to harmonize the institutional arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning at the national level with the European Qualification Framework, which “provides a common

- reference framework to compare levels of qualifications, indicating the competences required to achieve them “, based on level descriptors (see Council of the European Union, 2018: 2).
- Special emphasis is laid, within the framework of the ongoing EU2020 Strategy in the further development and modernization of national regulatory frameworks concerning the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, attempting to make use of the ‘Key Competences for Lifelong Learning — A European Reference Framework’, while emphasizing that “non-formal and informal learning play an important role in supporting the development of essential interpersonal, communicative and cognitive skills such as: critical thinking, analytical skills, creativity, problem solving and resilience that facilitate young people’s transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life” (Council of the European Union, 2018: 3). According to the acting European Reference Framework on Key Competence, creativity is considered as a “transversal (thematic) competence”, aligned with the WEF 21st Century Skills that considers Creativity as the major competence for, among others, the development of the key competence “Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship” (see European Commission, 2018b: 7 & 24).
 - The Work Programme “Education & Training 2020” of the EU2020 Strategy facilitated the planning and implementation of several major education reforms in many M-S, prioritizing the implementation of competence-oriented education, training and learning (see Papadakis & Drakaki 2016, Papadakis 2016).
 - The 2015 EU Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence, provide a joint path towards to further integrate initiatives and tools aiming at enhancing creativity from the early stages of the life-course (see OJ C 172, 27.5.2015: 17).
 - Entrepreneurship education and the relevant competences’ development is gradually related (all across EU) to creativity development and the sense of initiative especially among young people, “for example by promoting opportunities for young learners to undertake at least one practical entrepreneurial experience during their school education” (Council of the European Union 2018: 4). The prioritization of Creativity, within entrepreneurship education and innovation, became evident by the statement of the Council of the European Union in 2012, that “young people’s creativity, innovative capacity and entrepreneurial skills as tools for active participation in society, and increased employability should be fostered, through appropriate funding and by developing partnerships between relevant sectors aiming at stimulating innovation” (The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the EU, 2012: 2).
 - Additionally, more and more, it is stressed the need for aligning the new framework with EntreComp (namely the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, with innovation, creativity, risk-taking, teamwork, and of using the term entrepreneurship in its broader sense (European Commission 2018b: 34). Nowadays, “the up-dated definition of entrepreneurship competence is aligned with the JRC Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (and) in addition, *creativity* and the *ability to plan and manage processes* are highlighted as essential dimensions of an entrepreneurial mind-set” (European Commission, 2018b: 53- 54).
 - Several partial initiatives are institutionally supported and in many cases extra-funded in order to provide “specific opportunities for entrepreneurial experiences, traineeships in companies or entrepreneurs visiting education and training institutions including practical entrepreneurial experiences, such as creativity challenges, start-ups, student-led community initiatives, business simulations or entrepreneurial project-based learning” (Council of the European Union, 2018: 12)
 - The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommends now to assess educational success not only in the traditional subjects of schooling but also in field of "soft skills" like creativity. ". Given the abovementioned perception of Creativity within EU, it is not surprising that in the EU Strategy on Youth Policy - Investing and Empowering “*creativity is one of the main tools to deal with the challenges of our time when standard approaches seem to become inefficient. In this communication creativity is coupled to entrepreneurship to highlight the need of creative solutions also in the field of economy. Young people should be encouraged to think and act innovatively*” (Zentner, 2019: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/culture-and-creativity>)
 - Another major policy initiative is the Creative Europe Programme, that aims to support the European audiovisual, cultural and creative sector, further relating creativity to culture. We should point out, as this point the fact that (in terms of the Culture-related Creative Sectors) “taken together, the 11 sub-sectors of the creative industries provide “more than 12 million full-time jobs, which amounts to 7.5% of the EU’s workforce, creating approximately EUR 509 billion in value added to gross domestic product (5.3% of the EU’s total gross value added).” (European Manifesto on Supporting Innovation for Cultural and Creative Sectors 2018: <https://theartsplus.com/2018/10/11/european-manifesto/>). Subsequently, within the framework of the abovementioned Programme “the different funding schemes encourage the audiovisual, cultural and creative players to operate across Europe, to reach new audiences and to develop the skills needed in the digital age” (EACEA, 2019).

4. Conclusions-Concluding Remarks

As the European Commission recently stated “it is important to equip current and future generations – regardless of social and cultural background – with the characteristics of successful innovators – including curiosity (or inquisitiveness), use of imagination, critical thinking, problem-solving, and perseverance (resilience or persistence) which includes positive risk-taking. These characteristics are associated with 'creativity', which is a process typically of imagining possibilities, creating something new, and reflecting upon and modifying what is being created. In a broader sense it is a way of interpreting and acting upon the world” (European Commission, 2018b: 42). Taking that into account, Creativity is fundamentally aligned with the key-goal for the future of the EU, set in the Rome Declaration of 25 March 1967 pledged on the occasion of Europe's sixtieth birthday. In the EU Leaders' terms "We want a Union where citizens have new opportunities for cultural and social development and economic growth" (see European Commission, 2017b: 3). Within this framework, Creativity as a transversal theme- competence is gradually perceived as the prime mover for economic growth and social cohesion. A relevant study concluded that “highly educated people working in creative occupations are the most relevant component in explaining production efficiency, noncreative graduates exhibit a lower impact, and bohemians do not show a significant effect on regional performance” (Marrocu & Paci, 2012: 369). The increasing and multilevel policy initiatives, undertaken all across the EU, document the key role of creativity and the fact that its development requires fine-tuning at both supranational, national and regional level, institutional arrangements in education and training, evidence- based approaches and at the end of the day a true and holistic paradigm shift in every learning pathway. It's a constant challenge, that concerns the whole public policy complex.

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